



Jan- Feb 2023

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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Charlotte, NC*

MONTHLY MEETING

Meeting place: St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235

Meeting Time: 3rd Tuesday of Each Month at 7:00 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Our monthly chapter meetings will take place on 1/17/23 and 2/21/23

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!!

We congratulate you on having the courage to walk through our door for the first time. Please give our meetings at least 3 tries before deciding if they are right for you. We hope, with the resources available through TCF, you will find the right person or the right words to help you. You Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends.

TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS:

We need your encouragement and support. TCF continues because of YOU. You give hope to the newly bereaved - hope that they too can eventually find joy in life again. Please attend when you feel you are able to reach out to another bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling.

Did you know that TCF Charlotte has its own Facebook page? Just search in facebook groups for - Compassionate Friends of Charlotte, NC

LIKE our Facebook page and please post any article, quote or personal musings that you feel may help another member. All information for meetings and special events will be listed on our facebook page.

PLEASE VISIT US ON OUR WEBPAGE!!

WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART OF TCF CHARLOTTE STEERING COMMITTEE?

We need your help. Volunteering to be on our Steering Committee is a wonderful way to give back to the organization that helped you when you were starting your grief journey, and what better way to keep your child, grandchild or sibling's memory alive? Contact any of the leaders at our meetings if you would like more information. We need YOUR help to ensure our Chapter is as successful as possible in helping others. This is YOUR Chapter - help us make it a welcoming and caring place for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings to come to for help.

Our Chapter survives by donations only. There are costs associated with the Chapter, i.e., supplies, books, refreshments, food and supplies for our annual events, and our fee for our website. PLEASE help support our Chapter!!! Please consider donating to your Chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling on their special days or during the holidays. What better thing to do in their memory than to pay it forward for the help you have received from TCF.

You can also help your chapter by being a Steering Committee Member. Just contact one of our chapter leaders. We have lots of different areas that we need help in.

TCF Charlotte would like to thank these members for their generous donation to support our chapter. Lois Clark and Scott Higgins, in memory of their son Chris. Susan Fletcher, in memory of her son Michael.

Please Mail All Donations to Our TCF Charlotte Treasurer at The
Following Address:
Carolyn Patton
5902 Rimerton Drive
Charlotte, NC 28226-8227

Candle Lighting

It was lovely to see so many chapter members and their families at the Candle Lighting event in December. It had been three years since we were able to hold this cherished event in person. The candle lighting service was

started 26 years ago and is held annually the first Sunday in December. It gives us the opportunity to grieve openly and constructively but also to share joyful memories, meet family members and share a meal. I trust that everyone who attended the event left with some hope in their heart. It is a most companionable way to do that hard "grief work". The Charlotte chapter would like to thank the following members who contributed to the planning, preparation and presentation of the Candle Lighting event, Donna and Ralph Goodrich, Lesa and Alan Hartranft, Susan Fletcher, Candy Benish, Karen Howard, Connie Tobey, Caitlin Copeland and Scott Higgins. It takes a team, and we could not have done it without you!

We Are Thankful

We have a special angel in our Charlotte chapter of TCF. Her name is Martha Currie. You likely received a warm, heartfelt card on your child's birthday and angel date. Martha, who is a grieving mother and grandmother, sends them every month on behalf of TCF. She does this out of the goodness of her heart, not because she was asked to but because she wants to. At our last meeting, a couple mentioned how much they appreciated these cards. It lets members know that, even if they don't attend meetings that we are still there for them. Thank you Martha for the generosity of you time and effort to warm the hearts of our members.

TO OUR MEMBERS

If there are any errors in dates or names in our listing of our children's, grandchildren's or sibling's, please let me know. We are trying to get our database as accurate as possible. Many of our loved one's names do not have a last name listed. In these cases, we assume it is the same as the parent, grandparent or sibling who is listed as a member in our database. If this is incorrect, please let me know. There are many names that do not have a birth date or a death date listed. We know this can be very difficult to list, especially in the early days of grief. If you feel like adding those dates, just email them to me at: fletcher1mom@gmail.com. We are only human so we do make mistakes, but I have tried to be as accurate as I possibly can. Thank you for understanding.

