



March/April 2020

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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WEBSITE: WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG

Facebook Page: *Compassionate Friends of
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:

***TCF Annual National Conference, July 24-26, 2020, in
Atlanta, GA**

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REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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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. Thank you to the following people who have made donations to our Chapter.

Foundation of Greater Greensboro in Loving memory of Chad Langdon, Courtney Langdon's brother.

Mr. and Mrs. Simrell in Loving memory of Lesa Hartranft's Mom - Henrietta Kessler.

Ralph and Donna Goodrich in Loving memory of Lesa Hartranft's Mom - Henrietta Kessler.

Carol Patton in Loving memory of Lesa Hartranft's Mom - Henrietta Kessler.

Donna and Ralph Goodrich in loving memory of Lauren & Garth Marshall.

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 siblings'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: iluvu2lauren@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 your understanding.

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - March 2020

Cory Abernathy	3/24 - 12/1	Rhonda Abernathy
Zachery Anderson	3/5 - 8/22	Tracy & Jeff Anderson
Jack Hicks	3/26 - 2/24	Daniel Ashbury
Mary-Mattison Barnett	3/1 - 10/3	George Barnett
Vincent Chandler Edmond	3/19 - 12/13	Venceta Butler-Edmond
Michael Crites	3/31 - 10/28	Mary Ellen Crites
Alexander M. Williams	3/12 - 3/12	Lisa Culvert
Jennifer Eanes	3/18 - 12/12	Nancy & George Eanes
Lauren Ehele	3/8 - 9/1	Lisa Ehele
Cliff Golla	3/21 - 9/1	Yvonne Golla
Lauren Marshall	3/22 - 1/30	Donna & Ralph Goodrich
Homer Denver Graham III	3/25 - 10/22	Linda & Homer Graham
Donald McDermott	3/17 - 4/25	Theresa & Ron Homan

Missy Miner	3/8 - 2/26	Barbara Litschert
Jason Lubeznik	3/14 - 2/16	Maricely Lubeznik
Anthony Mclain	3/29 - 11/12	Kevin & Cindy Mclain
Aiden Miller	3/24 - 2/25	Matthew & Kely Miller
Isaac Rowell	3/21 - 9/9	Ed & Ann Rowell
Christina Rupp	3/19 - 2/12	Jennifer & Sharon Rupp
Keandra Sheats	3/8 - 5/2	Ken Sheats
Danielle Jean Callahan	3/29 - 9/16	Susan Turner
Robert Hunter Moyer	3/4 - 3/4	Terri Walbert
Jimmy Zacharias	3/31 - 6/8	Sherry Zacharias

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - March 2020

Phillip Jason Bell	9/2 - 3/13	Shannon & Kristal Bell
Kevin Bell	5/16 - 3/1	Mary Ann Bell
Dan Biffl	8/25 - 3/11	Mary Beth Biffl
Nick Brendle	4/25 - 3/23	Martha Brendle
Andrea Skillman	9/9 - 3/25	Darla Brover

Eric Carlson	11/19 - 3/9	Carol Carlson
Nicholas Cherry	8/16 - 3/26	Wayne & Jane Cherry
Christopher Diehl	6/21 - 3/8	Lois Clark & Scott Higgins
Alexander M. Williams	3/12 - 3/12	Lisa Culvert
Nathan Epley	7/28 - 3/1	Vicki Epley
Michael Gregory Finlay	5/2 - 3/15	William & Ayoma Finlay
Steve Hale	5/9 - 3/18	Karen & Douglas Hale
Chase Austin McCowie	7/8 - 3/23	Angela & Robert McCowie & Beth Jordan
Scott Aaron Katowitz	10/21 - 3/13	Bev & Mitch Katowitz
Joshua Brian Bronson	4/10 - 3/15	Jennifer Kilyanek & Brian Bronson
Joey McKee	4/7 - 3/3	Lynn McKee
Lance Ferguson	12/21 - 3/2	Rhonda Hutton
Chaylan Tucker	2/7 - 3/27	Crystal Moorman
Veronica Nicholson	10/14 - 3/4	Elizabeth Nicholson
Jaqueline Nicholson	2/23 - 3/4	Elizabeth Nicholson
Cherilyn Jane Crawford	6/7 - 3/24	Lu Prudhomme
Hannah Quinton	11/11 - 3/26	Alice & Carlton Quinton
Jason Kendall Ray	10/7 - 3/26	Emmitt & Charlotte Ray

