



The Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay Area Supporting Family After a Child Dies

MARCH - APRIL 2026

VOLUME XXVIII, NUMBER 1

MOVE YOUR GRIEF

That's exactly what a few of our Tampa Bay Area Chapter members did when they walked the Gasparilla 5K on Saturday, February 21.

Peggy said this in her Facebook post:

"Words will never be enough to explain the importance of this support system, the understanding, the love, the compassion, and pure acceptance we have for one another."



From left to right: Tracy, Bailey's mom; Marcolina, Brandon's mom; Bernardo, Brandon's dad; Mary Kay, Tori's mom; EJ, Tori's dad; Maxwell, Prechae's dad; and Peggy, RJ's mom

The next walk we have planned is the "She Is Football" 5K (3 miles) on March 6, which takes place in and around the Tampa Bay Buccaneers training center. Please see our Facebook page for sign up information.

We would love for you to join us.

Monthly Meetings

First Thursday of the month

NEW Location starting Nov 6
Brandon Christian Church
910 Bryan Rd
Brandon, FL 33511

Parking on Lumsden Rd side,
enter through doors under
covered walkway: Room 1

Time: 7 - 9pm

Third Thursday of the month

Virtually on Zoom:

Click [HERE](#) to join

Time: 7 - 9pm

Upcoming Events



TCF's 49th
National Conference

July 3 - 5, 2026
Baltimore, MD

for more information visit
compassionatefriends.org

A huge THANK YOU to Jody Pupecki, Tylor's mom, and one of the TCF National Board Members, for rushing to find a new vendor to replace the one that had gone out of business, making it possible for our members to order personalized shirts in time for this walk.



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Love Gifts

Why are Love Gift Donations Important? As a Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, we are solely dependent on donations to cover all of our expenses, from donations to our new meeting space at the church, refreshments for meetings, and welcome packets for the newly bereaved, to our Candle Lighting, our Web page, and all the other expenses needed to keep the chapter running smoothly and comfortably for everyone.

We hope you will consider a Love Gift in honor of your child, sibling, or grandchild. For sending a check please see the blue section on page 13.

In case you prefer to give a love gift electronically, we have the option for the following:

Venmo: Search for The Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay Area. When asked for the last four digits of the phone number, you can choose to click on the option to continue without.

Zelle: add our Chapter's email: tampacompassionatefriends@gmail.com to your address book. Confirm that you wish to send money to our Chapter's Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay Area account under the name of Chapter leader Debbie Rivera.

Please be sure to add a note with your loved one's name in whose memory you are making a donation.

With gratitude,

Your Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay family

GRANDPARENTS' GRIEF IS UNIQUE

<https://rednose.org.au/grief-and-loss-support/bereaved-family-and-friends/bereaved-grandparents/grandparents-grief-is-unique/>

The death of a beloved grandchild is one of the hardest things a grandparent ever has to face. Your natural hopes and dreams for the future have been shattered and you have been faced with an almost unbearable tragedy. Grandparents expect that they will love and enjoy their grandchildren: the natural order is that they will die before their own children – and certainly before their grandchildren.



“When a baby or child dies it has an impact on the whole family. There is often a lot of attention on the grieving parents, who are the primary grievers and grandparents may find themselves forgotten at times.”

Experiencing your own grief whilst simultaneously aiding your bereaved adult child characterizes grandparents' grief. Living with your own feelings whilst having to witness the torment and intense sorrow your own son or daughter are enduring - can be overwhelming.

Grandparents' Grief: A Multi-layered Blow

When a grandchild dies, grandparents experience a dual sorrow. They cry for their lost grandchild and they also cry for the terrible grief they see their own child having to bear. This pain is something you cannot take away. This can be difficult to accept because as a parent you expect (and desperately want) to be able to take away your child's pain.

A grandparent's grief is like a fork in the road, going in two different directions. One road represents the loss of your grandchild and the other represents the pain of seeing your child suffer. You have two tasks. The first is to work through your own grief and the other is to feel helpful to your bereaved child. There may be two parts, but you actually deal with them at the same time.

“Not only could I not take away my daughter's pain at the death of her 2 year old daughter, but I was also devastated by my own grief at the loss of my precious granddaughter.”

The one thing that would help your child feel better – to have their child back – is impossible. It is natural for you to feel useless, ineffective and hopeless.

