



JANUARY—FEBRUARY—MARCH 2025



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

“A Nonprofit Self-Help Organization for Families Who Have Experienced the Death of a Child”  
Portland, Oregon ~ (503) 307-8450 ~ [www.portlandtcf.org](http://www.portlandtcf.org)

## \*\* NEW YEAR'S WISHES FOR BEREAVED PARENTS \*\*

To the newly bereaved: We wish you patience—patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

To the bereaved sibling: We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.

To those who are single parents: We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone with your loss.

To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child: We wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To those who have suffered the death of more than one child: We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of all your children: We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

To those of you who are plagued with guilt: We wish you the reassurances that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that.

To those of you who are deeply depressed: We wish you the first steps out of the “Valley of the Shadow”.

To all fathers and those of you unable to cry: We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

To those of you who are exhausted from grieving: We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned: We wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

*~By Former TCF President, Joe Rousseau*

## PLEASE JOIN US ON THE 1ST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH @ 10:30 AM

First United Methodist Church, 1838 SW Jefferson, Rm. #134, Portland, OR 97205

FOR MORE INFORMATION: (503) 307-8450

### Chapter Leader

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# WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE. WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization composed of bereaved parents/grandparents & siblings. We offer friendship and understanding. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child/sibling and about the feelings they experience through the grieving process.

There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child/sibling, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings & issues that evolve around the death of a child.

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.



**WALK IN THE LIGHT**  
by Dan Westmoreland  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNhVUKZOLbM>

*Tears are the safety valve of the heart  
when too much pressure is laid on it.*

~ Albert Smith

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Email your address change to  
Jenna Moon, Member Database at  
[jennarmoon84@gmail.com](mailto:jennarmoon84@gmail.com)



### OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN THE AREA

#### CLACKAMAS COUNTY CHAPTER #2047

4th Tuesday of the month 7:00 pm.

NAMI, 10202 SE 32nd Ave., Suite 501, Milwaukie, OR 97222

Email: [tcfclackamascounty@mail.com](mailto:tcfclackamascounty@mail.com)

#### EUGENE/SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER #2571

**NEW**

Willamette Christian Center  
2500 W. 18th Ave. Eugene, OR 97402

\*Contact Chapter co-facilitators Rachael at 541-221-5792  
or Ben at 541-704-5938 or [eugspfdtcf@gmail.com](mailto:eugspfdtcf@gmail.com)  
for meeting dates & times

#### WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAPTER #1901

2nd Tuesday of the month 6:30—8:30 pm.

Reeds Crossing Health Center Building—Conference Room  
7305 SE Circuit Dr., Hillsboro, OR

Phone contact: Phyllis H. (503) 310-2504

### ~ CALENDAR ~

- January 1—New Year's Day
- January 4—Portland TCF in-person meeting
- January 17—Martin Luther King Day
- February 1—Portland TCF in-person meeting
- February 14—Valentine's Day
- February 17—President's Day
- March 1—Portland TCF in-person meeting
- March 9—Daylight Savings Time
- March 17—St. Patrick's Day
- March 20—Spring Equinox



### I MISS YOU LIKE CRAZY . . .

*We Need Not Walk Alone* magazine shares poems, articles, and expressions that touch the hearts of bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. Items in the magazine offer different perspectives and experiences of grief from those who have been bereaved for varying lengths of time. We hope that you find the magazine relatable, supportive and filled with hope.

You can find this e-mag at  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)



### Please support Portland TCF!

Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card!! Through their Community Rewards Program they donate to local community organizations/nonprofits of your choice. You just link your Rewards Card and scan it every time you shop at Freddy's.

\*Whenever you use your Rewards Card you will be helping Portland TCF earn a donation from Fred Meyer.

\*You will still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points & Rebates, just as you do today.



Please see page 12  
for more information.



Thank you to all the volunteers who made our worldwide candle lighting ceremony so beautiful & meaningful. Many hours of planning made this such a huge success. A special thank you to our performers, speakers and candle readers. The slideshow of our children, grandchildren and siblings was truly amazing—thank you Diane for such a beautiful tribute. And last but not least, to our guests who attended and shared the evening with us. You are what made this such a special event!

~ from your Steering Committee members

Please be aware our website [portlandtcf.org](http://portlandtcf.org) will be under construction & temporarily unavailable at the end of 2024 & into early January 2025. Please continue to stay in touch via email [portlandtcf@gmail.com](mailto:portlandtcf@gmail.com).

