



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Eastern Jackson County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

**Chapter Leader: Theresa Phillips**  
**24-Hour Help Line: (816)229-2640**  
**Private Facebook Page: Eastern Jackson County TCF**  
**Website: [www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org](http://www.easternjacksoncounty tcf.org)**

September-October 2025

**TCF National Headquarters**  
**48660 Pontiac Trail #930808 Wixom, MI 48393**  
**Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**  
**(877)969-0010**

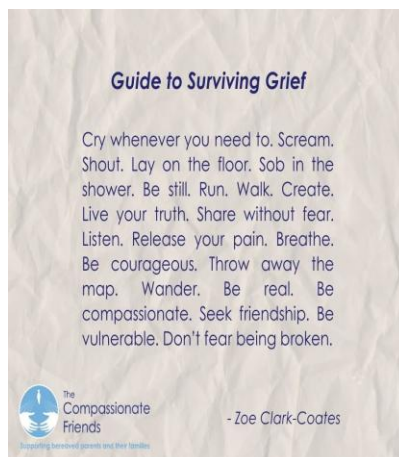
#### **Upcoming Events:**



**Our Annual Walk to Remember** will be held September 20, 2025 At Waterfall Park (just behind Bass Pro) In Independence, MO Registration will begin at 8:30 am The walk will begin at 9 am. Cost of registration is \$10. A limited number of shirts will be available for purchase on the morning of the event for \$15. This is an event for all family members and friends. Hope to see you there.

**National Virtual Bereavement Support Event** on October 25, 2025. For more information please visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Worldwide Candle Lighting** on December 14, 2025, starting at 7PM at Walnut Gardens Community of Christ Church 19201 E RD Mize Rd, Independence, MO. More details to follow.



Some days, it feels impossible.  
The weight of grief presses so heavy  
I can barely breathe.  
I want to collapse, to scream, to let  
the world see just how shattered I  
really am.

But then I think of you.

And I force myself to stand up when  
I'd rather fall.

I force myself to keep moving when  
all I want is to stay curled up in the  
dark.

I try to hold it together—for you.

Because you were strong.  
Because you showed me how to keep  
going even when life was cruel and  
unfair.

Because the love you gave me  
deserves more than me giving up.

So I stand a little taller, even when  
my knees are buckling.

I dry the tears, even though they  
never really stop.

I smile at the world, even when  
inside I'm still breaking.

It's not because I'm brave.

It's not because I've "healed."

It's because I carry you with me, and  
I want to make you proud.

The truth is—I don't always get it  
right.

I'm not always strong.

Most of the time I'm still just  
surviving.

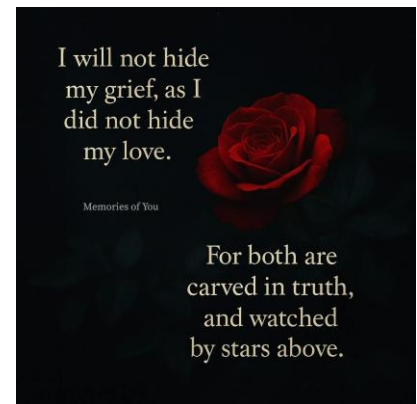
But every bit of strength I can find...

every breath I can take when it feels  
impossible...

is for you.

Because of you.

With you.



#### **I will not hide**

I will not hide the tears I cry  
For love like ours will never die,  
Grief and love are side by side  
One cannot live if one's denied.

The stars above, they seem to know  
The weight of loss, the depth of woe,  
Yet still they shine, a gentle sign  
That love eternal will be mine.

A rose of red, forever true  
Reminds me always still of you,  
Though shadows fall and nights are  
long  
Your love still makes my spirit  
strong.

For grief and love are both the same  
Two sides of one eternal flame.

— Memories of You Facebook page

## Coping with the Loss of a Toddler

The emergency section of St. Joseph's Hospital. Beige walls lined with unimposing chairs closed in on me. Doctors came and left. Family members surrounded me. Police officers and a priest came to speak with me. Each one repeated the same mantra, "It's not your fault". Unbeknownst to them, this seed of guilt was planted in my heart and spread its dark tentacles into every corner of my soul.

My daughter, Elena, was twenty-two months old when she passed away. I hadn't seen it coming. The day before she passed she'd chased bubbles. I tickled her until she squealed with delight. I read her a book on my knee, tucked her in, and gave her a goodnight kiss. The next day, she was gone. She slipped through my fingertips like sand. I thought her life was permanent, a fact. She would outlive me. She would have children someday. My world came crashing down, fragmenting at the seams. How could her little courageous heart stop beating?

