



JANUARY—FEBRUARY—MARCH 2026



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

"A Nonprofit Self-Help Organization for Families Who Have Experienced the Death of a Child"

6705 SW 15th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97219 ~ (503) 307-8450 ~ [www.portlandtcf.org](http://www.portlandtcf.org)

*There is love in our pain ... Memories in our grief ... Hope in our sharing.*

*~ Dallas TCF*

## THE NEW YEAR

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make & break, let's make some this year & really try to keep them.

1. Let's not try to imagine the future—take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone, and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations—of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it; don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It will come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type vitamins; rest even if you don't sleep; and do moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring for the needs of others, you are starting to come out of your shell—a very healthy sign.

I know following these won't be easy, but what has been? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

*~ Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA*



**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**

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(503) 307-8450  
[linerharrington@gmail.com](mailto:linerharrington@gmail.com)

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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.

### THE MUSIC BOX

#### I DID NOT WALK ALONE

By Alan Pedersen

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVYYd9lczGQ&list=OLAK5uy\\_lbKfyt28-eP9hhQl8\\_N0SXyUwaNkb7TAk&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVYYd9lczGQ&list=OLAK5uy_lbKfyt28-eP9hhQl8_N0SXyUwaNkb7TAk&index=6)

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

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



### ~ CALENDAR ~

Jan. 1—New Year's Day  
Jan. 3—Portland TCF in-person meeting  
Jan. 19—Martin Luther King Day  
Feb. 7—Portland TCF in-person meeting  
Feb. 14—Valentine's Day  
Feb. 16—President's Day  
Mar. 7—Portland TCF in-person meeting  
Mar. 8—Daylight Savings Time starts  
Mar. 17—St. Patrick's Day  
Mar. 20—Spring Equinox



Future TCF meetings:

April 4th, May 2nd, June 6th, 2026

Please visit our newly designed website: [portlandtcf.org](http://portlandtcf.org)

### 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

Phone contact Ellen White (503) 502-7767

#### EUGENE/SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER #2571

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

*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.





E-Motion Inc. is a nonprofit founded by a bereaved mom and committed to ensuring no one grieves alone. Movement Communities are movement-based grief groups created by and for grievers.

E-Motion's core program is the Movement Community, an 8-week, movement-based (running, walking, hiking, etc.) grief experience. These groups are peer-led and created by and for grievers. At the heart of our work is the belief that movement and community can help people feel less alone after the life-disrupting loss of a person.

**We are hoping to offer a Movement Community in Portland this spring** and are currently looking for facilitators (or co-facilitators). We provide full training, ongoing support, and all materials. We see this as an optional supplement for those who feel drawn to movement as part of their grief process, not as a replacement for any existing programs or groups. For more information:

<https://www.emotion-mc.org/movement-community-model>  
<https://www.emotion-mc.org/facilitators>

Grief is like a snowflake...  
sometimes it comes one flake  
at a time, other times,  
it comes like a blizzard.  
It melts away, but it always  
comes back. Just as each  
snowflake is unique,  
each person experiences grief  
in their own unique way.

~ Author unknown

When her son died she was 92.  
Her son was 64. "He was my baby"  
she cried. The pain of child loss  
is not confined by age

~ Grief to Glorious Unfolding

#### NEW YEAR'S WISH

I wish you gentle days and quiet nights.  
I wish you memories to keep you strong.  
I wish you time to smile and time for a song...  
And then I wish you friends to give you love,  
When you are hurt and lost and life is blind.  
I wish you friends and love and peace of mind.

~ Sascha Wagner, TCF, Central Iowa Chapter

There will be days when your grief is deep and consuming,  
dark and lonely. I hope you find refuge in supportive friends,  
family, and counselors on the days when you most need  
someone to sit beside you in that darkness.

There will be days when your grief is a bit more subtle and  
silent, content with buzzing in the background instead of  
being center stage. I hope you don't feel guilty for the days  
when this allows you to feel joy or hope.

These days are so deeply important as you move forward  
at your own pace.