Sharing tales of those we've lost is how we keep from really losing them.

~ Facebook/MyChildDidExi

We wish there was a magic formula for chasing away those post-holiday, pre-spring gloomies that so many of us suffer from in January & February. Problem is there's no such thing as a generic cure-all for the blahs. The task of "grief work" after the death of a child is hard work. There is no way to predict how you will feel. The reactions of grief are not like recipes with given ingredients and certain results. Each person mourns in a different way. You may cry hysterically, or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion. You may lash out in anger against your family and friends, or you may express your gratitude for their concern and dedication. You may be calm one moment—in turmoil the next. Reactions are varied and contradictory. Grief is universal. At the same time, it is extremely personal. Heal in your own way.

~ Rabbi Earl Grollman, "Living When a Loved One Has Died"

Sometimes, I just have to stop, close my eyes and hug you, even if it's only in my mind

~ Pinterest



### FACEBOOK PAGE

Please join us at "[TCF PORTLAND](#)"



This a private Facebook group for the Portland members only.

♥ Since this is a private page, you will be asked a couple questions from the administrators when you request to join.

Administrators – Debra Moon, Bev Waterworth



*Our children lovingly remembered...*

**CONFIDENTIAL**



*Our children lovingly remembered...*

**CONFIDENTIAL**



*Our children lovingly remembered...*

**CONFIDENTIAL**



*Our children lovingly remembered...*

**CONFIDENTIAL**

***The difference between grief & mourning***

**“Grief” is ones internal thoughts and feelings experienced.  
It is our internal response to loss.**

**“Mourning” is ones outward expression of grief. It is our grief “gone public”.  
Mourning is coming out and letting the world see and know something has happened to me.  
I loved and I lost. Now I am broken.**

*~ From a Grief Workshop presented by Dr. Alan Wolfelt*



A Love Gift is a special note to your child that is printed in the newsletter. It is a wonderful way to remember and honor their memory! Families often submit these either on their birthday or anniversary date of their child, but it can be done at any time! There is no charge for printing a Love Gift, but many families choose to donate a tax deductible contribution to help support TCF expenses such as brochures, outreach, special events, etc. Please complete the form on the back page with your love note and submit with your favorite photo. To include a picture with your Love Gift, please email your special photo to [debsmoon@gmail.com](mailto:debsmoon@gmail.com)

**DEADLINE to submit for the next newsletter is MARCH 10, 2025**

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR BEREAVED PARENTS

*I resolve ...*

- ♥ That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a timetable on my grief.
- ♥ That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.
- ♥ That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now".
- ♥ That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.
- ♥ That I will not expect my family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not had a child die cannot possibly know how it feels.
- ♥ That I will not blame myself for my child's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possible have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.
- ♥ That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.
- ♥ That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel

compelled to explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

- ♥ That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.
- ♥ To know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.
- ♥ To know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.
- ♥ To let myself heal and not feel guilty about feeling better.
- ♥ To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous—that it, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depressions, I will tell myself that "slipping backward" is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.
- ♥ To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.
- ♥ That I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.
- ♥ That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

~ Nancy A. Mower, TCF, Honolulu, HI



*"I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars."*

~ Og Mandino



## Save the Date:



### TCF's 48th National Conference

July 11—13, 2025 in Bellevue, Washington

Our conference is a place for bereaved families to find community and hope, while learning and sharing with others. Lifelong friendships are often made at the conference through meeting others who truly understand the painful loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild.



Like a tree in winter which has lost its leaves, we look ahead to spring for new growth and warmth of the sun to heal the pain in our heart.

Let us make January a time to reach out to each other and give that warmth from our hearts, and in return, we will all show new growth.

