



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May-June 2023

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

CO-LEADERS: Susan Fletcher, Lesa Hartranft & Scott Higgins

Sibling Coordinator - Courtney Langdon

NEWSLETTER: Susan Fletcher
704.534-8332

PHONE: 980-938-4589

E-MAIL: tcf.clt@gmail.com

WEBSITE: WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG

Facebook Page: *Compassionate Friends of*

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.
May 16, 2023 and June 20, 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 20, 2023- Chapter Leadership Training. St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Rooms 239/240/241 8:00-5:00

46th TCF National Conference. July 7-9, 2023. Denver, Colorado

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

WELCOME & Chapter Info.....2

Donations & Chapter Needs.....3

Remembering Our Children’s Birthdays and Angel Dates.....4

Angels Among Us.....7

Anticipating Mother’s Day.....8

Mother’s Day.....9

We Don’t Recover from Grief and That is OK.....12

How To Grieve and Cope with the Loss Of a Sibling.....13

A Letter From the Editor.....17

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Regional Coordinators for NC and SC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Phone Number: 980-938-4589
E-mail: iluvu2lauren@gmail.com

NATIONAL OFFICE

The Compassionate Friends
(877-969-0010)
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

online private closed facebook pages:
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/>

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.

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



TCF 46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023
■ DENVER, CO ■

July 7, 2023-July 9, 2023
Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202

Chapter Leadership Training in Charlotte

The TCF National Office will be holding a Chapter Leadership Training Class in Charlotte on Saturday May 20th. The class will run from 8:00 - 5:00 and will be held at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte in Room 234/235. Any chapter leaders or members of the Steering Committee are welcome to attend. Attendance is free and a continental breakfast and lunch are included. Chapter funds can

be used for hotel rooms if needed. Please send name, chapter affiliation, email address and phone number to Donna Goodrich - iluvu2lauren@gmail.com or call - 980-938-4589.

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 ones 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 - MAY

Kathryn Anderson 5/26
Robert Ankrah 5/30
G. Stone Barnett 5/18
Kevin Bell 5/16
Chip Day 5/31
Michael Gregory Finlay 5/2
Jack Morgan 5/26
Steve Hale 5/9
Michael Howard 5/15
David Paul Jackson 5/25
Jeremy Jenkins 5/8
Carl S. Olsen 5/6
Erica Lubeznik 5/4
Timmy Manus 5/14

Amber Johnson 5/5
Richard McPeck 5/4
Erica Dawn Mesarus 5/15
Ayriel E. Moore 5/9
Michael Ragone 5/31
Joshua R. Holden 5/4
Brianna Rae 5/4
Allie Brown 5/17
Allen Doak 5/31
Erin K. Lynch 5/30
Delbert Perry 5/11
William Rebain 5/31

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
MAY

Dylan Burke Hahn 5/3
Andrew Michael Chester 5/14
Drew Wright 5/29
Jessica Cudd 5/10
Ben Huff 5/7
Dennis Darrell 5/18
Jeffrey Michael Hunt 5/20
Daniel James 5/21
Ashton Sweet 5/31
Greg Kemp 5/?
Rickey Buchanan 5/18
William Buchanan 5/28
Sean Patrick Logan 5/26
Ben Longenecker 5/10
Michael Mahoney 5/3
Timmy Manus 5/13
Austin McRee 5/20
Jenna Ryan 5/8
Daniel Joseph Schrieber 5/18
Keandra Sheats 5/2
Cory Smith 5/28

Baby O. Turner 5/8
Nicole C. Willis 5/3
Xavier Brown 5/21
David Keziah 5/3
Matthew J. Randolph 5/4
Ryan Scott 5/1

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
JUNE

Felix Barraclough 6/6
Julian Alexander Barron 6/23
Jeremiah Bellard 6/23
Frankie Curra 6/13
Brian Yaniszweski 6/23
John Joseph Gabriel, Jr. 6/6
Christopher Diehl 6/21
Kevin Goodnight 6/26
Tarell Cooper 6/19
Kaleb Grant 6/28
Amanda Kendall Barbee 6/15
Brittney Lambert 6/22
Jeannie Liebertz 6/8
Jacki Grimstead 6/30
Scott Lee 6/9
Benjamin Elliot Owens 6/1
Kiara Pearse 6/12
Cherlyn Jane Crawford 6/7
Christopher Ross 6/25
Danny Gary Scott 6/17
Joseph Sharp 6/22
Brian Yaniszwski 6/23
Jason Lucas Armstrong 6/25
Jamaall Miller 6/7
David Keziah 6/15
Tyler Lynn 6/29
Michael Rebain 6/22
Martha Charlotte Von Dietman 6/5
Kelsey Anne Ward 6/17

