



The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

8701 36th Ave N
New Hope, MN 55427

IMPORTANT MEETING CHANGE

Until we can meet again in person, we are offering ZOOM video meetings as our Chapter monthly meetings.

We are hosting one-hour virtual meetings, similar to our in-person monthly meeting format. After the large group portion, we will divide into small group breakout rooms (with a separate group for siblings)

Meeting schedule, third Monday each month. **May 18, June 15, July 20, 7:00 pm—8:00 pm.** Check email, and our Facebook and website for updates.

- Watch your email for our Zoom virtual meeting invite.
- Register in advance. Simply click on the link in our invite email.
- A follow-up Confirmation email will be sent with link, meeting ID and password you will use to attend.
- See PAGE 2 for instructions on ZOOM and Joining a Meeting.

Meeting Schedule

We meet 7:00–8:30 pm on the third Monday of each month.

St. Joseph Parish Community
8701 36th Ave N., New Hope, MN

Bereaved Sibling Group Meeting

A bereaved sibling facilitates the group. Siblings (14+) meet separately, but at the same location/time as our Chapter meeting.

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We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents the opportunity to talk about their child and feelings as they go through the grieving process. Our meetings are also open to grandparents, older siblings, and extended family. There are no membership dues. There is no religious affiliation.

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

The Secret of TCF's Success is Simple: As seasoned griever reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward, and both are helped to heal.

To Our New Members: Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose, and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you find the right person...or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Members Further Down the 'Grief Road': We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting, we have new parents. Think back, what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you and share your grief?

About Our Meetings: Please don't stay away from a meeting because the scheduled topic does not interest you. At each meeting there will be time to discuss and share whatever is on your mind. We welcome your participation, but it is not required.



Resources

Visit our Chapter Website:

tcfmpls.org



Our Local Chapter Is On Facebook.

Join our Minneapolis Chapter's private Facebook community online: [TCF Mpls](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TCFMpls)

Or log onto Facebook and search: TCF Mpls

www.facebook.com/groups/TCFMpls

National Organization Resources

may be found by visiting:

www.compassionatefriends.org

Click "Find Support" tab.

- National Magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®
- Monthly E-Newsletter
- Online Grief-Related Webinar Series
- Online Support Community
- Facebook Closed (Private) Groups

[TCF/USA National Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA)

www.facebook.com/TCFUSA

MINNEAPOLIS CHAPTER INFO**TELEPHONE:** (612) 444-1301**EMAIL:** tcf.mpls@gmail.com**Minneapolis Chapter Leader**
Monica Colberg**Treasurer**

John Jordan

Newsletter Editor & Co-Leader

Gloria Jordan

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Mary Jo Peterson

Webmaster

Lisa Gross Crees

Facebook Page Administrator

Lisa Gross Crees

Hospitality Coordinator

Gail Hokemeir

Donor Appreciation

Pat Reller

Co-Librarians

Tasha Feigh & Mary Feigh

Special Events Committee

Lisa Crees, Mary Jo Peterson, Pat Reller

Sibling Facilitator

Maggie Bauer

Steering Committee Meetings

Held quarterly to plan events and Chapter direction. Next meeting: July, date TBA.

TCF NATIONAL OFFICE

Toll Free: 1-877-969-0010

E-mail:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.orgwww.compassionatefriends.org**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/TCFUSA**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/TCFofUSA>**REGIONAL COORDINATOR**

Cathy Seehuetter: (612) 991-9954

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Those who have **SUFFERED**
UNDERSTAND SUFFERING
and therefore

*extend their hand.*

-Patti Smith

Articles printed in this newsletter reflect the author's personal views, and not necessarily the opinion of the newsletter editor or The Compassionate Friends.

SURROUNDING AREA ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS**Chapter Locator tool is available on TCF National Website**[Find Chapter Here](#)compassionatefriends.org**The St. Paul Chapter**

Meets at Beaver Lake Lutheran Church at 2280 Stillwater Ave. in Maplewood.
Second Thursday each month, 7 pm.
Cathy, (612) 991-9954

The Monticello Chapter

Meets at St. Henry's Catholic Church at 1001 7th St. E in Monticello.
Second Monday of the month, 7 pm.
Beth Hill, (763) 295-3610.