Jason Christopher Roberts	12/7 - 3/5	David & Marie Roberts
Christopher Eastman Tilsch	9/20 - 3/21	Susan & Greg Tilsch
Allen Doak	5/31 - 3/9	Sandy Tolbert
Cory Vincent	4/17 - 3/3	Marcia & Ernie Vincent
Robert Hunter Moyer	3/4 - 3/4	Terri Walbert
Jonathan Holt Whitlow	12/26 - 3/31	William & Allison Whitlow
Derik Brown	8/1 - 3/23	Lori Young

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - April 2020

Brad Aylward	4/6 - 2/9	Lisa & Frank Aylward
Nick Brendle	4/25 - 3/23	Martha Brendle
Christian Buell	4/12 - 7/8	Jennifer Buell
Lauren Campbell	4/27 - 6/21	Marilyn Campbell
Kevin Carosa	4/1 - 8/31	Lou Carosa
Fausto De Los Santos	4/2 - 4/12	Karen De Los Santos
Garth Marshall	4/23 - 4/23	Donna & Ralph Goodrich
Ryan Jamall Hayes	4/1 - ?	Edith Hayes
Jaxson Hill	4/26 - 10/14	Lynn Hill

Luke Hoover	4/20 - 10/17	Angie & Randy Hoover
Brady Hopkins	4/27 - 2/1	Kim Hopkins
Jordan Horeth	4/4 - 4/7	Mike & Karen Horeth
Sean McCormick	4/8 - 2/17	Gail Jones
Michael Kern	4/30 - 4/13	Sylvia Kern
Russell Kershaw	4/30 - 2/28	Jim & Marguerite Kershaw
Joshua Brian Bronson	4/10 - 3/15	Jennifer Kilyanek & Brian Bronson
Gevaughnti Lawson	4/25 - 1/5	Lisa Lawson
William Buchanan	4/19 - 5/28	Cayren Lloyd
Sean McCormick	4/8 - 2/17	Gail McCormick
Joey McKee	4/7 - 3/3	Lynn McKee
Emily Parker	4/28 - 7/9	Jeff & Leslie Parker
Gina Rosetta Samuels	4/20 - 4/29	Valerie Samuels
Michael Schnexnayder	4/22 - 11/9	Meg, Paul & John Paul Schnexnayder
Brian Smart	4/15 - 10/8	Connie & Bill Smart
Jason Smart	4/24 - 2/17	Connie & Bill Smart
Cory Vincent	4/17 - 3/3	Marcia & Ernie Vincent
Andrew John Wesley	4/12 - 6/2	Pat & Larry Wesley

Laura Whittaker

4/21 - 9/11

Dennis & Karen Whittaker

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries- April 2020**Kyle Bennett Allen**

10/25 - 4/18

Janet & Rick Allen

Peter Fowler

7/5 - 4/5

Lisa Bellucci

Will Blottman

1/25 - 4/26

Tom & Catherine Blottman

Tarell Cooper

6/19 - 4/6

Alisha Cooper

Nicholas Daniel

12/4 - 4/24

Kimberly Daniel

Fausto De Los Santos

4/2 - 4/12

Karen De Los Santos

Creed Campbell

12/3 - 4/15

Stephanie & Steve Fee

Garth Marshall

4/23 - 4/23

Donna & Ralph Goodrich

Donald McDermott

3/17 - 4/25

Theresa & Ron Homan

Jordan Horeth

4/4 - 4/7

Karen & Mike Horeth

Jordi Bone

2/8 - 4/26

Jodi Bone Hudson

Sergio Huerta, Jr.

