



The Compassionate Friends

Eastern Jackson County Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

November-December 2025

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

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

Upcoming Events:



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

What to bring:

1. If you would like a picture button, come at 6:30 pm. Bring a picture on plain paper 2 ¼ to 2 ½ inches
2. Also bring a picture for the memory table
3. A snack to share after the program
4. If desired, bring a gift for a needy child in memory of your child
5. Plus, we will be having a raffle.

As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, bereaved families gather to honor their loved ones in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries. Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the ceremony creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Wherever you are at that time, we hope you will join us in this loving remembrance. A memorial message board will be available that day at www.thecompassionatefriends.org. Please allow time for sign in and find a seat before 7pm

Low-Fat, Lite Holidays

By Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CHT, CT, GMS, bereaved mother

I'm tired of low fat! I'm tired of fat-

free. I'm tired of thinking rice cakes are good; they're not the same as Oreos! I'm tired of trying to be creative in my thinking, my eating, my living, and I'm tired of dreading the holidays. In fact, I'm just plain tired.

Can anyone stop the holidays please? Can anyone find a fat substitute that really tastes like mom's pumpkin pie? Can anyone figure out a cure for the pain of these memories? Probably not. So, as long as we are stuck with the approaching holidays and as long as we remain determined to be healthy and keep up the good low-fat fight, what can we do to turn this season of despair into a season of hope? Where are the beacons of light?

Be patient with yourself. Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to hide. We are always in a hurry. We want things to be better now. Do what you can this season and let that be enough.

Be realistic. It will hurt, especially if there is an empty chair at the table. Don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues (a roll of toilet paper is more efficient). Anticipation is often far worse than reality. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go. Leave the word "ought" out of this holiday.

Plan ahead. Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important. (Breathing and potty time rank right up there!)

Redefine expectations. Be honest in what you expect to be able to do. We live in a world of ought's and should's and suffer from guilt because we cannot meet our own expectations.

Be kind and gentle to yourself. Figure out what you should do, balance it against what you are capable of doing, and then compromise. Forgive yourself for living when your child died.

Listen to yourself. Find the quiet space within where all answers live. As you become aware of your needs, tell family members and friends. Keep some traditions; choose which ones. Don't toss out everything this year. You can always try changing a routine. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always scrap it if it doesn't work.

Take care of yourself physically. Eat right. Exercise (or at least watch someone else). Jog your memory!

Hold on to your purse and charge cards. You can't buy away your grief, although you might be tempted to try.

Screen all holiday activities:

Will it be the holiday without it? Why do you do this activity? Tradition, habit, obligation? Do you have to do this, or can others do it for you? Do you like doing it? How could this activity be done differently?

Give yourself the gift of emotions. Put the motion back into the emotions. Toss a nerf ball when you're angry, pound a pillow. Go outside and yell while you shovel snow. Find a way to express the intensity of your feelings in a personally non-destructive way.

Buy a gift for your child. Give it away to someone who would otherwise not have a gift. It is the giving, the exchanging of love that we miss. When you share love, it grows.

Hang the stockings, place a wreath on the grave. Do whatever feels right for you and your family.

Share your holidays. Ride the ferry, visit a soup kitchen or nursing home, spend an evening at the bus station. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring.

Work at lifting depression. Take responsibility for yourself. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat.

Understand that heartaches will be unpacked. As you sift through the decorations, appreciate the warm, loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

Ask for help. Make a help-on-a-stick sign and stand on the porch, waving it. Someone will notice (but they may not stop). Just because you ask for help doesn't guarantee you'll get some; but if you never ask, no one will ever know how much you might need help or even a hug.

Learn to look for joy in the moment. Learn to celebrate what you do have instead of making mental lists of what you're missing. Change the way you look at things.

Light a special candle. Not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared! Never forget that once someone loved us and we loved back. NO ONE can deny that.