*Pat Dodge, TCF, Sacramento, CA*

It is November of 2024 and I tried to be brave & return to "the place". The place I went years ago, with your younger brother. The place I was when all the calls came in, "those" calls. Like a predator stalking it's prey. They say life is for the living, so I tried to return. Time itself does not change anything except the rawness of the pain. I ache for you. Every single day. I had hoped that I could go back to that mountain condo and move past the memories. I had hoped that laughter could once again meet me there, that new memories could replace the terrifying ones. I suppose you could say I did ok. I did not shake, I did not break down. What I did feel was a deep, deep sadness. I can't really explain the loneliness I felt, but then again, I don't have to. The way grief settles upon you like an unwelcome visitor is something we all know too well. The way our mind hopes for one thing but our soul is overtaken and engulfed by sorrow. This is something universally understood amongst the bereaved. It's not as if we don't try but it's like trying to warm up while walking in a blizzard. Some days grief has its way with us. But we must remember that even the darkest days come to an end. And when the sun rises again so must our hopes. Hopes for a brighter day, a lighter weight, hopes for grief to shrink and love to grow. Through the journey we can always return to TCF to find comfort and understanding. We are never alone. And that itself is a gift. Love to your hearts from mine.

*~ Michelle Thomason, Mom of Michael*

## OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS:

### SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

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

Facebook—SBSNW  
(503) 200-0382

\*Groups are being held several times per month on virtual Zoom meetings & in-person meetings. Please visit website for meeting dates/times/locations in the Portland metro area.

NE Portland \* SW Portland \* Milwaukee \* Gresham \* Hillsboro

### HELPING PARENTS HEAL

Annie & Marc Adams

[hphportlandoregon@gmail.com](mailto:hphportlandoregon@gmail.com)

Annie (503)752-8024

Marc (503) 880-4467

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

Support groups of grieving parents to connect with each other and with Spirit

### BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Ph. 503-699-8006

Spanish (503) 972-3376

Peace House, 2116 NE 18th St.

Portland ...2nd Mon 7 pm

Beaverton ...4th Thu 7 pm

Vancouver ...2nd Thu 7 pm

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

Support groups for parents who have experienced infant or pregnancy loss or who are considering or experiencing a subsequent pregnancy/adoption.

### PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN

Ph. 503-761-1304 or 503-656-8039

Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave

Portland... 1st Mon @ 7 pm

[www.pomc.com/portland](http://www.pomc.com/portland)

### SIDS RESOURCES OF OREGON

4035 NE Sandy Blvd Suite 209

Portland

Ph. 503-287-8265

### IN THIS TOGETHER

(formerly Me too, & Company)

Contact: Meg McCauley

Ph. 503-890-7027

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

Supports children & families who have experienced the death of a family member or friend.

### THE DOUGY CENTER

Ph. 503-775-5683, [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

3909 SE 52nd Ave., Portland, OR 97206



Provides safe place for children, teens, young adults & their families who are grieving a death.

### STEPPING STONES

Ph. 360-696-5120

SW Washington Medical Center, Vancouver, WA  
Support groups specialize in helping children with their grief.



# STEPPING STONES

Come, take my hand, the road is long.  
We must travel by stepping stones.  
No, you're not alone. I've been there.  
Don't fear the darkness. I'll be with you.  
We must take one step at a time.  
But remember, we may have to stop awhile.  
It's a long way to the other side  
And there are many obstacles.

We have many stones to cross.  
Some are bigger than others.  
Shock, denial, and anger to start.  
Then comes guilt, despair and loneliness.  
It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.  
It's the only way to reach the other side.

Come, slip your hand in mine.  
What? Oh, yes, it's strong.  
I've held so many hands like yours.  
Yes, mine was once small and weak like yours.  
Once, you see, I had to take someone's hand  
In order to take the first step.  
Oops! You've stumbled. Go ahead and cry.  
Don't be ashamed. I understand.  
Let's wait here awhile so that you can get your  
breath.  
When you're stronger, we'll go on, one step at a  
time.  
There's no need to hurry.

Say, it's nice to hear you laugh.  
Yes, I agree, the memories you shared are  
good.  
Look, we're halfway there now.  
I can see the other side.  
It looks so warm and sunny.  
Oh, have you noticed? We're nearing the last  
stone  
And you're standing alone.  
And look, your hand, you've let go of mine.  
We've reached the other side.

But wait, look back, someone is standing there.  
They are alone and want to cross the stepping  
stones.  
I'd better go. They need my help.  
What? Are you sure?  
Why, yes, go ahead. I'll wait.  
You know the way.  
You've been there.  
Yes, I agree. It's your turn, my friend ...  
To help someone else cross the stepping  
stones.

~ Barbara Williams Copyright © Barbara Williams

## STEPPING STONES TO VOLUNTEER

### Your First Few TCF Meetings

- Were you surprised to meet others who were also grappling with the terrifying trauma and shock of losing a child, grandchild or sibling? Did this help you feel less isolated, more understood?
- Were you encouraged to talk about your loved one and say their name? Was there a genuine interest in your child?
- Did you notice that crying and tears are perfectly acceptable, and in fact, normal?

