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

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
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## Issue 63 January/February 2022

### 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 11<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm**  
**February 8<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm**

***You need not walk alone!***

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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

### *If I Could Just See Hope*

If I could just see hope. If I knew what to look for or how to act or feel. If only the pain would stop. But we cannot erase this pain; that is the price we pay for love. The pain of this darkness will always be with us. But it can change its intensity and its depth. It can change its color, but only with our efforts. No one can make this journey for us. We must travel this path ourselves, but perhaps we do not have to go alone.

So, come with me in search of hope. Perhaps somewhere within these words will be the flicker of light that you've been seeking. We are always in search of hope, in search of that magical moment when we REMEMBER FIRST THAT OUR LOVED ONE LIVED.

Hope isn't a place or thing. Hope is not the absence of pain or sadness. Hope is the possibility of renewed joy...it's the memory of love given and received. Hope is here, within the magic and the memories of your heart. Hope is us...you and me and the person next to you and across the room and down the street and in your dreams. WE ARE EACH OTHER'S HOPE.

~by Darcie Sims

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS was a bereaved parent, a grief management specialist, a nationally certified thanatologist, a certified pastoral bereavement specialist, and a licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist.

**2022**  
*happy new year*



# Grieving in the New Year

By Claiare Bidwell Smith

<https://clairebidwellsmith.com/grief-new-year>

If you're like me, the new year brings an opportunity for renewal and a fresh start. Except when you're grieving. When you've lost someone you love—recently, or even years ago—the new year can bring on a tidal wave of emotions and expectations. The idea of starting over in the new year can feel unwanted or even just overwhelming.

## **New Year's Resolution: Be Less Sad.**

Impossible.

If you have this one on your list strike it out right now! I've heard so many clients tell me stories of trying to “quit” grieving at the beginning of the year, only to have this resolution fall flat on its face.

New year's simply looks different for those who are grieving. You may find yourself feeling more alone than ever as you watch your friends and loved ones carry on celebrating and making resolutions to embrace the year ahead. Because when you're grieving there is a poignancy that comes with the passing of time, and nothing feels like more a reminder of this than the new year.

I'll never forget the first new year after my mother died. She had been gone for almost a year but when the clock struck 12 that night and the minutes carried forth into a year in which she was not alive, I literally sank to my knees in pain in the back hallway of a nightclub.

The intense pain I felt in that moment was unexpected for me. For most of that first year, I had felt numb. But when the hands of the clock began to move forward and I realized I was entering a year in which she would not be a part of, I felt overcome with searing grief. The club patrons carried on celebrating around me and I curled into a corner of the hallway sobbing into my hands, missing my mother more than I could stand, and not knowing how I would get through an entire lifetime without her.

## **Allow Grief to be Part of Your New Year**

Be kind to yourself in the new year. You don't have to make the traditional fresh start, embrace diets, work out regimes, or start a daily gratitude list. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or whether it's been many years since the loss, it's important to honor your feelings and give yourself the proper time you need to grieve. There will be other years in which you can feel celebratory again. But this year be gentle with yourself.

Let your resolution be one of vulnerability. So many of us are afraid to feel all the big emotions that come after a loss. These feelings can be overwhelming and also make you feel like you are not functioning like everyone else around you, but let that be okay for now.

I've had many people tell me years after a loss that they feel they missed an opportunity in their grief – that they did not let it in when given the chance, and that it hardened something about their relationship with their loved one.

Use the new year to take a deep breath and to embrace who you are in this moment. We change so much more than we realize. So remember that you will not always be in this space, but while you are, allow yourself to feel all that comes with loss.

There is undeniably an identity shift that comes with losing someone close to you. Be it a friend, family member, spouse, or child, their absence in your life will force change upon your soul. Most of us try to resist that change, thinking that the answer to getting through the pain is to try to remain exactly the same, to try to retain the person you were before the loss. But in fact, the opposite is true.

When we can allow ourselves to let the loss shape us and change us, we will grow *with* experience, rather than *against* it. And whenever we stop resisting something then we can give ourselves the opportunity to heal.