The South of the River Chapter

Meets at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church at 12650 Johnny Cake Ridge Rd., Apple Valley.
Third Tuesday each month, 7 pm.
Sue, (952) 797-6346

**Instructions for ZOOM Monthly Meeting**

Zoom is fairly easy to use, and operates on many devices/platforms. Attend video conferences on the ZOOM Conference Meeting app using Windows, MacOS, and Android and iOS mobile phones and tablets. The app is free to download (from your App store or Google Play, or by visiting ZOOM's website).

For new users to Zoom, take a look at the many articles available online, including YouTube videos. You'll learn you simply click on the link in the emailed Meeting Confirmation you receive from us and follow the on-screen instructions. You can also call in with a phone, using the phone number on the Confirmation email we send. The meeting ID number and password will also be in the email.

- Step-by-step installation guides for several platforms and devices are readily available on the [ZOOM.us](https://zoom.us) website, along with tutorials for attending a meeting.
- Here is a link to ZOOM's instructions: [JOIN A ZOOM MEETING](#) Included in the article is a link to attend a practice meeting (don't worry; you'll be the only participant).
- A meeting invite will be emailed to our members. **IMPORTANT:** if you are not on our newsletter EMAIL distribution list, you need to email tcf.mpls@gmail.com to request a Zoom meeting invite.
- Next, to maintain our members privacy, you will need to Register in advance for the meeting before attending. Simply click on the link included in our invite email.
- Then, a follow-up Confirmation email will be sent with the meeting link, meeting ID and password you will use to attend. It is important that you do not share this info with others.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help so you're ready for the meeting:
Gloria J: 612-719-8260 (MacOS, iOS); or
John J: 612-719-3834 (Windows, Android).

Looking forward to seeing or hearing you at our virtual meeting.

Balloon Release & Picnic Plans Up in the Air

July 20, 2020

Our annual balloon release and picnic is a time-honored tradition held in July for two decades or more by The Compassionate Friends-Minneapolis Chapter. COVID-19 as we all know, may offset any best laid plans for a public event. As we go to press with this newsletter, the best we can publicly announce is we are planning our July event; however, we may need to revise the event due to the pandemic restrictions. Stay tuned for further announcements through our Facebook page, website or by email.

After last year's balloon release event, we began to research alternatives to releasing balloons, given environmental impact and helium shortage concerns. The chapter stopped using ribbon/string and plastic ties several years ago, and began writing messages on the balloons, rather than attach a notecard. However, the time has come to find another way to celebrate our children and siblings with a sustainable family friendly event.

The picnic portion of our event may also be impacted due to health concerns and social distancing restrictions.

As the event date draws near, we will review our options, and finalize our plans. We will update you via email, our Facebook page, and website. Thank you for your patience. Let's hope for the best, a chance to see families and friends and share time together remembering our children and siblings who are not with us physically but remain always in our hearts.

FOR TENTATIVE PLANNING:

EVENT DATE: Monday, July 20, 2020. Based on previous years, the event would start at 6:00 pm at our regular meeting place at 8701 36th Ave North, New Hope, MN. At 7:00pm, the program begins.

Typically, we would request an RSVP by July 10 via email at TCF.mpls@gmail.com, with the number of adults and children who plan to attend. You may also call to RSVP and leave a message at 612 444-1301 on our chapter phone line.

In the past, a freewill donation to cover chapter program expenses would be helpful at a suggested rate of \$5/person. Children 10 years of age and younger will attend at no charge. Donations will be collected on the day of the event.

Each of us will, one day,
rediscover whatever we cherish about life.
Each of us will find the laughter that echoed
throughout our life with our loved one...
If we will look for it.

~Darcie Sims

Leader's Corner

"You smell wonderful," I said to the pot of homemade chicken rice soup. No one else was in the house. What? Talking to soup? I am a gardener and on occasion, I talk to plants. Talking to my chicken soup? That's new territory.

