

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

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

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## THE HOLIDAYS ARE BEHIND US

It is the New Year. The Holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now look out at the winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb ~ a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searching's, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be armed and renewed by them and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love.

These are the new roots born of our love for our child that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

*Marie Andres*  
TCF So. MD Chapter



### MONTHLY MEETING

*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*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

January 10:  
*Our Outreach Program*  
What we can offer our  
community.

February 14:  
*Scrabble Activity*

### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Mail: TCF-Oscoda Area Chapter  
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The Compassionate Friends/Oscoda  
Area

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# THE SIBING CORNER

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

## What My Brother's Death Taught Me About Grief

By Ashley Cebulka

April 8, 2014

It's an experience we are pretty much guaranteed in life. Yet when it hits us, it can feel like we were just bulldozed by an avalanche, wondering if we'll ever breathe again. The world as we know it seems to stop, and the crumbling inside our hearts can feel paralyzing.

I can only write this to you now, because I've been there. I want to share with you a few things that were incredibly helpful to me in the process.

My oldest brother passed away four years ago. The news hit me in a way that is somewhat indescribable. He was and still is one of my best friends and one of the greatest heroes in my life. I didn't write about it for a long time because in all honesty, I didn't want sympathy. I wanted to be alone in my pain and stay connected to my brother in any and all ways possible. The opinions and, "Oh my gosh I can't imagine" moments were not all that welcome out of what seemed like self-preservation.

I was enraged, overwhelmed with sadness, lost, worried about my parents, lonely, mad that I wouldn't see him again, relieved he returned to love, then angry and sad again. This roller coaster of emotions continued for a long time. I was confused often. I desperately wanted to 'figure it out' and understand the great meaning so that somehow I could experience peace and love in my own heart again.

As time passed I realized there is actually so much beauty in grief. It helps us realize just how enormous our love can be. This is ultimately why it can hurt so intensely to say goodbye to that person in the form that we knew them.

Eventually, I opened up and spoke very, very honestly about it. I began to realize that if I trust everything happens for a reason, death is not excluded from that. While it was painful to lose my brother in his physical form, there are countless miracles that have happened since his passing. I now see that it was simply time for his spirit to move on from the body he was in. His spirit is still very much alive, to this day, and I experience evidence of that regularly. The key is for me to stay open to see it.

This inner-knowing brought a different kind of peace and understanding than I had ever experienced in life. So why am I sharing this? To let you know you're not alone. Grief is a different and unique journey for everyone. We all deal with it the best way we know how in the moment. And it is a moment to moment process of healing.

I am not claiming in any way to be an expert on grief, I simply want to share some things that helped me during that challenging time, with hopes it may be helpful to you.

1. Forgiveness: for the situation, the person, the things not said, the moments you wish you had, the ones you wish you could get back. Forgive.
2. When I was ready, choosing to focus on the love shared rather than the current pain.
3. Realizing and trusting that this too shall pass, while also trusting it's happening for a reason.
4. Being open and honest about where I was emotionally rather than trying to hide it. Expressing my needs to my loved ones, letting them know the times that I simply needed alone time.
5. Asking for help from the people I trust and love, while allowing myself to receive it.
6. Giving myself the time and space to feel and heal the way I uniquely need to.
7. Expressing gratitude for the gifts I received, for having my brother as a part of my life for as long as I did, celebrating our endless memories. While realizing that his spirit is forever with me, as long as I stay open to experiencing it. I also wrote down all of the incredible memories we had together, which was so healing.
8. Then eventually focusing on what I love and doing more of that every day.

I write this open letter with so much love in my heart to you reading this right now.

<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-13271/what-my-brothers-death-taught-me-about-grief.html>



## RESOLUTIONS

### The New Year by Sascha Wagner

The New Year comes  
When all the world is ready  
For changes, resolutions—great  
beginnings.

For us, to whom  
The stroke of midnight means  
A mission one remembered. For us, the  
new year comes  
More like another darkness.

But let us not forget  
That this new 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.

