



SEP - OCT 2026

VOLUME XXXI, NUMBER 1

ATTENTION:
NEW MEETING TIME AND PLACE!



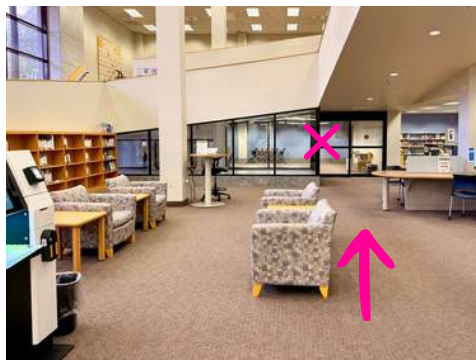
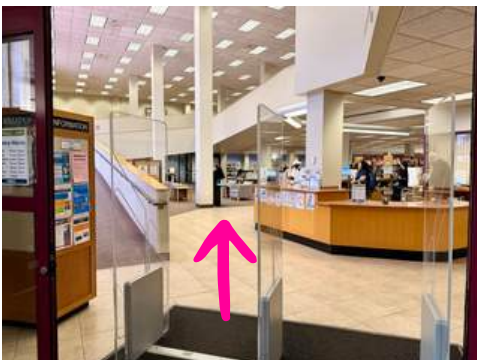
In order to accommodate everyone, we are moving our monthly in-person meetings to the Brandon Library. There is adequate parking and the building, as well as the room itself, is well air-conditioned.

The library closes at 9pm, which means we have to conclude our meeting at 8:45pm.

In order to give everyone adequate time to share, we will start the meeting half an hour earlier, at 6:30pm.

However, come when you can. The door is open.

Enter the Brandon Library and Center Place building (pictured above) and turn left to enter the library through the sliding glass doors.



Walk to the back of the library, in between the ramp on the left and the information desk on the right. You will see the room in the back. It is marked with an X in the photo on the right.

Monthly Meetings

First Thursday of the month

NEW Location

starting July 2

Brandon Regional Library
619 Vonderburg Dr.
Brandon, FL 33511

Time: 6:30 - 8:45pm

Third Thursday of the month

Virtually on Zoom:

[Click HERE to join](#)

Time: 7 - 9pm

Upcoming Events

Coming December 13:



Annual Candle lighting and Potluck

More Details to Follow
in the next Newsletter

Coming in January:

The Compassionate Friends
of Tampa Bay Area chapter

Walk To Remember

More Details to Follow
in the next Newsletter

Craft time

We are still going strong with our craft days, some of us continuing to work on our first Paint by Numbers painting, others having started another one. We talked about all kinds of things, from that moment's world events to what we remembered from our child's memorial, from our jobs to what audiobooks we like, to recent vacations.

July Craft Day



Clockwise from left: Mary Kay, Tori's mom; Marcolina, Brandon's mom; Kaleah, Kayne's mom; Tracy, Bailey's mom; Molly, Jackson's mom; Lynn, Anthony's mom; Peggy, RJ's mom; and Sylvia, KK's mom

August Craft Day



Peggy, RJ's mom, is showing her gorgeous completed painting.



Clockwise from left: Sylvia, KK's mom; Peggy, RJ's mom; Kelly, Evan's and Levi's mom; Marcolina, Brandon's mom; Lynn, Anthony's mom



Mary Kay, Tori's mom, is nearly done with this beautiful piece.

We were serious (sort of) about painting, showed pride in our finished work, asked advice about all kinds of things, tried new foods. We laughed and we cried. It simply felt good to be ourselves.

NEW IDEA FOR OUR NEXT GATHERING!

Peggy had a great idea: since we have several men who are actively attending our meetings, how about we have a gathering for all? Not just crafts, think grilling hot dogs, think talk about football (and other stuff)... Interested in joining us? Reach out to Debbie or myself (contact info on page 21)

**We are in the process of planning our next 5K walks
for when the weather gets cooler.
Do you have a favorite? Let us know!**

Run/Walk for the Beaches 5K

Treasure Island

Saturday, December 12, 2026

Every Step a Promise to our Turtles, Seabirds, and Beaches



**Come join the Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay as we walk together.
Register by clicking the link below, click 'join/create a team'
and look for our chapter name.**

**You have the option to make a donation, which you can choose to do
in honor of your child, sibling, or grandchild if you wish.**

To sign up click this link: [Run/Walk for the Beaches 5K](#)

We need not walk alone.

Walk To Remember

**Speaking of walks, we are in the process of organizing our Chapter's
Walk to Remember! Each Chapter needs to raise its own funds, and the
Walk to Remember is a major opportunity for our Chapter.
Please let Debbie know if you are interested in helping organize.**

**We are currently looking to secure a location for our walk for sometime in
January or February.**

More details to follow in the next newsletter!

