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

The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
4087 Forest Rd.  
Oscoda, MI 48750  
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## Issue 86 May & June 2026

### 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.**

**May 12 @ 7 pm**  
**June 9 @ 7 pm**  
**Butterfly Release June 28**

### Chapter Leadership

Mail: TCF-Oscoda Chapter  
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Oscoda, 45750  
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FB The Compassionate Friends

### Oscoda Area

Co-Leaders: Fran Ommani  
Charlie Negro  
Secretary: Charlie Negro  
Treasurer: Jane Negro & PR  
Outreach: Tracey Toppa  
Director: Vicky Stadler

### REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Gail Lafferty 734-306-3930  
Kathy Rambo 734-748-2514



*"You Need Not Walk  
Alone!"*

## Mother's Day...Father's Day...Proms...Graduations...

*By Fox Valley TCF, Aurora, Illinois*

Spring comes...and with it comes the uneasy awareness of difficult days ahead. For those who are still going through all the "firsts" without your child, we share with you some special ways other parents have coped and managed. For those who are further in their grief, we share these because we all know how difficult these days can be.

Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, vacations, these are special family times which often catch us unaware and bring unexpected tears and painful memories of young lives cut short. It does get better, or should we say it's different! And you can make these special days better with some planning and with encouragement from those who have already been there. Whatever the "special day" that lies ahead for your family, try to focus on doing something meaningful and tangible in remembrance of your child. Share as a family thoughts and suggestions about planting a tree or starting a rose garden, donating a book to the library or school, putting flowers on the altar, lighting a special candle, or taking the long talked—of vacation. Tears and moments of sadness are okay, for they are expressions of love. Remember:

- Take one day at a time.
- Keep things simple by playing down the holidays and special days, while they are so painful.
- Change your routine from past years.
- Make plans to be "busy" during at least part of the day (go out to lunch or to a movie or visit friends)
- Give your older children some "space". They not only feel your extreme sadness at times; they also have their own feelings to deal with.

The anticipation is often worse than the day itself!



# Happy Mother's Day

## Mother's We Will Always Be



As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's Day is coming soon. That will be a doubly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness on that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's Day a card will not arrive. For us, the reading and rereading of that one last card "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" – will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been" there already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird, perched nearby, float over clear notes of a single spring bird, perched nearby, float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divined comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church – "in memory..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day in remembrance.

Always we struggle with the eternal question – how does life in fairness exact from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain in that day? Where is the fairness and justice of such a barter?

The answer comes back again and again – life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a foretaste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and the beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in a alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?



No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, of compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world about you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and in receiving and in the tissue-wrapped memories that you hold forever in your heart.

~Mary Wildman, Moro, IL  
BP/USA, A Journey Together  
[www.bereavedparentsusa](http://www.bereavedparentsusa)

*Sometimes our hearts'  
Borrow from our yeaterdays.  
And with each remembrance  
We meet again with those we love.  
~Haviva*





*"Forever In Our Hearts"*  
Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings  
*Loved and Missed*



| Birthday                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                           | Remembered                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>May</b><br><br>John Pavlat<br><br>          | <b>June</b><br><br>Elise Schenk<br><br>  | <b>May</b><br><br>Mark Negro<br><br>                                                                      | <b>May</b><br><br>Steve Valentine<br><br>                                                         |
| <b>June</b><br><br>Christian Gonzalez<br><br> | <b>June</b><br><br>Tommy Draper<br><br> | <b>June</b><br><br>Aaron Gonzalez<br><br>                                                                | <p><i>"Though life is not as it was before,<br/>and never will be again,<br/>our memories are much richer than if love had never been."</i></p> <p><i>Unknown</i></p>                |
| <b>June</b><br><br>Bradley Hilberg<br><br>   | <b>June</b><br><br>Mark Negro<br><br>  | <p>"Don't weep at my grave, for I am not there, I've a date with a butterfly to dance in the air".</p>  | <p><b>"The Painted Lady whispers—change is not the end, it's the beginning of flight."</b></p>  |