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
JANUARY

Gabriel Jordon Arethas 1/24
Willi Blottman 1/25
Michael Rodas 1/5
Frank Chen 1/20
Dennis Darrell 1/10
Stacy Glickman 1/19
Cynthia Boza 1/24
Ryan Hartranft 1/12
Sergio Huerta Jr. 1/11
Matthew Jackson 1/2
Adyson Faith Mendicino 1/24
Jeanna Norton 1/28
Raymond Pierce 1/13
Anthony John Pijerov 1/5
Steven Vaughn Ray 1/27
Daniel Joseph Schrieber 1/10
Ryan Scott 1/16
Corey Smith 1/16
Joseph Matranga 1/6
Aubrey Wiger 1/1982
Robert Wylie 1/29

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
JANUARY

Jeremiah Bellard 1/27
Edward Stephens 1/6
Trenton James Scott 1/31
Tess Crespi 1/20

Sammie Crespi 1/20
Adam Dixon 1/30
Cynthia Boza 1/14
Lauren Marshall 1/30
Karson Whitesell 1/23
Ryan Hartranft 1/15
Tommy Horton 1/21
Diana Phillipi 1/20
Isaiah Pinkney 1/13
Gevaughnti Lawson 1/5
Jacki Grinstead 1/11
Mason Crist Heller 1/15
Scott Lee 1/9
Kristin Stinson 1/11
Paul McGrath 1/22
Michael McKinley 1/9
Bobby O'Shea 1/7
Michael Ragone 1/17
Amanda Lee Stanley 1/22
Phillip Templeton 1/15
Christopher John Thorne 1/25
Matthew Wright 1/28
Joseph Matrenga 1/8
Denis Anthony Giacobbe 1/18
Robert Wylie 1/18

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
FEBRUARY

El Barnhill 2/18
Laura Barrowman 2/26
Stephen Benish 2/3
Chet DeMilio 2/10
Brian Courtemanchie 2/3
Jessica Cudd 2/22
Ben Huff 2/21

Karson Whitesell 2/18
Jordi Bone 2/8
Jacob Preston Penrow 2/24
Jeramiah Karriker 2/17
Rickey Buchanan 2/25
Natalie Rose Ruiz 2/1
Jonah L. Gray 2/18
Austin McRee 2/16
Chaylan Tucker 2/7
Jaqueline Nicholson 2/13
David Patton 2/25
Jameel Pearse 2/28
Adam Powalski 2/4
Ben Huff 2/21
Kirsten Ashley Whicker 2/21
Phillip Templeton 2/12
Chris Taylor 2/23
Zachary Michael Tobey 2/4
Laura McDermott 2/10

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
FEBRUARY

Sam Wallace 2/22
Jack Hicks 2/24
Brad Aylward 2/9
Laura Barrowman 2/28
Frank Chen 2/11
Kevin Goodnight 2/17
Brendan Cullen 2/24
Bobby Dowling 2/28
Mike Goepp 2/11
Christopher Cullen 2/8
Brady Hopkins 2/1
Sean McCormick 2/17
Russell Kershaw 2/28

Jeannie Liebertz 2/12
Missy Minor 2/26
Natalie Rose Ruiz 2/1
Jason Lubeznik 2/16
Corey S. Flint 2/2
Richard McPeck 2/8
Aiden Miller 2/25
Stephanie Midkiff 2/3
James O'Keefe 2/19
David Patton 2/25
Adam Mashburn 2/24
Kirsten Ashley Whicker 2/7
Max Rudie 2/24
Christina Rupp 2/12
Robert Paul Alexy 2/25
"Danny" Gary Scott 2/24
Allie Brown 2/21
Jason Smart 2/17
Keeghan Drake McCormack 2/22
Martha Charlotte VonDietman 2/26
Elliot Grayson Thomas 2/13

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 facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all 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. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for 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
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

[Helping Yourself Heal When Your Child Dies](#)
by [Center for Loss](#) | Dec 15, 2016 | [Articles](#)
by [Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.](#)

"The experience of grief is powerful. So, too, is your ability to help yourself heal. In doing the work of grieving, you are moving toward a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in your life."

