



**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019**

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358**

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**WEBSITE:** [WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG](http://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:**

\*Card making session usually on the first Monday of each month  
at Donna Goodrich's home. E-mails will be sent out.

\*TCF Annual Candle Lighting Service, December 8th.  
6:30 pm St. Matthew Catholic Church, Small Chapel

**More information in the newsletter!!**

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**REGIONAL COORDINATOR**

**Regional Coordinators for NC: Donna & Ralph Goodrich**

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**NATIONAL OFFICE**

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*Website:*

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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](http://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.

THANK YOU to Kay Thomas and her husband Tim for hosting our "Fall Gathering" in loving memory of Kay's son, Elliot. They did a fantastic job. Thanks you so much for all your hard work.

Also, thank you to City BBQ at Providence Road West for donating the BBQ, cole slaw, sauce, iced tea and lemonade. This helped so much to make our Gathering a success.

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

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP OUT IN OUR CHAPTER? WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A NEW E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR. WE ONLY ISSUE AN E-NEWSLETTER EVERY TWO MONTHS AND I WOULD BE HAPPY TO HELP YOU UNTIL YOU ARE COMFORTABLE PREPARING IT YOURSELF. PLEASE EMAIL ME IF YOU ARE INTERESTED!!

Donna Goodrich - [iluvu2lauren@gmail.com](mailto:iluvu2lauren@gmail.com)

## 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](mailto: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 - November 2019