Bernardo and Marcolina lost their son, Brandon, and their niece, Elisa.

Below is a snippet of their story, and why they started Rise and Remember.

I have had the pleasure of sampling the delicious sourdough bread and yummy cake pops they have brought to meetings and craft days. Oh, such tasty goodness.

Please do visit their beautiful website: riseremember.com to read the full story.

Rise & Remember **Honoring Our Son Brandon**

Our Mission

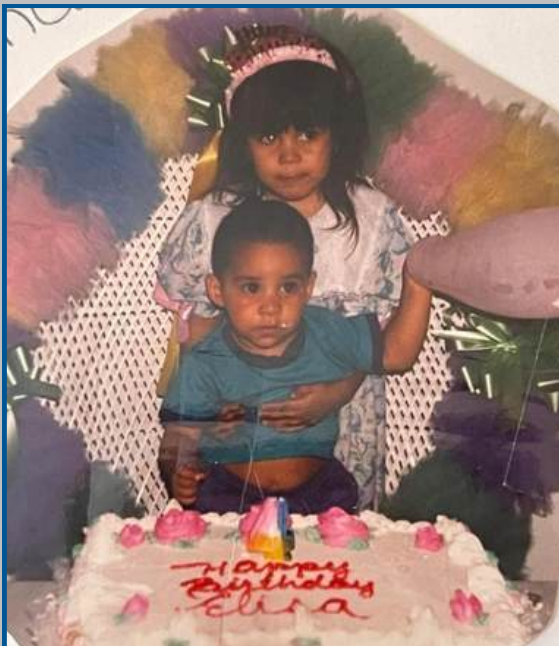
Our mission is to rise daily in honor of those we love and have lost, our son Brandon, our niece Elisa, and the many others still struggling. To spread awareness about mental health through the healing act of baking artisanal sourdough, we share love, remembrance, and hope, rising each day to remind one another: Please pause; you are the reason you are enough.

Delicious Sourdough Awaits

Sharing memories with every loaf of fresh bread.



**From left to right:
Bernardo, Brandon, and Marcolina**



**Brandon, 2yrs old, and Elisa
(behind), 4 yrs old**



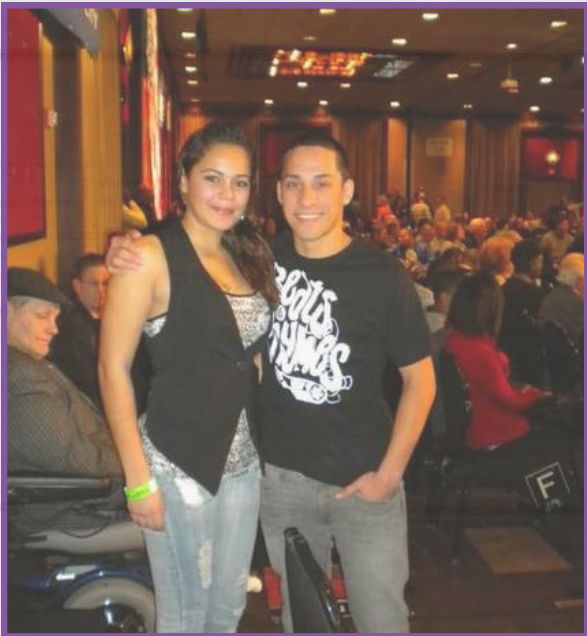
Brandon and Elisa

Our Story

Rise & Remember was born from unimaginable loss and enduring love. We lost our beloved son, Brandon, to suicide just two years after saying goodbye to our dear niece, Elisa, who was like a daughter to us. Both were taken by the same silent epidemic that touches far too many families. Mental health struggles and the pressure of everyday life weigh heavily on so many, often in silence.



Brandon was deeply loving, loyal, kind, and protective. With quiet strength, a sharp mind, a beautiful soul, and a disarming smile, he drew people in with his presence. Though he couldn't see the beauty in himself, everyone around him did. His story is why we share ours.



Elisa and Brandon

After losing Brandon, his mom turned to sourdough baking as a form of therapy to get her through some of the darkest days. A rhythm that offered purpose and solace. Each loaf became a way to honor Brandon, to keep moving forward, and carry his love with us.

Every loaf is a tribute. A reminder to rise above our struggles, to remember our loved ones, and hold space for love and loss.

OUR GIRL

by Sylvia Bosma

in memory of Kaitlyn ~ KK ~ Cook

You're patiently waiting, tail moving nearly imperceptibly. You glance my way every now and then as I go about our nightly routine. Turn off lights, plug in phone, set alarm, turn down comforter. Sliding into bed, I lie on my back and wait for you to join me. I feel you jump on, my outstretched hand ready to receive your soft, furry head. You nudge my fingers, already purring loudly in anticipation of the love you are about to receive. A minute later you crawl on top of me and settle in, your purring causing sweet vibrations in my chest and my heart. I have taken her place, have become your person.