There will be days when your grief changes on a dime,  
demanding different things from you moment to moment,  
giving you emotional whiplash as you try and keep up. I hope  
you are gentle with yourself on these days. Your heart is look-  
ing for ways to process a love that has changed due to loss  
(a love that is still present, but in a different way).

That is a lot of work on a weary soul.

There will be days when your grief softens enough to allow  
your mind to wander in memories, to rejoice in remembering,  
to allow the light to trickle in to the most painful spaces. And  
on those days, I hope you let the comfort surround you like a  
warm sweater. I hope you let the light in  
and feel it surrounding you.

Because grief will bring about many different kinds of days.  
may we take them one day at a time, one moment at a time,  
and make room for the tension that it brings.

~ Liz Newman, as printed in the TCF Cape Fear Chapter newsletter.



#### 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...*

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**“Grief is the loudest silence I’ve ever heard.”** ~ *Author Unknown*

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### **A Dozen Roses**

If I had a dozen roses, I know just what I'd do. I'd give each one a name that reminded me of you. The first rose I'd name "sunshine" cause you brighten every day. The second would be "beauty", the kind that never goes away. The third rose would be priceless, like those hugs you gave to me. I'd name the fourth one "silly", oh how funny you could be. Rose five, of course, is patience, something you have helped me find. The sixth rose I'd call "memories", the precious gift you left behind. The seventh & the eighth rose would for sure be "faith" and "grace". Nine would be "unique" because no one can take your place. The tenth rose, well, that's easy; I'd simply name it "love". Eleven, I'd call "angel" I know you're watching from above. I'd think about that twelfth rose, & I'd really take my time. After all these roses are for you, my Valentine. I'm sending them to heaven in every color that I know. So number twelve I'll name "forever", that's how long I will love you so.



*~ Alan Pedersen*



## Love Notes

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 rent, brochures, outreach, special events, etc.

*Please complete the form on the back page with your love note & 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, 2026.**

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*Missing you*

## The Winter of the Soul

The season of winter does have its own beauty, especially if you search for it, but it also parallels grief in many ways. There is a stillness, almost a silence, that echoes the silence of a voice no longer heard. The quiet of grief can be deeply painful, prompting some among us to surround ourselves with noise. Additionally winter brings a loss of color. The once brilliant shades of Autumn fade as we enter into the season of whites and grays. It feels strikingly familiar to the loss of brightness and vibrancy in our lives when our child has died. And with the change of color comes a change of temperature. The days take on a chill, sometimes feeling like the cold in ones bones that can't seem to find warmth. So too it is with our souls. I think of the bear who hibernates in winter. It's as if he is in survival mode, enduring isolation and the lack of food and warmth. In these seasons hope must be clung to, and perhaps faith. Seasons are temporary, and though the winter landscape appears lifeless, we must remember that life is still present beneath the surface. (Isn't this like our grief, when others assume we are or should be "over it". Grief continues quietly, invisibly, just under the surface). May hope fuel us forward as we realize that just like the dead branches, life is not completely gone. Though we cannot see it, there is a quiet growth and new buds will eventually emerge. In this current season be kind to yourself. Trust that process of enduring can produce something beautiful.

With you in this winter season and wishing you comfort for your soul.

*Michelle Thomason, in memory of Michael, TCF, Portland OR*

**Hold on to the love, not the loss.**

*~ Eva Longoria*



So, we use our influence as best we can, and our knowledge and whatever power is available, and sometimes that's enough. And, sometimes it's not.

The feeling of everything being surreal that comes after the funeral, when everyone returns to their normal life, and we no longer have a normal life, marks the start of a new way of living in this world. We are part of it, and often feel apart from it. The challenge is to expand—in honor of those we lost, so that their legacy in our lives is a good one.

