



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

OF CHARLOTTE NORTH CAROLINA

September-October 2022

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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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
Meetings will also be available via Zoom.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Covid numbers are declining, and mask mandates are being relaxed! We feel it is safe to return to "in person" meetings this month. We hope to see our chapter members at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235, Sept. 20, 2022, at 7:00 pm.

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REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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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.

The Charlotte TCF chapter graciously thanks Connie Tobey for her generous donation in memory of her grandson Zachary, from Frank Nelson in memoey of Doris O'Keefe and Susan Fletcher in memory of her son Michael Jr.

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

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 - SEPTEMBER

Amanda Barnett 9/26
Michelle H. Beebe 9/20
Phillip J. Bell 9/2
Michael Boyle Jr. 9/20
Andrea Skillman 9/9
Bobby Dowling 9/20
Michael W. Fletcher Jr. 9/11
Madelynn Charlotte Golbach 9/21
David Haney 9/27
Charlie Mullis 9/26
Jeffrey Michael Hunt 9/26
Ashley Hurte 9/9
Josh Keziah 9/5
Sean Patrick Logan 9/26
Jonathan Mariano 9/22
Hudson Lee 9/14
Kristin Stinson 9/20
Paul McGrath 9/26
Elizabeth Messer 9/4
Bobby O'Shea 9/6
Andrew Pangle 9/21
Maria Elena Petrone 9/13

Malik Robinson 9/27
Keeghan Drake McCormack 9/27
Darron Stitt 9/19
Kekoa Teonkina 9/4
Christopher Eastman Tilsch 9/20
Seth Henderson 9/27
Edward Stevens Brown 9/14
Brian Colbert 9/25

**REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
SEPTEMBER**

Kathryn Anderson 9/23
Rodney Trent Baldwin 9/3
Amanda Barnett 9/11
El Barnhill 9/25
Cliff Golla 9/1
Kendall Hope 9/7
June Keiper 9/14
Josh Keziah 9/1
Christopher Lloyd 9/25
Kelsey Morris 9/4
Justin Zuk 9/27
Maria Elena Petrone 9/2
Breanna Rae Ringersen 9/11
Isaac Rowell 9/9
Silje Rowell 9/8
Emily Elizabeth Smith 9/4
Chris Turner 9/11
Danielle Jean Callahan 9/16
Max Ugarte 9/10
Laura McDermott 9/23
Laura Whittaker 9/11
James Davis 9/11
Aubrey Wiger Sept.
Andrew Pangle 9/5

**REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
OCTOBER**

Kyle Bennett Allen 10/25
Sam Wallace 10/19
Rodney Trent Baldwin 10/21
Kai Parks Berry 10/11
Tess Crespi 10/16
Sammie Crespi 10/16
Emily Lauren Upton 10/4
Christopher Flower 10/10
Angel Freeman 10/8
Ryan Hortis 10/29
Christopher Cullen 10/19
Christopher Hall 10/1986
Jason P. Huff Jr. 10/28
Ashton Sweet 10/7
Scott Aaron Katowitz 10/21
Gregg Kemp 10/15
Debra Kern 10/17
Bradley Lovell 10/14
Mason Crist Heller 10/7
John R. Madigan 10/25
Brittany Williams 10/10
Sky Lee 10/25
Richard Maxwell 10/26
Jasmine D. Thar 10/17
Denny Miller 10/15
Veronica Nicholson 10/14
Blake Carlton Nolan 10/1
Billy Patton 10/1
Ezra Santiago Perez 10/15
Jermode Darnell Pharr 10/30
Jason Kendall Ray 10/7
Jennifer Hokanson 10/6
Jenna Ryan 10/10
Amaani Ariana Shah 10/1
Emily Lauren Upton 10/4
Emily Elizabeth Smith 10/13

Liliana Patricia Solano Mevdosa 10/23
Amanda Lee Stanley 10/18
Jonathan Troy Swierski 10/1
Elliot Grayson Thomas 10/2
Sarah Vincent 10/3
William James Wagner 10/23
Sam Wallace 10/19
Eric Courtemanche 10/29

**REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
OCTOBER**

Justin Ferdinand 10/22
Debbie Ferrell 10/16
Michelle DiBernardini 10/12
G. Stone Barnett 10/15
Mary-Mattison Barnett 10/3
Kai Parks Berry 10/29
Brian Yaniszweski 10/19
Blair M. Crane 10/16
Michael Crites 10/28
Angel Freeman 10/11
Josselyn Giebeler 10/24
Homer Denver Graham III 10/22
Jaxson Hill 10/14
Luke Hoover 10/17
Tommy Coble Ishee IV 10/10
Cole Kolker-Hicks 10/26
John R. Madigan 10/9
Eica Dawn Mesarus 10/28
Denny Miller 10/18
Raymond Pierce 10/13
Joshua Robert Holden 10/7
Cullen Reiland 10/1
Kevin Roddey 10/21
Alan Bloom 10/9

Joseph Sharp 10/20
Brien Smart 10/8
William James Wagner 10/23
Jake Ziegler 10/13
Samantha Mertz 10/20

Grief's Likeness to Fall - What is Lost, What is Left, What is Possible



As we prepare for a transition into cool mornings and early sunsets, I have been taking the time to reflect on how nature beautifully represents our mission at Austin Grief. As the trees let go of their leaves in preparation for a season of rest and recovery, it allows me to reflect on what is lost, what is left, and what is possible.

What is lost?

I always look forward to the first signs of fall; the leaves begin to slowly change, brisk mornings, and the sun begins to change from a penetrating light to a hazy glow. As the season progresses, the leaves begin to change into vibrant colors and slowly release from the trees. Within weeks we are left with empty branches, cool days, and a sense of stillness. I am reminded of how we can associate this transition with the initial phase of grief. Grief can leave us empty without our loved one. The way in which our lives have completely changed from vibrant life to numbness and pain. When grief informs our whole world, it can leave us lonely and desperate for connection to our roots and core. In nature the experience of fall is very purposeful. Trees need to let go of their leaves in order to prepare for the harshness of winter. In grief, we sometimes need to preserve our core for a period of time in order to one day grow again.

What is left?

As nature begins to prepare for winter, preservation becomes critical. Every last bit of sunshine and water is stored in order to survive a cruel winter. What we see in the outside world may be empty branches, brown grass, and flower blooms falling away. However, the internal experience is a very different process. Everything is still very much alive and fully functioning. As we move into the “what is left” phase of grief, this can be a similar experience. While our life will never be the same again, grief work can help us slowly identify what is left in our lives. Our core group of friends, family, and support help us nourish and preserve, but they can help us grow. They can help us remember that through loss, we can rediscover life and remember there is still love and connection in our lives.

What is possible?

As fall transitions into winter, we are left with a period of bleakness. It feels as if nothing is ever going to grow again. Survival is a battle for months. However, this period has purpose. The leaves fall down to the forest floor to provide enough nourishment for the earth’s soil to grow more leaves for when spring arrives. Each year when the laurels grow and the bluebonnets begin to emerge again, I am reminded of what is possible. In the final phase of grief, we are reminded that we can find meaning and joy in life again. We can transform our experience of the harshness into nourishment for our souls. Far too often, we fear the dark and adore only the light. The same can be said for grief. What I try to remember is we need balance and perspective as this is what allows for our experiences to be whole.

These symbolic associations are powerful reminders that Mother Nature has an incredible influence on our lives. Death forces us to examine the purpose of life. At Austin Grief we strive to connect and empower those mourning to invest in life again. We believe that our connections to our loved ones are not gone, but our relationship may be different. With balance and purpose we can allow ourselves to love and trust again.

From: The Austin Center For Grief and Loss

Quiet Courage

I have seen much courage in my life. Many types of bravery have inspired me. I am astonished by the courage of the elderly widow who buries her husband, quietly sells most of her personal belongings, furnishings and home and moves into a tiny apartment so that she can survive until death takes her, too.