I wonder how much of my daughter remains in your memory, nearly nine years later. She used to joke that you were her boyfriend, her future planned as the 'cat lady'. Furry grandchildren for me, then. She would playfully admonish you whenever you did not abide by her wishes. "Young man!" she would say in a mock stern voice. You slept in her room, on her bed, just like Hootie would do before you. She was torn apart by grief when he passed, inconsolable. At age 8 she had to grieve the devastating loss of her sweet kitty, the one she had known all her life. Searching the web I saw your photo and knew you were the one to help her heart heal.

You received your name, Darth Vader, a joint effort between her and her big brother, and promptly lived up to it. There were few that you allowed in your home, a mere handful of us mortals that could touch you for more than a second or two before the claws came out. Out of those few, our girl was the only one who you allowed - albeit begrudgingly - to pick you up and cuddle. Not for too long, mind you. You have standards, after all. How your name was Mr. Snuggles when we adopted you is beyond me.



Hootie and KK, 2010

She had a plan when she got you a leash. She started out in the hallway, eventually expanding the outings to explore the yard, just you and our girl. You just went along with it all. Is that what you remembered when, shortly after moving to Florida, you boldly leaped into the wild outdoors - also known as our backyard - only to realize you were not that brave after all?

Did you suddenly remember the time you escaped in the middle of a freezing Nashville winter? How terrified we were of you being lost? How I kept going outside, calling for you over and over? How, after what seemed an eternity, I heard this tiny, barely audible meow coming from the wood pile behind the house? How you didn't want to escape my hands that time, as I gently plucked you from in between the logs and tucked you safe inside my warm winter coat?

CONTINUED

And then one day it happened.

Our girl took her last breath on earth. Just like that she was gone. The house filled with people, so many people. You hid in her room, away from all the noise, the wails, the crying. I, too, found refuge in her room whenever I needed to escape, lest I start to scream. I found you, alone on her bed, the space next to you devoid of her presence. I wonder if you sensed what had happened, where she went. There is so much of those early weeks that I do not remember. I wonder now if you, too, went searching all over the house for her, not finding her. I did not need to wonder whether you were grieving her. I knew. Your person was gone.



KK and Vader, 2016

Were the months following that day a blur to you as well? Did time stand still for you, too? Whenever I went into her room to feel her close, you were there. We camped out on her bed together, huddled up with her dolphin pillow. You watched me as I wandered around her room, needing to touch the things she had touched, needing to feel what remained of her. Some months later you watched me box up my grief alongside her sketchbooks and stuffed animals, preparing for our move to Florida.

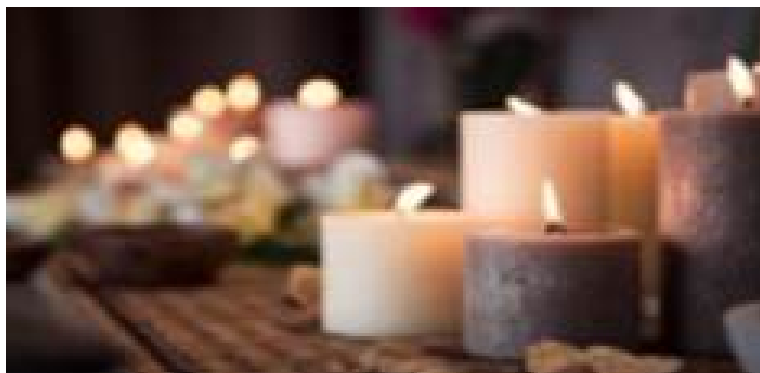
The Ancient Greek had two words for time: Chronos is what the clock measures; and Kairos is fluctuating, qualitative time. Nine years is an eternity that somehow seemed to pass in no time at all. I wonder if, after such an earth shattering loss, our brain is incapable of experiencing Kairos for a long while. With each minute, every hour that passes, the distance grows between now and the time I last held my daughter. Chronos will happen regardless, the minutes of the clock relentlessly ticking by at a steady pace. Kairos, however, is something I can practice, be mindful about: spending my time with intention. And thus I look forward to our nightly ritual, relishing its wistfulness. Come on, Mr. Snuggles, time to remember our girl.

*"i see the ghost
of every version of you
that you didn't live long enough
to become*

~ Sara Rian, Find Me There

ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN SEPTEMBER

LIGHTING A CANDLE, CHERISHING A BIRTH...