From the moment of conception, a parent's life changes form; new duties, dreams, and responsibilities. An evolution into a completely new identity with an innate instinct to protect their child. After suffering their devastating loss, there's a sense of failure.

Losing a toddler is a unique grieving experience. Elena was growing healthy and strong. She was learning her alphabet and numbers. She would say "I wuv you" and sing with me. Losing her also meant the loss of her future. A thousand tiny moments I wouldn't have traded for the world. In this day and age, with such advances in technology, losing a toddler is so rare that people can't help but wonder how it happened. Every time someone asked me "how", it was as if they were asking me to relive my deepest trauma for the benefit of their curiosity. My depressed mind told me they wanted to know if I was the one to blame, but the truth is, my judgment was clouded by grief. When someone asks, it's more than okay to say "I'm not ready to talk about it yet" if that's the case.

During the first few months of my grief journey, I joined grief counseling, and grieving parent Facebook groups. I felt as though no one could relate to my grief. Most people I came across had lost adult children, miscarried, or experienced prolonged illness with their child. I felt isolated and stigmatized at having lost a toddler. I kept asking myself, "How could I let this happen?". I met other parents who'd lost children decades prior who'd say they felt as though it were yesterday. Everyone's grief journey is unique to them. Every bereaved parent is bonded by the shared experiences of grief, guilt, and love.

No matter the age of a child who passes, each parent has some kind of guilt that torments them. More destructive than grief, guilt tears one apart until shreds of the heart and soul remain intact. It's important to understand that our children come from us but do not belong to us. A parent shapes their child's destiny, but can't control it.

To begin healing and fully embrace life one must let go of guilt. It seems impossible, or even disrespectful at first, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. After losing Elena, I asked myself, "How can I go on without you?". It felt like my life stopped, and if I moved forward it would be away from my life with her, a betrayal. I resented others for celebrating holidays, for laughing, for living, but I know now that my grief was in control, not me.

There's a formula I follow to make it through each day. Hope, faith, love. The trauma of her loss is the same, the grief is always there, and there is a way to cope.

A. J. Cronin once wrote, "Hell is the place where one has ceased to hope". Hope is the tether that keeps me going. I am learning to tell myself "It's not my fault" and live alongside my pain. I find hope in the little signs I believe she sends me, like a ladybug on a cold winter day, or a bible reference when my grief has a hold of me.

Faith feeds my hope and hope feeds my faith. Spiritually I have faith that she is with me every day and knows the effort I put into honoring her life. I have faith her soul still exists, that she is at peace and beyond all pain.

She knows the immensity of my love for her and the immensity of my pain.

Leaning on the support from my local church has helped me find purpose and meaning in life, but it isn't a one-size-fits-all cure.

Regardless of one's personal beliefs, the message remains the same; faith is the opposite of anxiety, and hope is the opposite of depression. By finding ways to strengthen the former, you will defeat the latter.

I am learning to love the person I am, and the mother I will always be because of her. Grief doesn't go away in time. Guilt doesn't magically fade away. As I evolve during my grief journey I am learning to forgive myself. I honor her memory daily and share my love of her with those who are still living. Her life has inspired artwork, poetry, and charity. Her love has bridged broken relationships and brought together communities. I am grateful for the time I had with her and the love I share because of her.

Though my heart is breaking daily, I am not broken. I am not healed, I am healing. I am grieving, I am not my grief. With hope, faith, and love I will embrace another day.

*Milan Lopes Published September 5, 2025 Compassionate Friends Website*





## Grief rewires your brain

Nobody talks about how grief makes you forget normal things.

I can remember the exact sound of their laugh from seven years ago, but I can't remember if I paid the electric bill yesterday.

I can replay the last words we said, word for word, but I'll walk into a room and have no idea why I'm there.

It's not just sadness. It's like my brain got rewired the day they died. Sharp in all the wrong places. Foggy in the ones that matter for everyday life.

People think it's depression, or distraction. But no. It's grief. It lives in your body, your memory, your focus. It steals things you didn't even know could be stolen.

### Grief rewires your brain.



I can remember the exact sound of their laugh from seven years ago, but I can't remember if I paid the electric bill yesterday.

Bereaved Parents of the USA

I used to beg for the grief to go away.

Now I understand, it's the last piece of you I get to keep.

It's in the quiet moments, the sudden tears, the way my heart skips when I think of your laugh.