The vision of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.**

### As Time Goes On

Grief has no timeline, it is different with each individual.

Talking about our child, sharing memories we hold dear, celebrating their birthday, honoring the day they died, are all helpful steps in the healing process. In time, the sharpest pain of grief softens, the sadness of loss always remains. **OUR CHILDREN ALWAYS REMEMBERED, ALWAYS LOVED.**

### The Idea of Hope

Hope is a powerful and universal human experience. After the death of a child, hope for a normal life again may feel elusive. If you have reached out to welcome a new member, shared a hug of support, or just a gentle touch on the shoulder of another grieving person, you have extended **HOPE**. These small gestures help not only the deeply bereaved, but also help strengthen and heal yourself.

The Portland TCF Chapter is always seeking volunteers; to assure we have a presence in the community for newly bereaved families now and in the future. If you feel TCF has played a positive part in your healing journey and would like to help our chapter remain strong, we urge you to take a step forward and become a volunteer!

**HELPING OTHERS ALWAYS HELPS OUR OWN HEART  
GROW STRONGER.**

Questions? Please contact Jeff Littman [jlittman@comcast.net](mailto:jlittman@comcast.net) or Carolyn Harrington [linerharrington@gmail.com](mailto:linerharrington@gmail.com)

*We survive the unthinkable. We survive for others. And then, very slowly we survive for ourselves. Because only through the good we do for others in her name will the beauty of spirit, mind, and body that was our daughter live forever.*

~ Kay Lokofof, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

## A LOVE LETTER TO MY CHILDREN



You are great kids. You have always been great kids, although I haven't always been a great mom. After your brother died, I was hardly any

kind of mom at all. I was so lost in my own grief, I wasn't there for you. You were bewildered, scared and hurt, but I couldn't seem to reach out to you beyond my own pain. I was like a day-old helium balloon drifting along, not sure whether my place was with you or with your brother.

I didn't drift for long. You grabbed at my string and yanked me back! The yowls and shrieks still ring in my ears: "Mom, all my underwear is dirty! Or "Mom, I'm starved!" or "Mom, he punched me!" Your brother was being cared for by his heavenly Father but you needed your earthly mother. It was your need for me that saved my life.

I'm sorry that your brother's death robbed you of your childhood. While other kids fretted about what to wear or which movie to see, you wondered when the tears and sadness would

ever end and if we would be a family again. If I could have shielded you from such great sorrow I would have; I couldn't.

Your lives were changed forever, and the future was uncertain but you kept going. You supported and inspired me as we traveled that rocky road of grief together. You talked about your brother when no one else would say his name. You kept his picture in your rooms and proudly pointed out to friends "This is my brother." you used his things, but gently. You reminded me of the cute, funny things he said and did. You included him in your bedtime prayers. You still do. Some day I believe you will tell your own children about your brother. Thank you for keeping his memory alive.

Because of the tragedy you experienced, you are more mature than other kids your age. You possess strength and courage beyond your years. You are resilient; little things don't get you down. Best of all, you are kind, sensitive, and compassionate to others. I adore you. You are my life.

~ Pat Dyson, TCF, Beaumont, TX

### *A presidents sorrow . . .*

*Joe Biden—2 of 4 children*

*George Bush—1 child*

*Theodore Roosevelt—2 children*

*John F. Kennedy—2 children*

*Ronald Reagan—1 child*

*John Adams—3 children*

*Thomas Jefferson—5 of 6 children*

*Abraham Lincoln—2 of 4 children*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower—1 child*

*Franklin Pierce—All 3 of his children*

*Martin Van Buren—1 child*

*Zachary Taylor—3 children*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt—1 child*

*James Garfield—2 children*

*Grover Cleveland—1 child*

*John Quincy Adams—3 children*

*Andrew Johnson—2 children*

*John Tyler—5 of 15 children*

*William Henry Harrison—5 of 10 children*

**"There is no tragedy in life like the death of a child: things never get back to the way they were"**

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

*Eyes open wide*

*I awake from a beautiful dream*

*Within seconds the painful reality of my  
life sets in*

*I find myself wanting to scream*

*Grief so strong*

*Impossible to explain*

*Living with a broken heart*

*Struggling with the pain*

*Eyes closed tight*

*I pray for that beautiful dream*

*A short escape from the painful reality*

*That makes me want to scream*

~ Robert Willis, TCF, Frederick, MD



*Our love for  
you will*

*never cease*

*You will always*

*be our missing*

*piece*

~ Author unknown

Lend me your hope for awhile, I seem to have mislaid mine. Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily. Pain and confusion are my companions. I know not where to turn. Looking ahead to the future times does not bring forth images of renewed hope. I see mirthless time, pain-filled days, and more tragedy.

