



The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



8701 36th Ave N
New Hope, MN 55427

MEETING SCHEDULE

OFFERING HYBRID MONTHLY MEETINGS

ATTEND IN-PERSON OR VIA ZOOM

We meet 7:00–8:30 pm on the third Monday of each month. Join us:

In Person: St. Joseph Parish Community
8701 36th Ave N., New Hope, MN

Via Zoom: Register using the link emailed to you a few days prior to each meeting.

Bereaved Siblings Hybrid Meeting

A bereaved sibling facilitates the group. Siblings (14+) meet at the same time and place (in-person & Zoom) as our Chapter meeting, but break into their own group for support & conversation.

Monday, February 21 "A Creative Path to Healing"

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

Linda Hayen will share her grief journey over the past 21 years and the lessons she learned while creating a children's book in her daughter's memory. See Linda's story on page 4.

Monday, March 21 "Finding Hope Through Community"

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

Carolyn Kinzel, founder of the non-profit Brighter Days Grief Center, will share hopeful ways to make meaningful connections, bring our loved ones memory into community, and recognize goodness along our path to hope. See page 4 for info.

Monday, April 18 "To the Griefers Before Us"

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

TCF Minneapolis Chapter will honor previous leaders and steering committee members. Individuals will share the lessons learned from earlier leaders in grieving and growing as lifelong members of the TCF community.

We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents the opportunity to talk about their child and feelings as they go through the grieving process. Our meetings are also open to grandparents, older siblings, and extended family. There are no membership dues. There is no religious affiliation.

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. **The Mission** of The Compassionate Friends is to provide highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

The Secret of TCF's Success is Simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward, and both are helped to heal.

To Our New Members: Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose, and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you find the right person...or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Members Further Down the 'Grief Road': We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting, we have new parents. Think back, what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you and share your grief?

About Our Meetings: Please don't stay away from a meeting because the scheduled topic does not interest you. At each meeting there will be time to discuss and share whatever is on your mind. We welcome your participation, but it is not required.

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TCF's Vision...

*That everyone who
needs us will find us
and everyone who finds
us will be helped.*

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Lisa Gross CreesHospitality Coordinator
Vickie Hackel *WELCOME to the team!*Donor Appreciation
Pat RellerCo-Librarians
*OPEN*Special Events Co-coordinators
Mary Jo Peterson & Monica ColbergSibling Loss Facilitator
Maggie BauerSteering Committee Meetings
Held quarterly to plan events and Chapter direction. Next meeting: APRIL 8.

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Those who have SUFFERED
UNDERSTAND SUFFERING
and therefore



-Patti Smith

Articles printed in this newsletter reflect the author's personal views, and not necessarily the opinion of the newsletter editor or The Compassionate Friends.

RESOURCES

Chapter Locator Tool available on TCF National Website
www.compassionatefriends.org
[Locate Chapter Here](#)Minneapolis Chapter Website:
tcfmpls.org

MPLS Chapter Is On Facebook:



Join our Minneapolis Chapter's private Facebook community online:

[TCF Mpls](#)Or log onto Facebook and search:
TCF Mplswww.facebook.com/groups/TCFMpls

Save the Date for Our
TCF 45th National Conference
being held
August 5th - 7th, 2022
in Houston, Texas!

"Love Soars Through Clouds of Hope"

We'd love to have you join us! Save the date for our 45th National Conference in Houston, Texas the weekend of August 5-7, 2022. Join us at the Marriott Marquis Houston for three days of connection, community, education, and support. We are planning for our traditional, in-person national conference. Our conference room block at the Marriott Marquis will open in February and conference registration will open sometime in March. As more details are finalized they will be posted on the national [TCF website](#) and our chapter's Facebook page and website.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/45th-tcf-national-conference/?bblinkid=257619827&bbemailid=37536593&bbejrid=-2055537828>

Minneapolis Chapter Conference Scholarships

We're excited to announce our Minneapolis Chapter will offer a number of Scholarships to help our members defray the conference registration expense. Our May newsletter will include the scholarship application details.

Puppy Love

I treasure the Valentines that Carson, my only child, made during his elementary school career. There's not many, and they reflect the interest level of a boy who was never into coloring, cutting, and gluing.

The nicest one, framed in a red heart accented with a lace doily, was not to his mom, rather a poem written in honor of his dog, Rusty. In Carson's 6th grade auto-biography, Rusty was featured in the chapter titled: "The Best Day of My Life!" From a young boy's perspective, the best day of his life was the day he brought home Rusty, his first puppy. It was love at first sight for those two.

On Valentine's Day, exactly two months after Carson's death, my husband and I received Valentines from Rusty the Wonder Dog. Without the other knowing, we bought cards to give each other from Carson's loyal companion. I have to admit, I even dipped Rusty's paw in some mud, then signed the card with an authentic "signature." Some might call it silly, maybe downright crazy, but in our own ways we ensure that love and tradition carries on.