1/11 - 4/25

Sandra Huerta

Carl S. Olson

5/6 - 4/24

Gloria Jones

Michael Kern

4/30 - 4/13

Sylvia Kern

Brian Michael Kirchner

12/3 - 4/29

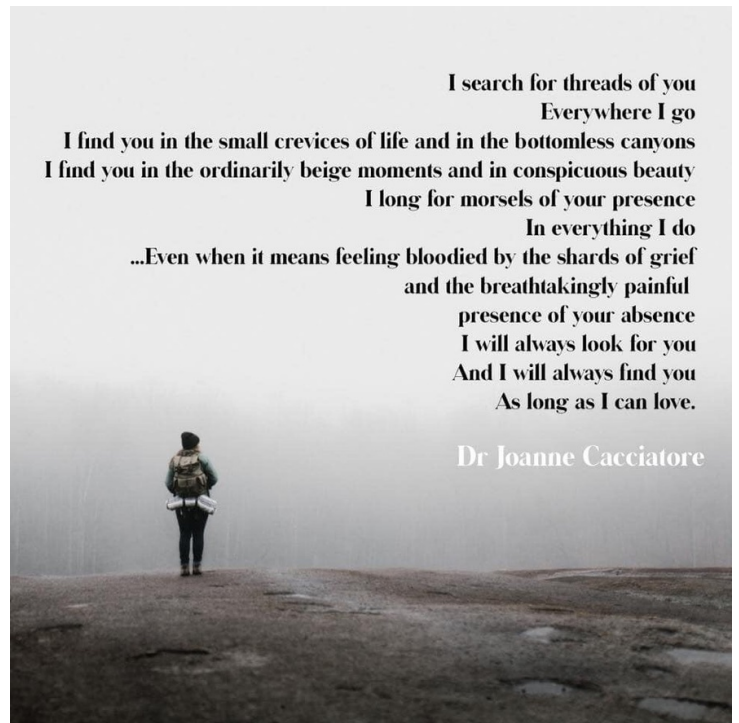
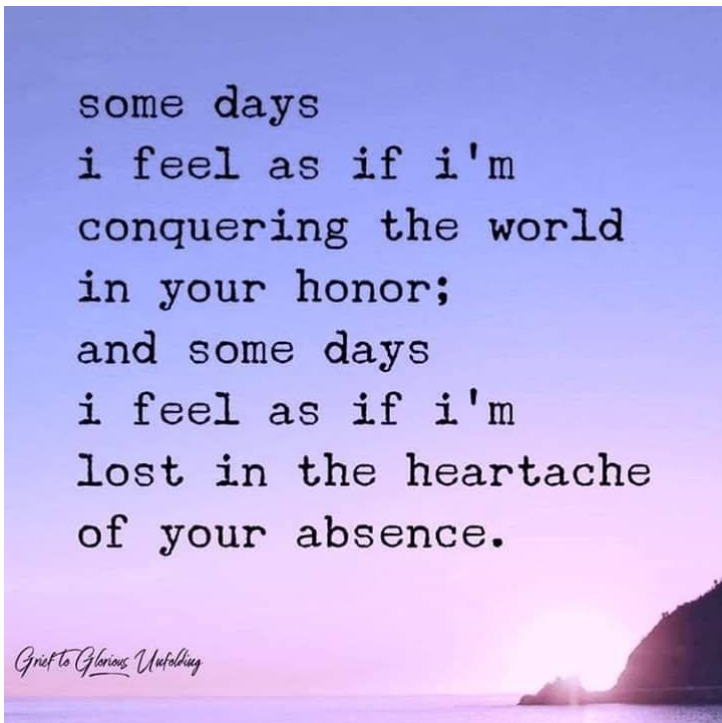
Dan & Tilly Kirchner

Bradley Lovell

10/14 - 4/6

Pam Lovell

Andy Yeager	8/3 - 4/20	Sharon Macaluso
Brittany Williams	10/10 - 10/14	Jordan Malveaux & Leslie Williams
Jamie McKinley	8/14 - 4/9	Janet McKinley
Jonah L. Gray	2/18 - 4/21	Melissa McNeal
Kyle Bodord	11/10 - 4/23	Libby Norum
Adam Powalski	2/4 - 4/12	Rose Powalski
Gina Rosetta Samuels	4/20 - 4/29	Valerie Samuels
Loren Silva	11/9 - 4/12	Allison Silva
Darron Stitt	9/19 - 4/1	Pearl Stitt



43RD TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE
JULY 24, 2020 - JULY 26, 2020



43rd TCF National Conference
July 24-26, 2020 • Atlanta, GA

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings and grandchildren.