Soup will nourish me. Preparing it is a distraction from the emergency we now experience. Soup is all good. Realistically, however, it comes up short as a conversationalist.

While the soup simmered I watched the evening news. Cried twice during the broadcast. COVID-19 had claimed more victims. Healthcare and other service industry personnel work in peril. The rest of us learn to make face masks and shelter in numbing isolation. We eat soup, our new alone together 24/7 companion.

In TCF we are at our best face to face. Zoom doesn't quite cut it. I cry for TCF chapter members who suffer new grief in self-imposed isolation. We adapt. We learn to host virtual meetings. We learn to connect in ways other than our proven best ways of offering a hand and time by your side for solace and hope. For the time being, this will nourish us.

Hang in there, everyone. Stay healthy.

Monica Colberg, Art's Mom and Chapter Leader
TCF Minneapolis Chapter

Value Your Connection to Creativity

For years, I had been storing my son's clothing, some of his favorite articles, in boxes in the garage. I didn't want to let go of the clothes, yet I had no use for them. One day an idea came. I was talking to a woman enthralled with quilting, with fabrics, textures, and the art of creating quilts. She was talking about how she was making a quilt out of her family's old blue jeans, because it created a use for the fabric and gave them a blanket that held the energy and memory of their experiences. It wasn't just a quilt. It became a special comfort quilt because of the energy the fabrics held.

That's when the idea came. My son had died years ago. His physical presence was no longer here. But the clothes held the memories of his physical presence and the energy of his spiritual presence. I could make them into a quilt, one that would cherish his memory and give me comfort. How do we get our ideas? From other people. From certain triggers in the world, the universe. From our imagination. We are connected to creativity. It's a force in the universe, an energy that runs through us. If we're connected to ourselves, our intuition will guide us as to what to do and when to do it. If we love ourselves, we'll trust ourselves enough to act confidently and joyfully on that guidance. Value your connection with creativity. Embrace your imagination. The universe will show you how, teach you how, help you along the way.

~ Melody Beattie

Author of "Journey to the Heart: Daily Meditations"
Lifted from TCF Atlanta GA area newsletter

Dear Bereaved Father

I am very sorry about the death of your child. When my son died, I remember thinking there are no words to describe the myriad of powerful feelings. I have also learned that there are no words I can share to take the pain away or give meaning to your sense of loss. The truth is, the future will be forever different and your grief...well...will be with you forever, though I believe eventually you'll learn to live with it. And you will go on living.

What advice do I have? First attend to your grief. Someone wrote, "The pain that is unbearable cannot be healed." After my initial outpouring of grief, I felt that I needed to be strong for my wife. I buried my son in the ground and buried myself in busy-ness. I discovered much later that my wife concluded I didn't really care about my son. I did not listen to the chaplain's advice. He said, "Who said you have to be strong to be supportive? Go have a good cry on each other's shoulder."

I discovered that grief is one of those "pay me now or pay me later" realities. Let the tears flow. Seek a healthy outlet for your anger. Share your feelings of guilt. Give your sense of helplessness and depression time and space.

Mothers and fathers grieve differently. Her grief is not better or worse, just different. Her coping style is different. Be patient with her and yourself. Grief is a roller coaster of emotions. You will not ride the ups and downs at the same time. You cannot take her grief away, but you can share it. You cannot prevent her from suffering, but you can prevent her from suffering for the wrong reasons. Be a loving listener. Share your feelings. Hold each other tenderly and often.

Men often have trouble reaching out for support. Certainly many have trouble offering support to men. I got so tired of hearing, "How's your wife doing?" I rarely heard, "How are you doing?" I cannot stress how important I believe it is for you to find and use one or more support persons. No one can do your grieving for you; no one grieves well alone! I urge both of you to join a bereaved parent support group. Consider reading – together – a book about grief.

Your child has died. Your dreams and memories will never die. Death demands that you let go, though that is no easy process. Letting go is not forgetting. Letting go is ultimately forgiving this tragedy, experiencing acceptance along with sadness and having the courage to risk living and loving again. I wish you a healthy journey through your grief – from another bereaved father.