## The Year of Letting Go

Let this be the year of letting go. Not of your loved one, but of your expectations of yourself. You will never *get over* your loved one and you do not ever need to let go of them, but in order to heal you do need to release the idea that you can remain unchanged.

Each time you find yourself judging your grief process – whether it’s thinking you are too sad or too angry or simply too consumed by it all – let go and know that whatever you are feeling right now is normal and natural. You will eventually reach a state of less pain and sadness and anxiety. You will find a *new normal*. Until then, be gentle with yourself.

## Meditation for the New Year

I want to walk you through a simple meditation that you can do anytime you have a quiet and private space for 5-10 minutes. Don’t worry if you’ve never meditated before. Just give it a try.

First lie back in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Then take a moment to simply breathe and become attuned to your body. When you are ready I want you to imagine that you are rising up above yourself and looking down. Take note of everything that you are experiencing in this moment in time. Do not resist what you see. If you think you are too sad, or too heavy or too scattered or too *whatever* I want you to let yourself see it and accept it anyway. This is who you are in this moment.

Take another moment to imagine reaching down and stroking your own head in a loving way. Forgive yourself for anything you think you are doing wrong and just for this one moment, during this meditation, let yourself feel real love and compassion for who you are, right here and right now.

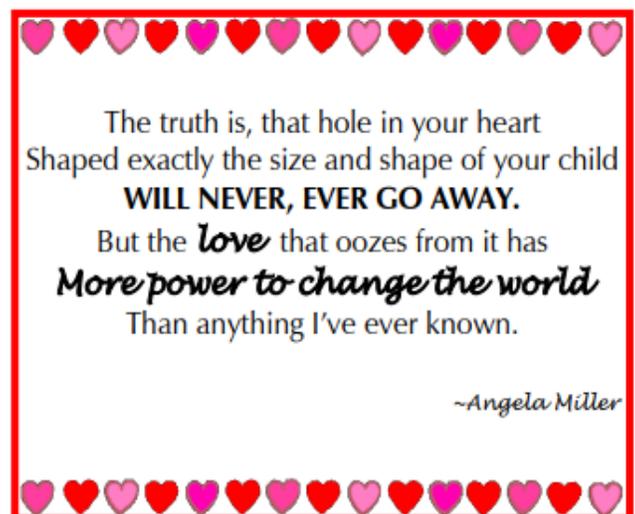
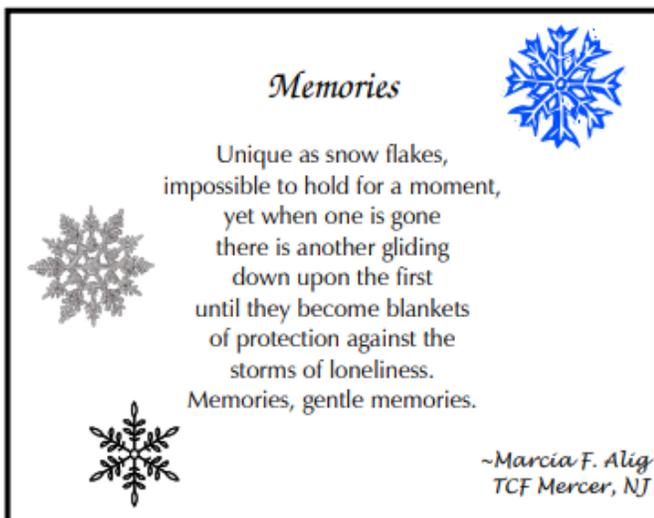
Give yourself a message of reassurance and love. See yourself as you would see a friend or a child, and meet yourself with true compassion.

When you are ready, return to your body and take some slow, deep breaths before you open your eyes.

Do this meditation as often as you need. It will help keep you present and balanced in the new year. And remember, the path to healing starts with giving yourself space to grieve.