## Mother's Day 2026

*Recognizes that a woman remains a mother even if her child is not physically present. Specifically, honors mothers with "aching hearts" and "empty arms." "I remember your mom today. She was so proud to be a grandma."*





### A Father Speaks

Driving to work with the radio on, I sit next to a fellow co-worker and friend in the passenger seat. It's early in the morning and the conversation is light. A song reminds me of Jesse, my deceased son, so I tell a story about Jesse. A cloud of silence and dread fills the car. My friend shifts his position, and I can feel how uncomfortable he is. I swallow the memories of Jesse and switch the conversation to last night's ball game. Sound familiar? It's painful for your friends to hear about your deceased child and it's painful for you to silence your memories too.

Certain studies claim that women are social beings and are more able to communicate their emotions than are men. This same studies state that men are mostly competitive and tend to hide their negative emotions, such as sadness or grief, especially from other men.

Does that mean that men have less need to deal with their emotions? I don't think so. From personal experiences and experiences of other men whom I have known, grief is one emotion that demands relief. Without grief recovery, grief can become a destructive force that, at some point, can consume your physical as well as your mental and spiritual health.

Bereavement support groups remind us that we need not walk alone. From a man's viewpoint, I think our support group's monthly gatherings offer an important avenue for men to work through the grief recovery process. Other doors are often shut to men who need to discuss their anger, guilt, sadness and even happy memories concerning their deceased children. Let's talk with and listen to each other.

~Jim Hobby  
BP/USA of North Texas  
A Journey Together-Spring 2004  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)



### "Sorrow Road"

The road to Sorrow was  
a short road!

I was there before I knew it.  
The road to Healing is a long road.  
The Healing Road will be found if I want,  
And wait and look long enough.  
Some days I travel easily, making good time.  
Other days each step feels like a mile,  
and I don't care if I ever arrive.  
My sorrow is real. I can feel it,  
and I see it everywhere I look.  
This road named Sorrow never ends, no  
matter how many miles I walk.  
After a time, Sorrow Road doesn't seem to  
always be uphill.  
I can find many ways to walk down hill,  
among the living.

~Tonya M. Sandoval

*"Your silent tents of green,  
We deck with fragrant flowers;  
Yours has the suffering been,  
The memory shall be ours.*

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



On this Memorial Day, remembering our heroes who have fought for our freedom and paid the ultimate sacrifice, including their families. We also give thanks to those who have served and those still serving today!

# THE SIBING CORNER

*This corner is dedicated to siblings together adjusting to grief through encouragement & sharing*

## Sibling Grief

Sibling grief is often described as a "forgotten" or "disenfranchised" grief, where the intense pain of losing a brother or sister is overlooked, particularly when family focus shifts to parents or spouses. When this loss occurs or is remembered during specific times, such as **May and June**, it can trigger intense waves of grief, even years later, as the changing season, warmer weather, or the start of summer can bring memories to the surface.

Here is an overview of sibling grief with specific consideration to this time of year:

### The Experience of Sibling Grief

- **Loss of Past, Present, and Future:** Losing a sibling means losing a witness to your childhood, a confidant in the present, and someone you expected to grow old with.
- **"Forgotten Mourners":** While parents are supported in losing a child, siblings often feel their grief is ignored, leading to a sense of isolation.
- **Identity Shift:** Surviving siblings may experience a profound identity shift, sometimes feeling as though they have become "only children" or feeling pressure to become the "perfect" child for their parents.
- **Secondary Losses:** Siblings may lose their family structure, sense of security, and sometimes, the memories of their sibling if parents are too distressed to speak of the deceased.