Chaplain James Cunningham
TCF Victoria, Inc.

taken from the national Newsletter of Bereaved Parents/USA.
"A JOURNEY TOGETHER" www.bereavedparentsusa.org.



Above the cloud
with its shadow
is the star
with its light.

Victor Hugo

The Things We'll Never Get to Do

Now as we plan to celebrate the Fourth of July, I can't help but think about how we'll never get to see Your excitement at watching the fireworks in the sky.

There are so many things We'll never get to share with you, You were taken from us too soon, We'll never get to show you the man in the moon. We'll never get to see you learn to crawl or pull yourself up, or teach you to drink from a cup.

You'll never get to take your first baby steps Or feel the tickle of grass under your little feet, We'll never get to share with you your first ice cream treat.

You'll never get to have your first birthday cake. Those first day of school pictures you'll never get to take.

We'll never get to hear the first song you learn to sing, Never get to show you a beautiful butterfly as it flutters its wings.

We'll never know the first words you might have said, We'll never get to hear you say "Goodnight Daddy" as we put you to bed.

Your brothers will never hear you say their names or pronounce them in a funny way, giving them both nicknames to make fun of some day! They'll never get to teach you how to catch a ball, or how to ride your first bike and catch you when you fall.

During those two months and six days we had the chance to hold you and tell you how much we loved you, We never knew you would not get to hug us back and tell us that you loved us too. When your father and I heard your first cry when you were born, Our thoughts were about all of the things we wanted to share with you, Now all we think about are all the things we'll never get to do.

Peggy Wills, TCF Atlanta, GA
In Memory of her son Jarod Robert Wills



Our Children Remembered...on Their Birthdays

Loved...Missed...Forever in Our Hearts



May

CHILD	MEMBER
Chad	Joyce Rubin
Carson Thomas Jordan	Gloria & John Jordan
Logan Bruns	Julie & Paul Kingsbury
Justin Thillman	Sarah Tieszen
Mitch (Sibling)	Rachel Shapiro
Ross Alvin Joseph Stenerson	Barbara Stenerson
Julie Marie Olson Topp	Barbara Olson
Noah David Muonio	Michael & Anita Muonio
Gregory	Mary & Tom Sincheff
Eric Brodin	Judy & Buck Brodin
Adam	Rhoda Michaelynn
Sawyer James Tate	Robert & Joy Tate
Mandy	Don & Connie Lundholm
Steve Hokemeir	Gail Hokemeir
Jenna Rietmulder	Jay & Holli Rietmulder
Kaare	Kristi Patterson
Javi	Renee & Ricardo Moron
Alec Smith (Siblings)	Alexis, Jamisen & Brittany
Alec Smith	Nicole Smith-Holt & James Holt Jr.
Scott Tuma	Shirley Tuma
Kameron	Dawn Gurule
Michael Habte	Debra Hudson
Nick (Sibling)	Alyssa Kroll
Jean Claude Wishard (Sibling)	Danielle Wishard-Tudor
Eric Lindquist	Bruce Lindquist
Rob	Mary Quade
Payton Tripp (Grandchild)	Janet & Richard Tripp
Lisa	Carol Sorensen
Matthew	Mary Curtis
Natalie	Vickie Hackel
John Pecnik (Sibling)	Jeanne Klein

June

CHILD	MEMBER
Thomas Scott	Dianne & Bill Jeffery
Carolyn Ann Bedford	Barbara & Robert Demsky
Ben Alden	Mary & John Alden
Tyler Russell Hill	Sheryl & Allen Hill
Abigail	Eric & Sam Zander
Alex	Chuck & Trudi Campbell
Mark	Bev London
Tina	Cynthia Wong
Vincent	Jeff Lewis
Allisa Feldman	Harley & Elayne Feldman
Katie	Fern & Dave Sanders
Thor Eide	Susan Nokleby
Zachary	Melanie & Craig Thielke
Victor Genis	Argimiro Delgado
Derek	Darwyn & Mary Tri
Ben Freidson (Sibling)	Debe Fefferman
Benjamin Freidson (Sibling)	Jenne Freidson
Drew	Judy Pehrson