#### **Justin Ferdinand**

11/25 - 10/22  
Judy Amoroso

#### **Michelle DiBernardini**

11/19 - 10/12  
Carol & Ben Baker

#### **Tim Boyer**

11/22 - 8/26  
Darlene & Melvin Boyer

#### **Nolan Brantley**

11/18 - 7/22  
Holly Brantley

#### **Colleen Louise Brooks**

11/15 - 8/19  
Sandra Brokaw

#### **Dylan Burke Hahn**

11/24 - 5/3  
Alicia Burke

#### **Eric Carlson**

11/19 - 3/9  
Carol Carlson

#### **Trenton James Scott**

11/15 - 1/31  
Lisa Ann Christensen

#### **John Cory Foil**

11/9 - 11/9  
Robin Foil

#### **Josselyn Gac**

11/4 - 10/24  
Adam & Judi Giebeler

#### **Caitlin Taylor Patton**

11/14 - 6/22  
Brandy Hartley & Christina Heindl

#### **Diana Phillipi**

11/19 - 1/20  
Becki Huff

**Ian Christian Lampkin**

11/27 - 11/27  
Leslie Lampkin

**Christopher Lloyd**

11/22 - 9/25  
Cayren Lloyd

**Michael Mahoney**

11/23 - 5/3  
Celia & Tom Mahoney

**Cory S. Flynt**

11/29 - 2/2  
Debra McDonald-Flynt

**Ryan Monfeli**

11/15 - 12/30  
Pamela Monfeli

**Kyle Bodord**

11/10 - 4/23  
Libby Norkum

**James O'Keefe**

11/6 - 2/19  
Doris O'Keefe

**Justin Zuk**

11/25 - 9/27  
Barbara Palmer

**Matthew Lee Puckett**

11/2 - 11/16  
Stephanie Puckett

**Hannah Quinton**

11/11 - 3/26  
Alice & Carlton Quinton

**Tim Roddey**

11/14 - 12/31  
Shelby & Jack Roddey

**Sadie Schuster**

11/14 - 12/7  
Erin Schuster

**Loren Silva**

11/9 - 4/12  
Allison Silva

**Bill Twaddell**

11/30 - 11/17  
Karen Twaddell

**William "Britton" Twitty**

11/21 - 7/14  
Kathy Twitty

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries - November 2019

**Stephen Benish**

2/3 - 11/28  
Candy Benish

**Michael Cargill**

1/5 - 11/12  
Debbie & Mike Cargill

**Lauren Ehele**

3/8 - 11/30  
Lisa Ehele

**John Cory Foil**

11/9 - 11/9  
Robin Foil

**Madelynn Charlotte Golbach**

9/21 - 11/2  
Nicole & Christoph Golbach

**David Haney**

9/27 - 11/24  
Theresa Haney

**Garrett Howison**

7/16 - 11/21  
Angie & Jason Howison

**Matthew Jackson**

1/2 - 11/3  
Sonny & Scotty Jackson

**Ian Christian Lampkin**

11/27 - 11/27  
Leslie Lampkin

**Chad Langdon**

12/22 - 11/27  
Courtney Langdon

**Anthony McLain**

3/29 - 11/12  
Kevin & Cindy McLain

**Jeanna Norton**

1/28 - 11/3  
David Norton & Jeanette Owens

**Billy Patton**

10/1 - 11/11  
Carol Patton

**Kiara Pearse**

6/12 - 11/14  
Yvette Pearse

**Jameel Pearse**

2/28 - 11/14  
Yvette Pearse

**Matthew Lee Puckett**

11/2 - 11/16  
Stephanie Puckett

**Michael Schexnayder**

4/22 - 11/9  
Meg & Paul Schexnayder  
John Paul Schexnayder

**Amaani Ariana Shah**

10/1 - 11/14  
Anjali Shah

**Gregg Moore**

8/16 - 11/8  
Linda & Arnold Shaw

**Shamar Sheats**

8/27 - 11/15  
Ken Sheats

**Jeremy Sprague**

7/4 - 11/30  
Max E. Sprague

**Bill Twaddell**

11/30 - 11/17  
Karen Twaddell

Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Birthdays - December 2019

**Ayanna Addison**

12/08 - 12/08  
Phillipa Addison

**Lewis Addison**

12/08 - 12/08  
Phillipa Addison

**Christopher Brown**

12/9 - 6/2  
Kimberly Brown

**Nicholas Daniel**

12/4 - 4/24  
Kimberly Daniel

**Creed Campbell**

12/3 - 4/15  
Stephanie & Steve Fee

**Thaddeus Cash**

12/10 - 8/17  
Jerrica Gaves

**Luna Eve Hobbs**

12/20 - 12/20  
Shayna Hobbs

**Tommy Horton**

12/23 - 1/21  
Marilyn Horton

**Isaiah Pinkney**

12/31 - 1/13  
Mia Jackson

**Brian Michael Kirchner**

12/3 - 4/29  
Dan & Tilly Kirchner

**Chad Langdon**

12/22 - 11/27  
Courtney Langdon

**Hannah E. Strickland**

12/6 - 7/2  
Charlotte Manis

**Michael McKinley**

12/23 - 1/9  
Janet McKinley

**Lance Ferguson**

12/21 - 3/2  
Rhonda Hutton

**Kelsey Morris**

12/4 - 9/4  
Meghan Morris

**Eric Lemarier**

12/12 - 6/27  
Gale Muscaro

**Adam Mashburn**

12/22 - 2/24  
Becky & Scott Petersen

**Jason Christopher Roberts**

12/7 - 3/5  
Marie & David Roberts

**Silje Rowell**

12/27 - 9/8  
Ed & Ann Rowell

**Heath Graves**

12/28 - 6/5  
Teresa & Paul Schmaldest

**Nicholas Simonette**

12/15 - 12/29  
Kelly Simonette

**Matthew Wright**

12/30 - 1/28  
Kathleen Turner

**Billy Trahey**

12/25 - 8/12  
Pat Varipapa