The 43rd TCF National Conference will be held in Atlanta, GA on July 24-26, 2020. “Sharing Sweet Memories of Love” is the theme of this year’s event, which promises more of this year’s great National Conference experience. We’ll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

- Choose to attend from nearly hundred different workshops and sharing sessions, given by professionals and also individuals just like you.
- Take advantage of “Healing Haven” to receive free personal services such as a massage.

- Craft items to commemorate the love for your family member in the “Crafty Corner”.

- Step away for a quiet moment of pause in the “Reflection Room”.

IF you haven’t attended a National Conference, please try to attend this one. It is close, Atlanta, GA. Just 4 hours down the road. It won’t be this close for many years. You will find nothing but compassion, love, understanding and most importantly - HOPE. Please join us!!

Our hotel block is now officially open for the 2020 TCF National Conference in Atlanta. Reservations can be made [online](#) or by calling Marriott Reservations directly at (866) 469-5475 and ask for the group rate for The Compassionate Friends 2020 Annual Conference.

Even if you aren’t sure you will be going - reserve a room - they do go fast.

I could only be grateful when I realized that I would rather have known you for a moment than never at all. I would rather endure this inexplicable pain of outliving you than to never have seen your face, spoken your name. I would rather be yours, and you be mine, regardless. Regardless of the sorrow, the sleepless nights, and the years I will walk this earth, carrying you in my heart.

LEXI BEHRNDT — SCRIBBLES AND CRUMBS

Taken from Grieving Mothers with Sheila Rahm

A Letter to the Newly Bereaved Mother

From one grieving mother's heart to another, I'm sending you love and so much strength... There are no rules for grieving and time becomes insignificant in so many ways now.

I'm not going to lie to you. It will never be okay. It will never become easy. And the sorrow of losing your son or daughter will never lessen. What I can tell you is that it will change. You will learn to survive and live around the pain and emptiness. It will not always be as suffocating and debilitating as it is right now.

If you refuse to give up, you will find life again, in your own time. The colors will never be as vivid as they once were; however, they will return to your world one day... Time will never be your friend but rather your teacher.

Follow your heart. No one else knows what you need. It is so raw right now so simply breathe and do whatever it is that will get you to the next moment. Nothing more. It is breath by breath and moment by moment right now and for some time to come. There is no time limit, no right or wrong and no matter what you may think sometimes, you are NOT crazy or going insane. It is simply your new normal.

You also are NOT alone. There are many of us traveling this road ahead of you and many more will arrive to follow behind you. When you are ready, reach out to the hands that journey ahead of you and allow them to pull you up and forward when you fall. They are waiting, and they are infused with the strength of a million broken hearts connected throughout time and space by a pain and sorrow that is hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world and all other experiences. And if you refuse to give up, if you remember that you alone are the keeper of your son's or daughter's memory, you will one day find yourself taking hold of a desperate hand reaching out for help from behind you and you will realize that you too have been infused with the strength needed to pull another mother or father up and forward.

But for today and for as many tomorrows as your heart says is needed, simply breathe and grieve my sister... Breathe and grieve for your child. And do it in absolutely any way that feels right to you. Simply breathe and grieve.

Because for as long as you breathe, your son or daughter will be.

The Day I'll Finally Stop Grieving

by: John Pavlovitz

“NOTE FROM EDITOR: Although this article is not about child, grandchild, or sibling loss, I felt it has many similar grief journey experiences as ours.”



“How long has it been” When is he going to get over that grief and move on already?”

I get it.

I know you might be thinking that about me or about someone else these days.

I know you may look at someone you know in mourning and wonder when they'll *snap out of it*.

I understand because I use to think that way too.

Okay, maybe at the time I was self-aware enough or guilty enough not to think it *quite* that explicitly, even in my own head. It might have come in the form of a growing impatience toward someone who was grieving or a gradual dismissing of their sadness over time or maybe in my intentionally avoiding them as the days passed. It was subtle to be sure, but I can distinctly remember reaching the place where my compassion for grieving friends had reached its capacity—and it was long before they stopped hurting.