~ Lynette Danylchuk, Lovingly lifted from TCF Newsletter



## *Remember when...*

### **Remember when:**

- ♥ you cried at the mention of her name
- ♥ you could not bear to look at her picture
- ♥ watching home movies of you is too heart-wrenching to even consider
- ♥ everything you saw reminded you of her...and it hurt so badly
- ♥ you dreaded going to sleep for fear of dreaming of her
- ♥ you dreaded waking up
- ♥ you dreaded ——life
- ♥ you wanted to go where she was

### **How about now?**

- ♥ you can talk about her without crying—you love to meet anyone who remembers her
- ♥ you love to hear them say her name
- ♥ you can laugh at the funny things she said
- ♥ you have picture albums of her, and you love to share them
- ♥ you love watching those movies (they are tears of joy)
- ♥ you love to dream of her
- ♥ you pray to dream of her
- ♥ you even went through her hope chest—& lived to tell about it

There is no time limit on grief. You have your way, and I have mine. I can truly say after all these years, I am better. And I feel confident in telling you, "You will get better, too." My best advice as a "seasoned griever": Don't try to do it alone. Let other bereaved parents help you. It helps you, and it helps them. You will find unbelievable compassion among those who have been through what you are going through. They can help, and in time, so can you.

Cherish the days between "remember when" and "how about now." Make a list similar to mine. You have come much further than you think. God bless you.

~ Sam Smith, TCF, Tyler, TX

**Time passes. MEMORIES fade. Feelings change.**

**PEOPLE leave. But HEARTS never forget.**

## **OTHER SUPPORT GROUPS**

### **SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT**

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  
Annie (503) 752-8024  
Marc (503) 880-4467  
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

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

### **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

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

### **THE DOUGY CENTER**

Ph. 503-775-5683, 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 [linerrharrington@gmail.com](mailto:linerrharrington@gmail.com)

### As Long As I Can

*As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us. As long as I can, I will laugh with the birds, I will sing with the flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.  
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you would want me to live, as long as I can.*

~ Sascha Wagner (Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3; years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide at age 21.)

## \* DECISIONS \*

What to do with the belongings of a deceased child is one of the most traumatic decisions a parent will have to make. To some the thought of disposing of even the most minute possessions is unacceptable. It is almost as if their touching of an object imbues it with the spirit of the deceased. In the extreme, even the rearranging of the child's room cannot be tolerated. Carried to a conclusion, the behavior leads to the creation of a shrine to the deceased.

Other parents cannot bear to be reminded of a child's death and they remove and dispose of his or her clothing and other possessions as soon as possible. Or the room is refurbished or rearranged in an effort to further eliminate unpleasant reminders. Other parents find their comfort in taking a position somewhere in between these extremes.

As with most emotional decisions, there is no right or wrong way to handle this. However, based upon our experience, I believe it would be wise to withhold any irrevocable decisions for at least three months or even longer. The mind already overloaded with turmoil and trauma of the loss of a child, is just not capable of making any decision on such a sensitive issue.

When our son Drew died, we kept the door to his room closed for almost a year, entering it only

for an occasional cleaning, or to remove or store some items. The pain of seeing his clothes and possessions and knowing he would never be able to use them again was insurmountable, and prevented us from making any decisions on what to do. When the pain subsided enough to plan a course of action, we decided that we did not want to maintain a shrine.

We decided to open the room and make it available for use. We removed and gave away some of his clothing and things for which we had the least emotional attachment. We packed and consolidated other things that we felt we might want to use or give away later. We cleaned and painted the room hung new curtains and bought a high riser that would accommodate guests for an overnight stay. We hung his button collections and some of his posters on the walls.

Probably the most important decision we made was to keep the door to the room open. When we look in the room now, and see Drew's things, it reminds us of how vibrant and alive he was, and although we still miss him terribly, somehow his things provide an important link between us.

Just recently, almost 11 years later, we gave away most of the things we had so lovingly saved so long ago. Our handling of the

situation best satisfied our needs. You may need more or less time, but it must be enough to think things out clearly.