“You grieve for your grandchild, you grieve for your adult child and you grieve for yourself. You may feel a loss or challenge to your own identity: at a time of life where there is an expectation of ‘settling’ into a grandparent role, suddenly you are faced with the inimitable task of being a parent wanting to support and protect your grieving adult child as the whole family navigates this upheaval that impacts all generations”.



The Compassionate Friends has online communities and private Facebook groups that are targeted towards specific needs, such as grandparents. You can find them [HERE](#)

ANSWERS?



*The memories are bright and far away,
because in all those grieving years
the pain has calmed.*

*The mind has learned
that life and loss are brothers,
that death tells nothing
when we ask him “why.”
The memories are deep and long ago.*

*Here, after all those grieving years,
the songs we sang, the thoughts we shared,
the morning kisses
and the mystic evenings,
remain alive in us and unforgotten.*

*Now Love holds answers,
though we ask her nothing.*

Sascha



I first learned about Margo Fowkes’ story back in November of 2020, as I was walking the trail around our neighborhood lake. Margo was a guest on the Grief Out Loud podcast (see page 18 for more info). You know how you can hear something several times, but it doesn’t sink in, and then it does? That’s exactly what happened to me when Margo talked about guilt. I remember exactly where I was walking on the trail when I felt her words sink in, *really* sink in. I had been carrying so much guilt about my failure as a mother, all those What Ifs I had been carrying around since KK died. What Margo said made so much sense to me. It was what I so badly needed to hear. I immediately looked up her website [Salt Water](#) and devoured every single word.

Even though her article, ‘Let It Rain Down’, aligns with the beginning of a new calendar year and all the complicated feelings we grievers have around stepping into January, I still feel it validates our feelings even now, a few months into 2026, when life is still raining down all around us. I hope her words touch your heart the way they have touched mine.

Sylvia

Following the death of her son Jimmy in 2014 after an eight-year battle with brain cancer, Margo Fowkes launched Salt Water, an online community that provides a safe harbor for those who have lost someone dear to them. Inspired by Jimmy’s determination to live a rich, full life despite his circumstances, the blog posts and resources focus on healing and building a new life in the aftermath of a devastating loss.

Margo is also the author of the award-winning ***Leading Through Loss: How to Navigate Grief at Work.***

LET IT RAIN DOWN

by Margo Fowkes

*You can't stop time. You can't capture light.
You can only turn your face up and let it rain down.
~ The Memory Keeper's Daughter*

I stopped making New Year's resolutions after Jimmy died. In the early years, it was hard to think much beyond surviving life in the aftermath. Getting out of bed, putting one foot in front of another, finding laughter and bits of joy where I could, fighting to stay out of the pit.

Now, more than ten years out, I look at the lengthy lists of resolutions people post online and quickly get overwhelmed. Even those that purport to be for grieverers are too much for me. There are days when I can barely get myself outside to walk our dog, but I'm supposed to make and keep 64 New Year's Resolutions for Grieverers?

Part of the problem is the enormity of the undertaking, and part of it is that I just can't be that perfect. I need to eat well, meditate and get lots of sleep. I should stay away from toxic people and journal on a daily basis. I must organize my piles and piles of photos and create a memory book in honor of Jimmy or my parents. It's all just too much.

What gets lost in all those resolutions is how far I've come. How far we've all come. To lose one of your essential people (or two or three or four), and keep living is no small thing. To find joy, friendship and love in the aftermath. To keep learning, taking chances, making new friends, supporting others who've also lost a beloved. That's where the beauty lies.

In a New Year's resolution world, I'd be 15 pounds lighter and training for a half marathon. I'd be cooking 5-6 days a week, keeping a spotless house and writing another book. I'd have a well-organized calendar that was carefully balanced between work commitments and time with friends and family. But the woman who aspired to some or all of that is gone now. I don't have the energy, desire or brain power to even aspire to that kind of life.

Some days, it's all I can do to remember to pause and take a deep, cleansing breath. So instead, I set a few simple goals for myself. What's the difference between a goal and a resolution? Don't ask. It might just be semantics but "goal" feel less intimidating.

- Move my body a little every day. The world is much more manageable when I get some exercise.
- Preserve space on my calendar to read, write, create and just be
- Spend time each week with the people I love most
- Hold my sweet boy close. Say his name, share his story and embrace the world the way he did.