Live through the hurt. Joy can return to warm your heart. I'm not going to let yesterday use up today. If I have a terrific memory to cherish, I'll enjoy it. I will not allow pain or fear or sadness to ruin the entire season. It may not be the same as before we became bereaved; but whatever it is can be something, and that just may be the beacon of hope in this season of despair.

Grab the fruitcake and the low-fat turkey and get moving to the rhythms of this holiday season—the season where love and memory might lighten the heart and chase the gloom. Skip the fat, shed the tears, light the candle, and find the light. Make this holiday season full of light and love.

The New Year

After the holidays, we will be off on another 365. Some of you, I know, wonder if you can make it. That's such an enormous amount of time to contemplate all at once, isn't it? You may have some of your "firsts" coming in the months ahead, and the normal impulse seems to be to lump all those days together and dread them concurrently, like a prisoner serving several life sentences.

It's possible to do it that way, but that's the hard way. Getting through this day may take all the energy you can muster. Why try to handle March or May or July (or whenever your special days are) now? You can't really, and by

trying, you end up only defeating yourself in your effort to effectively survive *this* day. When this day is past, March or May or July will still be there, trying to defeat your tomorrow—but only if you let them!

Get past this day--and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. By the time March, May or July gets here you'll have improved your coping skills. You can better handle your special days with more practice. I encourage you to know you can and will be better. Use this New Year to work toward that end. —
Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA



The Second Wave

It's the one you never see coming.
The one that shows up years later,
long after people stop checking in.

You think you've done the work.
You've cried, survived, rebuilt.
You've convinced yourself you're
finding your footing again.
Then one random day, grief kicks the
door back open.

It hits like it did in the beginning—
sharp, cruel, and familiar.
You don't ease into it. You drown in it.
That same ache in your chest, that same
lump in your throat.
You remember the exact sound of that
day,
the way the air felt when your world
split.
It all floods back like no time has passed
at all.

And the people around you—they don't
see it.
They think you've moved on.
They think time has done its job.
But time doesn't heal this kind of
wound.

It just teaches you how to look
functional while you bleed.

The second wave makes you realize how
deep it still runs.
How love this real doesn't expire just
because life keeps going.
It reminds you that no matter how strong
you've been,
grief still knows your name.

And when it hits, all you can do is stop
fighting it.
Let it come.
Let it wreck you for a while.
Because it's proof they still exist
somewhere inside you.

You'll stand up again—
you always do—
but for a moment,
you're back there.
And that's what the second wave really
is—
not starting over,
just remembering how much it still hurts
to love someone who's gone.

[griefjourney](#) [#memories](#) [#dad](#)
[#grievingdaughter](#) [#griefsupport](#) [#Death](#)
[#grieving](#) [#widow](#) [#loss](#) [#missingyou](#)
[#mom](#) [#intheirfootsteps](#) [#grief](#)
[#fblifestyle](#)



I want to smile again, without feeling guilty.

I want to miss you, without coming undone.

I want to celebrate your life, without my heart breaking.

If there's a good side of grief, I've yet to reach it. It's not getting any easier. Time isn't helping. Some days I feel as if the pain deepens.

The roads ahead seem longer without you walking them beside me.

It's like I'm resistant to joy.

Pushing back against my own happiness.

I'm afraid that healing means forgetting,

and I'm not ready to leave.

Let me sit here for a little while longer.

There are things I needed to tell you that I never got the chance to.

Things you deserved to hear....

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry for not doing more.

If it was possible to bear your pain, I would have.

Even when distant, my world was better because you were in it.

I was always proud of you.

My love for you is constant, unconditional, eternal.

There are pieces of you I'm discovering in me. Little gifts you unknowingly left behind.

Even your absence is filled with moments worth revisiting.

Maybe instead of learning how to live without you, I'll just bring the best of you with me.

Maybe we're not meant to move on, we're meant to move with.