Claire Bidwell Smith is a therapist, renowned grief expert, and the author of three books of nonfiction: *The Rules of Inheritance*, *After This: When Life is Over Where Do We Go?* and *Anxiety: The Missing Stage of Grief*. Claire offers numerous online programs for grief in addition to working with people one-on-one. Led by her own experiences with grief, and fueled by her work in hospice and private practice, Claire strives to provide support for all kinds of people experiencing all kinds of grief.

*Bereaved Parents of the USA*



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

Birthdays 		Remembrances 	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Derek Toppa</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February</b> Ashley Scott</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Tony Calabrese</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Katie Kirkpatrick</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February</b> Jerry Brunk</p> 		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Audree Ball</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Daniel Cleary</p> 
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b> Tommy Draper</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February</b> Casey May Whitney</p> 

*“A new year brings time to reflect on the children we love, those who remain with us and those for whom we grieve” ~Wayne Loder*



### **February**

When February comes there is finally an end in sight to the long winter. Sometimes melting snow reveals the green tips of an early crocus or even an exquisite blossom itself, a soft flower of hope invading a harsh landscape of graying snow, biting wind and ominous sky - a small promise of new life to come.

My heart, grieving for my son who died, was like that image of winter. For somehow, even during the darkest, coldest moments, an unexpected sign of hope would intrude. And as the hours and days and months dragged on, my heart finally learned once again to be open to the promise of new life. Painful forever dormant once again sprang forth from my heart. In living, hopefully and lovingly the seasons of the heart can change. The living memories of your special child, like the flower in the snow, can be the beginning of the end of winter.

~Morgan Krame

### **A Valentine to All My Compassionate Friends**

We who have had our hearts so badly broken know each other.

We have lost a child, grandchild, a sister or a brother.

It matters not if we've seen each other's faces.

We share mending hearts full of achy places.

At first our hearts feel shredded and torn.

We might even wish that we'd never been born.

We don't understand how our lives went so wrong.

Everyone tells us they're so glad that we're strong.

All we know is that we hurt to the core.

Because a child dearly loved is with us no more.

With time, patience, and understanding we begin to heal.

We begin to accept what is, and life starts to seem real.

Each time we tell our tale,

each hug we receive puts a band-aid

on the hurting spots - and gives - us reason to believe.

That we will feel joy again, that life does go on.

Though we're never quite the same, since our child is gone.

Compassionate Friends teach us ways we cope.

Until we can live again and face life with hope.

So to TCF members, whether we've met or not,

Thank you for the band-aids on that bruised, healing spot.

I Love You All,

~Kathy Hahn, TCF Lower Bucks, PA



*“Grieving is a journey that teaches us how to love in a new way now that our loved one is no longer with us.*

*Consciously remembering those who have died is the key that opens the heart that allows us to love them in new ways.”*

~Tom Attig

From *The Heart of Grief*

February



Let this cool and gentle  
month of the heart  
remind you  
not only  
of lost treasures,  
but also of riches  
(past and present)  
in your love.  
~Sascha Wagner



Like snowflakes,  
your words fall silent.  
But my heart still  
hears your voice.  
Angie Welland-Crosby

*When Cardinals appear  
Your loved one is near*

## Worldwide Candle Lighting

On Sunday December 12<sup>th</sup> our chapter held its annual candle lighting program in Mark's Park. This was our 7<sup>th</sup> Candle lighting and the 2<sup>nd</sup> year we held it outside in the park in amongst our Memory Garden and Memory Bricks. Over 40 embellished luminaries lined the path around the flowers and Memory Brick with a few hanging from the tree. The jars glowed with memories of our beloved children, siblings and grandchildren as we read their names. We gathered together in the cold winter night under the stars in celebration of our loved ones. Those who could not attend received candles to participate in their homes. We came together in friendship and love to celebrate and remember our loved ones. Whether they lived several decades, a few years, a few months or never tasted the earth's air, they are ours, now and forever. No longer being with us the way we want does not lessen our love for them in our hearts. It is our hope that this program for just a short time helped you feel the warmth of your loved one's memories and presence in your heart and that you were given some small measure of peace for the holidays.

~so... "their light may always shine."

Pictures of the candle lighting can be found on our website at <https://www.tcf-oscoda.org/community-events>