The light is coming back, a little more every day. We are still here. Battered and bruised. Hurting and healing. Vulnerable and brave. Still standing and sticking together. Releasing our grip on old grievances. Holding tight to the ones we've lost and the ones who enable us to survive. Fighting to stay in the arena. Doing our best.

Wishing you grace, beauty, hope, healing and joy in the new year. Here's to staying close, holding hands and keeping each other upright as life rains down all around us.

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN MARCH

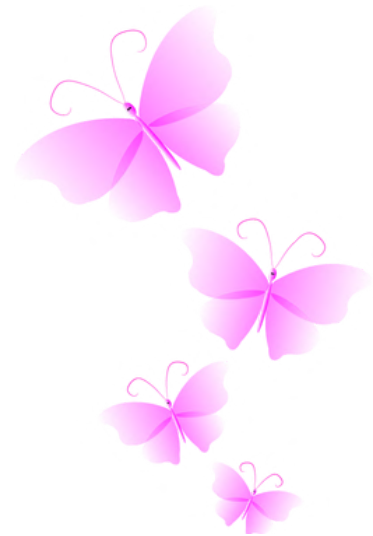
LIGHTING A CANDLE, CHERISHING A BIRTH...



Remembering them:

1 - Enso Rosati Tuscano
 1 - Savannah Taylor Le
 1 - Reagan Yeager Le
 5 - Ashley Duty
 7 - Jonathan
 8 - Gabe Renfroe
 9 - Joey Cooke
 9 - Hailey
 11 - Susan
 11 - Devin Doyle
 11 - Lidianna
 11 - Tyler Christopher Wisnieski
 13 - Shannon Marie Finn
 16 - Marisa Alvarado
 16 - Peter (PJ) Demetrius Hyman Jr
 17 - Bubba (James)
 17 - Lynn
 19 - Rustin Lane Noeder
 20 - Sara Delesie Mobley
 20 - Johnny Cobernus
 22 - Natalia Iris Rivera
 27 - Jasmine Ford
 28 - Brittany Tann
 28 - Julian Terrel Hayag
 29 - Levi Godwin
 30 - Joshua Heslep
 31 - Jim Clemments-Lockmuller
 31 - Jeremi Brito

Kallison Tuscano
 Lisa and Thanh Le
 Lisa and Thanh Le
 Dee and Scott Duty
 Linda Walker
 Julie and David Renfroe
 Mike and Maria Cooke
 Lisa and Chris Acierno
 Patricia Fee
 David and Christine Doyle
 Sandra Jiminez
 Sonya and Thomas Wisnieski
 Debbie and John McCarthy
 Becky Null
 Bianca Cooper
 Janet Kist
 Victor Bartolotta
 Yvonne and Kevin Bahret
 Sara H. Delesie
 Julia Cobernus
 Cynthia and Gabriel Rivera
 Sabrina Ford
 Faith Tann
 Glenn and Teresa Hayag
 Kelly Godwin
 Phyllis Heslep
 Becky Clemments and Fred Lockmuller
 Judy Caminero



Birthdays & Remembrances

Birthday and anniversary dates can be difficult times for families as they remember a loved one gone too soon. The days leading up to the date can often be harder than the actual day itself, while for some the days following can also be difficult.

Please take the time to reach out to those chapter members that have their child's birthday and/or anniversary in this newsletter and let them know they need not walk alone!

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN MARCH

LIGHTING A CANDLE,
REMEMBERING A LIFE...



Remembering them:

1 - Savannah Taylor Le
 1 - Reagan Yeager Le
 1 - Justin
 2 - Michael Holmberg
 2 - Saijah Coleman
 3 - Michael Dunaway
 5 - Patrick Jernigan
 6 - Nymeir Z.C. Brown
 13 - Hannah
 13 - Milo Oliver Allen
 14 - Susan
 14 - Steven Messina
 18 - Michael Zayas Jr.
 19 - Daniel Williams
 19 - Johnny Cobernus
 21 - Steven Cozzi
 22 - Gabe Renfroe
 28 - Hailey Ann Acierno
 28 - Jason
 28 - Brendan Martin
 30 - Joshua Heslep

