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



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies  
Oscoda Area Chapter

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
4087 Forest Rd.  
Oscoda, MI 48750  
989-254-5888  
Email: [tcfoscoda@gmail.com](mailto:tcfoscoda@gmail.com)

## Issue 57 January/February 2021

### Monthly Meetings

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the Month

Sacred Heart Church Family Center

5300 N US 23

Oscoda, MI 48750

Meeting time 7:00 pm

**If Oscoda Area Schools is closed due to weather our meeting is canceled.**

**January 12<sup>th</sup>**

Zoom or Face to Face depending on

Health Department Guidelines

**WE WILL EMAIL YOU DETAILS**

**February 9**

Zoom or Face to Face depending on

Health Department Guidelines

**WE WILL EMAIL YOU DETAILS**



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### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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The Compassionate Friends Oscoda

Area

Co-Leaders: Fran Ommani  
Charlie Negro

Secretary: Charlie Negro

Treasurer: Jane Negro

Outreach: Tracey Toppa

Director: Vicky Weichel

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### REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Gail Lafferty 734-748-2514

Kathy Rambo 734-306-3930

### National Organization

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### The New Year: A Time of Hope



Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

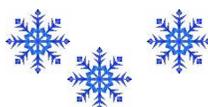
Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF, Katy, TX  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen





## A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon  
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

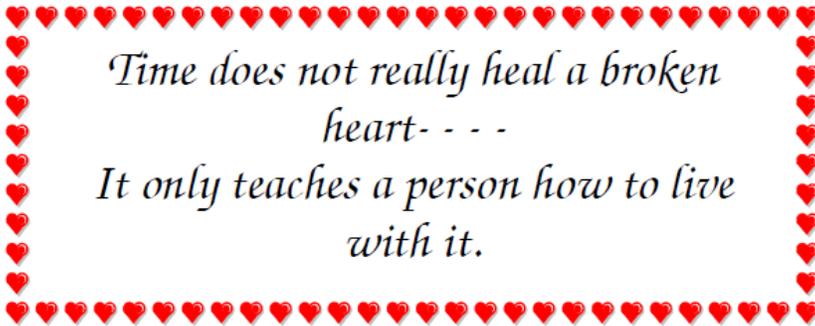


Let There Be Light?  
The new year comes  
When all the world is ready  
For changes, resolutions--  
Great beginnings.

For us, to whom  
That stroke of midnight means  
A missing child remembered,  
For us the new year comes  
More like another darkness.

But let us not forget  
That this may be the year  
When love and hope and courage  
Find each other somewhere  
In the darkness  
    To lift their voices and speak;  
    Let there be light.

~Sasha Wagner  
From: *For You From Sascha*



*Time does not really heal a broken  
heart- - -  
It only teaches a person how to live  
with it.*

## 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.

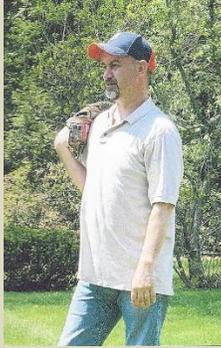
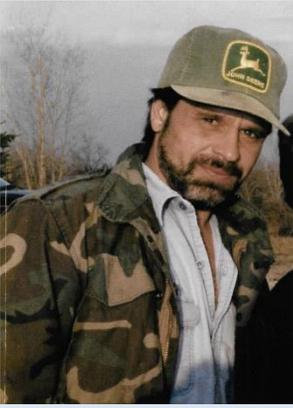
Valentine's Day is for those who love  
And for those who receive love, too  
For a parent the perfect love in life  
Is the love I've given you.  
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,  
With a sadness that is unspoken  
As I mark another Valentine's Day  
With a heart that is forever broken.

~Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd  
TCF Katy, TX





"Forever In Our Hearts"  
*Our Children/Siblings Remembered*


Birthdays 		Remembrances 	
<p>January Derek Toppa</p> 	<p>February Ashley Scott</p> 	<p>January Tony Calabrese</p> 	<p>January Katie Kirkpatrick</p> 
<p>February Jerry Brunk</p> 		<p>January Tommy Draper</p> 	<p>January Audree Ball</p> 
 <p style="text-align: center; color: red; font-weight: bold;">                     The truth is,                      that hole in your heart                      shaped exactly the size and shape of                      our child  <b>WILL NEVER,                      EVER GO AWAY.</b>                      But the <b>LOVE</b> that oozes from it has  <b>more power to change the world</b>                      than anything                      I've ever known.                      By Angela Miller  <a href="https://abedformyheart.com/" style="color: blue; text-decoration: underline;">https://abedformyheart.com/</a> </p>		<p>February Casey May Whitney</p> 	