~ ~ ~

Allow yourself to mourn

Your child has died. You are now faced with the difficult, but important, need to mourn. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings regarding the death of your child. It is an essential part of healing.

With the death of your child, your hopes, dreams and plans for the future are turned upside down. You are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, and overwhelming. The death of a child results in the most profound bereavement. In fact, sometimes your feelings of grief may be so intense that you do not understand what is happening. This article provides practical suggestions to help you move toward healing in your personal grief experience.

Realize your grief is unique

Your grief is unique. The unique child you loved and cared for so deeply had died. No one, including your spouse, will grieve in exactly the same way you do. Your grief journey will be influenced not only by the relationship you had with your child, but also by the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system and your cultural and religious background.

As a result, you will grieve in your own unique way. Don't try to compare your experience with that of others or adopt assumptions about just how long your grief should last. Consider taking a "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

Allow yourself to feel numb

Feeling dazed or numb when your child dies may well be a part of your early grief experience. You may feel as if the world has suddenly come to a halt. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you.

You may feel you are in a dream-like state and that you will wake up and none of this will be true. These feelings of numbness and disbelief help insulate you from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.

This death is "out of order"

Because the more natural order is for parents to precede their children in death, you must readapt to a new and seemingly illogical reality. This shocking reality says that even though you are older and have been the protector and provider, you have survived while your child has not. This can be so difficult to comprehend.

Not only has the death of your child violated nature's way, where the young grow up and replace the old, but your personal identity was tied to your child. You may feel impotent and wonder why you couldn't have protected your child from death. Such thoughts are normal and will naturally soften over time as you explore and express them.

Expect to feel a multitude of emotions

The death of your child can result in a variety of emotions. Confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, anger and relief are just a few of the emotions you may feel. Sometimes these emotions will follow each other within a short period of time. Or they may occur simultaneously.

As strange as some of these emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy. Allow yourself to learn from these feelings. And don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times. These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. They are, however, a natural response to the death of your child. Find someone who understands your feelings and will allow you to talk about them.

Be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued. Your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired. And your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Don't expect yourself to be as available to your spouse, surviving children, and friends as you might otherwise be.

Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Nurture yourself. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Lighten your schedule as much as possible. Caring for yourself doesn't mean you are feeling sorry for yourself. It means you are using survival skills.

Talk about your grief

Express your grief openly. When you share your grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better. Allow yourself to speak from your heart, not just your head. Doing so doesn't mean you are losing control or going "crazy." It is a normal part of your grief journey.

Watch out for clichés

Clichés—trite comments some people make in attempts to diminish your loss—can be extremely painful for you to hear. Comments like, "You are holding up so well," "Time heals all wounds," "Think of what you have to be thankful for" or "You have to be strong for others" are not constructive. While these comments may be well-intended, you do not have to accept them. You have every right to express your grief. No one has the right to take it away.

Develop a support system

Reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate self-action you can do at this difficult time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Seek out those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings, whatever they are.

A support group may be one of the best ways to help yourself. In a group, you can connect with other parents who have experienced the death of a child. You will be allowed and gently encouraged to talk about your child as much, and as often, as you like.

Sharing the pain won't make it disappear, but it can ease any thoughts that what you are experiencing is crazy, or somehow bad. Support comes in different forms for different people — support groups, counseling, friends, faith—find out what combination works best for you and try to make use of them.

Embrace your treasure of memories

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of a child. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends.

Keep in mind that memories can be tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love — no one can take them away from you.

Gather important keepsakes

You may want to collect some important keepsakes that help you treasure your memories. You may want to create a memory book, which is a collection of photos that represent your child's life. Some people create memory boxes to keep special keepsakes in. Then, whenever you want, you can open your memory box and embrace those special memories. The reality that your child has died does not diminish your need to have these objects. They are a tangible, lasting part of the special relationship you had with your child.

