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

The Compassionate Friends of  
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**ISSUE 50 SPECIAL EDITION MAY 2020**

### *A Note from our Chapter Steering Committee.....*

We are planning a virtual meeting for May 12, 7 pm. We still won't be able to meet in person due to the Coronavirus restrictions, so we thought we would check in with you through a virtual meeting. Please RSVP by May 11<sup>th</sup> and we will email you the Zoom meeting link.

We also have not set a date at this time for the Butterfly Release as we don't know just what to expect as things are reopened. We hope to set a new date as soon as restrictions are lifted! During these trying times please know that TCF is here for you! If you need some support, please contact



*The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area*

*Our phone number--989-254-5888*

*Our email—[tcfoscodagmail.com](mailto:tcfoscodagmail.com)*

*Our Chapter Website [www.tcf-oscoda.org](http://www.tcf-oscoda.org)*

*TCF National Website [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)*

Please take good care of yourselves.....we want you all to be safe. We are all in this together. Remember: We need not walk alone, we are the Compassionate Friends.

### **WE ARE NOT ALL IN THE SAME BOAT**

A year ago we had an article in the Newsletter and an activity where we discussed "The Boat" as it pertains to grief. Here is a similar piece pertaining to what we are currently experiencing with the COVID Virus. The author of this is "unknown" Those of us who have experienced the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling can totally relate to this "storm."



I heard that we are all in the same boat, but it's not like that. We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat. Your ship could be shipwrecked and mine might not be. Or vice versa.

For some, quarantine is optimal. A moment of reflection, of re-connection, easy in flip flops, with a cocktail or coffee. For others, this is a desperate

financial & family crisis.

For some that live alone they're facing endless loneliness. While for others it is peace, rest & time with their mother, father, sons & daughters.

With the \$600 weekly increase in unemployment some are bringing in more money to their households than they were working. Others are working more hours for less money due to pay cuts or loss in sales.

Some families of 4 just received \$3400 from the stimulus while other families of 4 saw \$0.

Some were concerned about getting a certain candy for Easter while others were concerned if there would be enough bread, milk and eggs for the weekend.

Some want to go back to work because they don't qualify for unemployment and are running out of money. Others want to kill those who break the quarantine.

Some are home spending 2-3 hours/day helping their child with online schooling while others are spending 2-3 hours/day to educate their children on top of a 10-12 hour workday.

Some have experienced the near death of the virus, some have already lost someone from it and some are not sure if their loved ones are going to make it. Others don't believe this is a big deal.

### MONTHLY MEETING

*May 12 7 pm via Zoom  
To attend RSVP by May 11 for the  
Zoom meeting link.*

**If Oscoda Area Schools is closed  
due to weather our meeting is  
canceled—per Sacred Heart  
Policy**

### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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*The Compassionate Friends Oscoda*



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Some have faith in God and expect miracles during this 2020. Others say the worst is yet to come.

So, friends, we are not in the same boat. We are going through a time when our perceptions and needs are completely different.

Each of us will emerge, in our own way, from this storm. It is very important to see beyond what is seen at first glance. Not just looking, actually seeing.

We are all on different ships during this storm experiencing a very different journey.

~Unknown author



*Like Springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and anew from this cocoon of grief that has been spun around me. Help me face the harsh reality of sunshine and renewed life as my bones still creak from the winter of my grief. Life has dared to go on around me and, as I recover from the insult of life's continuance, I adjust my focus to include healing and growth as possibility in my future. Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief, but may I never forget it is the place where I grew my wings, becoming a new person because of my loss.*  
~ Janis Hiel

## **MINDFULNESS TIPS THAT INCREASE RESILIENCE**

**By Susan Miller, PhD, LPCS, Miller Counseling Services, PC, Lighted Path® Coaching & Art Studio**

This is from <https://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/2020-Spring>

I am sure you are hunkered down during this unique and challenging time! The COVID-19 virus is impacting us in so many ways. If you are like a lot of people, your environment has been uprooted and you are trying to get used to what is a normal day.

You are trying to figure out how to meet the challenges of family around while working, where to get the supplies that you (and everybody else) need, having to isolate from others, concerns about job security, and how to manage the stress of the uncertainty.

Uncertainty is hard. It can lead to feeling frozen! It causes the brain to go into overwhelm. Anxiety grows and we have a hard time being aware of what to do next. This is called “fear paralysis” and it is the feeling of being stuck in most big areas of our lives: our emotions, our bodies, our thoughts, and even our spiritual connection. If you are having a hard time with all of this uncertainty, then you are in good company. It is what trauma specialists call “a normal response to an abnormal event.” Whenever I tell my clients this, it is like a weight lifts off their shoulders and they feel lighter. There is something about knowing this fact that helps us not be so hard on ourselves during a crisis. We do not need to judge ourselves because we are not experiencing feeling “ok.” It is OK to not be OK.

So how do we move out of this stuck place or tolerate the uncertainty? Mindfulness is one simple strategy that can move us toward acceptance of our circumstances, becoming curious, then moving more easily toward problem solving. We can learn how to regulate our response to overwhelming situations with mindfulness.