Lisa and Thanh Le
 Lisa and Thanh Le
 Deborah Jackson
 Mary Ellen Holmberg
 Takoma and Ilee Coleman
 Jerralynne Duncan
 Debbie and David Rivera
 Neveah Goldsborough and Tyron Carswell
 Shawn Marx
 Hannah Greth
 Patricia Fee
 Debra and Steven Messina
 Lillian and Gary Costa
 Maureen and Scott Williams
 Julia Cobernus
 Lois and George Cozzi
 Julie and David Renfroe
 Lisa and Chris Acierno
 Kathy LeoGrande
 Joyce Martin
 Phyllis Heslep



Your first meeting

Attending your first TCF meeting can be difficult. Feelings can be overwhelming. We have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Please attend two or three meetings before deciding if TCF is right for you. There are no dues or fees. If you choose, you need not speak a word at a meeting. We are an international, non-denominational group, offering support and information to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. We need not walk alone.

A Note to the Newly Bereaved

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, our newsletter, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering. Every person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees, and you do not have to speak. We do suggest that you attend at least three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF group meetings are for you. We are glad you have found us.



A Request of our Current Members

Take a moment of your time today to think back to the beginning of your grief journey. It's difficult. Do you remember your first TCF meeting? Yet you came, and when you arrived a sweet voice soothed your shattered nerves, talked with you, welcomed you and explained the chapter meetings so you would know what to expect. Someone was there for you. Many "established bereaved" were there to support you as you said your loved one's name for the first time in an open group setting. There was a gentleness and kinship in the room that you found nowhere else in the world.

Your unique perspective is needed by the many newly bereaved who enter our meetings each month for the first time. Each of these new members deserves a gentle welcome and a kindred soul upon whom they can rely. Remember who you were and all that you have become since coming to Compassionate Friends. Please return for them.

The gift of hope is such a precious treasure.

iSmash

863 E. Bloomingdale Ave, Brandon, FL 33511

Group Event

- Closed to the public for 2 ½ hours
- 4 Rage Rooms / Event Room - outside food and drinks allowed
- half group will smash, other half throws axes, then switch
- Fri Sat Sun \$45 p/person - Tues Wed Thurs \$40 p/person

Date TBD



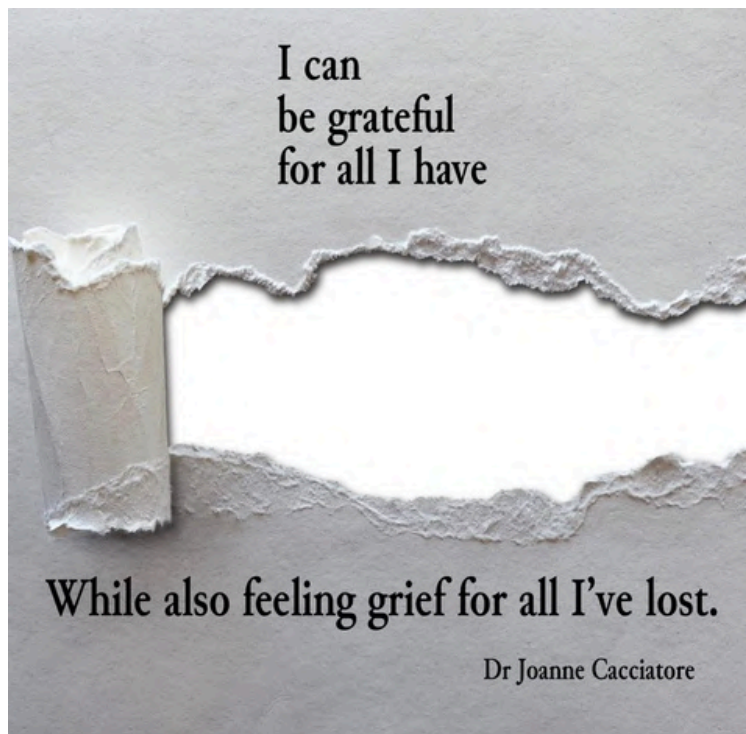
Telephone Listeners

**Do you feel you need a little extra support, someone to talk to,
or to just listen? These friends are just a phone call away.**

Don't hesitate to reach out.