## 7 Grief Strategies For the New Year----Or For Anytime

The old saying is true: “If there is an elephant in the room, introduce him.” No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. And when it comes to facing the pain of our grief with both eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we’ve had a loss recently, the new year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest about the pain of our grief, and resolve in the months to come to be proactive and do the necessary grief work to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

#1. Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter. Imagine you had a friend who you cared deeply for, and imagine that friend had just experienced the death of someone they love very much. You would want to help them, you’d want to comfort then and encourage them. Well, now substitute yourself for that friend. You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged too, so write yourself a letter saying to yourself the same sorts of things you would say to a good friend. Then, read the letter aloud to yourself once or twice, put it away for a few days or a week, then read it again. Do this for a few months, then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Avoid thinking that you are so ‘strong’ or ‘solid’ that you don’t need help and tender compassion. That is a misunderstanding of strength and personal fortitude. Feeling intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness, to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

#2. Buy a big calendar, and use it. One of the main problems bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. Grieving people also sometimes get pressured by other well-meaning people into doing activities they really don’t want to do. An ‘appointment calendar’ can solve both of those problems. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. So as the new year begins, grab your pen, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments. Appointments with whom? Well, most importantly, with yourself. Without isolating yourself or taking yourself out of social circulation, you can pen in some ‘self-time’ and thereby reserve a lot of valuable quiet time. Now this quiet time does not have to be momentous. Just by reserving time for yourself, you will give yourself time to breathe and reflect as the new year, with all of its demands and changes, unfolds. Appointments like “movie with me,” or “reading with me,” “journaling with me” or “recreation with me” make it possible for you to always be able to tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, “Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment .” This way you can say “No” in a socially graceful way, and if you want to accept someone’s invitation, you can always break an appointment with yourself, no one will be upset about that.

#3. Move your body, move your mind. As you slowly adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it’s vital you get outside and move your body. Notice, I didn’t say “exercise,” since for some people that may sound daunting (What do I wear? What gym do I join? What are the elements of my workout?). No need to make it a big undertaking, you’re not training for the Olympics. So pick short, achieve-able goals, like a very short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park, etc. Keep these jaunts short, as this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief. This is a great habit to form in the new year.

#4. Realize that you do not need to “understand” your grief, or fit your loss into your religious or philosophical worldview right now. When I coached Little League, I established the One Minute Rule. It was this: If I, or any player, gets hit by a batted or thrown baseball, whatever the person hit by the ball says for the first minute after being hit, is OK. Screaming and accusations were common after being hit by the baseball, but everyone knew that you got a free pass for a minute. And they knew that after a minute the hit person had to be ready to move on. Well, bereaved people get a lot longer than a minute, or a month, or a year, to integrate their experience into the rest of their outlook on life. So don’t feel any anxiety about fully grasping what has happened to you. Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to cognitively address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued.

#5. Decide that in the new year, you will, in some new way, begin to focus a bit more on others, as a part of your loved one's legacy. This is a valuable change you can make in your life. We all need to get out of our skin for a while, we need to get out of ourselves and just focus on other people, and their problems. Sometimes this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. So plan on doing that this new year, and as you do it, you will no doubt talk with new people, and when the opportunity presents itself tell them about your loved one who has died. You don't have to tell your loved one's life story or anything like that, just mention them in passing, or say "My wife used to like to do this (activity)." You may feel a bit more comfortable talking about your loved one with people who didn't know him or her, and it is very valuable to begin to talk out loud—in the past tense---about your loved one. It may be shocking for you to hear yourself speak out loud in the past tense about someone so close to you, but it will help you integrate their death into your life. Where do you go to be around other people? Start with local civic groups, like the Boys and Girls Club, the Historical Society, the Kiwanis or Elks, the Library, Big Brothers and Sisters, a Habitat for Humanity project or a Rescue Mission.

#6. Listen to the Music. A recent study I saw asserted that sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood, report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing. Throughout human religious and cultural history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Sit down with a pen and paper, and make a short list of some songs of different types that you have always liked. Then go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for them and listen to them, or go to the library and listen to them, or order them online (if you are not accustomed to doing that on a computer, ask a friend to do it for you). Just get the music playing so you can listen to it. And as you do, let your mind take you where it will---daydream---and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed.