Embrace your spirituality

If faith is part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you are angry at God because of the death of your child, realize this feeling as a normal part of your grief work. Find someone to talk with who won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may hear someone say, “With faith, you don’t need to grieve.” Don’t believe it. Having your personal faith does not insulate you from needing to talk out and explore your thoughts and feelings. To deny your grief is to invite problems to build up inside you. Express your faith, but express your grief as well.

Move toward your grief and heal

To restore your capacity to love you must grieve when your child dies. You can’t heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Embrace your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Never forget that the death of your child changes your life forever. It’s not that you won’t be happy again, it’s simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the child died.

How Do We Face Valentine’s Day When Someone We Love Has Died?

A February Tip Sheet

The calendar turns another month, and here is February staring at us. We’ve just regrouped from the holiday season and the New Year, only to confront yet another reminder of the loss of our loved one. For some, Valentine’s Day itself may not stir up much grief, but themes that relate to it — love, relationship, togetherness — can be hard to handle when grieving the loss of a loved one. We can take steps, however, to nurture our hearts during this holiday and help ease the pain of our grief. Feeling Overwhelmed? First, we need to acknowledge how we are feeling and talk about our feelings with someone we can trust, someone who can really listen. We might call a therapist, counselor, minister, rabbi, or other faith practitioner; attend a bereavement support group; etc. We need to be gentle with ourselves, practice good self-care, and remember we are grieving in just the right way for us. If we are not sure whether what we’re feeling is “normal,” and especially if we’re not eating or sleeping well, are crying uncontrollably, or are unable to manage basic activities of daily living, we need to recognize that our grief has become overwhelming and we need help. Call your local bereavement manager who can help further explore what you are feeling and can make recommendations for grief resources and support. Reminders of Love Even if our distress is not acute, an event like Valentine’s Day can still take the wind out of our sails. This holiday often

brings back memories of our loved one and reminds us of the void we feel without them. One woman described it this way: ““ My mom died 10 years ago after a slow decline into Alzheimer’s. She’s been on my mind a lot lately. I got one of her rings restored as a gift to myself so I could carry a bit of her wherever I went. As time passes and changes happen in my life, I wish she were here to comfort and reassure me. Valentine’s was a day she always gifted me with some ‘from-me-to-you’ reminder of her love. Now she gifts me during my quiet time, when I imagine her and think about her. I hear familiar words from her echo in me. I find I continue to be loved and companioned by her. ”

There are ways to help ourselves on Valentine’s Day when we are grieving the loss of a loved one. First, it helps to anticipate not whether, but how grief will show up, and have a plan in place to manage it. It also helps to remember that we might be surprised ...

Sometimes the anticipation of the holiday is worse than the day itself!

Here are some practical tips on managing Valentine’s Day grief: • Write a letter to your loved one. • Light a candle or buy a bouquet of roses in honor of him or her. • Gift yourself with a special Valentine’s present, maybe flowers or chocolates. • Make a special meal with someone where you can share memories of your loved one. • Look at photo albums and reminisce. • Soothe yourself with music, prayer, uplifting literature, tears, and laughter. • Make a list of the ways your loved one enriched your life and continues to influence you. • Visit favorite places from your life with your loved one and savor the memories. Do something your loved one enjoyed. • Surround yourself with people who love and support you. • Draw comfort from doing for others. Consider giving a donation or gift in memory of our loved one. The most important thing to remember is: There is no right or wrong way to celebrate Valentine’s Day after the death of a loved one. The best way to cope is to plan ahead, get support from others, take care of ourselves, and experience whatever emotions arise — be it joy, sadness, anger — to allow ourselves to fully grieve. Special days like Valentine’s Day play a role in helping us keep the memories of our loved ones alive.

Vitas Health Care

Grief and Valentine’s Day

I don’t want to alarm you, but I just had a look at the calendar, and it’s almost Valentine’s Day. I know some of you were planning to skip from February 13 straight to February 15, but I can’t let you do that because then you’d be living a day ahead of everyone, and you’d miss all your appointments and favorite TV.