Molly Liff, Jackson's mom: 727-742-2587

Maxwell Britt, Prechae's dad: 347-423-0535



Why Anger Can Be an Ally During the Grieving Process

The role of anger in grief is often misunderstood. But it plays a valuable role.

Article from Psychology Today.

When we think of grief, we picture sadness, sorrow, or numbness. But what about anger? Though it's a recognized part of grief and trauma (Lenferink et al., 2024), it's often overlooked—and misunderstood. Recognizing and understanding anger can help us process grief more effectively, rather than feeling caught off guard by its intensity.

First, it's important to consider why anger is often minimized. Society often labels anger as dangerous or "bad"—and to be fair, it can be disruptive and even harmful. Sayings like "flying off the handle," "blowing a fuse," and "hitting the roof" evoke chaos and instability, reinforcing the idea that anger is something we should control or avoid altogether. But while it's undeniable that anger can lead to confrontation or violence (and thus needs to be managed to some extent), viewing it as solely negative overlooks its natural and essential role in the grieving process.

The Relationship Between Anger and Loss

It can be helpful to explore the relationship between anger and grief as they walk hand-in-hand as companions, each one helping the other express what we're feeling.

When we experience grief and loss, it's not uncommon to find a sense of injustice lurking nearby. The mantra "life isn't fair" is amplified in the face of death, illness, betrayal, and other forms of loss, and as such, "grief isn't fair" becomes just as relevant. This sense of unfairness can fuel anger, and anger becomes the voice of that which is unjust and unpredictable.

Anger isn't just a vicious emotion; it's a functional part of our survival instinct and helps us respond to threats in a protective manner, its volatility serving to increase alertness and readiness for action. Imagine being chased by a predator and the rush of anger and adrenaline that increases focus and strength, as well as prepares the body to fight or flee. In times of grief, anger can provide a roadmap to self-awareness and indicate that something is wrong or that boundaries have been violated.

Grief can leave us feeling vulnerable and powerless. But anger, when channeled appropriately, can give us the courage to speak up, push for change, and reclaim a sense of control. For example, in the face of a traumatic situation, anger can encourage us to take action—whether by seeking answers about circumstances such as illness or death or demanding accountability after betrayal. This helps people regain a sense of control during a time when they might otherwise feel immobilized and defenseless.

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As a way of understanding the normalcy of anger, it can be viewed as another way of processing negative or overwhelming emotions—just from a different angle. While sadness and guilt tend to turn inward, manifesting as feelings of self-blame or deep sorrow, anger is more outward-facing, directed at people, situations, and real or perceived injustices. At its core, internalized and externalized grief are just two sides of the same coin, and people can experience them individually or together—sometimes at the same time, sometimes one after the other, or even bouncing between them—as they process their loss.

Anger Is OK; Destructive Anger Is Not

But, alas, anger can also come with a steep downside. It can contribute to health issues, including but not limited to cardiovascular disease (Shimbo et al., 2024). It can drive wedges between loved ones by turning relationships into battlegrounds filled with conflict. It may serve as a barrier to moving forward in the healing process. If left unaddressed, anger can wreak havoc in a person's life by leading to aggression or emotional turmoil.

So how can a person lean into the healthy properties of anger and leave the destructive ones behind? It's important to recognize and accept the presence of anger rather than suppress it. If ignored, anger doesn't just disappear—it finds a way out, like water seeping through the cracks of a door that is closed and locked.

When grief gives rise to anger, it's important to recognize and understand these feelings. A person should practice self-compassion and realize that anger isn't the enemy; instead, it's like a warning light on the dashboard of a car, there to help us in the only way it knows how.

You can be in control of your anger by finding healthy ways to express it—whether through creative outlets, by talking to loved ones, engaging in physical activities, or by seeking professional help.

Techniques like mindfulness, journaling, or deep breathing can also help you observe your anger without being consumed by it.

Anger as an Integral Part of the Grieving Process

In the end, anger is not something to fear or withhold but a powerful emotion that can steer us through the complex process of grief. By acknowledging its presence, understanding its purpose, and channeling it in healthy ways, we can use anger as a tool for healing rather than allowing it to become an obstacle.

Just as grief is a journey, so too is learning to navigate anger. By embracing both, we open ourselves to the possibility of growth, self-discovery, a clear path on which to make decisions, and, ultimately, emotional resilience.