July

CHILD	MEMBER
Daniel Hinschberger (Sibling)	Anna & Todd Lundblad
Daniel Hinschberger	Linda Schaeffer
Elsey Kirabo	Mary Jo & Winston Peterson
Alex	Lisa Welke
Spencer Johnson	Ann Perry
Grant	Greg & Stephanie Dossier
Andrew John terSteege	Leon & Kathryn terSteege
Kendra (Sibling)	Cole Lindfors
Kendra	Tom & Terri Lindfors
Bruce	Judith Richart
Paul	Char & Rich Myklebust
Jory Day-Monroe (Sibling)	Seaira Garcia
Jory Day-Monroe (Grandchild)	Mary Klingelhoets
Andrea	Joan & Martin Leeper
Cynthia	Liz Keller
Arthur Colberg	Monica Colberg
Arthur Colberg (Sibling)	Jessica & Brandon Schultz
Persephonee	Chris & Amee Banks
Dawn Ankney	Sharon & Gregory Maidment
Jonathan Townsend	Kelly Townsend
Danny	Georgie Waulk
Sadie Hanson	Dani Hanson
Shayde Erin Rudenick	Steve Rudenick
Gretchen	Susan and Dave Windschitl
Krista Monyhan (Sibling)	Erin Hanson
Krista Monyhan	Dave & Tricia Hanson
Zachary	Connie Theis
Brian	Julia Malmgren
Dylan Colbath	Lisa Colbath
Tony	Tina Mehok
Ryan Trunzo	Scott Wagner & Paula Trunzo

Birthday Table

Birthdays are given special recognition at our meetings. During your child's birthday month, you are invited to bring photos and memorabilia to share and display on our Birthday Table. Some like to sign up to bring a favorite snack or treat (even birthday cake) to celebrate the birthday of their child.

Like the Butterfly

It fluttered above my head
 Weightless in the soft breeze.
 I reached up my hand,
 It lit on my finger.
 Waving glistening wings gently,
 It looked at me for timeless moments.
 I smiled, reaching deep and
 Finding all those cherished memories.
 As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
 I knew we had said hello once more.

Leslie Langford, TCF North Platte, NE

Our Beloved Children...in Our Hearts Always

especially during the Remembrance Month of their death.



May

CHILD	MEMBER
Logan Bruns	Julie & Paul Kingsbury
Caleb	Paul & Perla Morley
Samantha	Julie & John Bangsund
Natalie	Vickie Hackel
Vanessa Marie	Maureen Voltin
Joseph Engles	Deb & Paul Barland
Robby Andrew Wallenberg Bragg	Linda Wallenberg
David Lindgren	Jeff & Jan Bowers
David Lindgren (Siblings)	Adam & Tony Lindgren
Ashley Cochran	Lisa Cochran
Carissa Hayen	Linda Hayen
Scott Tuma	Shirley Tuma
Lori Jensen	Christine Jensen
Mark Richard Peterson	Todd & Helen Peterson
Melissa Marie Vomhof	John & Ruth Vomhof
Julie Marie Olson Topp	Barbara Olson
Arthur Colberg (Nephew)	Marcia & Craig Benham
Arthur Colberg	Monica Colberg
Arthur Colberg (Sibling)	Jessica & Brandon Schultz

June

CHILD	MEMBER
Alex	Kathy Simanek
Daniel Christian Demsky	Barbara & Robert Demsky
Grant	Greg & Stephanie Dossier
Ron Reinert	Sharon Reinert
David	Derwood Twigg
David Andrew Twigg	Selma Twigg
Andrea	Joan & Martin Leeper
JoAnna	Aron & Ruth Wilterding
Krystie Anna (Caregiver)	Patty Beaudry
Krystie Anna	Rick Karl & Bruce Steiger
Ryan Trunzo	Scott Wagner & Paula Trunzo
Zachary	Melanie & Craig Thielke
Dan Lewis	Chris & Bob Lewis
Timothy	Rony & Christine Muzik
Tim	Rozanne & John Puhek
Ashley	Michon Jenkin & Randy Segal
Leon Harwood	Antonia (Flipper) Filipiak
Corey Fetzer-Londer	Cheryl Fetzer
Alec Smith (Siblings)	Alexis, Jamisen & Brittany
Alec Smith	Nicole Smith-Holt & James Holt Jr.
Daniel	Dan & Chevis Peso
Justin Thillman	Sarah Tieszen
Tyler Russell Hill	Sheryl & Allen Hill
Kelsey Eberle	Roxanne & Terry Eberle

TCF's Vision....