## BORROWED HOPE

Lend me your hope for awhile, I seem to have mislaid mine. Hold my hand and hug me, Listen to all my ramblings. I need to unleash the pain & let it tumble out. Recovery seems so far distant, the road to healing, a long & lonely one.

Stand by me. Offer me your presence, your ears and your love. Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present. I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts. Lend me your hope for awhile. A time will come when I will heal, and I will lend my renewed hope to others.

~ Eloise Cole

## Birthdays

If it's your child's birthday month, we invite you to join our monthly meeting and share their story!

Birthdays hold treasured memories and are especially difficult for surviving parents and siblings; TCF offers a wonderful venue to honor and celebrate the precious life-story of your loved one. Taking a few minutes to share a picture, memento, award or even their favorite toy is a gentle reminder to all that *love continues and grows* with each passing year.



## WHEN YOU HAVE LOST SOMEONE YOU LOVE

*Do not make the mistake of living in sadness, or living small to honor their absence. You owe it to them to live even more vividly than before. If they could reach you, they would surely say ... "Take the love you had for me and turn it into gladness, use the love you had for me to drive away the sadness."*

*Love is an energy, so powerful, so all-consuming that when the person you felt all that love for is not here, you are a vessel filled with a boundless source of power that has nowhere to go. Harness it.*

*Use it to burn even more brightly and live even more loudly than before. Share the love you felt for that person with all the other special people in your life, for it is limitless. There is no end to it and there never, ever should be.*

*If they could reach you they would surely say ... "Make my time on earth count loudly, so I've not lived in vain. Use the love we shared to make more love and not more pain." If you are struggling to move on, to find the way to carry on without them, this is it. Use the love.*

*Carry them with you in all that you do, using their love as the source. It is what they would want. Tell their stories, mention their name, feel their love—and share it.*

*Do not let the pain of their loss overshadow the love that they created whilst alive. Make them count.*

*Remember, grief is the price you pay for a love divine. The stronger the love, the deeper the grief but love, love will always win in the end.*

*~ Donna Ashworth*

*grief has made me look for you in  
everything around me;  
the clouds,  
the wind,  
the butterflies*



### Please Support Portland TCF . . .

Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card!! Fred Meyer donates to local community organizations/nonprofits of your choice through their *Community Rewards Program*. Just link your Rewards Card and scan it every time you shop at Freddy's.

~ Whenever you use your Rewards Card you will be helping Portland TCF earn a donation from Fred Meyer.

~ You will still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points and Rebates, just as you do today.

### Great Way for Families & Friends to Support TCF!

- Go to [www.fredmeyer.com/community-rewards](http://www.fredmeyer.com/community-rewards)
- Sign up online (even if you already have a card, you must create an online account)
- You will immediately receive an email to confirm your account (check your Spam or Junk Mail!)
- Sign up using your email address and password
- From the top menu select: Reward —> Community Rewards
- Click "[LINK YOUR CARD HERE](#)"
- Enter # FT805
- Be sure to click the bubble!  
The Compassionate Friends, P.O. Box 3065  
Portland OR 97208

TCF Portland earned **\$41.06** during the 3rd quarter!

2024 YTD = \$122.99

~ Thank you for participating  
& enjoy shopping! ~

## WHEN GRIEF COMES KNOCKING AGAIN

Grief has surrounded me most of my adult life starting with my very loved father dying suddenly of a heart attack at age 45. Professionally I worked with hospice and then for 10 years with pediatric oncology where I fell in love with over 100 children that too so died from cancer. After volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, I began to appreciate that well-run bereavement support groups can do more good than any counselor, so I organized several grief groups. When I left St. Louis Children's Hospital and escaped to Florida, I did not escape grief. I volunteered for 14 years running the local homicide bereavement group.