The next time anger enters into your experience with grief, pause. Is it a friend guiding you, a foe stomping its foot and demanding patience, or something in between? Either way, it has something to teach—if you're willing to listen and learn.

Cynthia Vejar, Ph.D., is program director and associate professor of clinical mental health counseling at Lebanon Valley College.

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN APRIL

LIGHTING A CANDLE, CHERISHING A BIRTH...



Remembering them:

1 - Richard Mathelier
 1 - Christopher Elijah
 3 - Makayla
 4 - RJ Bronson
 4 - Steven David Thomas
 7 - Jason
 8 - Jared Lee
 10 - Joshua
 12 - Rachel
 12 - Garret King
 12 - Saijah Coleman
 13 - Nymeir Z.C. Brown
 13 - Legend Alfonso Johnson
 14 - Rachael Butts
 17 - Jeffrey A. Polonski
 17 - Jasper Arien Shipley
 18 - Joshua
 18 - Jeff Grace
 19 - Amy
 19 - Triston Lee Flake
 21 - Wayne
 21 - Brando
 25 - Alexander Crandall
 27 - Evangeline Nellie Nolan
 28 - April Havens

Rachel Mathelier
 Delores and Wayne Evans
 Christy and Price Jones
 Peggy Pruitt
 Kathy Law
 Kathy LeoGrande
 Noelani Lee
 Yvonne Morales
 Patricia O'Steen
 Beth King
 Takoma and Ilee Coleman
 Neveah Goldsborough and Tyron Carswell
 Wendy Davis
 Sherry Lovett
 Victor and Darlene Polonski
 Adria Shipley
 Denise Dean
 Michael Grace
 Ann and Roy Hoffman
 Shannon Collins
 Susie Smith
 Yolanda Lucena and Oswald Patino
 Kristin and Michael Crandall
 Samantha Garcia and Cody Nolan
 Mary Beth Havens



We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions in our Special Days section.

To have your child, grandchild, or sibling remembered on these pages, or with any corrections, please call Debbie at 813 690-4448 or email her at TampaCompassionateFriends@gmail.com.

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN APRIL

LIGHTING A CANDLE, REMEMBERING A LIFE...



Remembering them:

3 - Melissa Leigh Trotter
 5 - Samantha Roberts
 6 - Ian Carlisle
 7 - Enso Rosati Tuscano
 8 - Karen
 9 - Ashley Duty
 10 - Donald Martino Jr.
 10 - Matthew
 10 - Amy
 10 - Wyatt Jax Mitchell
 11 - Alex
 15 - Danielle
 16 - Thomas Carl (TC) Capell
 17 - Jeffrey A. Polonski
 18 - Melvin "Jimmy" Buelvas
 18 - Liana Maye
 21 - Evan Godwin
 23 - Veronica Greca
 29 - Sister

Robin Trotter
 Toni and Art Roberts
 Tom and Lisa Carlisle
 Kallison Tuscano
 Patricia Fee
 Dee and Scott Duty
 Donald "Don" Santo Martino
 Nanette LaPresti
 Ann and Roy Hoffman
 Nyesha Mond
 Lori Sumner
 Scott and Kay Heims
 Thomas Capell
 Victor and Darlene Polonski
 Alan Buelvas
 Charla Maye
 Kelly Godwin
 Jessica Sanford
 Natalie West



Consider making a Love Gift to support The Compassionate Friends. Your gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses and allow us to provide outreach in our community related to the unique needs of those who are grieving the death of a child or grandchild. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible. To make a love gift to the chapter, make the check payable to:

Love Gifts



Tampa Bay Area Chapter of TCF
 Debbie Rivera, Chapter Leader
 310 Bryan Oak Ave
 Brandon, FL 33511

Favorite

A few months ago I was asked the impossible task to pick the top 10 photos of my youngest son Zander, from baby on up, to be shown at his school graduation event.

Do these people realize how many photos I have of this boy? And how many of these are *favorites*? Only TEN?

I spent months on this project, and needless to say it was tedious. And also it was so much fun. I loved seeing photos I had not looked at in a while, of him, of his sister, of his big brother. Photos of things we had done, experiences had, memories made. It got me thinking, how do I decide which photo becomes a favorite? It is different for pictures of inanimate objects or nature, where I feel it is more of an artistic decision.