*J. Raymond "Best of You"
From The Kindred Project: Vol. II*



The holidays are coming up
and I've been feeling sad
But now I feel I'm learning to
find reasons to be glad

For some time now my heart's been
filled
with anger at the Lord
"He's let me down", "He doesn't
care"
I struck a sour chord

But somehow some amazing way
I'm learning now to trust
to know that there's a higher plan
and I'll go on, I must

I finally know and realize
Some truth and some of why
That Jesus had to suffer so
and why he had to die

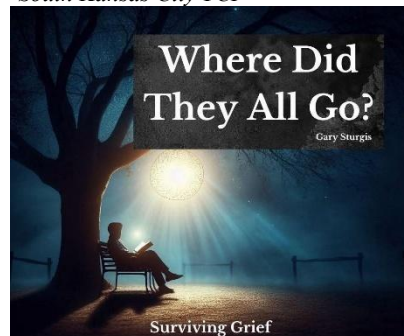
He's been there too, He's felt the
pain
He knows life at its worst
He cares for us, He's always there
although we may feel cursed

He knows we all face tragedy
that life gets very rough
Death, divorce and illness come
there's always war, it's tough

But he's right here beside us still
and He will never leave
He understands the way we feel
This I do believe

So, thank you Lord for showing me
Your loving and Your light
And give me strength to make it
through
And somehow, make it right.

*Jenny Donaldson, Chad's mom
-South Kansas City TCF*



Where Did They All Go?

Sometimes I feel like this whole grief
experience would be easier if it weren't
for the people around me.

At least...that's the way it feels.

Right after my loss it felt like people
were everywhere. There were tears,

hugs, and the hundreds of times I heard,
"I'm so sorry."

Everyone was telling me they were
here for me, and to let them know if
there was anything they could do for
me.

Here's the thing...where did they all
go?

It was like they suddenly all
disappeared. They evaporated into thin
air.

Poof! They were gone.

No one was calling, texting, or
emailing. No one was checking in on
me. No one was mentioning my loved
one's name.

And what about all those casseroles
I've heard about? I never got one?

When I was with people, they just
pretended like nothing happened.

But something did happen!
The person I love was gone, and my
heart was broken. In a million pieces.

No one noticed, they just stepped over
the rubble and went on with their lives.

I'm not saying that there weren't some
people who were helpful. The ironic
thing is most of them were people I
never knew before my loss. They were
usually strangers who also had a loss.
They were kind and caring.

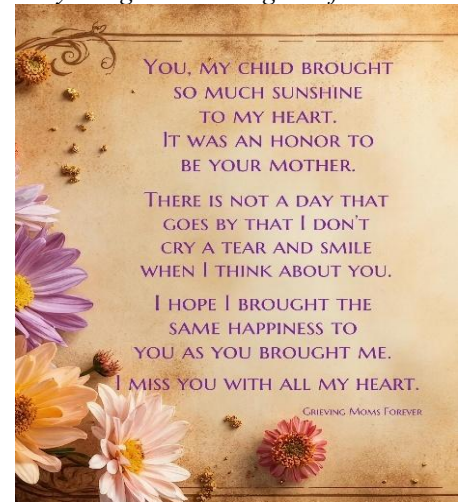
Most of the people that were in my life
for a long time seemed to just want to
wish it away. That just made me feel
invisible and abandoned.

Losing the person, I love was more
than enough, and I guess I just never
expected the betrayal of the people I
thought I could count on.

Yeah...I was angry, but I've learned
that the people in my life now are my
tribe. They can handle the mess.

As for those other people...I bet they'll
be back when its their turn at grief.

Gary Sturgis - Surviving Grief



How Can We Celebrate Thanksgiving?

One family, trying to avoid Thanksgiving, which was their deceased son's birthday as well, decided that family gatherings were no longer for them. They would travel or simply ignore the festivities. One day the mother came upon her ten-year-old daughter crying and asked what was wrong. She was sobbing, reported the mother, "All the children in school had told of their plans and made table decorations for the holiday, and Lynn felt completely removed from her classmates. She cried that she was not only deprived of her brother who had died, but she couldn't even have Thanksgiving dinner and a turkey!" The mother listened, and held Lynn in her arms and cried.