Gloria Jordan
TCF Minneapolis, MN

Minneapolis Chapter Reaches Milestone



The National Compassionate Friends organization was incorporated in 1978. Their website states that today, over 600 chapters serve in all 50 states across the USA plus Washington DC, Puerto Rico and Guam. The typical lifespan for a TCF chapter is 20 years.

This year the TCF Minneapolis Chapter will celebrate 40 years of service to every bereaved family, parent, sibling and grandparent who has found their way into our circle of friends. Less than 10 percent of all TCF chapters achieve a legacy of 40 years or more of service to the grief community.

So many families stepped forward to take on crucial Steering Committee and leadership responsibilities for our Minneapolis Chapter. So many families donate to the TCF Chapter.

The chapter's longevity is anchored in the leadership functions of an engaged Steering Committee. St. Joseph Parish Community in New Hope, Minnesota, has sheltered the chapter for many years. We are so grateful for their unwavering assistance. To everyone who contributed to the growth of our group and comfort for our grieving families, thank you.

The April 18, 2022 chapter meeting will honor the griever before us who carried the chapter through decades of service. We will continue their tradition.

Monica Colberg, Art's Mom, and Gloria Jordan, Carson's Mom
Leader and Co-Leader, on behalf of the Steering Committee
TCF Minneapolis, MN Chapter

Free Lending Library

Our Minneapolis chapter of The Compassionate Friends is fortunate to have a library of books about grief. They are available to take home to read and then return when you are done with them.

We have four new books in our library that came highly recommended, each with its own focus.

"Footsteps of Hope: Milestones to Guide Your Journey Through the Grief of Child Loss" is written by Sara Nelson. From the back cover... "The unexpected loss of her own child and much-loved daughter launched Sara Nelson on an unwanted journey into the darkness of grief. She discovered how easily the pain, purposelessness, and loss of a way of life that could never be recovered can pull a person into a quagmire of despair. Her path to recovery began with recognizing the importance of perspective, the power of positive choices, and finding personalized therapeutic strategies for difficult days. Sara tells her story with honesty and raw vulnerability as she worked through the emotional, physical and spiritual perplexities of grief."

"Comfort for the Grieving Parent's Heart: Hope and Healing After Losing Your Child" by Gary Roe is from the series "Comfort for Grieving Hearts." This is a practical book that will help guide you with compassion as you travel the journey none of us ever wanted after losing a child.

We have two new books that are from the mother's perspective of losing a child to drugs:

"From Heroin to Hope: Making Sense of the Loss of a Child" by Marsha Wiggins is her personal story of loss and how to move forward from the darkness.

"Not in Vain: Mothers Share their Journey through their Child's Life and Loss to the Drug Pandemic" includes the stories from over 160 mothers about the struggles of addiction, the effects on the family, to the final loss of their child in death. It strives to help parents know that they are not alone in this journey.

Please feel free to peruse our library cart at St. Joseph's. There are many titles from varying perspectives. You may also contribute books you have read that you found helpful in your journey.

Leader's Corner

The holiday season brought cards and letters to our mailboxes, email and video to our laptops and cellphones. Watches can communicate greetings now. Tech toys empower us to stay connected.

The ones no longer with us are not as easy to reach. New griever still in shock may not know how to connect with the ones they love. Seasoned grievers have learned that when hope returns, the possibility to connect with a loved one returns.

There are ways to do this. The Compassionate Friends know those lessons.

During the holidays one quiet evening I tugged on an ornament hanging on our tree that my son had touched. I closed my eyes and concentrated on him. My thoughts traveled on a gold single striped rainbow that formed an arc from our living room out to the universe. The shimmering arc traversed the starry night and continued out of sight, to wherever he is now.

In TCF we talk about our loved ones openly and honestly. We share their stories and ours. We celebrate their birthdays. We create legacies. We bring them forward with us. We remember them and find joy again.

Monica Colberg
Art's Mom and Chapter Leader
TCF Minneapolis, MN

The Space Between Thoughts

You are no longer in my thoughts constantly. You are now dwelling in the space between thoughts, a part of my every moment whether joyful or sad or in between, or both simultaneously.

I walk, talk, work, play and you surround me.

You are in the sparkle of my smile
the wisdom in my thinking
the rainbow circles in my life.

As long as I live, you will live.

As I learn, you are teaching, not only me
but all those who are in my life today.

You are a blessing, dear child, for all you were
and all you are and all you forever will be.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry,
from her book, *"Catching the Light,
Coming back to Life after the Death of a Child"*



A Creative Path to Healing

When my daughter, Carissa, was about 10 years old she started a club. She named it The Everybody Club. Her parents, brothers, dolls and her stuffed animals were the charter members. One of her brothers, Phillip, has severe disabilities. She held meetings in our basement. These meetings were very serious and mainly consisted of making fabric badges for each member and pinning them on with safety pins.