### May and June Specific Considerations

- **The "Grieffiest" Months:** For many, certain seasons trigger memories regardless of how much time has passed. June is frequently cited as a difficult "grief-inducing" month where, even years later, the body and mind may recall the loss.
- **Milestones and Summer Plans:** May and June are often filled with milestones (graduations, end of school year) that highlight the absence of a sibling. These months often mark the start of summer activities that were once shared, making the absence particularly acute.
- **"Hard Grief Days" Reappearance:** Long-term grievers may find that the onset of warmer weather brings back "waves" of grief, which is a normal reaction to loss and not a sign that one is failing to heal.

*Open to Hope*

<https://www.opentohope.com/sibling-loss-changes>

*Butterfly Release  
Sunday June 28, 2026*



# The 3 Words You Should Never Say to Someone Going Through a Hard Time

By Angela Haupt  
Time Magazine April 17, 2026

When Rebecca Love's oldest son took his own life in 2019, at age 25, she felt like her entire world blew up overnight. In the days and weeks that followed, as she nearly collapsed under the weight of the worst pain she'd ever experienced, people said the same three words to her again and again: "You're so strong." They thought they were helpful, but the message stung for some reason.

"It took me a long time to sort out how I felt about it, and I realized that ultimately, it completely invalidated my pain," says Love, a therapist in Fair Oaks, Calif. "What I needed more than anything was for my pain to be witnessed, because the way we integrate grief—there's no finish line for it. To say 'You're so strong' is really to say, 'I'm not seeing your struggle. I'm not acknowledging how awful this is for you.'"

While others were praising her supposed strength, Love was simply trying to survive another day. It wasn't her own resilience carrying her through—it was the people around her. "There was no part of me that felt strong," she says. "My heart beats; my lungs breathe. I didn't want to be here after I lost a child, but my body had other plans." What got her through, she says, was her husband, her mother, her best friend, the people who understood instinctively that no one gets through that kind of loss alone. Rather than telling her she was strong, they just showed up.

Love's experience isn't unusual. Experts say that while the phrase is often meant as comfort, it can land differently for the person on the receiving end.

**What "you're so strong" really implies:** Strength is often misinterpreted. Therapist Amy Morin defines it as showing emotion, asking for help, and being frank about the fact that you're struggling. Yet many people confuse being strong with acting tough.

A comment like "you're so strong" implies, "Great job not showing emotion!" or "I'm impressed you're holding it together," says Morin, author of *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do*. It can unintentionally make people feel they need to hide what they're really going through—that they can't let their guard down, ask for help, or talk about their struggles, she says.

When Morin was 26, she lost her mother and then her husband. She remembers one person, who almost certainly meant well, saying to her: "The fact that you're not crying speaks to how strong you are."

"As a therapist I knew that a lot of times, we have to put on a brave face in public," she says. "Obviously you're trying to not cry in the grocery store; you're trying to get through the day. But when people interpret the fact that you don't look upset to be strength, it really sends the wrong message." Those three words, she says, encourage people to act tough, even when that's the last way they feel.

**Read More:** *11 Things to Say When Someone Dies Besides, I'm Sorry* Lauren Jessell, a licensed clinical social worker in New York, points out that people often resent being told how strong they are because it discounts how out of control they actually feel. The phrase, she says, is a kind of mis attunement—it reflects back an image of the person that has nothing to do with their inner experience. "When we're in a tough situation, we aren't 'being strong,'" she says. "We're just managing the cards we were dealt."

There's an implicit suggestion that the person somehow chose their circumstances and is rising admirably to meet them—when in reality, they're simply doing what they have to do to get by. The phrase can also reinforce the pressure to keep suffering private, Jessell says, particularly for people who have already internalized the idea that they should appear composed during hard times.

Love equates with lauding someone's strength to praising their ability to hide their vulnerability. When people told her she was strong, she didn't feel silenced. "'You're so strong' is really dismissive," she says. "It does not invite dialogue. It does not invite an opportunity for that person to talk about not feeling strong."