This grief is the thread that ties me to you in a world that keeps moving without you.

And I'll never let it go.

The reality of losing a child is that a mother will grieve forever. She will never "get over it" as many people will say.

She will break and find a way to put the pieces back together but she will never be the same.

How could she; she has lost a part of herself.

Grieving Moms Forever

## The things people don't see after your child dies

It's not just the birthdays and holidays.

It's not just the empty seat at the table.

It's the way you pause before answering, "How many children do you have?"

It's the panic in the grocery store when you hear someone call their name.

It's still buying their favorite snack out of habit and crying in the car.

It's keeping their phone number in your contacts because deleting it feels like erasing them.

It's the ache of watching their friends graduate, get married, have kids... while your child will forever stay the same age.

It's talking to them in your head every single day.

It's the way your smile in public hides a thousand private tears. Grief after child loss doesn't "end."

We carry it. We live with it. We breathe through it.

You might not see all of this...

But it's there. Always.

For all the parents walking this road, I see you. ❤️

For everyone who loves someone walking this road... please, keep saying their child's name.

*Time doesn't heal everything—  
it just teaches us to walk  
with pieces of our heart  
missing, yet  
still beating.*



## After October

and if there be a perfect month,  
for me, it is October...  
with days and nights like laughing  
fauns,  
with mornings bright and sober.  
when wind will dance in sudden  
glee

to do the autumn-sweeping  
or cloud and fog and wistful rain  
can move a heart to weeping.  
and in October You were born,  
four days before November...  
and four years later you were  
gone,

my little son, my only son,  
I love you.  
and remember. . .

Sascha Wagner

©The Compassionate Friends

*I will never let my  
child's light fade!*

SilentGriefSupport.com

## AUTUMN TEARS

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to, children. Halloween will soon approach and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss—the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have—the announcement of our long-awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories, more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

Penny Young

TCF Powell River, British Columbia



*Time slips by and life  
goes on, but from my heart  
you're never gone...  
I think about you always,  
I talk about you too,  
I have so many memories,  
but I wish I still had you!*

[facebook.com/MissingLovedOne](https://facebook.com/MissingLovedOne)

Cheyenne, it's been 31 years since I held you—  
in my weary arms,  
yet you remain at the center of every wild thing  
— I love.

You aren't just the echo of my years gone by—  
you're the sunlight trembling  
through new leaves today,  
the hush leaning against my shoulder  
in the quiet field before tomorrow morning.

You are kindness, caught like dew  
in the grass under my feet, next week  
and gentleness, singing low  
with the river as it passes  
over the small stones of sorrow.  
As I walk—slowly, with a heart  
attuned to everything—  
I find you with me in the bright  
unfolding of ordinary things:  
the tilt of a bird's wing,  
the way the air moves,  
a golden pause in the mid-afternoon.

What is grief but an open hand,  
and love, and wild geese calling  
across the sky of my forever?

I carry you: not as memory alone,  
but as a hush of compassion  
woven into every offering—  
for you are not just my past.  
You are the soft persistence  
of hope in my chest,  
and everywhere I walk,  
your spirit bends the light  
toward mercy for all beings.

—Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

Missing my beautiful daughter 31  
years after her death

## The Trees Will Cry

The trees will soon begin to cry,  
they do this time of year,  
and now until the end of time  
they cry for you, my dear.

The oak you sleep beneath, my son,  
that keeps you safe from harm,  
will sleep with you the winter through,  
its arms stretched out to calm.

The brutal winds will soon be here,  
cold and bitter days,  
the landscape will look like my life,  
so dark and bleak, no grace.

But life goes on, the circle turns,  
and once again, my boy,  
the sun will shine, the earth rejoice,  
and like you, be reborn.

**I used to beg for the grief to go  
away.**

**Now I understand,  
it's the last piece of you I get to  
keep.**

**It's in the quiet moments,  
the sudden tears,  
the way my heart skips when I  
think of your laugh.**

**This grief is the thread that ties  
me to you in a world that keeps  
moving without you.**

**And I'll never let it go.**

*You can't fix a heart  
broken by child loss.*



[SilentGriefSupport.com](http://SilentGriefSupport.com)



## FALL

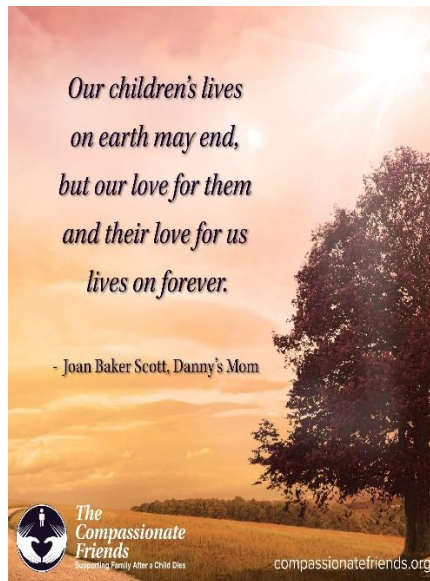
It is so hard to believe that summer is over! Even though summer is technically still here until September, the cool evenings we have been having, school starting, and football games being played are all signs that fall is here. And I love it!