Valentine’s day is one of those “*I appreciate you*” holidays, like Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. As such, there’s a whole faction of people who would prefer to ignore the

holiday altogether...you know...because the person they're supposed to appreciate is dead.

I won't go into all the reasons why grief and Valentine's Day don't mix well; if the day is hard for you, you already have an idea why. What I thought we could do is discuss a few options for making it through the day.

1. Take the day to be completely miserable. It's okay to be unhappy, and this is one day when you're not alone in your misery — a lot of people hate Valentine's Day!

2. Ignore the day altogether. Ignore the obnoxious jewelry commercials. Ignore the cards, ignore the chocolates, ignore the girl sitting next to you at the doctor's office chatting on her cell phone about her romantic plans. Actually...you know what? Just stay home...stay home and don't turn on the TV.

I can sense you're beginning to lose confidence in my suggestions. It's not realistic to pretend the day doesn't exist, and you don't *really* want to spend the day feeling miserable. So let me offer one more suggestion.

3. Reframe how you think about the day.

Typically when we think of Valentine's Day, we think of romance. That's why the day is stereotypically hard on people who don't have a "date." But look deeper, and you see at the heart of the day is 'love' (pun wholly intended). Valentine's day *ought* to be about giving and receiving love of ALL kinds.

I can hear some of you starting to groan. Stop that; it's not as cheesy as it sounds, and you can embrace Valentine's Day in all sorts of ways, big and small.

Friend and Family Love:

Big Steps

- Invite a group of people over for a casual get together or dinner party.
- Plan a night out with others who have experienced the same loss. Acknowledge the day is hard, but make it your goal to have fun and laugh. Go to the movies and see a comedy, have a game night, bowl, go to a comedy club, sing karaoke.
- Allow your children to pick an activity. Let them dream as big as your budget will allow. Grieving children need opportunities to have good, healthy fun, and seeing them smile will warm your heart a bit. Don't be afraid to acknowledge that being together as a family highlights who is missing and take every chance you get to remember and talk about your loved one, even if it's just to say, "Dad would have loved this."

Small Steps

- Let someone close to you know you are feeling down but don't want to be alone. Invite them over for a quiet night in.
 - Have a movie night with your kids. Choose to watch feel-good movies like comedies, animation, or cheesy old classics. Order pizza and put on your PJs.
 - Send a card or flowers to a friend or family member who you know is also feeling down on Valentine's Day. Perhaps they are grieving the same loss you are, or they have experienced some other hardship. Let them know they are not alone.
-

Stranger Love:

Big Steps

- Volunteering your time with an organization or charity is an excellent way to interact and connect with people while also helping others. Consider choosing an organization your loved one would have supported and tell yourself you're doing it in his/her honor.
- Attend or join a group of any kind. I'm leaving this broad for a reason. Support groups are an excellent way to receive and give support, but there is also benefit in joining any group that gathers around something you like. Camera clubs, choirs, prayer groups, widow/widower happy hours, you name it; they all allow for the benefit of human interaction and recreation.
- Set out to do 5 acts of kindness throughout the day. Big or small, they will put more love into the world and will have the added consequence of letting you feel good about yourself.

Small Steps

- Write a letter. Write to anyone. Write to an organization or professional you think is doing a good job. Write to an individual you know who is struggling. Write to a child or adolescent you want to encourage. Write to your deceased loved one.
 - Make a monetary donation. Make it in honor of your loved one for the amount you might have spent on dinner and a movie.
 - Set out to do 1 act of kindness during the day.
-

Love for Yourself:

All Kind of Steps

- Recognize your limitations. Don't push yourself into an activity you're not up to.

- Treat yourself. Taking budget into consideration, take yourself out for a day of relaxation – whatever that means to you. It may be a spa treatment, retail therapy, or a monster truck rally; as long as it relieves stress or makes you smile, anything goes.
- Deliberately set aside time to engage in any activity that helps you cope with grief – exercise, yoga, journaling, art, etc.
- Allow yourself to be really present with your loved one’s memory and allow yourself to cry for as long as you like. We all have our rituals and reminders that make us feel close to deceased loved ones, go ahead and engage in them.
- Believe that next year will be a little bit easier.