~ Howard & Rose Muller, TCF, Burlington, NJ



*A few thoughts from the newsletter editor, Jeff, for the TCF Wilmington NC chapter:*

*Number one and very important...don't let anyone talk you into or force you into doing something you don't want to do or are not ready to do.*

*Talk with ALL family members (spouse & remaining children) to decide what you want to do with "the room", belongings, pictures, etc. if you are willing to part with things. As a family decide what these things are and what to do with them. A mistake we made was we told our daughter: "if there are things you want, be sure to take them." What she heard was, "If there are a few things you want, take them."*

*If possible, if one family member is not ready to do something...put off doing it. One or some may not be ready to make major changes. If possible wait until everyone is ready. We as a family decided when we were ready to take down our son's bed. It was some time later before we did other changes. It was years before we took down his seashell collection. Regardless of when you do it, it will be hard. Yet, you will know when the time is right.*

*Be willing to compromise. You may want his or her picture in every room. Another family member may find that hard to handle. Talk with each other about your feelings.*

**The key is communication.**



### *Strength Born of Pain*

I would say to those who mourn ... look upon each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Do not suppress it. Never attempt to hide grief from yourself. Little by little, just as the deaf, the blind, the handicapped, develop with time an extra sense to balance disability, so the bereaved will find new strength, new vision, born of the very pain and loneliness which seem, at first, impossible to master.

~ Daphne du Maujier, from "The Rebecca Notebook"



## 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 & 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.



### 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 **\$45.01** during the 3rd quarter!

2025 YTD = \$126.69

~ Thank you for participating  
& enjoy shopping! ~

## HIS SHOES SPEAK TO ME

His shoes still sit on the closet floor,  
Tho' he's been gone a decade & more.

Some days my memories are a bit hazy,  
It is a nightmare or am I going crazy?

I go to the closet and there are his shoes,  
It's easy to see they really were used.

The prints of his feet are still inside,  
He really did live but too soon he died.

Reality returns, with his shoes on the floor,  
How long will they be there?

Till I need them no more.

His bronzed baby shoes sit on a shelf,  
They help me to meet a need in myself.

These baby shoes speak of a life just beginning,  
The work shoes tell about life & it's ending.

With the passing of years, some peace I've attained.  
But the happiness I once knew cannot be regained.

Yet there's much about life I still want to live.  
To my family and others, I still yearn to give.

I've cried many tears, felt the quilt and the pain.  
My grief has diminished and I can laugh once again.

~ Ora S. Lewis,  
TCF, Orange County, CA

## Valentine Message

I send this message to my child  
Who no longer walks this plane,  
A message filled with love  
Yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat  
When I ponder your early death  
As I think of times we'll never share  
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love  
And for those who receive love, too  
For a parent the perfect love in life  
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my child,  
With a sadness that is unspoken  
As I mark another Valentine's Day  
With a heart that is forever broken.

~ Annette Mennen Balwin, TCF, Katy, TX

Sometimes, all you can do is lie  
in bed & hope to fall asleep  
before you fall apart.

~ William C. Hannan



# POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH

The shock and the pain blew me out of my world. All of the necessary activity of those days kept me connected with others, those who knew and cared. Then, all of the rituals of death were over. Everyone went home. Their lives returned to normal.

Normal no longer existed for me. The regular world felt surreal. Everyone was behaving like they did before, and I was no longer a part of that world.

Surreal—real but not felt as real any more. In most cultures, people are assumed to be in deep grief for the first year after a death, and then they emerge from that state, and slowly reintegrate into their community. Space is given for grief. Grief is honored and respected.

In this Western culture, grief gets immediate attention and then it's somehow supposed to be something to move past. People do not move past their past traumas. They grow larger emotionally to be able to know, feel, and remember their traumas while also becoming more capable of being present in their current lives.

This is called Post-traumatic Growth. When people are allowed the space they need to grieve, when their grief is not curtailed, they will learn to hold both the painful reality of loss along with the love they still feel for the person who died. From there, their lives expand to hold both past, present, and future. Their emotional world deepens, compassion and wisdom grow.