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
JUNE

Gabriel Jordan 6/6
Julian Alexander Barron 6/23
Michelle H. Beebe 6/3
Christopher Brown 6/2
Lauren Campbell 6/21
Chip Day 6/14
Emily Lauren Upton 6/1
Christopher Flower 6/16
Stacey Glickman 6/15
Kaleb Grant 6/22
Caitlin Taylor Patton 6/22
Kristopher Hartung 6/15
David Paul Jackson 6/21
Jacquetta Johnson 6/10
Richard Maxwell 6/21
Adyson Faith Mendicino 6/24
Elizabeth Messer 6/24
Christina Michailidis 6/8
Eric Lemarier 6/27
Blake Carlton 6/16
Anthony John Pijerov 6/8
Heath Graves 6/5
Andrew John Wesley 6/2
Gabriel Jordon 6/6
Jimmy Zacharias 6/8
Amanda Jean Ziegler 6/25
Michael Rbain 6/22
Emily Lauren Upton 6/1
Delbert Perry 6/

Angels Among Us

Our Angels are among us
We see them everyday
In all the forms that God created...
They are with us along life's way.

We see them in the sunrise,
That brightens and warms our soul.
We feel them in the summer breeze
That chases away our cold.

They are there among the flowers...
Their sweet scent a memory of love.
They soar with the eagles,
As they fly so high above.

The night will find them in the stars,
Lighting our path below.
And even in our dreams,
Their presence we'll still know.

As the snow melts with the sun,
And spring flowers peek through their beds,
They come on the wings of butterflies,
And flutter about our heads.

They are telling us they are with us,
And will be forever more...
Until it's time for us to meet again,
As we pass through heaven's door.

Anticipating Mother's Day

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days past.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it. Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

This is the fifth Mother's Day I have endured since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself.... "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

While my first Mother's Day was filled with tears, subsequent Mother's Days have been more subdued.

The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

Some of us plan the day carefully. Some of us just "go with the flow." Some of us weep; some of us work. Some of us read, some of us revel in this special moment set aside just for mothers. Each of us makes a choice that is based on our own truth.

The day itself is not nearly as overwhelming as the buildup of anxiety and sadness which precedes it. I have found this to be true of all holidays, birthdays, death anniversaries and special occasions. I am trying to live in the moment. When the moment of Mother's Day happens, I will decide what I should do. I refuse to let others pressure me. I refuse to become maudlin over greeting card commercials and heart-grabbing point-of-purchase marketing efforts. I will not be manipulated by the agenda of others.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's day is coming soon. That will be anundoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's

day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and re-reading of that one last card - "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" - will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".

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

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

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

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

We Don't Recover From Grief, and that's Okay

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF / UNDERSTANDING GRIEF: ELEANOR HALEY

After some discussion with our insightful readers, we're adding a brief preface to this article. We feel it's important to clarify upfront that when we say we don't recover from grief or experience "grief recovery", we do NOT mean that we don't recover from the intense pain of loss. It is important for all grieving people – despite their loss and experiences – to believe in the hope for healing. No one should expect to live with the anguish associated with acute grief forever.

Our belief is that grief encompasses more than just pain. We believe that over time grief changes shape and involves many different experiences and emotions – some of these experiences may be painful – like a milestone or the anniversary of a loved one's death – but some of them may be comforting – like warm memories and the enduring role that your loved one plays in your life. With that, the original article is presented below.

I need to tell you that, in the face of significant loss, we don't "recover" from grief.

Yes, I'm using the royal "we" because you and I are all a part of this club.

I also need to tell you that that *not* recovering from grief doesn't doom you to a life of despair. Let me reassure you, there are millions of people out there, right now, living normal and purposeful lives while also experiencing ongoing grief.

All the things you've heard about getting over grief, going back to normal, and moving on – they are misrepresentations of what it means to love someone who has died. I'm sorry, I know us human-people appreciate things like closure and resolution, but this isn't how grief goes.