REMEMBERING THEM:

1 – Joshua Ashley Weicheld	Gail Dudley
2 – Jacob	Kristin Solano
2 – Daniel J. Cavallaro	Maria Cavallaro Sansome and Luigi (Kim) Cavallaro
2 – Katelyn	Diane King
3 – Destiny Skye	Laurie Lancaster and Kristian Broomeland
4 – Lillian	Katie and Anthony Reggi
5 – Tim	Sue Bensman
8 – Andrew	Aurora Hennen and Deymer Piedraita
8 – Adam	Debra and Rick Buchanan
8 - Donald Martino Jr.	Donald “Don” Santo Martino
10 – Maeve Marielynn Simon	Kateri and Kodi Simon
12 – Danielle	Scott and Kay Heims
13 – Brendan Martin	Joyce Martin
14 – Will	Misty Portillo
17 – Daniel Mitchell	Victoria and John Mitchell
18 – Stephen Soni	Sara Soni
19 – Prechae Wesley Britt	Maxwell and Alicia Britt
20 – Dennis	Becky Gage
21 - Matthew	Carolyn Besnier
23 – Veronica Ann Hankel	Carla Hankel
26 – Tara Pugh	Carla Rigby
30 – Dayla	Dale Dintelmann



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 SEPTEMBER

LIGHTING A CANDLE, REMEMBERING A LIFE...



REMEMBERING THEM:

1 – Steve Gregory
2 - Ronan Hardin
8 - Wayne
8 - Debbie
9 - Johnnie
10 – Steven Thomas Law
10 - Christopher Wyahtt Crown
11 - Jake
11 - Christopher
14 - Peter Demetris (PJ) Hyman
15 – Kaitlyn Kimberly Cook
15 – Logan Scherer
15 – Veronoca Ann Hankel
16 - Jesse Law
17 - Nicholas A. Rodriguez
19 - Caitlyn
20 – Megan Meredith
22 - Elizabeth
23 – Ross Blinder
26 – Austin Lee Gravette
28 – Brian Wilson
28 – Paul Maxwell

Deloris Durm
Alixandrea Hardin
Susie Smith
Marilyn Yarbrough
Dorothy Wilson
Kathy Law
Rita and Mark Antinori
Alex Toole
Joan Sullican
Bianca Cooper
Sylvia Bosma and Jim Cook
Brooke and Jordan Scherer
Carla Hankel
Margie Walter
Lauri and Artie Rodriguez
Leandra and Jeff Grigsby
Margaret Isaacs
Linda Dyer
Steven Blinder
Pamela Gravette
Mary and Larry Wilson
Kristina Maxwell



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.

Corporate Workplace Giving Campaigns

Corporate giving occurs when companies financially contribute to nonprofit causes. These types of programs often incentivize employee giving with company donations. Corporate giving programs fall under the wider umbrella of corporate philanthropy, which refers to any support companies provide to nonprofits.

One of the best aspects of corporate giving is that companies of any size can participate. From locally owned neighborhood shops to the largest corporations, all companies can easily establish corporate giving programs and give back to the causes they care about.

**Would your company consider giving support to the Tampa Bay Area TCF Chapter?
Contact your leaders for more information.**

The Living Shrine

A shrine there is
 within our house
A shrine created
 with my spouse
A shrine to call
 the thoughts so dear
Of our child
 no longer here.

A shrine not of
 the morbid climes
But rather one
 of happy times
Of days gone by
 when in our mid
We shared in life
 this wondrous kid.

This shrine is not
 of wood and stone
For it is housed
 in flesh and bone.

It does not have
 an altar place
Nor will you find
 a display case.

Contained there is
 that memory
Of thoughts we hold
 in reverie

A shrine of deeds
 we hold in pride
When our newborn
 was by our side.

No others see
 our thoughts of gold
About our child
 who now lies cold
But we shall keep
 within our mind
This honored place
 Our living shrine.

Guy Rall

TCF, Houston/West, TN



ALWAYS WITH LOVE, WE REMEMBER THEM IN OCTOBER

LIGHTING A CANDLE,
CHERISHING A
BIRTH...



REMEMBERING THEM:

3 – Tyler Hylton	Christine and Andrew Hylton
4 – Brandon Beres	Lori and Rick Tubaugh
5 – James Alvarez	Ben Alvarez
10 - Dylan Joshua Steinwand	Kurt and Yvie Steinwand
11 - Jillian	Tom and Sylvia Johnson
14 – Judd Peters	Erica Peters
15 – Ryan Casey	Mike Casey
15 – Kristen J. Kelley	Joanne Kelley
21 – Cooper Miller Reid	Bridget Ataszak and Richard Reid
21 - Karen	Patricia Fee
22 – Anita Marie Mira	Patricia and Chris Mira
22 - Zachary	Kathi Ciperski
23 - Jonathan	Donna Chastain
30 – Niole Perrella	Teresa and Lee Perrella



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 OCTOBER

LIGHTING A CANDLE, REMEMBERING A LIFE...