Back then like most people, my mind was operating under the faulty assumption that grief had some predictable expiration date; a reasonable period of time after which recovery and normalcy would come and the person would return to life as it was before, albeit with some minor adjustments.

I thought all these things, *until I grieved*.

I never think these things anymore.

Four years ago I remember sitting with a dear friend at a coffee shop table in the aftermath of my father's sudden passing. In response to my quivering voice and my tear-weary eyes and my obvious shell shock, she assured me that this

debilitating sadness; this ironic combination of searing pain and complete numbness was going to give me a layer of compassion for hurting people that I'd never had before. It was an understanding, she said, that I simply couldn't have had without walking through the Grief Valley. She was right, though I would have gladly acquired this empathy in a million other ways.

Since that day I've realized that Grief doesn't just visit you for a horrible, yet temporary holiday. It moves in, puts down roots—and it never leaves. Yes as time passes, eventually the tidal waves subside for longer periods, but they inevitably come crashing in again without notice, when you are least prepared. With no warning they devastate the landscape of your heart all over again, leaving you bruised and breathless and needing to rebuild once more.

Grief brings humility as a housewarming gift and doesn't care whether you want it or not.

You are forced to face your inability to do *anything* but feel it all and fall apart. It's incredibly difficult in those quiet moments, when you realize so long after the loss that you're still not the same person you used to be; that this chronic soul injury just won't heal up. This is tough medicine to take, but more difficult still, is coming to feel quite sure that you'll never be that person again. It's humbling to know you've been internally altered: Death has interrupted your plans, severed your relationships, and rewritten the script for you. And strangely (or perhaps quite understandably) those acute attacks of despair are the very moments when I feel closest to my father, as if the pain somehow allows me to remove the space and time which separates us and I can press my head

against his chest and hear his heartbeat once more. These tragic times are somehow oddly comforting even as they kick you in the gut.

And it is *this* odd healing sadness which I'll carry for the remainder of my days; that nexus between total devastation and gradual restoration. It is the way your love outlives your loved one.

I've walked enough of this road to realize that it *is* my road now. This is not just a momentary detour, it's the permanent state of affairs. I will have many good days and many moments of gratitude and times of welcome respite, but I'm never fully getting over this loss.

This is the cost of sharing your life with someone worth missing.

Four years into my walk in the Valley I've resigned myself to the truth that this a lifetime sentence. At the end of my time here on the planet, I will either be reunited with my father in some glorious mystery, or simply reach my last day of mourning his loss.

Either way I'm beginning to rest in the simple truth:
The day I'll stop grieving—is the day I stop breathing.

Would you like to do something to honor your child, grandchild, sibling?? Why not become the editor of our TCF Charlotte enewsletter?? The format is easy to follow and there are many articles available for use. Use your imagination and make our newsletter a piece of art and give back to the organization that has helped you on your grief journey. PLEASE email me if you would like to become our new enewsletter editor. iluvu2lauaren@gmail.com

**I'm unreliable. I'm late. I'm disorganized.
I'm weepy. I can't make decisions.
I'm angry for reasons
you cannot possibly understand.
Neither can I.
I'm lost. I'm not me anymore.
The mirror is lying, and this cannot be my life...
This is what grief looks like.
Please, love me through it.**

-Joanne Cacciatore from Dear Cheryenne

Post by Still Standing Contributor Amelia Kowalisyn of Emma's Footprints

Does my grief make you uncomfortable?

Me too.

On a daily basis, without the option of unfollowing it, ignoring it, avoiding it without a second thought.

It's a part of my everyday life.

Every minute, every hour, every moment.

My grief, because of my love for my child, is always there.

I don't bring up my daughter to make you squirm.

I don't bring her up for your sympathy, or maybe some days I do because this is heavy.

My heart is heavier than most.

I talk about her; I include her because she's my child.

It's as simple as that.

I carried her, I gave birth to her, I held her, I sang to her, I loved her, and I will always love her because she's a part of my very being.

I don't ignore that she existed. I can't pretend that I didn't once have another child here in my arms.

I won't stop talking about her or including her in our family's life because she matters. I'm sorry if that makes you sad.

If it makes you uncomfortable.

If the thought of it makes you cringe, is too much for you, is something you cannot deal with.

Because, although it may be hard for you to hear about, this is my reality.