I am a psychologist specializing in working with people who have been severely traumatized. What I already knew about trauma helped me enormously when my son died. I let myself grieve deeply. I didn't try to 'move on'. I knew our culture's response to death was inadequate, superficial, and, at times, harmful to the grieving person. I keened, wailed, sobbed, and cried, the intensity coming down over time, naturally. Meanwhile, I knew I needed to integrate this loss into my life and future, so that my son's legacy in my life would be a good one, in honor of him. Deep grief makes those around us very uncomfortable. They want to fix it, make it better, and that actually makes it harder because it tells the grieving person that they're 'too much'. So, the grieving person has a choice—grieve alone, or stifle the

grief and maintain contact with others. This is a horrible dilemma, because when people are traumatized, they need the presence of others. They need good, warm, comforting contact with people who know and care about them. Human contact helps people heal. When there is no one around, the grieving person suffers in isolation, or becomes numb to their own pain in order to stay in connection. Sadness slides into depression. Friendships become distant. Some people may feel the world isn't real anymore, or the world is real and they're not. Those are dissociative mechanisms—derealization and depersonalization. They are like circuit breakers in the nervous system, lowering the 'charge' by disconnecting the emotions.

Many people experiencing a deep grief are also very familiar with the symptoms of PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—intrusive thoughts, avoidance, numbing out, nightmares, problems with sleep. It would be helpful to take the 'Disorder' off of the diagnosis. It's Post Traumatic Stress. It's a human response to trauma. It would be inhuman to not have a response to this kind of huge trauma. The responses are normal. The problem is find ways to help calm the nervous system and integrate the all-too-intolerant emotions of loss, anguish, and try to build a life without someone who is now gone.

One of the common traps for people who have lost others is the "I should have" trap. "I should have known." "I should have been able to stop this." This is a normal first level thought process. It happens commonly right after the death. For a short time it may be helpful, backtracking in the mind to find clues that may have been missed, or possible solutions that weren't tried, etc. That's a way the mind tries to learn what can be learned to prevent this from happening again. It normally goes away with time. However, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it gets stuck. When that happens, it's usually a wish in disguise. "I wish I had known." "I wish I had been able to stop this" turn into an assumption of omnipotence. None of us has that kind of all-knowing and all-powerful control. We are all simply human, doing our best with what we do know and actually can do, and that's limited. We do have influence over others, sometimes a lot. However, none of us has control over others. We just don't.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## TCF Sibling Zoom Meetings



- ⇒ SIB Suicide Support—Meets 4th Monday of the month at 9 pm ET
- ⇒ Meeting with Jordan—Meets Tuesdays at 7 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 pm ET
- ⇒ Meeting with Jason—Meets Thursdays at 7 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 pm ET
- ⇒ SIBS in Relationships and Partners—Meets 2nd Sunday of the month at 7 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.

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



## **Strength Born of Pain**

I would say to those who mourn . . . Look upon each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Do not suppress it. Never attempt to hide grief from yourself. Little by little, just as the deaf, the blind, the handicapped, develop with time an extra sense to balance disability, so the bereaved will find new strength, new vision, born of the very pain and loneliness which seem, at first, impossible to master.

~ Daphne du Maurier, from "The Rebecca Notebook"

That was & still is the great disaster of my life—that lovely, lovely little boy. There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child. Things never get back to the way they were before

~ President Dwight D. Eisenhower

*Who then can so softly bind up the wound of another as he who has felt the same wound himself?*

~ Thomas Jefferson

## **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.

First-Time 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

## Now What Happens . . .

What happens to the children when a brother or sister dies? In some ways it is a very different experience from that which parents go through, while in others it is very much the same. Part of the reason for the difference is that the child who has died has a unique relationship with each family member. Part of the reason for the similarity is that all have suffered a loss.

One of the strongest desires expressed by siblings is that they are much more likely to want to return to a normal routine. They want to return to school fairly quickly and to go out with their friends. They want their parents to stop crying, not because they don't care, but because they do care and want to see the hurt stop. Just because a child wants to go to a movie doesn't mean he isn't grieving. I think that children are much less exposed to socially "appropriate" behavior after someone has died and may do things that do not fit into an appropriate" role.