To me, fall is the most invigorating time of the year. The crispness of the air, the beautiful coloration of the trees, the smell of leaf and wood smoke, the sky full of birds traveling south “talking” with one another as they go, are all part of this wonderful world we live in. I hope all of you will be able to feel and see the wonders of fall.

Sometimes we are so “down” and preoccupied with our child’s death, and we are working so hard to just get through each day, that we are unable to appreciate what is going on in the world around us. Try to take a few minutes each day and look around. If you can focus on a beautiful tree or leaf, smell the chrysanthemums blooming in the garden or bite into a fresh apple just picked and enjoy doing this for just a few minutes, it will make your day seem brighter. And, if you are up to it, go to a high school football game or a band competition. The enthusiasm of the young people participating in these events is contagious.

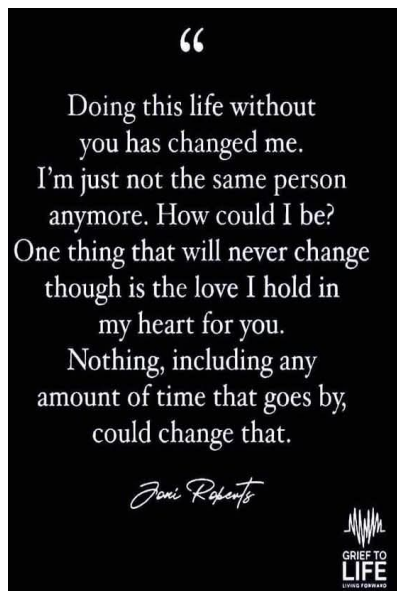
Yes, it sometimes hurts. We want our children to be there also, enjoying these activities. But it also gives us renewed faith that life does go on, and there is happiness and excitement in the world. I hope you all can find some beauty and peace in the fall months ahead.

Peggy Hartzell, TCF Ambler, PA



## A Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings  
Autumn is here once again  
As it comes every year.  
And with the leaves  
My falling tears.  
This time of year  
is the hardest of all  
My heart is still breaking,  
Once again it is fall.  
Memories once so vivid  
Are seeming to fade.  
My time spent with you  
Seems some other age.  
This season reminds me  
Of grief and of pain.  
But yet teaches hope  
And joy once again.  
For trees are still living  
Beneath their gray bark,  
And you my sweet child  
Are alive in my heart.  
Cinda Schake, TCF, Butler, PA



## Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment  
and children's pleasure.  
Gremlins and goblins  
and ghosties at the door  
of your house.

And the other children  
come to the door of your mind.  
Faces out of the past,  
small ghosts with sweet, painted  
faces.

They do not shout.  
Those children  
who no longer march laughing  
on cold Halloween nights,  
they stand at the door of your  
mind

and you will let them in,  
so that you can give them  
the small gifts of Halloween,  
a smile and a tear.  
Sascha Wagner  
The Compassionate Friends

**There are quiet moments when the  
stars shimmer in the night sky,  
and I am reminded of you.**

**Your soul traveled its path, and is  
forever etched in my heart, leaving  
a warmth that lingers long after  
your departure.**

**Each memory is a gentle touch, a  
blessing that I carry with me,  
reminding me of the love we  
shared and the light that you  
brought into my life. Though time  
may separate us, I miss you  
always, holding you close in spirit  
until we meet again.**

Words by: Serendipity Corner

Artist Credit: Naya Art



### **“Brothers Should Be Marching”**

The warmth of a summer evening  
with August sun still in the sky

As I linger in quietness of our  
backyard, the emptiness still makes  
me cry.

As I walk alone, I feel the grassy  
carpet underneath my feet.

And in the distance, I start to hear  
that familiar beat.

Just like I’d heard in previous  
weeks from across the field down in  
the small valley below.

There was a group that was  
working together to learn this  
season’s show.