REMEMBERING THEM:

Glenn and Teresa Hayag
Rachel Mathelier
Christine and Andrew Hylton
Evelyn and Chris Richardson
Joanne Kelley
Barbara Neel
Tammy and Brit Johnston
Joe and Cathy Scaglione
Bridget Staszak and Richard Reid
Carolyn Besnier
David and Christine Doyle
Michelle Mendoza
Kathy Hoverman
Dr. Shirley Harvey
Frances Gonzalez
Morgan Fishbourne



1 - Julian Terrel Hayag
2 – Richard Mathelier
2 – Tyler Hylton
5 - Christopher Richardson Jr.
15 – Kristen J. Kelley
15 - James Christopher “Chris” Gay
19 - William Johnston
20 - Johnathan Scaglione
21 – Cooper Miller Reid
21 - Matthew
23 - Devin Doyle
24 – Paula Mendoza
27 - Matthew
27 – Chloe La Tisha Harvey
28 – George Anthony Gonzalez
31 – Payton Marie Lyle

Love Gifts



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:

Compassionate Friends of Tampa Bay Area
#2407
Debbie Rivera, Chapter Leader
310 Bryan Oak Ave
Brandon, FL 33511

Please consider donating any books on grieving that you are no longer in need of to our Chapter's library in honor of your child, sibling, and / or grandchild.

Grief is Complicated

- *It's forgetfulness.*
- *It's exhaustion.*
- *It's questioning yourself about everything.*
- *It's anger.*
- *It's physical pain.*
- *It's guilt.*
- *And it's sadness.*
- *It's complicated.*

- Lindsay Simmons,
Ryan's Mom



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

compassionatefriends.org

Do you have a story you would like to share?
I would love to add your contribution in our Chapter's newsletter.

**DID YOU KNOW THE NATIONAL TCF HAS A FREE FALL RETREAT ON OCTOBER 24TH?
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG/EVENTS/](https://compassionatefriends.org/events/) AND CLICK ON
VIRTUAL FALL RETREAT FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER.**

Make a Wish for JS

No cake and no you.
Still, I light a candle
on your birthday
and notice the way
one small flame
changes the feel
of a whole room.
I think of your light
and how many
gather around it,
how quietly you invite
the shadows to dance,
how gently one person
can change the world.

—Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer



Grief's Impact on Memory and Focus

The brain fog that comes with loss (and why it matters).

Gina Moffa, LCSW

Substack, Jul 13, 2026

I can sound like a broken record sometimes when I say that grief is not only an emotional experience. Grief is a full body experience. It rewires the nervous system and reshapes the brain too.



Two of the most common, but least talked about effects of grief are brain fog and memory disruption. You might notice yourself forgetting appointments, misplacing objects, rereading the same page without being able to take in any of the information, or feeling like time itself has gone slippery. Days blur together. Moments of loss stay etched in sharp detail, while everything else seems to fade.

Though it can feel really upsetting, scary, and confusing, it is because your nervous system is, quite simply, overloaded. When loss activates the stress response, cortisol and adrenaline surge through the body. Getting geeky for a second: these chemicals heighten vigilance to keep you safe, but impair the hippocampus - the structure that helps you encode and retrieve memory. In grief, the brain is wired for survival, not for efficiency. And that certainly becomes apparent after significant loss.

CONTINUED

The fog can feel humiliating or frightening, or worse, some people may think they have a serious medical diagnosis. Many people fear they are “going backward” or “losing themselves.” But this altered state is an adaptive mechanism. Forgetting is not neglect in any way; it is the psyche’s way of sparing you from the unbearable all at once. It thinks it’s doing a really good thing.

Over time, as the nervous system recalibrates, your memory begins to return. Not in a linear fashion per se, and not exactly as it was before. Loss leaves its fingerprint on cognition, just as it does on the heart. Certain memories may remain piercingly vivid, while others dissolve. This, too, is part of how the brain integrates trauma and attachment.

If you have been frustrated with yourself for the fog, pause here: You are living through biology, through love, and through huge, painful, life-changing loss. The brain is doing its best to help you survive.

Your Memory Fog is Normal

Grief changes the way your mind works. What feels like forgetfulness or mental fog is not a sign that you are “losing your mind”. It is a natural response to emotional overwhelm. Your brain is taking care of you and protecting you from being flooded by everything at once. This pause in clarity is a signal that your nervous system is working to keep you safe while you navigate loss.

It is okay to slow down and give yourself space. Being gentle and patient with yourself is not indulgent, but a form of resilience. Recognizing this allows you to move through loss with compassion for yourself and trust that your mind is gradually finding its way back to clarity.