**Greg Vitiello**

12/5 - 7/6  
Pat & Ciro Vitiello

**Jason Walters**

12/10 - 8/26  
Alan & Ellen Walters

**Denis Anthony Giacobbe**

12/31 - 1/18  
Christine Webb

**Angela Harper**

12/15 - 8/13  
Sherri West

**Lindsay N. Jerdo**

12/16 - 12/24  
Melanie Wheaton

**Jonathan Holt Whitlow**

12/26 - 3/31  
William & Allison Whitlow

**Amanda Jean Ziegler**

12/28 - 6/25  
Joy Ziegler

**Remembering these Children and Their Families on Their Anniversaries -December 2019**

**Cory Abernathy**

3/24 - 12/1  
Rhonda Abernathy

**John Joseph Gabriel, Jr.**

6/6 - 12/12  
Patti & Fred Burnick

**Vincent Chandler Edmond**

3/19 - 12/13  
Venceta Butler-Edmond

**Jennifer Eanes**

3/18 - 12/12  
Nancy & George Eanes

**Yasmine Anderson**

7/11 - 12/16  
Kim Glazier

**Christopher Hall**

10/? - 12/25  
Jessica Hall

**Luna Eve Hobbs**

12/20 - 12/20  
Shayna Hobbs

**Ashley Hurte**

9/9 - 12/22  
Jim & Elisa Hurte

**Jeremy Jenkins**

5/8 - 12/7  
Denise Jenkins

**Jasmine D. Thar**

10/17 - 12/23  
Carletta McNeil

**Ryan Monfeli**

11/15 - 12/30  
Pamela Monfeli

**Ayriel E. Moore**

5/9 - 12/6  
Andrea & Cedric Moore



**Tim Roddey**  
11/14 - 12/31  
Shelby & Jack Roddey

**Sadie Schuster**  
11/14 - 12/7  
Erin Schuster

**Nicholas Simonette**  
12/15 - 12/29  
Kelly Simonette

**Chris Taylor**  
2/23 - 12/10  
(No Name)

**Lindsay N. Jerdo**  
12/16 - 12/24  
Melanie Wheaton

**Jason Lucas Armstrong**  
6/25 - 12/25  
Patti & Fred Wright

**Jamaal Miller**  
6/7 - 12/14  
Olaniyi Zainabu

I wish you knew how much of you  
there is in everything I do.  
It can be the smallest thing... trivial...  
mundane... But you're there, under  
the surface of it somewhere.  
I wish you knew how I carry you  
with me always... Everywhere I go.

- Ranata Suzuki -

*Goodbyes hurt  
the most, when the  
story was not  
finished...*

## Why The Death Of A Sibling Is Like Losing A Part Of Yourself

If you're anything like me, you grew up in a fairytale surrounded by siblings who stood 10 feet tall. You grew up with parents who were as brave as superheroes. You grew up naïve to the world around you.

Don't get me wrong; I was well aware of what the news never failed to talk about. I knew mothers and fathers could lose their battles with cancer. I knew children could be kidnapped. I knew houses burned down, and car accidents happened almost every day.

But, I had created a world where my family was untouchable, where nothing could ever happen to them because they were mine.

Five years ago, a police officer knocked on our front door. It was 10 pm, and I had just gotten ready for bed.

"There's been an accident. You need to come to the hospital right away."

By this point, I had seen enough TV shows to know this was not what you wanted to hear from a police officer, especially not at 10 pm, and especially not when your older brother still hadn't made it home.

I lost a brother that day. I lost a cheerleader, a mentor and a best friend. The safe space I had created so easily disappeared, and I was left to tackle the world without the one person who had always paved a path before me.

There's no word to describe the loss of a sibling. If you lose a spouse, you're a widow or widower. If you lose your parents, you're an orphan. But if you lose a sibling, you just become the girl who lost her brother. My therapist described it as losing a limb. If someone tells you it gets better with time, the person's lying to you. Yes, cuts get better and wounds do heal, but when you lose an arm, it's foolish to await the day it "gets better." You simply learn to live with one arm.

I learned to do the things I know he would have liked. I learned to listen to the songs we sang together in the car without breaking down in tears. I learned — and am still learning — to function normally without him just a phone call away.

However, “normal” has lately been like a blanket too short for a bed. Sometimes it covers you just fine, and other times it leaves you shaking in the cold. I've come to find the worst part is I never know which one it's going to be when I wake up.