Another strong feeling I see is that of guilt. As much as parents know about their children, there are some things they will never know. A child's private thoughts or an exchange between children may never come to the parents' attention. The source of a child's guilt is frequently the result of an argument, a hastily shouted "drop dead," or a similar fleeting thought. These incidents come back to haunt children, as though one such incident had something to do with the death.

There are a few more concerns that may develop. One is how to take over for the child who died—for example, the household chores that were always done by him or her but that now have to be done by someone else. Related to this concern is a situation in which a child always shared a particular activity simply because the sibling did it too. After the death, the surviving sibling

may feel compelled to continue the activity because to give up would be to take away a reminder of the dead sibling. Another concern is that whatever happened to the brother or sister may happen to the survivor. This is particularly acute if the sibling who died was older. As the child approaches the age of the sibling when he or she died, a feeling of anxiety may develop. Many children realize this fear to be groundless but find themselves wondering if they will survive. Consequently, birthdays are often occasions with unexpressed conflicts. Children also share some of their parents' feeling that no one else really knows what they're going through. They also share the unanswerable questions: "If I could have ..." and "What if ..." A child's life is changed forever when a brother or sister dies. If I could advise parents, it would be to say, "Children do not grieve the same way as parents do because of different relationships.

Keeping these differences in perspective will help you understand why children sometimes do the things they do. It helps to consider a child's point of view when you are hurting so much. During such an emotionally draining time as grieving, don't leave anything to chance; don't assume anything. Making sure you and your children are aware of each other's feelings will mean less confusion, less tension, more sharing, and more growing together as a family."

~ Julie Peterson, TCF, Pawtucket, RI

## HOW DOES IT FEEL? WHAT'S IT LIKE?

It's like:

A hole with no bottom  
A hill with no top  
A road with no bend  
A night with no end  
It's as if nothing happened  
It's as if it's not true  
It's as if it's a dream  
Yet a numbness seeps through  
There's a feeling of emptiness  
A gap to be filled  
There's a feeling of loneliness  
That can't be stilled.  
They say time's a healer  
How long will it take?  
I can't see it ending  
It's a permanent ache  
Life has no meaning  
Yet it has to go on  
I find it so hard  
To feel so alone  
No one will ever know  
The depth of my sorrow  
I just have to trust  
There'll be a better tomorrow  
May God give me the strength  
To keep on going  
To get through this pain  
To feel real again  
I'll never get over it  
Of that I am sure  
But I'll give time a chance  
And hope for a cure  
Time's without end  
Love is too  
I'll never forget you  
I will always miss you.

*By sister Stella Kelly, after the death of her brother.  
Submitted by Pat King, TCF, Seattle WA*



## MEMORIES

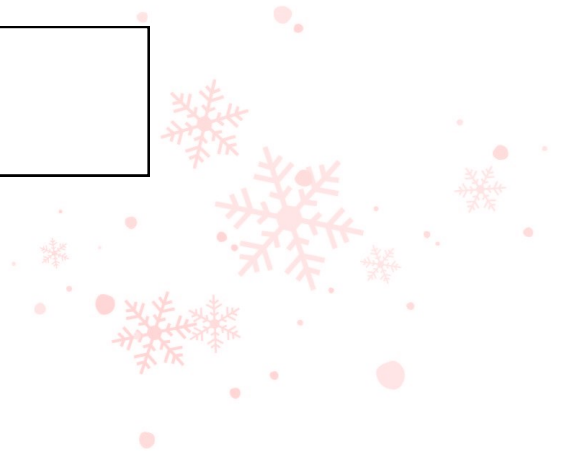
My little brother who loved winter and icicles that are clear,  
my heart aches and I cry because you are now gone forever.  
How did time go by so fast with all the memories we made?  
They are everlasting; but without you the world is lonely.  
And there are no new memories.

*Renee Miller, TCF, Lake Jackson, TX*

The Compassionate Friends  
Portland Oregon Chapter  
6705 SW 15th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97219



**JANUARY—FEBRUARY—MARCH  
2026**



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