This is my life.

It's who I am now.

So, sit with me. Talk to me.

Ask me how I'm doing on birthdays and holidays.

Say her name. Emma.

Emma Rose.

My grief, child loss, isn't something you can catch.

It's not a virus, a disease. It's not a dirty subject to avoid.

It's not a reason to stop being my friend; it's a reason to dig your feet into the ground and be a better friend.

To show you care, to love me even at my worst.

Because thankfully you don't, and hopefully never will, understand what I've been through and why I can never go back to who I once was.

Why I never want to.

Why there will always be the before Emma and after Emma line in my life, why just hearing her sweet name is so precious to my grieving heart.

So, the next time I talk about her, please rather than offering advice just let me be. Tell me your sorry.

Let me know you care, that you too wish she was here with us.

Be the friend I so desperately need on days when my heart is overwhelmed.

Honor her by speaking her name, honor our friendship by not avoiding my grief but embracing me for who I am now.

A mother who has a little girl in heaven.

But still her mother just the same.

— — —



**From the outside
looking in you can
never understand
and from the inside
looking out you can
never explain.**

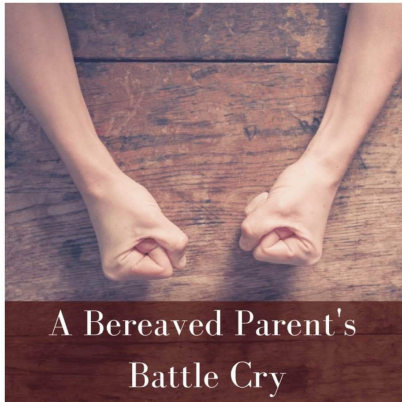
Anon.



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

LEHIGH VALLEY CHAPTER
Supporting Friends After a Child Dies

Facebook.com/TCFLehighValley



A Bereaved Parent's Battle Cry by Anna Nalepka

This is a bereaved parent's battle cry.

I'm tired... tired of having to hide how I am truly feeling from the rest of the world.

Tired of having to put on a fake smile every time I go to work or a social event, so people around me will think I'm doing better.

Tired of wanting to post something about MY CHILD – yet I don't because people are "tired of seeing that."

So I hide.

I hide and post in one of my bereaved parent groups because that is the only place "I feel safe enough to show my real feelings and won't be judged."

Why the hell should I have to hide my feelings about my child?

Do others have to hide their feelings about their children?

Do other parents have to watch "how many times" they post about their son or their daughter's soccer games or recitals or first steps or proms or births – or anything that they rejoice in?

Because other people will rejoice with them!

They are not looking for pats on the back because they are that child's parent.
They are proud of their children.
PERIOD!

So why...

WHY IS IT DIFFERENT FOR BEREAVED PARENTS?

We don't have future proms...
or recitals...
or births...
or first steps.
We have memories.
That.is.it!

We post about our children because... we are proud of them just like any other parent.
We want people to support our memories with the same encouragement with which they used to support our accomplishments and milestones when our children still lived!

Say our child's name!
Share a memory to our
page of that child!
Rejoice with us!

Please Don't Forget About My Child!

And on those hard days when we post that we miss our child, and we say we can't go on, whether it is two months or 10 years later –
please understand, we are not looking for a pat on the back or sympathy.
We want you to remember that child with us!
Please...
Memories are all we have left...

I love you all...
Please understand that posting is healthy and therapeutic!

Each time you take the time to read our posts and comment, you are helping us on our healing journey!

Expressing ourselves is grief-work NOT pity-work!

It takes a lot of courage to be so vulnerable to express our deepest pain right here for everyone to see!

If we don't express our grief we feel like we are going to explode!

Expressing ourselves is a way of letting the steam out of a pressure cooker!

Helping us cope a little better!

Helping to validate our journey!

Maybe even finding purpose in our pain!

When you remember our child, you help divide our pain!

The Long Road of Grief - the Dangers of Losing Hope - (Sorry There Aren't 5 Stages!)

It would be great if there really were only five stages of grief, and you passed through them in a nice, neat chronological order.

“Whoopee,” we might say, as we find ourselves in the slough of depression. “Won’t be long now – next stage is *acceptance* – and then I’m all done!”