It's been almost five years since that day. Some days the ache is a little less than before, but other days it makes me want to lock myself in my room. And some days, I still feel like I am stuck in a void.

There is no statute of limitations on grief. There is no time limit to waking up crying, or having to leave the grocery store because you see your sibling's old friends. There is no special cure for those dull aches in your heart that don't seem to ever go away.

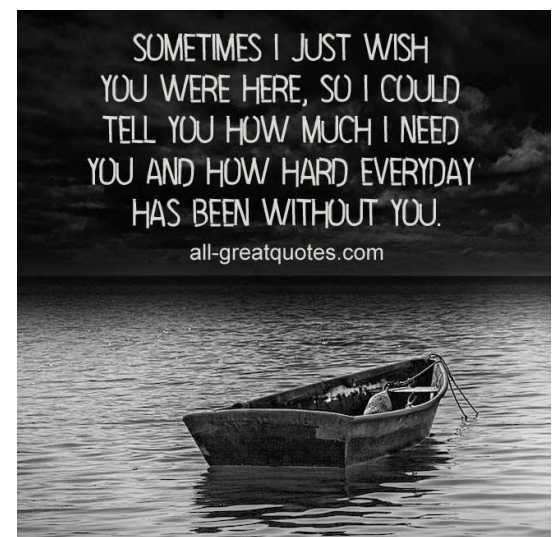
But, coming from a sister who thought she would never find the light again, know there will come a day when the thought of that loved one brings a smile to your face instead of leaving you gasping for a breath you cannot find.

There will come a day when you find yourself talking about your sibling and you do not feel uncomfortable. There will come a day when the universe sends you a sign to let you know your sibling is doing OK.

And there will come a day when the 19 years you were able to have with your sibling becomes enough for the 19 more you'll never have. There is no other love like the love *for* a brother, and no other love like the love *from* a brother. And if you're lucky to have a brother who was also your best friend, that love is going to cover you during the best of times and hold your hand through the worst.



*This article was written by **Kady Braswell** for **Unwritten**.*



TCF Charlotte will have their Annual Candle Lighting on **December 8, 2019** beginning at 6:30 pm in the **Small Chapel** at St.

Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Balantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte. Everyone is welcome and so are family and friends. We will hold the candle lighting starting at 6:30 pm. After the Candle Lighting Service, we will hold a reception in Rooms

239/240/241, in

the New Life Center building - down the hall from where our regular monthly meetings are held. Everyone is encouraged to bring an appetizer or dessert to share. The chapter will provide drinks. PLEASE arrive early if you need to drop your food off before the candle lighting. We will not be able to accept food at the Chapel doors as before to transport upstairs. If possible you can just bring them up after the Candle Lighting Service. The service will consist of readings by TCF members, music, lighting our candles and speaking our children, grandchildren and siblings's names. We look forward to seeing everyone at the Candle Lighting.



**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all  
children who have died

**Worldwide  
Candle  
Lighting®**

... that their light  
may always shine.

**Sunday, December 8, 2019  
7 PM Around the Globe**



## ***THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING - UGH!!!!***

I'm sure most of you, especially the newly bereaved, feel this way about the holidays. Yes, the holidays are hard - for a very long time. But they do get better - its just takes time and work on our part. Many times we give in to these type comments: "you need to keep the past traditions going", "you need to do holidays the same way you always did - for your remaining children", or "you need to continue to participate in holidays for other members of your family". None of these cliques should be said to you and your family - nor should you make a decision for how you will handle the holidays based on a comment from someone who is NOT in your immediate family (which is you, your spouse and your surviving children) or who has not lost a child. Instead of articles on handling our grief that we usually have in the newsletter, I've included many tips and suggestion for handling and surviving the holidays. They are just that - tips. You should do what you and your immediate family decide is best for you - that's it!! No one who has not lost a child can understand what we go through - especially during the holidays. So ONLY do what you feel is right!