*That everyone who needs us will find us
and everyone who finds us will be helped.*

July

CHILD	MEMBER
Amia	Adrienne Pelleg
Tucker	Dana & Kevin O'Brien
Krista Monyhan (Sibling)	Erin Hanson
Charlotte	Jon & Angie Downing
Claire Richards	Gail Manning & David Richards
Krista Monyhan	Dave & Tricia Hanson
Michael	Jean Shilinski
Peter	Eric Strommen
Allyson	Roger Graphenteen
Adrian	John & Stephanie Merfeld
Archer	Kara Amorosi
Adam	Rhoda Michaelynn
Steve Hokemeir	Gail Hokemeir
Rhiley	Mike Henneman
Kate	Scott & Lisa Fronck
Murdoch	Cory Crust
Murdoch	Nicole Crust
Andrew John terSteege	Leon & Kathryn terSteege
Barry Allan Beal	Carol Beal
David	Joan Robson
Chad Goodspeed (Sibling)	Brenna Goodspeed
Chad Goodspeed	Betty Udseth
Luke (Sibling)	Carolyn Crotteau
Luke	Amy & Jason Crotteau
Harriet	Stephen & Fiona Burgdorf
Victor Genis	Argimiro Delgado
Michael DeBruin	Mary & Bob DeBruin
Selene Anderson (Sibling)	Elizabeth Anderson
Selene	Deborah Anderson
Jason McCarthy (Grandson)	Ken & MaryLou Theisen
Brian	Julia Malmgren
Kaare	Kristi Patterson
Alexander	Susan & Ed Herrmann

Awkward Silence

I wish that someone would say his name.
I know my feelings they're trying to spare,
And so we go through the charade, the game,
Of dancing around the ghost that is there,
Trying to avoid evoking a tear,
Or stirring emotions too painful to bear.
That he be forgotten is what I fear,
That no one will even his presence miss,
As if there were no trace that he was here.
Be referring to him, my purpose is
Not to stir pity or keep things the same,
But my heart will simply break if his
Memory will die like a flickering flame.
I just wish someone would say his name.
a poem by Richard Dew, M.D., TCF, Knoxville, TN

The Isolation of Grief

Now, I've never been a stranger to the isolation that comes from feeling like you just don't fit into your surroundings. But I've never felt as isolated in my whole life as I have after the death of my daughter.

As a child, I was a shy, introverted person and often felt different than the people around me. At the time, I never really knew why. While I didn't like the feeling of isolation, I didn't understand what caused it so it just became a fact of life. Over the years my shyness has lessened, but I still prefer interacting with small groups or one-on-one in-person conversations, and still look forward to time alone. I've learned to accept it as my personality, and it works for me.

After my daughter died, my sense of isolation grew exponentially as a result of grief. In the immediate aftermath of her sudden death, our house was filled with family and friends who were showing their support for us and helping us do what had to be done: planning the memorial, visiting the cemetery to secure a plot, working with our insurance company requirements, etc. They prepared meals, made sure we were left alone when we needed our space, gave us hugs, and shed tears with us. The phone rang often, and I found myself doing most of the talking when the other end of the phone was uncomfortably silent as people struggled to find the right words to say. Even in my numbness, I was able to understand the dilemma of "I'm sorry" doesn't seem to be enough when someone has just lost a four-year-old little girl.

A few days after the memorial service, everyone went home. Less sympathy cards arrived in the mail until there were none. The phone stopped ringing. Our daughter's preschool arranged a weekly meal donation and then my work did the same, which was a huge help...but eventually those stopped coming too. We were left alone to figure out how to pick up the pieces of our shattered hearts and shattered lives. We went to counseling and support groups. But we were forced to accept the fact that life was going to keep moving forward without our precious girl in it. It was devastating.

