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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
989-254-5888
Email: tcfoscodagmail.com

Issue 69 January/February 2023

Monthly Meetings

2nd 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 10th @ 7 pm
February 14th @ 7 pm

You need not walk alone!

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

REGIONAL COORDINATORS



Gail Lafferty
734-748-2514

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734-306-3930

Hello, Did I Hear a Big Sigh?

The holidays are finally over, and we can put our hurt and pain back in the boxes along with the Christmas decorations. Oh, how easy that would be, if that were so.

Dealing with the anticipation of the holidays without our loved ones early on in our grief is devastating. We find ourselves not wanting to cope and wishing away the oncoming celebration. This is a natural reaction, of course, and one we must fight to overcome. Memories and the thought of celebrations without our children are fought with tears and heartache.

We can only hope that the next time we must encounter a specific holiday, we will find it less painful to cope with because we have put one more year behind us. Time soes have a way of helping to soften our grief, but the road can be very bumpy along the way to recovery.

Our children were our reason for life, and their memories are our reason to go on living.

Because of my sons, my affiliation with TCF has given me many treasured friends whom I can sympathize with and have empathy for.

Let's start the New Year with the promise of mending our bodies; holding the memories of our children, sow love, in our hearts, and helping each newly bereaved parent and sibling to better cope with the difficult task of their loss. By supporting one another in our grief, we find the comfort and understanding we wo sorely need.

Happy New Year!



~Mary Senbertrand
TCF Cape May, NJ

Facing the New Year after Losing a Child

By Lisa Boehm 12/26/2021

<https://www.lisakboehm.com/post/facing-the-new-year-after-losing-a-child>

Not-so Happy New Year

The New Year represents hope, new beginnings, and change. I think that's why it hurts so much. When you've lost a child celebrations can feel all wrong. Holidays like the New Year are meant to be celebrated with friends and family, but there is a gaping hole in your family. Who can possibly think of celebrating when your child is missing?

Major holidays like this also mark the passing of time.

You may feel more alone at this time of year as you watch those around you celebrate, have fun, and make exciting resolutions for change in the coming year; people exclaiming they are ready to live happier lives! Yet, here we are: another year without our children.

The first New Year without my daughter Katie was a complete train wreck. First of all, it was less than one month after her car accident on December 8 and I was completely unprepared. I had put all my efforts into surviving Christmas, so I barely gave New Years a thought. My husband, son, and I went away for Christmas that first year, just weeks after losing our girl. It was as 'ok' as it could be. We spent five days with my brother skiing and snowboarding in BC, Canada. We were distracted and I was so glad not to be at home.

Then New Year arrived, blind-sided me, and took me out at the knees.

We arrived home to an empty house, full of dead flowers. Katie's urn sat on a table visible from the front door and the Christmas tree sat unlit and solemn in the corner. The silence was palpable. I felt like I had been punched in the stomach.

Before the bags were unpacked, I took the tree down that had been put up days before Katie died. I'm sure I broke half the ornaments as I savagely pulled and shoved and threw them into bags and containers. I screamed and I cried, but the Christmas tree can down in thunderous record time and was shoved into the deep recesses of the storage room. Then I slumped to the ground. Numb and dumbstruck that this was not a bad dream, but a reality that I would be living for the rest of my life.

That New Year was a blur. I think my husband and I sat opposite each other in our living room and stared blankly between tears as the clock struck twelve and the rest of the world celebrated.

If you are feeling this way, let me share some the New Year's resolutions I've made since my daughter died.