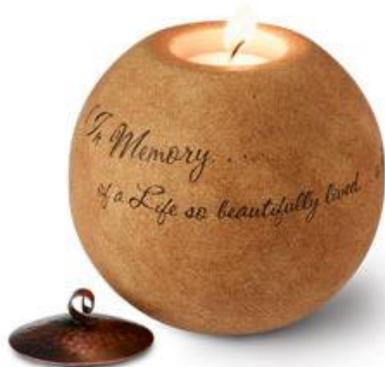
1998 TCF Professional of the Year



Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was not different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better. Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions.

Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it. Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us. This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!  
Your Steering Committee of the Oscoda Area Chapter of TCF  
Borrowed from Pat Akery, TCF Medford, OR



*There's a valentine waiting for you  
That's different from all the others.  
It's there every month at our meetings  
For fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers.*

*Its envelope is made of caring  
The glue of understanding seals it tight.  
This non-judgmental group who've been there,  
Help to take away your fear and fright.*

*So, come join with us together,  
Read your loving message printed clear,  
In not only this month's valentine,  
But all those throughout the year.*

*~Mary Cleckley  
TCF Atlanta, GA*





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



Birthdays		Remembrances 	
<b>January</b> Derek Toppa 	<b>February</b> Ashley Scott 	<b>January</b> Tony Calabrese 	<b>January</b> Katie Kirkpatrick 
		<b>January</b> Tommy Draper 	<b>February</b> Casey Whitney 



The truth is,  
that hole in your  
heart shaped exactly  
the size and shape of  
our 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



**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 the facing life and hope another day. There are not set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we 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. 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

*The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.*

### Lending Library

We have many great books in our library and are always on the lookout for new material. If you have any suggestions, please let Charlie or Fran know as we are always adding to our collection. If you have a book from our library and are finished, please return it so it can be circulated again to another family.

If you would like to keep the book, please let us know the title of the book, so we can order a replacement.

Donations for new books are always appreciated and are a great way to honor our loved one on a birthday or anniversary.

To check out our books just click on the link...

[Lending Library for TCF-Oscoda](#)

### Book Review

*Beyond Tears* is written by nine mothers who have each lost a child. This revised edition includes a new chapter written from the perspective of surviving siblings.

The death of a child is that unimaginable loss no parent ever expects to face. In *Beyond Tears*, nine mothers share their individual stories of how to survive in the darkest hour. They candidly share with other bereaved parents what to expect in the first year and long beyond:

\*Harmonious relationships can become strained

\*There is a new definition of what one considers "normal"

\*The question "how many children do you have?" can be devastating

\*Mothers and fathers mourn and cope differently

\*Surviving siblings grieve and suffer as well

\*There simply is no answer to the question "why?"

This sharing in itself is a catharsis and because each of these mothers lost her child at least seven years ago, she is in a unique position to provide perspective on what newly bereaved parents can expect to feel. The mothers of *Beyond Tears* offer reassurance that the clouds of grief do lessen with time and that grieving parents will find a way to live, and even laugh again.

### Support

#### The Compassionate Friends Of Oscoda Area 2440

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)

Amazon donates

Go to: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/35-2493920>



Thanks to donors like you, The Compassionate Friends of Oscoda Area raised \$100.61 in 2016. It is an amazingly simple, no cost to you, donation platform. Check it out at [www.iGive.com/TheCompassionateFriendsofOscodaArea](http://www.iGive.com/TheCompassionateFriendsofOscodaArea)



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### GRIEF SUPPORT WEBSITES

- <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>
- <http://www.griefwatch.com>
- <http://www.aliveinmemory.org>
- <http://angelmoms.com>
- <http://bereavedparentsusa.org>
- <http://childloss.com>
- <http://www.good-grief.org>
- <http://griefnet.org>
- <http://www.griefhealingblog.com>
- <http://www.opentohope.com>
- <http://pomc.com> —families of murder victims
- <http://survivorsofselfharm.com>
- <http://www.taps.org> – military death
- <http://webhealing.com>
- [www.griefwatch.com](http://www.griefwatch.com)

### *In times of darkness...*

*Love sees in times of silence...*

*Love hears in times of doubt...*

*Love hopes in times of sorrow...*

*Love remembers.*

*May time soften the pain*

*Until all that remains*

*Is the warmth of the memories*

*And the love.*

*Author Unknown*