It might look like this:

You arrive at London Euston railway station. It’s confusing and busy. You stand on the concourse, looking up at the board that tells where your train will depart from. Your neck starts to ache as you peer up at the board, waiting impatiently for the platform number to appear. Then finally, it gives you the information you’ve been waiting for, and off you walk, briskly, with ticket in hand.

You get on the train. It chugs along through the almost-flat scenery. It takes you through Birmingham and then on to Manchester. Not long to go now. At the next stop – your destination – you find the peaks and lakes and lush green verdure of the Lake District. You disembark from the train. Now perhaps you’ll take a ride on an old-fashioned steamer over Lake Windermere, sitting with your feet up, sipping tea, and eating strawberries and cream as you enjoy the afternoon sunshine. In the evening you’ll head to the pub for a refreshing pint and a generous portion of fish and chips. What a delightful place it is. What a delightful time you’ll have. You have ‘arrived’.

If only. But not.

Grief isn’t like that. You don’t start at Point A, travel directly to Point B, C and D, then on to the final idyllic destination.

Grief is messy. You think you’ve got yourself sorted and you’re back on your feet, coping with life as it has unravelled, and then WHAM something happens, and it’s like you’ve been knocked to your knees again, barely crawling through the day.

Could be anything that sets you back. Random thoughts and memories. Comments from other people. Running into an old friend who doesn’t have any idea how vastly your life has changed. Could be the weather. Could be an anniversary, birthday or some special date. Could be your loved one’s inquest. Could be a story line on TV or in a film that reminds you too much of...

The visceral ache of missing him or her takes over your thoughts. It is hard to distract yourself or find a comfortable spot inwardly or outwardly.

Grief is raging. It’s back with a vengeance. The realization of your loved one’s death hits you hard. It grabs hold of your heart and squeezes tight. A cold sensation sinks down into the pit of your stomach. You feel unnerved. Unsteady.

Your intense love for him or her is bubbling up inside and it doesn’t know how to find an outlet. You feel as though you might explode. What would you give for one more chance to have a chat together, to hold hands, to hug. How many things have been left unsaid.

You miss that person. Whether they were your baby or your child, your partner, your parent, a close relative or friend. You are continuing a life that they are absent from, and it hurts. Just hurts.

What can make it even harder is the absence of those who could support you. They might have rallied round when your loved one died; they might have maintained their kindness for some time. But now, after the months and perhaps years have passed, their life has progressed, and they’re not expecting you to be in the state in which you find yourself. So perhaps you don’t even tell them.

Finding hope

It would be nicer if grief was simple and straightforward. But it isn't. And that can sometimes make you feel quite hopeless. Literally, a loss of hope, that you will ever feel better or at peace.

I think that loss of hope can be quite dangerous.

So how do we get through these times when we reside in 'Bleak House' and we cannot see any future? The main message of my articles on "[The Way](#)" has been about taking one step at a time, one step after the other. We don't always know where those steps will lead us. It doesn't usually do us much good to try to foresee how we will feel in the future. Let's focus on this moment. **Let's just get through today.**

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Looking back at other times and how we survived them can also help. The fact is that we *did* survive. What helped on that occasion? Was it a call to a [helpline](#)? A chat with a friend? Trying to escape the moments by reading a book, going out to a film, some retail therapy? Was it a meaningful activity like a charity walk or a visit to someone who is in a worse state than ourselves? What worked in the past might not help today, but it *might*.

I would suggest that **realizing that you are not alone in what you're experiencing can also be a great comfort.** Talking with other people who are bereaved can help you realize that your roller-coaster of emotions is not unusual. Talking with other people can also help you realize that it can be survived.

Doing something in your loved one's memory can also be comforting. Organizing the photos. Creating a collage. And finally, I think it helps to **give yourself something to look forward to**, like making arrangements for a visit to a friend or a favorite place. What's that show that you've always wanted to see? What about the weekend pottery course? What about that walk? You might not feel like it *now*, but the focus on making the arrangements will be good to start with, and hopefully by the time the event comes around, you will find you have something to enjoy

There is no magical destination where grief ends, but there are places on the journey that are not as difficult as others. When we're feeling hopeless, it's time to search them out.