There’s one senior class trumpet  
player missing through all of his high  
school years,

And now a freshman drummer is  
missing too, causing me even more  
tears.

That trumpet player and that  
drummer used to play right alongside  
of the others,

The freshman and the senior who  
are very special brothers.

To understand that everyone else  
must go on with their life indeed is  
plain,

But wondering if they remember  
the adds to this stabbing pain.

A familiar sight again appears as  
we’ve seen many times before,

My heart first stops, and then  
heavy, upon the vision I now depore

The grass now feels abrasive as I  
stand, frozen, and watch the band  
approaching,

My eyes travel up and down that  
line as I’m filled with grief and  
longing.

Comments like ‘what a big band,’  
and ‘the single file lines seems like it  
never ends’

But, Oh, how I wish that line was  
just a bit longer, including two more  
friends.

To see the confidence upon the face  
of a senior trumpeter marching so  
strong,

And the nervousness of the  
freshman drummer, beginning to feel  
he belonged.

That trumpet player and that  
drummer used to play right alongside  
of the others,

The freshman and the senior who  
are special brothers.

To understand that everyone else  
must go on with their own life  
indeed is plain,

But wondering if they remember  
them adds to this stabbing pain.

The drums grow more thunderous  
as they approach, but my heart beats  
louder still

While thinking of their earlier  
years, with memories I am filled

Two boys would get excited and  
we’d race right up the street

Watching and listening to the band  
was always quite a treat.

Of older kids they knew, and songs  
they heard, and formations they saw  
we’d talk.

All the way back home again, as  
they pranced right down the walks.

There never seemed to be a  
question that one day they’d be on  
that field, too

And I anticipated the joy of seeing  
that, and how I wish that it could be  
true.

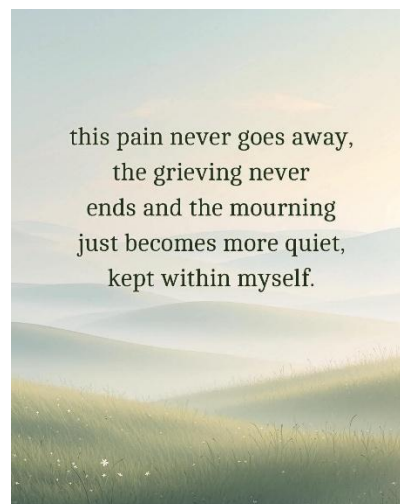
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The freshman and the senior who  
are very special brothers.

To understand that everyone else  
must go on with their own life  
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But wondering if they remember  
them adds to this stabbing pain.

*--Written by Lora Krum in August, 2013  
When Dylan would have been a high  
school Senior, and Gavin a high school  
Freshman*



this pain never goes away,  
the grieving never  
ends and the mourning  
just becomes more quiet,  
kept within myself.

### **Autumn**

In the fall

When amber leaves are shed,  
Softly—silently

Like tears that wait to flow,  
I watch and grieve.

My heart beats sadly in the fall;  
'Tis then I miss you most of all.

--Lily de Lauder TCF Van Nuys, CA

### **We are very grateful for donations received from:**

Shareen Baxter in memory of her  
son, Rodney

Kathy Wilcox in memory of her son,  
Jeffrey.

Lori Wuellner in memory of  
Miranda Williams.

Billie Ashton in memory of  
Mistyka.

Steven and Robin Smith in  
memory of David.

**Please help us help others. Make a  
LOVE GIFT today. Tax deductible  
Love Gifts may be sent to: TCF C/O  
Theresa Phillips 6200 Kentucky Ave,  
Raytown, MO 64133**

**Remember when you came to your  
first meeting, and someone was  
there who was a little farther down  
the road and gave you a hug or  
shared something that made you  
feel like you are not crazy. Well, if  
you are a little bit farther down the  
road, please feel free to come back  
to our meetings and help families  
that are just starting their grief  
journey.**

**Please visit our website at**

[www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org](http://www.easternjacksoncountytcf.org)

**Find us on Facebook at**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1582699755290182>

We have several volunteers who  
write remembrance cards to families  
on birthdays and death dates. Just a  
reminder if you have an address  
change, please email  
[phillipsplace@aol.com](mailto:phillipsplace@aol.com) or mail a note  
to TCF, C/O Theresa Phillips 6200  
Kentucky Raytown, MO 64133 so the  
roster can be updated.

Please remember that you can give to  
The Compassionate Friends through your  
United Way pledge at work or as a single  
gift, but you MUST WRITE IT IN.