- **Resolve to just be.** Let go of the idea that your grief 'should be' this way or that way. Let go of what society thinks your grief should look like after losing your child. Allow yourself to be however you need to be. If you need to take mental health days from work or life, that's ok. If you need to be in your pajamas all day, that's ok. Remove all expectations of yourself and allow yourself to grieve in a way that feels right to you. What you are feeling is normal. You have been through the worst that life can throw at a person.
- **Resolve to take care of yourself instead of worrying about everyone around you.** As moms we are experts on putting ourselves last. After the death of a child, self-care is a non-negotiable. Simply put - you must take care of *you* right now. Drink water, lots of water. Avoid alcohol, because that is a slippery slope. Eat nourishing foods, even if it's a nibble here and a nibble there. Get outside at least once a day, even if you step outside the back door to look up at the sky. And if at all possible, do your best to go for a walk, even if it's around the block at a time when no one will see you.
- **Resolve to meditate.** You might roll your eyes at this one, but have you tried to do this? Honestly, it's just sitting quietly and thinking about your breathing. I have turned to this more and more on my grief journey and have integrated this practice into my daily life. Anxiety attacks still plague me at times and this is one of the best ways for me to cope when things get really bad. When I'm a better place, it also allows me to connect with my daughter's spirit.
- **Resolve to bring aspects of your child forward with you.** Know that your child will always be with you and that you can honor their life by doing things that they loved to do and care about the things and the people that they cared about. You might find something that resonates with you in this document: [77 ways to honor your child in heaven](#)
- **Resolve to make meaning of your new life,** instead of focusing on *finding* meaning. Honor your child and their memory by living a meaningful life. Katie had a zest for life that I have not seen in many people. I want to live like she did, so this year, I resolve to do just that.

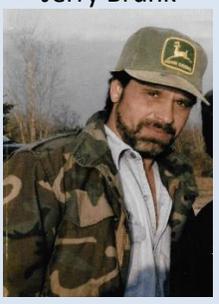
Be gentle with yourself and know that you are not alone on this path.

Walking beside you,
Lisa



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



Birthdays 		Remembrances 	
January Derek Toppa 	January Ashley Scott 	January Tony Calabrese 	January Tommy Draper 
January Jerry Brunk 		January Audree Ball 	January Daniel Cleary 
		January Katie Kirkpatrick 	February Casey May Whitney 



Your Heart Will Mend, But It Will...
*...be a different heart,
 ...wear a deep and lasting scar,
 ...be a more compassionate heart,
 ...know life in a new and different way,
 ...understand the Eternity of Love.
 ~Nancy Green, TCF Livonia, MI*

How Gratitude and Grief can Coexist

<https://www.chaunabryant.com/new-blog/m7hfulpzl5kj8tihbud0zsxbc1rgb3>

by Chauna Bryant 2/9/2022

Can Gratitude and Grief Coexist?

Gratitude helps bring together the past, present, and future to help close the gap between you and your suffering. Gratitude can stem from the many experiences and memories left behind following a loss. Some people may find it hard to be thankful for what they have.

Gratitude helps you focus on positive things in life, despite a loss. Being mindful of the blessings in your life can help you move through your grief with a more purposeful outlook.

Grief is a complex process. **Living life fully includes grieving.** Grieving is like embarking upon a journey to an unknown destination, against your will, without any idea of how long it will take or what you will find once you get there.

There are no shortcuts to grieving.

It can be helpful to have someone support you during your grief journey. Remember special dates and milestones in your grief journey, and keep them in your calendar, so you always have a reminder of how much you have lost.

Remember special dates and milestones in your grief journey, and keep them in your calendar, so you always have a reminder of how much you have lost. Gratitude has the power to help those in mourning rise above their loss. Expressing gratitude makes people feel important.

HOW TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE WHEN GREIVING

We can grieve loss while still feeling gratitude for the goodness in our lives.

Grief and gratitude can be explored by sharing the experiences of others. Listening to others' stories about their grief journeys may help you embrace your own experience. In addition, reading about others' experiences may help you focus on where your grief stems from.

Gratitude can provide hope and healing. Living a life of gratitude can help transform your grief to allow you to let go of the past and focus on the abundance that surrounds your life now.

Gratitude can help overcome adversities and bounce back from them with strength and motivation. Gratitude is an important emotion that can bring happiness and health benefits.