Then grief became very personal when our bright, handsome, charming 18-year-old grandson, Adam, was killed suddenly in an accident. He was our daughter's only child.

Grief may walk out the door for a while with its voice becoming dimmer with time, but then it can turn around and suddenly be knocking down the door again. For us this time it was the news that our amazing 52-year-old son, Tad, was diagnosed with a terminal cancer. Ironically, this happened just as I was finally able to find the time to write the book I always promised myself and all of my angels in heaven that I would write about their beautiful lives and courageous deaths: "Remember Me: A Memoir of Children and Teens Combating Cancer."

The grief for our son is not the heart-stopping grief of the loss of our grandson. Adam's accident was in the morning on the way to his volunteer job as counselor for the YMCA, the week before his high school graduation. I vividly remember later that evening being in Adam's bathroom and seeing the shaving cream on the side of the can that was still wet. So alive that morning and so totally, irrevocably gone that evening. Such a little thing to remember, but it's strange how some of the little things get seared into your memory.

Our grief with Tad is more of a gnawing sadness that stays with you every hour of every day while you still go about your life doing your normal things—while you slowly watch the quality of his life slipping away and have the heart wrenching talks with him about when to know when enough is enough. Having worked with so much death and dying, I cannot even pretend that Tad might get the miracle that everyone is praying for because he deserves it for being such a good person. How many good children and teenagers did I work with that died? How many prayers were said for them that were left unanswered—or at least unanswered in the way everyone hoped? What makes me or my son so special that we will be the exception to having to follow this path of loss and grief? Some say we suffered enough with the loss of our grandson, but who is to say that there is a quota on loss? I can't even say, "Why me?" Do I really have the right to suffer less than the many wonderful families with whom I worked?

People will sometimes say to me, "I don't know how you can be so strong. I could never do it!" I feel that perhaps people say this because they think that somehow it will abstain them from such significant loss and grief—because they just couldn't handle it. It reminds me of long ago hearing a quote from an unknown source: "You never know how strong you are until strong is the only choice you have." I have known many, many "strong" grieving parents over the years, and strong was not their choice—it was their only hope for survival.

Tad has a tattoo on his hand and wrist, **GET UP**, to remind himself every day that no matter how bad it gets, "No matter how many times life knocks you down, you have to continue to **Get Up** and keep moving forward. If you can't **Get Up** to help yourself, **Get Up** to help somebody else." If Tad has this attitude despite the awful chemotherapy, radiation, surgeries and any hope of survival waning away, how can I do anything less?

~ Janalee Tomaseski-Heinemann

LOSING A CHILD  
CHANGES WHO YOU ARE  
AT YOUR VERY CORE.  
IT IS THE  
GREATEST LOSS A  
HUMAN BEING CAN  
EXPERIENCE.

~ Author unknown

## TCF Sibling Zoom Meetings



- ⇒ SIB Suicide Support—Meets 4th Monday of the month at 9:00 pm ET
- ⇒ Meeting with Jordan—Meets Tuesdays at 7:00 pm ET
- ⇒ Grief Book Club—Meets 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm ET
- ⇒ Write Your Soul—Meets 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm ET
- ⇒ Meeting with Jason—Meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm ET
- ⇒ LGBTQ+ Sibs Meeting—Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 9:30 pm ET
- ⇒ Canada Sibling Sharing Circle—Meets 2nd Saturday of the month at 1:00 pm ET
- ⇒ SIBS in Relationships and Partners—Meets 2nd Sunday of the month at 7:00 pm ET

To sign up for TCF SIBS newsletter, or read about the groups, visit [siblingisland.com](http://siblingisland.com) or scan the QR code.

*Sibling relationships  
outlast marriages,  
survive the death of  
parents, resurface after  
quarrels that will sink  
any friendship.  
Their absence is  
unsurmountable.”*

*~ Pinterest, author unknown*

Please refer to the National  
Compassionate Friends  
website:  
[compassionatefriends.org](http://compassionatefriends.org)

### **THIS IS A LISTING OF SEVERAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE NATIONAL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

*Please visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) for links to the following support groups*

#### **24/7 ONLINE SUPPORT**

The Compassionate Friends offers “virtual chapters” through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends; friends who understand the emotions you’re experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. Several days & times available.