When it comes to my children, I prefer more candid shots over staged “look at me and smile” photos. The storyteller in me sees the story behind the photo, which instantly pushes those to the top of my Favorites list.

Of course not every photo has its own story. There are many favorites that are “just” a photo, a split second caption of a moment in time, although I dare say none of those are posed pictures with the obvious fake smiles.

I do believe I started to add more importance to KK’s photos after she died at age 14. After all, I was not going to get any new ones, no longer able to create new memories, and would have to make do with the ones I had. Some time ago I decided I wanted to start writing down those memories, for fear I would forget.

As I was searching for one of my ‘Zander’ Easter favorites, I found this little fuzzy gem of KK running in her Easter dress. In the background her big brother, Aaron, is carrying his soccer basket, searching for Easter eggs scattered in a large field. I took this photo back in 2006. Here’s the story.

KK never had Terrible Twos, at least not the grocery store variety. With her it was a veritable struggle to get her to leave the playground, in particular the swings, no matter how many heads-up we gave her. That girl LOVED to swing and did not give them up without a fight.

In this photo we had just come out of church, finished taking the obligatory staged family photos - complete with the fake smiles - and the kids had been given the go ahead to start their search for Easter eggs. KK had been busily gathering eggs until... you guessed it: she spotted the swings. She instantly dropped her basket and made a beeline for them. I barely had a chance to snap the photo, she was so fast. Such a priceless memory. Definitely in my Top Ten of favorite photos of her.



Sylvia Bosma
Mama to Kaitlyn K Cook

I WISH



I wish we could have finished the dollhouse.
I wish I had bought you a new sandwich instead
of just taking off the onions.
I wish I had bought you that new car for your
graduation.
I wish I could have taken your place when you
found out you were sick.
I wish I could have kept my promise that
everything would be all right.
I wish I had said something to the doctor to make
him try harder.
I wish we could have put up the Christmas tree
together.
I wish I had taken you and your Mama to a fancy
restaurant once more.
I wish I had brought you home from the hospital
before you left us.
I wish I wasn't responsible for using the rest of
my lifetime for the both of us.
I wish I hadn't said goodbye.
I wish you were still here with us.

Terry Sparks
TCF, Lawrenceville, GA

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THINGS OTHERS DON'T SEE WHEN WE'RE GRIEVING

Article from [HealGrief.org](https://healgrief.org)



Grief isn't just tears at a funeral or anniversaries circled on a calendar. It's a quiet ache that shows up at 2 a.m. and stays through the morning meeting. It's walking around with a smile while your insides feel like glass.

Here are 10 things that hurt deeply, but you can't see when you're grieving:

When people stop asking how you're doing, because they believe "enough time has passed." As if grief works on a timer.

Having to act like you're okay, so others don't feel uncomfortable. It's exhausting pretending you're fine when you're just trying to make it through the day.

Feeling guilty for laughing or enjoying something, or simply moving forward. Joy now feels like betrayal.

The weight of "being strong." What does that even mean? Holding your pain in until it spills out sideways? You're not weak because you're hurting... you're human. Besides, being vulnerable and showing emotion are strengths!

The fear that people are getting tired of you and your grief. But you can't just press pause on missing your person. This isn't a movie; it's your life now.

Missing the small stuff. The texts. The inside jokes. The way your person made ordinary things feel like everything.

The emotional fatigue. Living in survival mode isn't sustainable, but somehow, you keep waking up and doing it again.

Feeling like you don't fit anymore. Not with yourself. Not with your people. Everything feels off, and no one notices but you.

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CONTINUED

Having to rebuild from scratch while the world keeps moving. You're grieving...but bills still come, people still expect, life...goes on like nothing happened.

When your body remembers before your mind does: Anniversaries, holidays, seasons, sounds...suddenly you're not okay, without knowing why.

You can't see everything, but you feel it all. Be gentle with yourself. Grief is a long, messy road. It doesn't make you broken. It just makes you someone who loved deeply and is now living without their person. That's hard. And that deserves compassion, not deadlines.

So, what did you identify with today?



When one day at a time seems too long, try just one minute at a time.

Kristin Thompson
TCF Nashville, TN



A SIGN?