I am distressed by the youthful courage demonstrated every day by soldiers who were high school kids heading for homecoming last year but who now serve in dangerous, hostile places fighting an enemy who is invisible in the crowd. The law enforcement memorial in Washington, D.C., speaks of the many brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to keep anarchy at bay. The EMS and fire fighting people who hold strong to tradition and put themselves in harm's way each day to save others amaze me with their dedication and devotion to duty.

The single mother who works two jobs, raises her children, cares for them in times of illness, keeps a home, cooks, cleans and still finds time to bake cookies for the PTA fundraiser is a heroine who is doomed to remain faceless and unknown. Yet the courage to start each new day in the hope of making a better life for her children drives her forward.

There are all types of courage in this life. All are impressive, all are worthy of praise and all set standards for us to emulate.

But the deepest, most compelling courage I have seen in my life is that of the parent who has lost a child to death. Each has experienced total helplessness and real physical pain in their loss. Raw in their grief, they join our Compassionate Friends group. I am struck by how weakened in spirit these parents are, how tenuous their hold on sanity must surely be. Yet these parents quietly enter our meeting room and face the unknown with tears in their eyes and tremendous weight in their hearts. Their world is upside down, their children have died and the pain and loss seem insurmountable. They have been snatched out of their former reality and slammed into the depths of hell by a cosmic force more intense than a tsunami. These moms and dads who have lost their beautiful child listen quietly as others talk of children who have lived for years in their parents' hearts. Each parent tells a story, each voice breaks, each heart breaks as a lost child's name echoes in the quiet room. The courage to acknowledge and face this new reality and look for hope in the midst of this infinite despair is a pure wonderment.

What pain is in this room? What deep, agonizing loss is systemic within this group? What will I say? How can I relate when I cannot even remember what day it is? How can I go on

for one more day? These are the agonizing feelings of the newly bereaved parent. The Compassionate Friends meeting is the place they have chosen to begin their journey into what they perceive as a hideous, horrible, dark and unknown future. Yet their courage to face this, the greatest loss any human could possibly endure, is extraordinary. The power of the mind to begin to see reason, to begin to seek hope, to climb this mountain of trauma and travail cannot be overstated. This power is pure courage, raw courage, desperate courage, but courage in its purest form.

Each meeting brings the dread of facing the reality of their child's death. Yet the parents who have lost so much return to talk, to listen, to understand, to move into the light of hope. Gradually an understanding develops. Slowly each parent learns we must continue to live and honor our child. They light candles, visit cemeteries, fund scholarships, write poetry, raise funds to help others.....all in memory of their precious children. They reach out to other parents who are newly bereaved, listening, talking and listening again with their hearts. Occasionally they smile. Then one day they laugh. The journey is long, the grief work is difficult, the pain is forever, yet they keep on moving forward into the light.

There are no medals, no press releases, no television appearances, no accolades, no parades. The deepest, soul-permeating, life changing and amazing courage is found here. As I look at my Compassionate Friends I am awe-struck by the rare and quiet courage that fills this room.

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

Beyond Surviving: “Twenty Five Commandments”

Hundreds of books have been written about loss and grief. Few have addressed the aftermath of suicide for survivors. Here again, there are no answers; only suggestions from those who have lived through and beyond the event. I've compiled their thoughts.

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with “why” it happened until you no longer need to know “why,” or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will have to act on these thoughts.
8. Remember to take one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief; an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.

15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and with others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as The Compassionate Friends, or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, i.e., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving.

Iris Bolton, author of *My Son, My Son*

My Witch and My Angel

For Zoë Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, make-up, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year—1987—I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures. Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes; I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoë's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly. With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath—the same one I take every year at every holiday and milestone. With my unsteady hand I will design witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoë's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my little witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13 year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make-believe?

Zoë will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as OK as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here.

And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoë, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly graze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's OK. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treat' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoë skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom—take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween.

Just like his sister.

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In memory of Max
TCF, Sugarland, TX
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How to live through the Fall Season of Grief Conversations for the ...The Hurting

It's Fall. Excuse me for stating the obvious. But sometimes our grief is not as obvious to others when the season is full of vibrancy and celebrated change. Due to our loss we are trying desperately to adjust to changes we never signed up for. If anyone is a little too cheery, we

might find ourselves slinking back into our shadows, trying to self-soothe the pain.