### **TIPS TO SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS**

#### **PLAN AHEAD**

Realize you will not be able to do everything with everyone. Decide what is truly important to you and your family.

#### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP**

Ask friends and relatives for help. Tasks which may normally take little effort can feel overwhelming, i.e., fixing a meal, cleaning the house now seem monumental.

## **NO ONE EXPECTS YOU TO PROVE YOU HAVE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT**

No one expects you to string rows and rows of lights or decorate the entire house. Do only what you feel you are capable of doing - even if that is nothing!

## **NO OBLIGATION TO HOST**

Just because you have hosted gatherings in the past, you are not obligated to do it this year. Others will understand (maybe a “teaching moment”).

## **OLD TRADITIONS MAY BE LEFT BEHIND**

After your child has died, old traditions are often left behind. Honor the memory of your child in unique ways that have meaning to you and your family.

## **INCLUDE SURVIVING CHILDREN**

If your surviving children are old enough to help make decisions, be sure to include them in the discussions.

## **BE EASY ON YOURSELF**

If you don't get everything done you plan, don't sweat it. Rest!! Grief is hard work.

## **SHOPPING**

Even attempting to go into a shopping center at Christmas is so overwhelming to a bereaved parent, filling us with memories of when our child was with us. We now have instant access to any store through internet. Use it. Gift cards are a good idea - IF you feel you have to give gifts this year.

## **PARTICIPATE IN A MEMORIAL SERVICE**

Each year on the second Sunday in December the Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting Service is done. This is a great memorial service to attend. You can bring your family and friends and hopefully educate them about how important it is to you and your family that your child, grandchild or sibling is remembered throughout the year

and especially at holidays. IF you feel the service is too much for you and your family this year, light a candle at home for your child, grandchild or sibling and participate in the candle lighting from the comfort and safety of your home.

### **ANTICIPATION MAY BE WORSE THAN THE ACTUAL DAY**

Fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself. To Go or Not To Go - that is the question. Do you go to the various Christmas parties, do you participate in your families traditional Christmas dinner, do you hide in your house with the blinds closed?? These are all questions that may hit us at this time of the year. REMEMBER - do what you feel you are able and want to do. Many families leave the area during the holiday period. They go to the beach, to the mountains, on a cruise, etc., anywhere that they will not run into someone they know. This works for them. Grief will not be left behind - believe me - it goes with us wherever we go, but going somewhere you are not known in order to not have to mask your grief does help some of us. Please try to attend a TCF Chapter meeting before the holidays. Most chapters will have "Handling the Holidays" as a topic for their meetings. If they don't, ask those that are farther along in their grief how they managed the holidays through the years. That's why they are still attending TCF meetings - to help the newly bereaved, to tell them what worked and did not work for them, to hold your hand and let you cry if you need to - to help in any way they can. Someone was there to help them - now they are there to help you.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

### **KNOW WHEN YOUR HOLIDAYS ARE**

- Holidays are those times when family and friends get together for fun. It may or may not be associated with one of the traditional days of celebration.
- Mark on your calendar the months during which your family's holidays occur.
- Begin early to plan your coping strategies.

### **BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT HOW YOU PLAN YOUR HOLIDAY**

- Together, as a family, examine the events and tasks of the celebration and ask the following questions:
- Do we really enjoy doing this? Is it done out of habit, free choice, or obligation?
- Is this a task that can be shared?
- Would the holiday "be the same" without it?

### **DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE COMFORTABLY**

- Whether we are open to talk about our child.
- Whether we feel able to send holiday cards this year.
- Whether we can handle the responsibility of the family dinner, holiday parties, etc., or if we wish someone else to take over some of the traditions this year.
- Whether we will stay at home for the holidays or choose a different environment.
- Shopping is so very difficult when you have lost a loved one. Internet shopping is now the go to option for many bereaved families. Use it and skip the "triggers" of mall shopping.

### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES. IT CAN REALLY MAKE THINGS LESS PAINFUL**

- Let the children take over decorating the tree or invite friends to help.
- Open presents the night before the holiday instead of in the morning.



- Have dinner at a different time. Change the seating arrangement.
- burn a special candle to quietly include your absent son or daughter.

### **OUR GREATEST COMFORT MAY COME IN DOING SOMETHING FOR OTHERS**

- Giving a gift in memory of our child to a meaningful charity.
- Adopting a needy family for the holidays.
- Inviting a guest (foreign student, senior citizen, someone who would otherwise be alone) to share the festivities.

### **EVALUATE YOUR COPING PLANS**

- Do your plans isolate you from those who love and support you best?
- Do your plans allow for meaningful expression and celebration of what the particular holiday means for you?

### **LET YOUR PLANS AND LIMITS BE KNOWN**

- Write or phone family and friends to let them know of any intended changes.
- Share with friends and family how you plan to approach the holiday and how they can best help you.

### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN**

- Enjoyment, laughter and pleasure are not experiences in which you abandon your lost child, grandchild or sibling. You have not forgotten him/her. You need not feel guilty over any enjoyment you may experience.
- Give yourself and members of your family permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holiday in whatever way your family has chosen. It is YOUR choice - not someone else's.

Finally, as you seek to make sensible plans, remember to make them firm enough to support you, but flexible enough to leave you some freedom - have an alternate plan to leave an event if you feel too overwhelmed.

Below is an article written by the late and wonderful Darcie Sims. Her knowledge of the grief world and her humor still shine through in today's world and in our various stages of grief.

from **THE SEASON OF LIGHT**

by: Darcie Sims Ph.D. (From the Nov/Dec 1995 issue of Bereavement Magazine)

### **BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF**

Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to bear. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.

### **BE REALISTIC**

It will hurt but don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues (a roll of toilet paper is even more efficient!). Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go.

### **BE KIND AND GENTLE TO YOURSELF**

Figure out what you should do, balance it with what you are *capable* of doing and then *compromise*. Forgive yourself for living.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is *really* important to *you*.

### **LISTEN TO YOURSELF**

As you become aware of your needs tell family members and friends.

### **ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT**

### **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF PHYSICALLY**

Eat right. Exercise (or at least watch someone else). Gift wrap some broccoli. If nothing else, jog your memory!

### **CHANGE SOMETHING**

**Everything** has already changed so don't be afraid to change some traditions. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always stop it if it doesn't feel quite right or doesn't work! But don't toss out everything this year. Keep some traditions. You choose which ones.

## **LEAVE THE WORD "OUGHT" OUT OF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

### **HOLD ON TO YOUR WALLET AND CHARGE CARDS**

You can't buy away grief, but you might be tempted to try.

### **UNDERSTANDING...**

That heartache will be unpacked as you sift through the decorations, but so, too, are the warm loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

### **SHARE YOUR HOLIDAYS**

With someone, anyone! Ride the ferry, visit a soup kitchen or nursing home, spend an evening at the bus station. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring.

### **WORK AT LIFTING DEPRESSION**

Take responsibility for yourself. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat. (Cookies are often therapeutic!)

### **HANG THE STOCKINGS**

Place a wreath on the grave. Do whatever feels right for you and your family.

### **LIGHT A SPECIAL CANDLE**

Not in memory of a death but in celebration of a life and a love shared!!

### **LEARN TO LOOK FOR JOY IN THE MOMENT**

Get a pair of rose colored glasses and change the way you look at things. Joy happens when we look for it!

### **FIND THE GIFTS OF YOUR LOVED ONE'S LIFE**

Think of all the "gifts" that your loved one gave to you - joy, safety, laughter, companionship etc. list these "gifts" on strips of paper and keep them

somewhere close to you. Some may decorate the tree with them or simply keep them in a memory book or in a secret place. But, wherever you place them, know that these small strips of paper hold treasures far beyond our capacity to understand. They hold tangible evidence that someone lived. It is a reminder that we did exchange gifts and that we still have those gifts even if the giver has gone.