**FirstTime Chatter Orientation ~ Parents/Grandparents/Siblings ~ Loss to Substance Related Causes Bereaved More Than Three Years ~ No Surviving Children ~ Pregnancy/Infant Loss ~ Suicide Loss**

#### **PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS**

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. If you are waiting approval, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

Loss to COVID-19 & Other Infectious Diseases ∞ Loss of a Stepchild ∞ Loss of a Grandchild ∞ Sibs (for bereaved siblings) ∞ Bereaved LGBTQ Parents with Loss of a Child ∞ Loss of a LGBTQ+ Child ∞ Multiple Losses ∞ Men in Grief ∞ Daughterless Mothers ∞ Sudden Death ∞ Loss to Substance Related Causes ∞ Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes ∞ Loss to Suicide ∞ Loss to Homicide ∞ Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver ∞ Loss to Cancer ∞ Loss of a Child with Special Needs ∞ Loss to Long-term Illness ∞ Loss After Withdrawing Life Support ∞ Loss to Mental Illness ∞ Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth ∞ Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild ∞ Infant & Toddler Loss ∞ Loss of a Child 4—12 Years Old ∞ Loss of a Child 13—19 Years Old ∞ Loss of an Adult Child ∞ Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children ∞ Finding Hope for Parents Through TCF SIBS ∞ Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren ∞ Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues ∞ Inclusion and Diversity ∞ Grieving with Faith and Hope ∞ Secular Support ∞ Reading Your Way Through Grief ∞ Crafty Corner ∞ Loss of a Child

## A Sibling Dies

For Don.

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over. How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother was 24; and I was 19 years old. Our family of five irretrievably shattered.

Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden. Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments. "Give me back my family—give me back my Christmas, you creep, Give me back your laughter," I want to shout at him. Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry?

Well, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor after all. One doesn't get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean.

When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it's a waltz, other years a tango. It doesn't seem to matter if it's two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died. I get out my dancing shoes. I don't go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me.

Some years I announce—around November 25th, "I'm over this." I act accordingly. I shop for Christmas Cards and don't go near my dancing shoes. It doesn't matter. They find me.

It's not like I didn't have therapy. I've had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, creampuff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy . . . Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere.

Seriously, losing a sibling is heart-wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write. Other than to therapists, I've spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself?

I adored my brother Don—he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother's energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part anger.

We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil's lane, and my mother mourned my brother until the day she died. I'm sad to say that we never had Don's picture in our home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago, so much remained hidden. Self-healing groups were non-existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving.

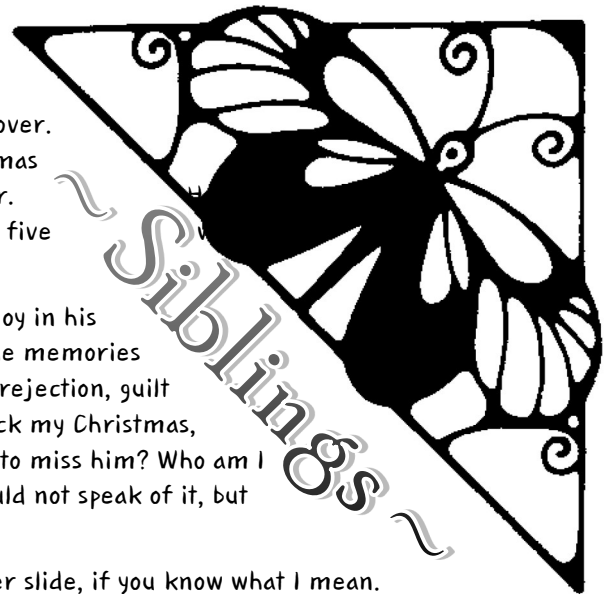
I couldn't save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn't dead, I'd sure like to be. This is grief. And it does soften over time. It softens like water softens rock, in its flowing, gentle, rushing, mysterious way. It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep, knowing that love knits the bones of despair together, tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before. Knowing that the fires of your being burn the cross of despair. Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure and can take it and transform the pain into joy.

Joy for having known this person, for a day or ten years or two months. Joy for having the courage to be. For knowing yourself in many garments. For taking a risk to love anyone again: a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself.

The broken heart opens and mends itself. In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening.

Joy seeps into me. After all, I'm entitled. I'm a survivor.

... © L. Nicole Dean, Lovingly lifted from TCF/Marin County & San Francisco Chapters





**JANUARY—FEBRUARY—MARCH  
2025**



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