Gratitude has been linked to decreased cortisol levels and increased serotonin production. People who are more grateful have a greater sense of well-being and are less likely to experience negative emotions such as anger, stress, or sadness. Gratitude can help improve sleep quality, cognitive function, and physical health by reducing inflammation and improving moods.

Loss is a challenging experience and can lead to grief. However, the journey from grief to gratitude is a gradual process.

Breathwork can help with grief and many emotions. If you are interested in trying breathwork, you can get a free recording at [chaunabryant.com](https://www.chaunabryant.com) or join a [virtual group HERE](#).



THE SIBING CORNER

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

“You Need Not Walk Alone”

Tuesday was the fourth anniversary of Danielle’s death. I was on a plane after about 4 hours of sleep and in meetings all day in Arizona. Her memory would grab at my chest when walking to my room or taking a phone call but I couldn’t let myself go. Thank God for exhaustion! I was able to spend the weekend in Florida, not to memorialize her but as often happens when I am near the sea, I was able to hold her in my mind and heart and I was able to swim with her as I do everywhere I go in the world. As you probably know, we scattered my sister’s ashes into the ocean near where we played as children. No matter where I travel to, I feel her close to me when I put my feet into a stream, a lake, a waterfall but mostly – when I am near the ocean. I have danced with her in Spain off the southern coast, I have cried with her in Italy and have run alongside of her in New Jersey as she meanders next to my running trail...I am able to dance with her and laugh with her and fill myself with her as her memory is embodied in the waters I love. I am looking forward to seeing her in China and alongside me as I run my marathon near the coast. As time goes on, it hurts differently but heals more to let the water tickle my toes. Like she was in life, she is at times stormy or cold and others she is bright and glistening...rambling...at other times she is warm and soothing. The morning we were supposed to leave Florida, I walked out onto the beach to say hello to her and about 15 feet off shore, three dolphins played and I laughed out loud at their antics ...knowing she was a part of that spirit and that moment was between us. I picked up a shell to hold the memory. I continue to make memories, even though she is gone. I miss her.

This beautiful story was written by Diedre Paterno Pai of Boulder, CO and emailed to her friend, who is a bereaved sibling herself



The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first; nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now, right now, it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending. Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears.

Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life. A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess to swell and undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed. The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

~Nancy Green TCF,
Livonia, MI



*Those we love we
never lose,
For always,
they will be,
Loved, remembered,
treasured,
Always in our memory.*



The truth is, that hole in your heart
shaped exactly the size and shape of your child
WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY.

But the *love* that oozes from it has
more power to change the world

than anything I've ever known.

Angela Miller



S.W.A.K. (Sealed With A Kiss)

Valentine's Day

Remember how we used to write to those we love the best?
Our letters we would fill with hopes and dreams and
seal them with a kiss.

To you our child, we write today—and wish we could
impart,
the hopes an dreams that once we had,
now crush our breaking hearts.

The thoughts of what we had planned for you float through
our wishful minds,
then burst like bubbles in the air,
while dreams explode with time.

And yet we still have hope and still dream on,
and think of all we'll miss,
and wish with all our hearts we could write to you,
and seal it with a kiss.

The grief we have for you is like a weight upon our chests,
there's no way we can ignore it—it never gives us rest.

And no words could ever tell of our longings to express,
to write a love letter to you, our child,
and seal it with a kiss.

And if we had but one chance more to write to you today,
the words would come with no regrets
and we'd like for them to say...

“To love and to be loved by you, our child...an honor
and so blessed,
Our time on earth cut short, it's true...**But We Sealed it
With a Kiss.**”

~Faye McCord, Co-Leader
TCF Jacson, MS



*“Grief is the price we pay for love.
We did not lose our children.
They died, taking with them our
hopes and dreams for the future,
but never, never taking away their love.
Though death comes, love will never go away.
Hold it tight, the love our children gave us.
Hold it tight through the storms of grief
and bring it with you into today.
Love never goes away...”*

Darcie Sims