This isn't to say that "recovery" doesn't have a place in grief – it's simply 'what' we're recovering from that needs to be redefined. To "recover" means to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength, and as many would attest, when someone very significant dies, we never return to a pre-loss "normal". The loss, the person who died, our grief – they all get integrated into our lives and they profoundly change how we live and experience the world.

What will, hopefully, return to a general baseline is the level of intense emotion, stress, and distress that a person experiences in the weeks and months following their loss. So perhaps we recover from the intense distress of grief, but we don't recover from the grief itself.

Now you could say that I'm getting caught up in semantics, but sometimes semantics matter. Especially, when trying to describe an experience that, for so many, is unfamiliar and frightening. Grief is one of those experiences you can never fully understand until you actually experience it and, until that time, all a person has to go on is what they've observed and what they've been told.

The words we use to label and describe grief matter and, in many ways, these words have been getting us into trouble for decades. In the context of grief, words like denial, detachment, unresolved, recovery, and acceptance (to name a few) could be interpreted many different ways and some of these interpretations offer false impressions and false promises.

Interestingly, when many of these words were first used by grief theorists starting in the early 20th century, their intent was to help *describe* grief. I have no doubt that in the contexts in which they were working, these words and their operational definitions were useful and effective. It's when these descriptions reach our broader society without explanation or nuance, or when they are misapplied by those who position themselves as experts – that they go terribly awry.

So going back to the beginning, we don't recover from grief after the loss of someone significant. Grief is born when someone significant dies – and as long as that person remains significant – grief will remain.

Sure, people may push you to stop feeling the pain, but this is misguided. If the pain always exists, it makes sense, because there will never come a day when you won't wish for one more moment, one more conversation, one last hello, or one last goodbye. You learn to live with these wishes and you learn to accept that they won't come true – not here on Earth – but you still wish for them.

And let me reassure you, experiencing pain doesn't negate the potential for healing. With [constructive coping](#) and maybe a little support, the intensity of your distress will lessen and your healing will evolve over time. Though there will be many ups and downs, you should eventually reach a place where you're having just as many good days as bad...and then perhaps more good days than bad...until one day you may find that your bad grief days are few and far between.

But the grief, it's always there, like an old injury that aches when it rains. And though this prospect may be scary in the early days of grief, I think in time you'll find that you wouldn't have it any other way. Grief is an [expression of love](#) – these things grow from the same seed. Grief becomes a part of how we love a person despite their physical absence; it helps connect us to memories of the past; it bonds us with others through our shared humanity, and it helps provide perspective on our immense capacity for finding strength and wisdom in the most difficult of times.

How to Grieve and Cope with the Loss of a Sibling

From: **Better Place Forests**

Sibling relationships can be complicated. Some brothers and sisters grow up to become best friends, while others rarely speak — all of which can make sibling grief especially difficult to navigate.

No matter how close you were, if your brother or sister recently passed away, you may be struggling with the loss. While we understand everyone mourns differently, in our guide below, we address a few ways to help you cope with the death of your sibling.

Why is losing a sibling so hard?

First, let's discuss why losing a sibling is so difficult. If you've recently lost a brother or sister, you may have noticed that others tend to focus solely on your parents and forget that you are also grieving.

Surviving siblings, sometimes called “forgotten mourners,” often experience “disenfranchised grief,” which refers to a kind of grief unacknowledged by society. Because their grief isn't always acknowledged, surviving siblings may feel unsupported and even alienated while mourning their loss.

Though it sometimes falls under the radar, sibling grief is a valid form of grief. After all, siblings have a unique bond and connection as from growing up together, sharing the same experiences, and forming their identities and personalities together along the way.

When your brother or sister passes away, as a surviving sibling you now have to face life without one of your closest relatives — you're mourning the loss of history *and* the loss of a future with them. Moreover, losing a sibling disrupts the birth order and can shift your responsibilities in the family, which may cause you to have to reevaluate your identity and role within the family.

In addition to experiencing disenfranchised grief, surviving siblings aren't always given the space to mourn because they're focused on caring for their parents. They often believe it's their responsibility to be strong and comfort their parents to keep the family together, which can be an even bigger burden if they've lost touch with their parents over the years or have a strained relationship. While this need to protect and care for their parents comes from a place of love, it can delay or derail their own recovery if they don't allow themselves to process their own grief.