That devastation led me to a self-imposed isolation from a world I could no longer stand to be a part of. I didn't want to talk to people who couldn't understand my pain because I didn't want to have to explain myself. The sound of laughter or gossip produced outright anger in me. The everyday acts of going to work, chores, grocery shopping, or even something as simple as showering were agonizingly painful and almost impossible. I wanted nothing to do with any of it. I found myself not answering the phone and not returning messages. I turned down invitations to get together with friends who weren't sure how to help me.

I managed to make sure that I fed my surviving kids and took them to school and practices, but I was no longer the mom they were used to. They stopped wanting to talk to me about how they felt because they knew it would make me even sadder, and they were frightened that not only did they lose their sister, but there was a potential that their mom was losing her ability to take care of them.

Over that first year or so, the suffocating pain began to lessen, though not by as much as I would have hoped. I got better at doing those everyday tasks that didn't seem so impossible anymore. I began to adjust to the "new normal" any grieving person must accept.

Then the isolation of grief began to change. While I started answering the phone and accepting some of those invitations, I felt isolated in the sense that I continued to think of my daughter and experience the pain constantly, but very few people talked about my grief or even mentioned her name any more. I felt completely alone.

Support groups and counseling helped. So did reaching out to other parents who had lost children, and I preferred their company over others. I found myself part of the secret society of grieving parents who mostly keep their grief to

themselves and only share it with those who understand because they are faced with the same loss and pain. I found that sharing my feelings with these people helped me immensely.

Now that more time has passed, I am learning how to balance becoming fully reinvested in life while respecting my continuing needs for grief support. I still look forward to support groups and talking with other bereaved people, but I also appreciate that when I allow myself to enjoy and appreciate everyday life, joy will come even without my daughter being physically here.

Despite my continued longing for her to be at my side and the ability to experience the wonder of watching her grow, I know that she will always be with me in spirit. She is forever in my heart, my memories, and my thoughts. And these days, I don't mind sharing that with anyone who cares to get to know me.

Maria Kubitz, TCF Contra Costa County, CA
In Memory of my daughter, Margareta

Bent But Not Broken

To the Mother who has lost her only child, or has no surviving children, the thought of Mother's Day sends a stabbing pain that only the ones of us who are in this situation can understand. We begin to notice Mother's Day cards slipped in right after Valentine's Day along with the Easter cards. Even before Easter the TV advertising starts. We try to blot this all out but our subconscious keeps reminding us, the day is coming closer.

For the first two years we celebrated Mother's Day for my mother and sister very quietly. The third year after my daughter Shawna's death, we decided to go to a local restaurant featuring a nice buffet. We arrived early hoping to avoid the crowd. A very flustered hostess greeted us and found a table for us. The tables had been pushed close together to accommodate more people. It was already becoming very crowded. She asked the question, "How many Mothers?" It was then we noticed the flowers she was carrying. Someone managed to stammer out, three- three- Mothers. She handed us each a flower, while glancing around to find a table for the next group of people. She didn't notice the one she handed me was pretty battered.

My sister wanted to give me hers or get another. "No, it's ok," I said. The stem was bent, but not broken completely. A wilted tired flower was hanging from the stem. I brought it home and propped it up in a glass of water to revive it. You see, I could identify with that flower.

As a Mother without my child, I have felt so bruised and battered. Somehow through all the pain, tears, and loneliness, like the flower, I have been bent but never quite broken.

Donna Frechec,
TCF Enid, OK





The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

c/o St. Joseph Parish Community
8701 36th Ave N
New Hope MN 55427

The Minneapolis Chapter of The Compassionate Friends operates solely with voluntary donations. While there are no dues or subscription fees, donations to help support our Chapter's efforts are much appreciated. Funds are used for meeting supplies, rent, newsletter printing/postage, and more. Gifts in any amount are appreciated. Please consider a \$10 annual donation if you are receiving a printed, mailed newsletter.

Thank you for your consideration!

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