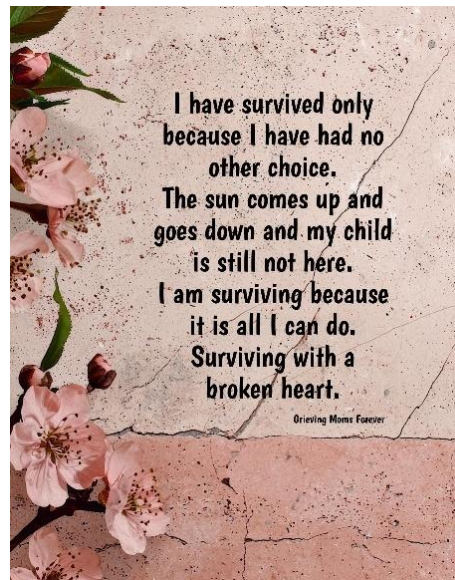
That night the mother talked to her husband, and they decided that no matter how bleak and empty it would be, they would have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. The family sat around the table, very quietly at first. The father said grace and thanked the Lord for a bountiful meal. When he was through, their ten-year old said she had something to add. "I want to thank Mommy and Daddy for making this very special dinner for our family. And most of all I want to thank you, God." There wasn't a dry eye at the table for a few minutes.

But gradually, as the meal progressed, they made an effort to discuss why the holiday was celebrated. From there, the parents told of amusing experiences at Thanksgiving dinners in their younger years. The mother said she planned to tell the stories to lighten the atmosphere just as carefully as she had planned the menu. By the time the meal was over, the parents discovered what had built up in their minds as unsurvivable had become just another turning point.

There will be many such turning points as you work your way forward. You have already survived what you were certain you could not live through—the death of your child. Turning points, plateaus, are merely steps in coping, and nothing more. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy/sad occasion, you

will gain strength from having passed beyond another painful event.

Harriet Schiff, The Bereaved Parent



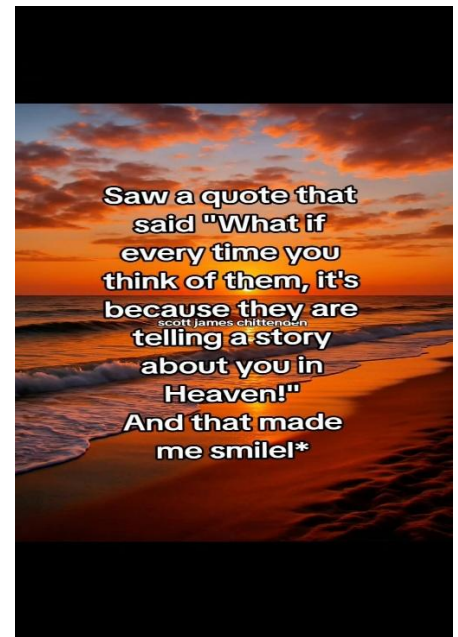
Let this Christmas be gentle for you
Give yourself the gift of peace;
Let the magic spin your private cocoon
With a hope that will never cease.
Remember your children tenderly—
Let the light of their love shine through
For in the wonder of magic
of Christmas time
They are sending their gifts to you:
Sweet Hope
Sweet Peace
Sweet Love

*--Dana Gensler, Lindsay's Mom
TCF of South Central Kentucky*

The scars you can't see



Deep in winter, my friend,
When life is darkest
it is very important
to try thinking
one small sunshine-thought
every morning, early—
try your best.



Grief Lives in the Body Too

When we talk about grief, we often focus on the emotional pain — the heartbreak, the sadness, the waves of loss. But grief doesn't just live in our hearts. It lives in our bodies too.

It can show up as exhaustion that no amount of sleep can fix.
As a tight chest, a lump in your throat, a racing heart.
As foggy thinking, aching joints, or a stomach that just won't settle.
You might feel restless, jittery... or heavy like you're moving through mud.