How to grieve and cope with losing a sibling

Regardless of whether you're dealing with the death of a sibling in adulthood or childhood, losing them can bring up a wide range of emotions. On top of the grief associated with the death of your brother or sister, you might be experiencing other complex feelings, such as regret for not mending your relationship sooner or guilt over not preventing their death.

While grief can come in all shapes and forms, it's important to find ways to handle and process this heartbreak. Below are just a few tips for helping you cope with your loss.

Give yourself time and space to grieve

Many people wonder, how do you get over the death of a sibling? The unfortunate truth is that you may never fully recover after losing a sibling. It's possible that you will always hold some sadness in your heart, but that's not to say you won't eventually heal and find a sense of peace.

While mourning the loss of your brother or sister, you may go through the [stages of grief](#) as you work toward acceptance. During this time, allow yourself to feel — it's okay to be angry and upset. Give way to your emotions and let them run their course.

It's also important to let yourself process this grief on your own time. Don't feel like you need to hurry up and feel better. Allow yourself all the time and space you need to cope with the loss of your sibling.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

Sometimes, it's easy to feel like you're alone in your grief, but that's never the case — there's always someone to turn to in your time of need.

If you're looking for a shoulder to cry on or someone to talk to, reach out to your friends and family members. Just because they didn't lose their sibling doesn't mean they're not mourning the loss of your brother or sister, too. Getting together to reminisce on the good times or talk about the hard times can be a deeply cathartic experience.

Another option is to join a support group. See if your community offers any grief support groups, especially ones tailored toward sibling loss, or look into online support groups. These provide you with an opportunity to engage with others who are experiencing a similar sense of loss. be

For additional support, you can always turn to a grief therapist. These professionals provide bereavement counseling with [grief therapy techniques](#) and coping strategies designed to help guide you through your mourning period. Meeting with a grief counselor can be especially constructive if you're struggling with feelings of guilt, anger, or regret.

Celebrate their life

Your brother or sister may be gone, but they're certainly not forgotten. One way to cope with their passing is by celebrating and remembering their spirit. There are countless ways you can go about this. For instance, you could host a party on your brother's birthday and invite all your loved ones to commemorate his life while eating his favorite foods and listening to his favorite music. Or may you decide to take a trip to your sister's favorite campsite, where you spend the weekend fishing, hiking, and boating in her memory.

Find ways to continue their legacy

Losing a sibling is a painful experience. However, some people find comfort in continuing their sibling's legacy. Contributing to what they loved is a way to feel close to them while healing yourself in the process. For example, if your sister was passionate about volunteering for the Humane Society, you could make a donation, host a fundraising event, or even adopt a pet in her honor. Or perhaps your brother felt strongly about planting community gardens, in which case, you could complete his projects, find new areas to tend to, or plant a tree or vegetable patch in his name.

Overcoming sibling grief isn't something that occurs overnight. During this difficult time, be kind and patient with yourself, and you will slowly but surely begin to heal

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

I hope everyone is well and enjoying the (sometimes) warmer weather, longer days and the lovely colors that come with spring. Our regional coordinators, Ralph and Donna Goodrich will be offering chapter leadership training in May. If you have any interest in becoming a chapter leader or member of the steering committee, please consider participating in this training. It is free and breakfast and lunch will be provided. We welcome and need the support of all our chapter members. If you are a bereaved parent, grandparent, or sibling you have some perspectives that could lift our chapter and ensure our meetings meet the needs of our members by providing meaningful, comforting and beneficial gatherings.

The 46th National TCF Conference will be held July 7-9, 2023 in Denver, Colorado. If you have never been to Colorado, I promise, you will not be disappointed. It is one of the most magnificent places in the country! Regretfully, I will not be able to attend the conference this year but if you are able, I encourage you to go. The event truly lives up to the name of this organization. You will find both compassion and friendship in abundance.

Our chapter treasurer, Carol Patton has done this job faithfully and accurately for several years and we are extremely grateful for her contribution of time and effort to our chapter. However, Carol would like to retire from this position, and it is well deserved. Is there anyone in our chapter that would like to take on this position? Carol assures me the it's "not that hard"! If anyone is interested and/or willing to take on this task, please contact either Lesa or me and let us know.

Keep doing the grief work my friends, one day, one minute, one heartbeat at a time and always have hope.

Best Love,

Susan (Michael's mom)