Why Memory Goes Haywire in Grief

Loss destabilizes not only the heart, but also the cognitive systems we rely on to orient us in daily life. Many grieverers I work with (and myself) describe misplacing objects, rereading the same line without comprehension, or drifting in and out of conversations. These disruptions reflect the nervous system redirecting its energy toward survival after a loss.

Think of memory like a desk piled with papers and notes. When grief hits, it’s as if someone suddenly drops a stack of heavy books onto the desk, scattering everything in chaos. Trying to find a particular post-it note or keep track of new information, feels almost impossible when the workspace is overwhelmed.

It’s not you just being forgetful, or having cognitive dysfunction in general. This is your brain’s way of surviving after loss.

Stress Hormones and the Brain

Acute grief triggers the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, releasing cortisol and adrenaline in sustained waves. While these neurochemicals heighten vigilance, they directly impair the hippocampus, the structure central to memory consolidation and retrieval.

This cascade isn't something you should be rushing to fix. It is the body's way of prioritizing immediate survival, narrowing mental bandwidth to what feels most threatening or essential. The cost, however, is that our memory capacity and focus lessens for some time. It's common, it's to be expected after a significant stressor such as loss. And, if it becomes incredibly worrisome, speaking to a mental health or medical professional could be helpful to address any concerns.

The Distortion of Time

What feels like a “deficit” is in many ways an adaptive pause. Memory fog is the brain's attempt to protect itself against overstimulation. By blurring edges and slowing recall, the nervous system creates insulation and a sense of safety that allows the psyche to metabolize shock at a tolerable pace.

Grief changes the way we experience time. Some days feel unbearably long, while weeks can fly by without notice, as if the ground beneath your sense of time has shifted and dipped unexpectedly. Ordinary routines that once felt automatic may now seem disjointed, and the past and present can blur together. Moments of intense emotion are etched in sharp relief, while everything else fades into a haze, making it hard to orient yourself in daily life. The world keeps moving forward, but your internal sense of time has its own, unpredictable rhythm now.

The Weight of Self-Judgment

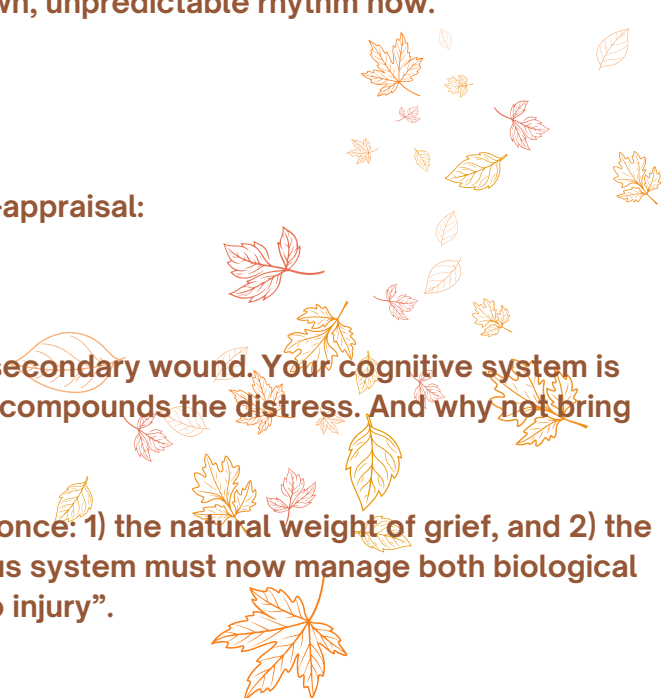
Cognitive fog in grief is often accompanied by harsh self-appraisal:

I should be able to handle this by now.

From my own clinical perspective, this judgment adds a secondary wound. Your cognitive system is already under neurological strain; layering shame onto it compounds the distress. And why not bring compassion to your already suffering heart?

Psychologically, this resembles carrying two burdens at once: 1) the natural weight of grief, and 2) the constructed burden of self-criticism. In effect, the nervous system must now manage both biological overload and internalized blame. This only adds “insult to injury”.

Let's be gentle with ourselves now.



Memory Fog as Adaptation

Time under grief is rarely linear. Hours can drag with unbearable slowness, while entire weeks vanish without clarity. People often retain crystal-clear “flashbulb memories” of the moment of loss, but struggle to recall details from the days that follow.

In other words: the brain is partially “checking out” of overwhelming stimuli, because it’s trying to regulate emotional and physiological overload. It’s not a failure of functioning whatsoever, but a protective shift of awareness. Forgetting, in this context, becomes a form of mercy, granting the mind room to survive what might otherwise be unendurable, how smart of our brain!