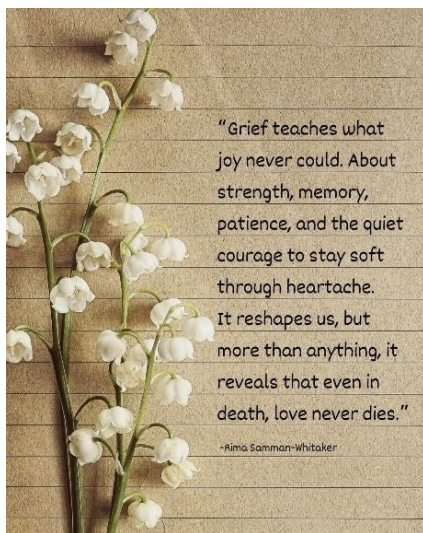
Grief can disrupt sleep, appetite, memory, even your immune system. It can feel like your whole body is crying out, missing the one who is gone.

If you're feeling this way, please know — you're not going mad. You're grieving.

Be gentle with yourself. Rest when you can. Nourish yourself when you're able. And most of all, don't judge yourself for how grief is showing up.

Your body is carrying a love so big, it hurts.

*#GriefInTheBody #PhysicalGrief
#BeGentleWithYourself #TCFV*



The Candle

A candle's but a simple thing,
It starts with just a bit of string. Yet
dipped and dipped
With patient hand,
It gathers wax upon the strand Until,
complete and snowy white, It gives
at last a lovely light.

Life is so like that bit of string, Each
day we do a simple thing,
Yet day by day if on life's strand We
work with patient heart and hand
It gathers joy,
Makes dark days bright,
And gives at last a lovely light.

by Clara B. Thurston



Grief is.

Brutal.
It's waking up every day to the same
reality you still can't believe is true.
They're gone.
And no matter how many times you
remind yourself, it still doesn't make
sense.

It's the kind of pain that doesn't
scream—it just sits in your chest,
day after day.
Heavy. Constant.
It changes how you breathe.

How you move.
How you see the world.

Grief is being tired but not able to
sleep.
Awake, but not really living.
It's dragging yourself through the
day pretending you're okay—
because what else are you supposed
to do?

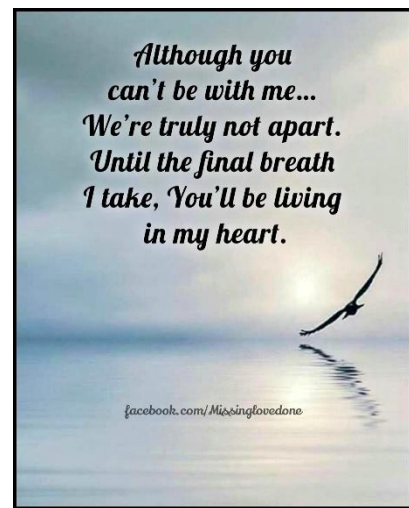
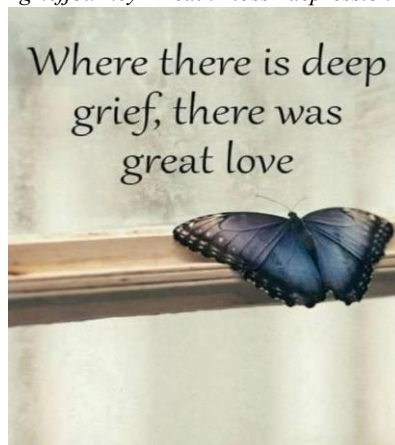
It's crying in the car.
Cancelling plans you don't have the
energy for.
Forgetting what you were saying
mid-sentence.
It's not just sadness. It's mental
chaos. Emotional exhaustion.
Physical weight.

Grief is lonely.
Even when people check in, even
when you're surrounded.
Because none of it brings your
person back.
And no one else truly gets what it
feels like to live without them.

It's missing them in a way that takes
your breath away.
It's hearing their laugh in your head
and breaking all over again.
It's the constant loop in your mind—
how is this real? How is this my life
now?