In Russ Harris MD’s book: *ACT Made Simple: An Easy-to-Read Primer on Acceptance Commitment Therapy*, “Mindfulness means paying attention with flexibility, openness, and curiosity.” Three themes of Mindfulness are:

- a process of awareness of our experience in the moment instead of being consumed by our thoughts.
- having an open and curious attitude, even in the difficulty and pain, instead of avoiding.
- having flexible attention: the ability to attend to the many different aspects of our experience.

Harris says: “We can use mindfulness to connect with ourselves and appreciate the fullness of each moment. We can use it to improve our self-knowledge -- to learn more about how we feel and think and react. We can use it to connect deeply and intimately with the people we care about, including ourselves. And we can use it to consciously influence our own behavior and increase our range of responses to the world we live in. It is the art of living consciously -- a profound way to enhance psychological resilience and increase life satisfaction.”

*Editor's Note: This issue focuses on strategies to help us cope with the unprecedented times we are living through. I read recently that "mental hygiene is just as important as physical hygiene" as we learn to deal with stay at home orders and social distancing mandates. As I looked for articles that might help us with the anxiety, loneliness, fear and stress of our current situation, it was not lost on me that the advice in the following articles is the very same that we might receive to help us with our grief. Kathy Corrigan*

Resilience and satisfaction surely are things we could use an extra dose of right now, don't you think? Let's take a look at how we can use Mindfulness in our COVID-19 crisis to develop resilience.

#### Simple Mindfulness Strategies:

- Take a breather! Breathe (outside preferably!) in deeply, slow it down and be aware of how it feels to be able to simply breathe in and exhale. Put a bit of a smile on the edges of your mouth and notice the response in your emotions and body.
- When you notice yourself being anxious about the things going on in the world, take a pause and notice where you feel this in your body. Breathe in and out and see if you can shift the body response ever so slightly toward calm. When you do this, notice your emotions again and see if there is also a shift. You can reverse this as well.
- When you notice moments in your environment, whether with others or alone, notice if you are present. Allow yourself to be more present by connecting to your body and emotion. If you notice anxiety, see if you can pinpoint if it is your environment that is causing the anxiety or if it is mainly your own internal environment. Do the breathing exercise from above. Find one calming thing in your visual field that draws your attention and bring your awareness to your feelings in your emotions and your body. Use the breathing technique to shift any tension ever so slightly toward more relaxed.
- When you are moving about your home doing tasks, focus on the moment, what you are experiencing and see if you can be aware of something within that may need shifting. You will notice this in the form of sensations in the body.
- Take a mindful walk, noticing the beauty around you, and try to notice the joy that comes with moving your body outdoors.
- Hug your pet, consider fostering or adopting a pet. They are truly the best emotional support you can have right now, especially if you are unable to connect with other people in person.
- Do something fun. How do you feel emotionally and physically when you are in the moment?
- We can do these simple strategies at any time during our day. Small shifts make a huge difference in developing our resilience muscle! This can go far in this time of crisis.

#### **A SURPRISE ON MOTHER'S DAY**

**Veronica Douglas, 2005 - St. Louis, MO**

I have always loved butterflies, but ever since we lost our beautiful and only daughter Emily Anne, these lovely winged creatures have taken on a different meaning for me. (I know many of you share this very same thought.) I don't know if it is because I am more aware of my surroundings now, but many more of these fascinating beauties "fly in and out of my life"!

Our precious daughter, Emily, and her sweet boyfriend Dan were taken from us forever on October 6, 2002 in a car accident. Ever since then, I have had delightful monarch butterflies of all sizes follow me everywhere! I have seen them landing on my coneflowers in the garden, fly around the front porch (they were not out there at first) and even land right on the top of the lamppost Two years ago, my husband and I went to Key West and had a rental home with a swimming pool. After we had been swimming for a short time, a dazzling monarch butterfly started circling the pool.

The best butterfly story happened this past Mother's Day, 2005. Our family was having a double celebration (my nephew's birthday is around Mother's Day) at my brother's home. Our family is "picture-taking crazy". (I am so thankful for that!) So, when it was the Douglas family's turn to get their picture (my husband Dave, our son Josh, my nephew Chip and me) guess what landed right on my shoulder? You guessed it...a small monarch butterfly! And it stayed there until after the picture had been taken! I know Emily is with us all the time because she is a part of the universe now. I also know how much her family meant to her and how much she loved each one of us in her own special way...Thank you, darling daughter for my mother's day gift!!



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



**Birthdays**



**May**  
Katie Kirkpatrick



**Remembrances**



**May**  
Mark Negro



**May**  
Steve Valentine



**HOPE**  
is Not Cancelled

Hope is not canceled  
Love is not canceled  
Coping is not canceled  
Growth is not canceled  
Integrity is not canceled  
Learning is not canceled  
Gratitude is not canceled  
Kindness is not canceled  
Laughter is not canceled  
Connection is not canceled



During these unprecedented times, it's hard not to dwell on the fear and anxiety that surrounds us, especially, if we are already grieving the loss of a loved one. We are well aware that the worst can happen; we know that children can die; we know that siblings can die; we know the devastating pain and terror that can overcome us with that kind of loss.

But we also know that we have learned to live with that loss; we know that we are able to dig deep and come through the darkest of times; we know we are survivors and have discovered that joy and sadness can coexist. And we know that we have the stamina and resources to get through what lies ahead.

<https://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/2020-Spring>



Private Facebook Groups:

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>