In Time, Memory Returns

Memory does not return all at once like a magic trick. It unfolds in fragments, sometimes in surprising ways. Certain moments remain vivid because they carry strong emotional weight, while others may feel hazy or temporarily inaccessible. This unevenness is part of how your mind integrates experiences.

Grief changes the way your mind organizes and connects memories. What emerges over time is a reshaped inner landscape where past, present, and emotion coexist. This integration allows you to carry forward what matters, even as your sense of self and your world adjust to a new reality.

Though your memory may feel different, it is not gone and not diminished. It is resilient, nuanced, and deeply human, holding the traces of what you loved, and the strength to continue forward.

Noticing Memory Returning



Even in the midst of grief fog, there are small signs that your memory is coming back. A familiar name pops into your mind, a song triggers a clear memory, or you remember a conversation with a loved one. These little moments are evidence that your mind is gradually integrating experiences and emotions. Paying attention to them can help you feel grounded and encouraged.

You can support this process with gentle practices. Pause to notice the details around you, keep a small journal of memories as they surface, or share recollections with someone you trust. These micro-practices create a space to observe and honor your returning clarity. Each small memory is a step forward; a reminder that your mind is resilient and capable, slowly knitting together the threads of love, loss, and life.

Practical Supports

In other words: the brain is partially “checking out” of overwhelming stimuli, because it’s trying to regulate emotional and physiological overload. It’s not a failure of functioning whatsoever, but a protective shift of awareness. Forgetting, in this context, becomes a form of mercy, granting the mind room to survive what might otherwise be unendurable, how smart of our brain!

When you're in the fog, small, concrete steps matter. Here are some gentle ways to support yourself:

1. External Supports

- Journals, lists, reminders
- Trusted friends who can help remember things
- Professional support in any way that feels meaningful

2. Body & Nervous System Care

- Slow, deep breaths
- Notice your senses (sight, touch, sound)
- Gentle movement or stretching
- Being in nature

3. Rest & Pause

- Allow naps and breaks
- Focus on one thing at a time
- Short mindful moments to reset or honor your loss

4. Emotional Support

- Talk or journal your feelings
- Connect with understanding friends or support groups
- Small rituals to honor your loss

5. Nourishment & Hydration

- Eat regular, balanced, nourishing meals
- Drink water (and soothing teas)

Remember: Memory fog is how your brain protects you. Through gentle support and small steps, you can help clarity return, piece by piece.

This isn't easy work. You're living through biology, love, and loss. And your brain, though foggy, searching, doing its very best, is proof of just how hard you are working to survive something that has changed you.

Butterfly Dreams
By Vern Bradley Central Iowa TCF

As I gaze upon this field
With the morning dew,
I See a little butterfly
And my thoughts return to you

It floats from flower to flower
With beauty and grace;
It softens my heart
As I remember your face.

A field of pretty green
As far as I can see
This is our special place
Because you live inside of me.

As I think of the love
That gathers in my heart,
It will last forever;
We will never part.

With fond memories
As I look into the sky
I'm reminded of our love
As I watch this butterfly.



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Editor's note: This article bears repeating for those unfamiliar with Day of the Dead and its meaning.

Day of the Dead - Dia de los Muertos

By: Allyson England Drake, M.Ed, CT
Online Article on Full Circle Grief Center

Dia de los Muertos, also known as “Day of the Dead” is a holiday that is celebrated all over the world on November 1st and 2nd each year. This Mexican holiday is full of traditions and ways to honor our deceased loved ones. Dia de los Muertos celebrates both death and life.

Even if you haven't celebrated this holiday in the past, we hope you will explore these inspirational traditions to discover ways you can honor and celebrate significant people in your lives who have died.



- Families or individuals usually create an altar, also known as an ofrenda or offerings, in honor of the deceased. Altars can be filled with items that remind them of their loved one, such as food items, candy, and pictures. These altars are welcoming the spirits of loved ones and the ofrenda (offerings) is dedicated to the person who died. According to tradition, altars must be placed by the evening of October 31st.
- Sugar skulls, or Calaveras, are often decorated to celebrate the holiday, often placed on the altars for the deceased.
- Many believe that since spirits are near and visiting the altars, it is a time that you are able to say anything that was left unsaid before the loved one died.
- On the last day, families often visit resting places of their loved ones and decorate them with marigolds, gifts, and sugar skulls.
- Marigold flowers are thought to serve as the guide for the spirits to visit the altars. They are referred to as the “Flor de Muerto” or flower of the dead. These marigolds represent the beauty as well as the fragility of life.
- The holiday is meant to be a celebration, and not a day of sadness or longing. Death is celebrated as a part of life, not the end of life. In addition, this holiday helps those who are grieving to feel less alone in their grief because families can gather and spend time together in celebration of the deceased.
- Coco is a Disney movie that won two Academy Awards in 2017. Many individuals who celebrate Dia de los Muertos report that this movie is a very accurate representation of the holiday. Watching this movie and enjoying the theme song “Remember Me” is a great way to help children (and adults!) understand this holiday.