There, on my sleeve, a small white feather.
I don't know that I believe in signs.
But the white feather that appears on my sleeve
while I think of saying goodbye to my girl
doesn't mean nothing. It says to me,
pay attention. It says, *slow down.* It says,
you have learned how to love what isn't here.
I think of all the white feathers I started to see
after the death of my son. On the sidewalk.
In the air. On a mug. In a dream.
So I say to the feather, *I see you.* And I say
to the feather, *thank you for reminding me*
to notice the smallest of things. I say to the feather,
such a gift that you should appear here now.
And I say to my girl, *I see you.* And I say to my girl,
I love how good your hand feels in my hand. And I say
to my girl, *such a gift you are here right now.*

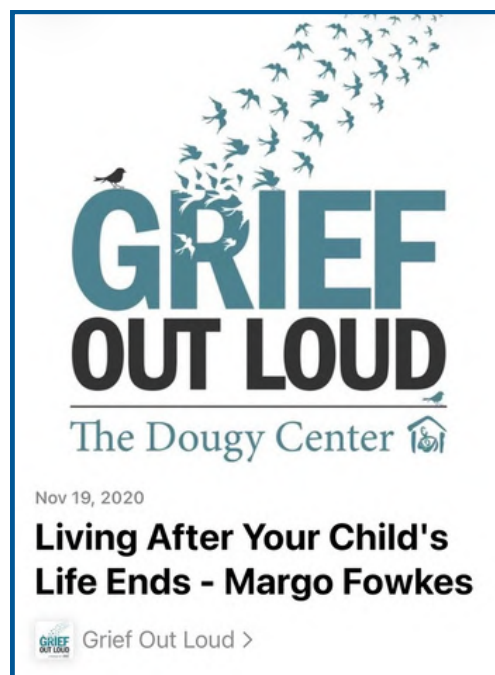
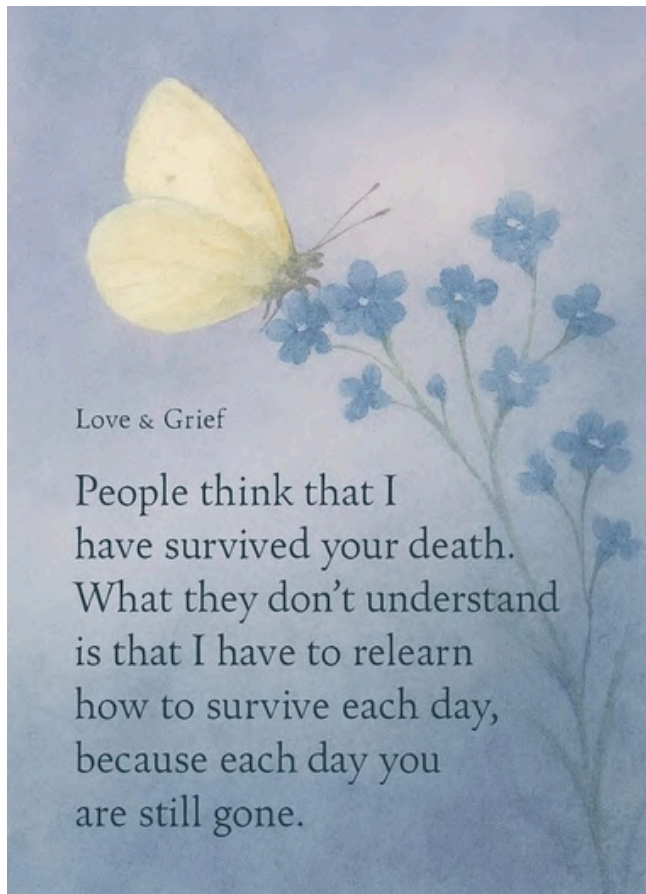


- Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

notes from the editor

BOOK RECOMMENDATION:

Have you found a book or online source that has been helpful to you? Would you like to share your recommendation? I would love to share your review here.



HAVE A LISTEN

Ep. 172

How do you go on living after your child's life ends? How do you continue to find connection, beauty, and meaning when someone we can't imagine living without dies? This is the question Margo Fowkes faced when her son Jimmy died of brain cancer at the age of 21. Margo barely had a moment to grapple with this devastating loss when just a year later, her mother also died. This led Margo to search for information and connection with others who were also grieving. When she couldn't find what she was looking for, she decided to create it.

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