### **LIVE THROUGH THE HURT.....**

so that joy can return to warm your heart! This is the Season of Light - for it is the season when we remember that once we loved and were loved. And that is the greatest light and memory of all!!

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING YOUR OWN MEMORIALS**

Following are a few suggestions for the Thanksgiving feast, Christmas/Yuletide and the New Year. Remember that rituals are part of learning to cope. Most of these suggestions are adaptable for any of the holidays or throughout the entire season. You may not feel “up” to doing any of these suggestions this year or even next year. We have included them for you to think about as you try to establish new rituals in memory of your loved one. Use any of these suggestions you feel fits in with you and your family.

- 1. Purchase or make a memorial candle.** Your memorial candle may be lit each morning or evening and extinguished only before bedtime throughout the holiday season. There are also perpetual candles (liquid paraffin in a can placed in a glass container) which may burn for up to a week.
- 2. Toast your child, grandchild or sibling.** Create a special toast to your loved one, using your favorite wine or beverage. This can be done on any of the holidays when the family is gathered together or even when you are alone.

- 3. Your favorite story.** Reserve some time at the table or around the Christmas tree to tell a favorite story about your loved one, This could accompany the special toast to your memories.
- 4. Place a single flower on the table.** Choose our favorite flower in honor of the "presence" of your loved one.
- 5. Observe a moment of silence.** Silence or prayer before the meal or at another time you deem appropriate is a simple and gracious way to honor your love.
- 6. Family album.** Spend some time together as a family with the family album. Make it a special celebration when the past is discussed, reviewed and relived.
- 7. Buy or create your own Advent Calendar.** You may want to place a photograph of members of the family or close friends behind each window from December 1 to 25. This tradition anticipates coping slowly, day by day as the season passes.
- 8. Buy a living Christmas tree.** Most nurseries and Christmas tree vendors now sell live evergreens that are ready to be planted in the yard after the Holiday Season. Planting new life to commemorate the meaning of the life of your child, grandchild or sibling can be shared with family and friends, who may also be invited for refreshments or a meal after the planting ceremony.
- 9. Garnish your tree.** This year you might decorate your tree with fresh flowers and products of nature, or an outside tree with berries, seeds and other kinds of food for the birds and squirrels.
- 10. Create luminaries.** Line your sidewalk or driveway with luminaries. These are a Mexican tradition and are simple to do, yet lovely as they light up the night in soft glow. All you need are brown paper sandwich bags, small candles and sand. You can also use battery powered tea lights if fire is an issue. They signify a warm welcome.

**11. Buy a Christmas present for/from your loved one.** A gift for the home which will have a special place or take on special meaning for holidays to come can be the gift to/from your loved one.

**12. Make a donation/gift to charity.** An established agency will welcome your gift in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. You might want to help a needy family by providing Christmas dinner for them or buying small gifts for the children.

**13. Decorate the altar at Church.** Your decoration may be as simple as a flowering plant, or whatever seems appropriate as you share the memory of your loved one with your congregation.

**14. Discuss the values you share as a family.** Set aside a time before opening gifts to discuss the values you share as a family and how your loved one contributed to the quality of your life.

**15. Drink a toast to the future.** The New Year may bring with it your own resolution toward hope. Drinking a toast to the future does not neglect the past, but gives us the time to look ahead and regain some sense of control over our lives. For the newly bereaved, this opportunity is even greater. There is something about planning a new or renewed direction which is very encouraging.

Our wish for you in the days ahead is to remember that anguish is not forever and that joy is possible even in grief. It does take time and work by you, but you can find joy in life again. Those of us that are farther down the road in our grief journey are proof that it can happen. That's what TCF and your chapter are all about - showing you that you CAN make it through this. We are here for you, to help you through the holidays as well as all the other days of the year. **HUGGGGGS!!**