For Brothers and Sisters

A Brother Means So Much

The gift of a brother
is a precious treasure.
It is the love, tears, and
joys of a friendship that
has unbreakable bonds.

The beauty of a brother
cannot be described,
measure or defined.
For it is a wonderful legacy
that will always be carried
in a sister's heart.

Jill Hricik
TCF, Pittsburg, PA

On Your Birthday

I wrote this date this morning,
paused,
and felt the room grow cold.
It always does
when I remember
All of it -
Down to the last petal
tossed by winds
above the upturned earth
This time the chill
does not leave
so easily
It would have been your birthday.
Soon, I shall be
as old as you will ever be.

Wanda M. Trawick
TCF Acme, PA

*Did you know that TCF has a quarterly newsletter?
The We Need Not Walk Alone online magazine is filled with articles
by bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings like you and me.
You can access it by clicking [HERE](#)*

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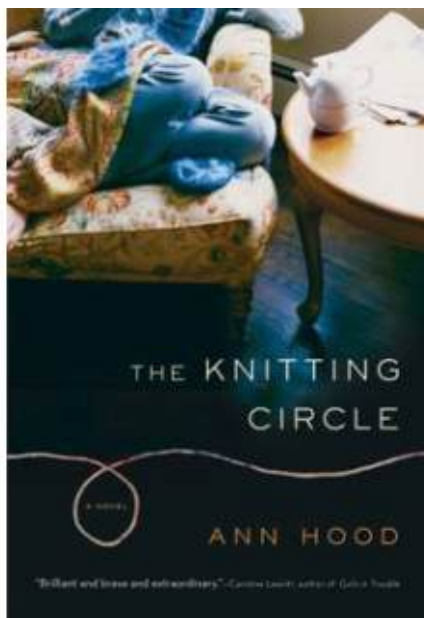
notes from the editor

BOOK RECOMMENDATION:

The Knitting Circle

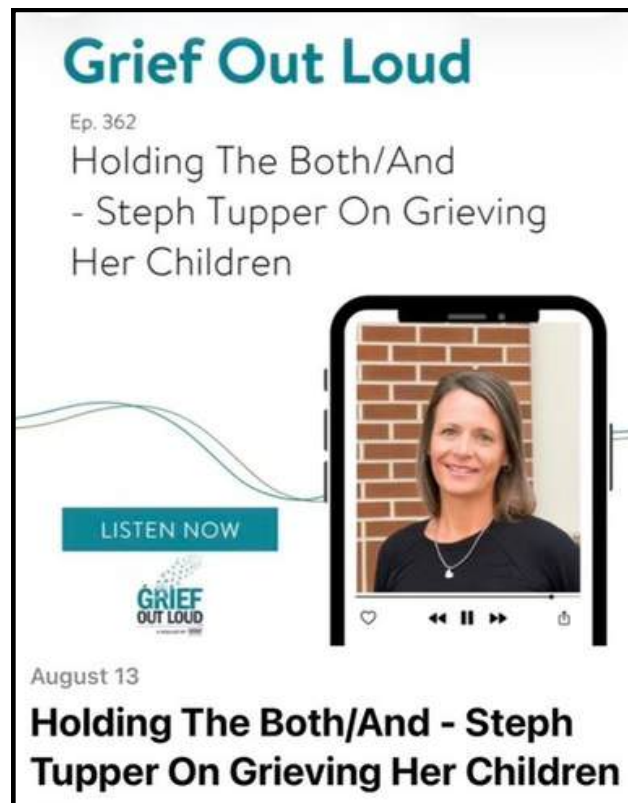
BY ANN HOOD

Ann Hood, whose daughter Grace passed away tragically at age 5, knows all about the unimaginable grief of losing a child. I highly recommend this fiction, interwoven with her own experience.



After the loss of her only child, Mary Baxter finds herself unable to read or write, the activities that used to be her primary source of comfort. She reluctantly joins a knitting circle as a way to fill her lonely days--not knowing it will change her life. As they teach Mary new knitting techniques, the women in the circle also reveal their own secrets of loss, love, and hope. With time, Mary is finally able to tell her own story of grief, and in so doing finds the spark of life again.

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HAVE A LISTEN

Jana is an amazing Podcast host. She asks the right questions and makes astute observations. I very much enjoyed listening to this conversation. I teared up quite a few times, not only because of the way Steph tells her story, but also the emotions clearly audible in her voice.

Steph Tupper lost Ali and Joe, two of her three children, in a car crash in 2022.

Four years later, Steph is still learning how to live with the reality of losing her children while continuing to parent her youngest daughter.

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