When you can't see the colors

So what does the Fall season teach us about our grief? Nearly all across the nation, vibrant fall colors catch people's attention, sometimes skipping a heartbeat for the sheer beauty of it all. But not for us. At least not for some of us. Our senses are dimmed, as if an internal rheostat turned down the illumination of life all around us. This seasonal interlude between the heat of summer and the chill of winter lacks luster, appeal, awe, and notice. For us, the season of our personal pain interferes greatly with the physical capacity to see, hear, and feel the vibrancy of Autumn.

You are not alone

Would you allow me, a fellow grief-path traveler, to share some of my memories of living numb and mute, in the shadows of my pain? You are not alone. This season of grief for me happened in the late Summer and early Fall (around 7 months after our son's death). Food had little flavor or appeal. The beauty of nature appeared dim and uninspiring. Color that would have normally attracted me, went unnoticed. I called that time my "*despair of sadness*." Numb and listless, I stepped through the days with a deep ache that nothing could soothe.

Hope through change

If you find yourself disengaged with others, nature, and even yourself I want to give you hope. The thing about seasons is that they change. Slowly, the summer heat subsides, Fall breezes and gentle cleansing showers refresh the dry, dusty environment. Fall offers a season of reflection with our grief. We might find ourselves with a little more time to cozy up with our journal pages or your [Comfort for the Day](#) book. Sweaters come out, along with scarves and boots. And eventually, the rain or snow take over. (I know some places this Fall have already been deep in snow.) The change in the seasons, assures

us that our grief will change too. But grief is different than seasons in that we can make choices that will help us grieve through each change with intentionality. Seasons don't have that choice.

Coming to life again

Winter changes things up again. Much of nature goes dormant. There is a waiting. And the cycle continues until we have moved through each season of the calendar. Likewise, our season of malaise, despair, reflection, growth, or waiting will also merge into a different season of grief. I can't say what the next one will be for you, but I can let you know that ***IF*** you pay attention to this season, find new ways to interact with the numbing pain, releasing your emotions by expressing your heart and tough stuff on paper, you will move forward. Try some art, a new hobby, or even gardening, and you will one day realize that a bird's trill ignites something in your soul. You heard it with your heart. You will notice that food has more flavor, and music is joyously pleasing. You will discover the previous disengagement has been overtaken by genuine interest in the lives of others around you.

The hope of the seasons

Sometimes just knowing that grief has its seasons helps. It's like gathering a little blanket of comfort and hope that we will not remain stuck in the current "*despair of sadness*." If you take note of the rosy cheeks of a child who just came in from frolicking in the leaves, be encouraged deep inside, your grief is changing and you will move past muted tones, muffled laughter, or mild flavors.

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Autumn

In the fall
When amber leaves are shed,
 Softly—silently
 Like tears that wait to flow,
 I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in the fall;
'Tis then I miss you most of all.

Lily de Lauder
TCF, Van Nuys, CA

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

I'm so glad I had the opportunity to attend the National Conference in Houston last month. I learned so much and I got to talk about my son to everyone! That in itself is worth it. I came home with great ideas, new reading lists, new and renewed interests, and so many memories of companionship and comfort. Oh, and we had fun too!

As I was reading the article about the likeness of grief in fall, I was reminded of an event that marked a milestone in my grief journey. I was driving up towards the NC mountains in early fall a few years ago. It was early fall, and the leaves were just beginning to show their colors. A scenic drive on a lovely, fall day. As I was driving, I found myself singing along to a song that was playing on the radio, an old favorite from the 70's. Something I hadn't done in a long time. I wasn't just humming the melody; I was SINGING OUT LOUD and I was enjoying it! It occurred to me that I had made a breakthrough! It was a giant leap along the grief walk! I owed it to Fall. There was comfort in the scenic beauty of the season. As the days get cooler and the leaves begin to change, I hope you find strength, courage and hope in the amazing transformation that we experience in fall.

Love and Peace,
Susan, Michael's mom