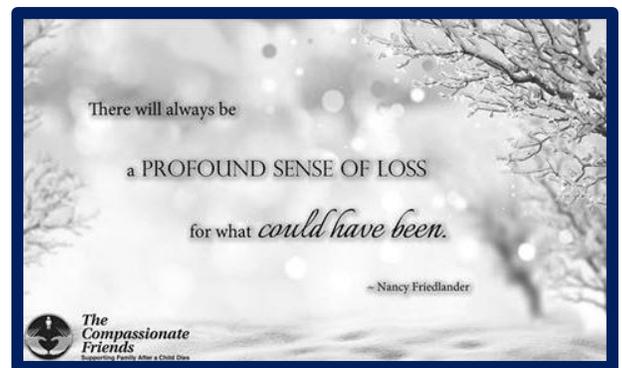
When I was a teenager I spent four hours every Saturday morning, from 8:30 a. m. to 12:30 p. m., helping Mr. Leffingwell clean his expansive yard. There were what seemed like hundreds of plants and bushes, in addition to several lawns he wanted pristine. It was a big undertaking, as he was a very particular man. I remember that his wife died one year. He took one Saturday off from yard work, and he was right back at it the next week---and I was with him. The first Saturday back, he opened up the sliding door to his backyard where we were working, and he turned up his stereo. He was playing a record by John Denver, and on it was the tribute ballad Annie's Song. When that song came on, he stopped trimming bushes, and just stood there, looking at his pool, and staring around the green yard. As John Denver sang "You fill up my senses, like a night in the forest..." Mr. Leffingwell stood still. When the song was over, he went back to work, and I remember he worked hard, with vigor, until I left at 12:30 p. m. That soulful song seemed like a tonic to him, it seemed to soothe his aching heart. Find the songs that are meaningful to you, and let them speak to you.

#7. Wishing you well. As the new year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the new year. Trouble imagining what that might be? It's probably the same as what you would wish for your loved one, had you been the one that died. So sit down at the computer, or put pen to paper, and make a list of five or seven or ten states of mind or attitudes or commodities that your loved one would want for you to attain as you move forward without them physically with you. For example, my mother would want me to look toward the future, and not be paralyzed by mourning. Or, my father would want me to be optimistic about what will happen to me this year, or my sister would want me to buy those expensive boots we used to talk about. And then, armed with your list, choose one of those dispositions or possessions and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months, and check off the outlook or object you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this new year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

So often, we think of grief or bereavement as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate, since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives. This is not to say that grief is a “problem” we can solve, or a “condition” we can hurry up and make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants and even helpful agents in our own emotional well-being. By deliberately and purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a new year and our new lives dawn.

<https://centering.org/grief-digest-articles>

Author Brad Stetson (Ph. D., University of Southern California)  
Website: [www.bradstetson.com](http://www.bradstetson.com)



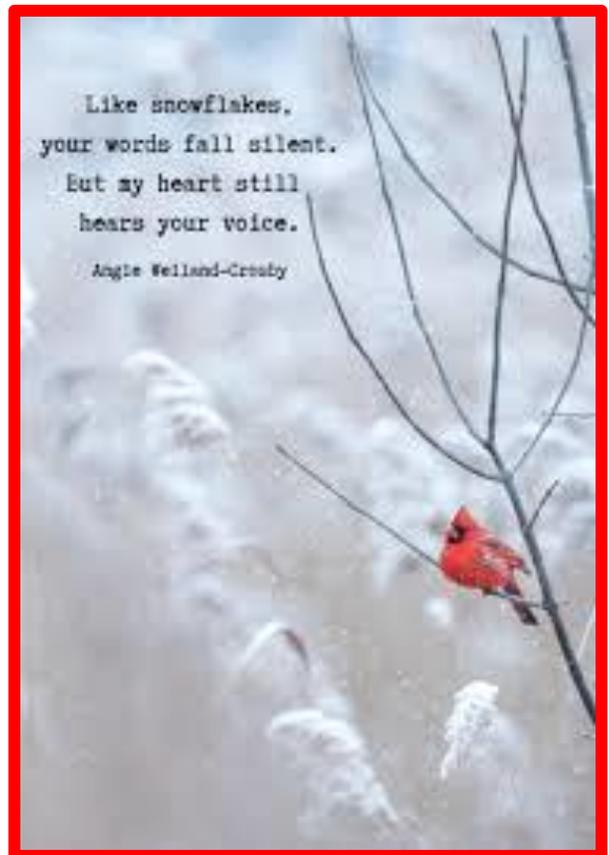
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*Let 2021 be your year of hope...*