Grief is love that has nowhere to go.
It's holding on and letting go at the
same time.
It's surviving what you never
thought you could.

And no, it doesn't get "better."
You just learn how to carry it.
Even on the days it feels too heavy to
hold.
#griefsupport #grief #grieving
#griefjourney #Death #loss #depression



Celebration

When our ashes join out daughters
At the bottom of the lake,
It will not be a time to cry
But truly celebrate.

The reunion of our family
When we're on the other side
Will be such a great occasion,
As if no tears were cried.

Our daughters, who were soulmates,
Big and little sisters true,
Will hug and kiss their mom and
dad,
So glad we're four, not two.

Great spirit, who we're children of
Will welcome us back home.
Our lessons learned, all sins
forgiven,
No pain, just love unearned.

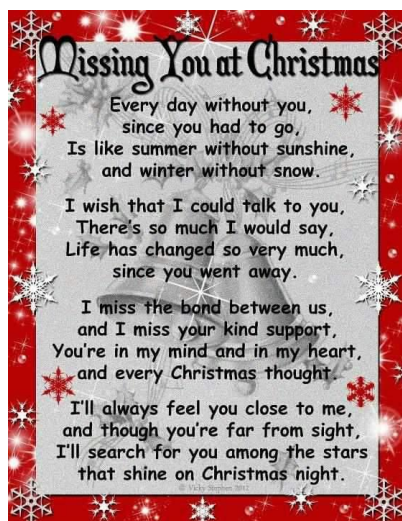
We'll celebrate eternity,
Cascading lives of love
To help, protect and demonstrate,
Next angels from above.

By Barbara Batson
South Kansas City TCF

The heart of Christmas is hope,
We need hope.
We need Christmas!

The New Year gives us time.
We need time,
to grieve, but most of all
to heal

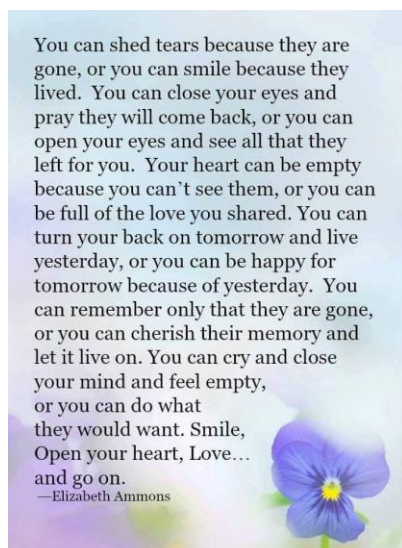
--From Friends Caring and Sharing Newsletter



Hold on to Life

Hold on to what is good,
even if it is a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe,
even if it is a tree which stands
by itself.
Hold on to life
even when it is easier to let go.
Hold on to my hand
even when I have gone away
from you.

--Nancy Woods, from *Many Winters*



They Lived

Yes, cry dear souls
for the ones you have lost.
Remember the times you
shared—
the fun times
the quiet times
the sad times
the thoughtful times.

Yes, cry dear hearts
for the lives cut short.

Remember what they gave—
the laughter
the tears
the hopes
the fears.

Yes, cry for the loss of a loved one.
But celebrate, for they have lived.

--Cheryl Larson, bereaved sibling,
Pike Peak TCF Chapter



For bereaved parents, Thanksgiving begins the dreaded string of holidays. There is no magic way for us to get around them. We MUST go through them. Yes, we can try ignoring the holidays altogether, but it doesn't stop them from coming. TIME does not stop to accommodate us, and "night" seems to be our biggest enemy. But thank God time does not stop for us. Could you bear to feel this devastating hurt forever? If you knew you would be LOCKED into this time period, there would be no

hope for a better day. Yes, it takes courage to face each new day. It takes hope along the way. It takes TIME before we can say, "I made it through the holidays!"

Nancy Cassell, TCF Monmouth County NJ

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.
Nancy Talley in memory of Craig

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
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 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.