Whats Your Grief
Feb. 10, 2014

Winter is Still Here, Often Making Grieving Even Harder

Here we are. The start of the new year, and we’re also settling into wintertime.

AND, on top of wintertime, we are having a covid surge once again, so isolating from others, canceling of social events and less interaction with the outside world adds grief to our grief, when we are grieving.

Here’s what I start to see right about now in my grief counseling practice.

Some clients say, “OH, it’s so hard to be grieving in the wintertime.” Their reasons are that it’s dark and dreary, compounded often with bad weather, making it harder to get motivated, to want to get out of bed, to have energy to be productive, exercise or tackle a to-do list.

Some clients say, “OH, it’s a little easier to be grieving in the wintertime.” Their reasons are that it’s easier to “hibernate” and “be alone” in the winter when other people too are spending more indoors than outdoors.

They don’t feel they are expected to be as joyful as they might have to feel in the summertime when their friends and family are going to the beach, having barbecues, taking weekend getaways and playing outdoor sports.

Whichever way you look at it, grief is hard in ALL FOUR SEASONS. But, for sure, grief in the wintertime is challenging.

Why Is Wintertime Hard For Grievers

The experts at whatsyourgrief.com (a website I HIGHLY recommend) give 8 reasons for wintertime being the worst for grievers.

1. **Lack of sunlight.** This leads to a lack of vitamin d and a drop in the neurotransmitter serotonin. Leaves you tired and “blue” and maybe even irritable.
2. **Cabin fever.** Too much time spent indoors can lead to restlessness, depression, and irritability and too much time inside spend thinking difficult thoughts and emotions with little relief from it.
3. **Social isolations.** If you’re already prone towards isolating yourself while grieving, you’ll be more prone to isolate during bad weather and shorter days. Being alone too much can impact negatively on your physical and emotional health.
4. **Not moving enough.** Even a small amount of physical movement can boost your emotional and physical health. In the winter, people are less inclined to do so given the bad weather, poor road conditions. That’s when it’s even more important to try to join a gym or exercise with a Youtube video at home, just to move around even a little.
5. **Poor eating.** Yes, grief often equals comfort food. And it’s known that in the wintertime, people indulge in food more. Be careful to not give yourself too much permission to overindulge during grief periods.
6. **It’s cold.**
7. **You’re sad.** Winter starts with holidays that grievers find sad, nostalgic and is closely followed by the winter blues (blahs) with a whole lot of cold, dark weeks ahead.
8. **You’re experiencing SAD.** Seasonal Affective Disorder affects some more than others. It is a subtype of major depression and the symptoms occur in fall and early Winter and recede during the Spring. Having the SAD disorder naturally can complicate the griever’s ability to cope during the winter months.

Jill S. Cohen

Family Grief Counselor

January 1

When we are drawn into the brotherhood or sisterhood of loss, tenderness seems to be our natural state. We are so vulnerable. Everything brushes against the raw wound of our grief, reminding us of what we have lost, triggering memories—a tilt of the head, a laugh, a way of walking, a touch, a particular conversation. These images are beads strung together on the necklace of loss. Tenderly, we turn them again and again. We cannot bear them. We cannot let them go.

Then, gradually, bit by bit, the binding thread of grief somehow transmutes, reconstitutes itself as a thread of treasured memories—a tilt of the head, a laugh, a way of walking, a touch, a particular conversation as gifts from a life we shared with the one we have lost, gifts that can never be taken away.

From: Healing After Loss

Martha Whitmore Hickman

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

I'm going to begin this letter the same way I did last January 1st, and that is to applaud you for making it through the holidays. It wasn't easy. You were dreading it! It was painful! But here we are on the other side of January first, and we are breathing! You did the "grief work"!

I am always open to suggestions from our chapter members. If you find something such as article, story, photo or poem that you comforting or supportive and want to share, please send it to me. I would welcome your ideas.

I wish you all a peaceful, healthy, healing new year. I hope 2023 brings you all good things.

Love,

Susan

Michael's mom