**Why we keep saying it** So why is this phrase so common? Usually, Morin says, it's because it makes us feel better—not the person we're trying to comfort. When someone we care about is suffering, our own anxiety spikes. We don't know what to say and are afraid

of making things worse. And if the grieving person appears to be holding it together, there's a temptation to latch onto that—to reflect it back as a compliment and call it support. "When somebody goes through a tragedy, we often have a fear of, 'How would I handle that if it happened to me?'" Morin says. "We see the other person and think, 'Well, clearly they're doing all right.' It gives us a strange reassurance."

Love understands the impulse, even if the words still sting. "I do think these comments usually come from a good place," she says. People are trying to relate and convey that they grasp the enormity of what you're going through. They just don't realize that by opting for these three specific words, they're asking the grieving person to do the emotional labor—to manage not only their own pain, but the discomfort of everyone around them.

"We're not a culture that talks about grief, so we don't have any foundation for how to sit in discomfort," she says. It took her a long time to arrive at that understanding—but she now extends grace to the people who hurt her without meaning to. "I'm so glad on some level that they don't understand," she says. "I would not wish this pain on anyone."

**What to say instead** If you truly want to comfort someone who's going through a hard time, experts say the most powerful thing you can do is to just be there—and resist the urge to fix anything.

"Words consistently fail the bereaved," Love says. "There are no good words that are truly going to encapsulate a loss." She's found that the most meaningful thing anyone said to her was some version of: "I don't know what to say, but I love you and I'm here for you." That honesty, she says, was far more comforting than any well-worn platitude. As she puts it: "It didn't hurt that they didn't know what to say. Of course they didn't know what to say. I don't know what to say." Silence, Love adds, is also underrated. People tend to rush to fill quiet moments—cracking a joke, changing the subject, or pivoting to a story about themselves. But sitting with someone in their pain, without trying to narrate it or reroute it, is one of the most generous things you can offer. "Your presence is so powerful," she says. "You don't have to fix it. You just need to witness it."

**Read More:** *The Best and Worst Things to Say to Someone Just Diagnosed with Cancer* Morin suggests normalizing emotional pain regardless of how someone appears on the outside. "You have no idea how they're feeling on the inside," she says. A few phrases she recommends: "I'm sure you're feeling a lot of emotions right now, and that would be normal." Or: "I can't imagine how you might be feeling right now." Or simply: "Whatever it is you're feeling, it's OK."

She also encourages people to give explicit permission to drop the brave face. You might say something like: "I know you have to hold it together at work, but if you ever feel like having a conversation where you don't need to act tough, I'll be there for you." The key, Morin says, is that it has to be a genuine offer, don't say it unless you mean it.

Open-ended questions also help, as long as they're specific enough to signal that you actually want to hear the answer. Morin recommends adding two small words: "right now." "When you add 'right now' on the end of 'how are you doing,' it makes it clear—I'm not just saying hi," she says. "I really want to know."

Jessell agrees that the goal is to be with the person rather than try to bypass the hardship they're enduring. Instead of labeling someone's experience for them, try reflecting back what they're actually telling you so they feel heard. And ask what kind of support would be most helpful—sometimes people want practical help, and sometimes they just want a friend to listen to. "Really just asking can be useful," she says.

If someone does say something that stings—whether it's "you're so strong" or something else that lands wrong—Love wants people to know they don't have to smile through it. She tells her therapy clients to keep a phrase in their back pocket for moments like these: "*That's not helpful.*"

"That's the end of your interaction," she says. "You're not blowing up at them. But you are sending a clear message: This isn't working for me. And then let them go figure it out."

It's a boundary that can also be instructive. When someone learns that their go-to phrase doesn't land the way they intended, they're less likely to say it to the next person who's struggling. "I've had people say, 'Oh my God, I didn't realize—I've been saying this to people all the time and nobody ever told me it wasn't helpful,'" Love says. "And they say, 'Thank you. I'm never going to say this again.'"