After Carissa died at age 16 in the year 2000, I was completely devastated. I, like all of you, thought I could not survive this unspeakable loss. I also thought I knew a lot about grief because I had grieved for my son Phillip when I learned of his disabilities. I joined The Compassionate Friends and did many other things to help deal with my grief. During this time, my Everybody Club badge was one of my most precious possessions. Gradually, over many years, the memory of this "club" that only lasted a couple of weeks, became more and more prominent in my psyche. I thought it would make a good children's book. Little did I know that vague idea would change my life. The development and ultimate creation of the book helped me on my healing journey in ways I never anticipated.

Over all these years, I have learned to focus on my daughter's life and not her death. This was very hard to do at first and TCF helped me. But creating the book forced me to really think about her life and what it meant to the world. It took that concept to a deeper level and I found a message there, I think, for all of us. The fact that our children died does not discount the fact that they were here and they made a contribution. Thinking about and discovering that contribution is not only healing, but important and truly does, like the old cliché, makes them live on.

Linda Hayden
TCF Minneapolis, MN

At our February 21 meeting, Linda will share her grief experience, and offer wise words that have helped her through the many years, learned from professionals and others along the way.

She looks forward to sharing her recent epiphany, learning to honor and celebrate her daughter's life during the creation of a children's book, inspired by her daughter's sense of community and inclusion.



The truth is, that hole in your heart
shaped exactly the size and shape of your child
WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY.

But the *love* that oozes from it has
more power to change the world
than anything I've ever known.

Angela Miller

Memories

Memories can be painful when parents and siblings are newly bereaved, because even happy memories are a reminder that no further memories can be made with that deceased child. We want so much more! We want to be able to make so many more memories. We resent the abrupt cessation of the life of our beloved child or sibling.

As we do our grief work, however, all the memories—no matter how few or how many—become increasingly important. Eventually we can relive our memories with real joy, grateful for them and even more appreciative of the time we had together.

If you are in the midst of painful memories at the moment, take heart that it will not always be so.

Those of us who have survived many years have learned that over the long run, the human mind chooses to recall only the best of memories—the happy ones, the humorous ones, the sentimental ones—and we learn that even the pain of unhappy memories diminishes. It is then that memories bring joy and comfort in spite of lingering loneliness. It is then that memories might even serve to further some project or interest your child or sibling would have wanted you to carry out in his or her absence. In this sense memories can become a real force for good in the world.

What are your memories saying to you?

Shirley Ottman
TCF Denton, TX

Brighter Days Grief Center

Brighter Days Family Grief Center provides free grief support resources, programs and services to youth, young adults and adults grieving the death or terminal diagnosis of a loved one.

Carolyn Kinzel is the Founder and President of Brighter Days Family Grief Center, the only family-focused non-profit grief center serving the state of Minnesota. Since inception in May 2017, Brighter Days focuses on bringing families back together after the death of a loved one, providing the compassionate and comprehensive care they deserve.



Bringing her personal grief experiences to the forefront, Carolyn formed an unparalleled model of care that addresses the logistical, psychosocial, and financial aspects of grief illuminated by the death of a family member.

She has recently launched partnerships with American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation to shine a light on the unique grief that comes from these types of losses. Her most recent accomplishment included writing a proclamation for Children's Grief Awareness Day, now a recognized day in Minnesota.

Carolyn is a steadfast and committed advocate for grieving children, families, and communities. She presents locally and nationally to hospitals, churches, community groups, schools, and other grief centers.

Carolyn will join us at our March meeting to share meaningful community resources, and insights to inspire and encourage us to be open to recognizing gratitude along our path to hope.

<http://www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org>

Our Children Remembered...on Their Birthdays

Loved...Missed...Forever in Our Hearts



February

CHILD		MEMBER
J. D.		Cathy Bailly
Elyse Mary Stern		Robin Stern
Corey Fetzter-Londer		Cheryl Fetzter
Charlotte		Jon & Angie Downing
Brandon	sibling	Maya Lawrence
Brandon		Melanie Lawrence-Smith
Alice		Suzanna Bess & Carrie Johnson
Christopher Bormann		Susan Bormann
Claire Richards		Gail Manning & David Richards
Benjamin		Todd & Debbie Huberty
Troy Perron		Gin Johnson
Noah Tweed		Dennis & Sandee Tweed
Kevin Williams		Shirley Williams
Kevin Williams	sibling	Kim and Ken Williams
Amanda		Dave & Deb Nordgaard
Lori Jensen		Christine Jensen
Harriet		Stephen & Fiona Burgdorf
Chris	sibling	Maggie Bauer
Christopher		Mary & Bruce Bauer
Aiden		Mary Sullivan
Paul Just	sibling	Sarah Barrett
Paul Just		Kelly Barrett

March

CHILD		MEMBER
David Nelson		Jill Harrison
Zachary		Darcie Rummel
Adam		Kathryn & Waters
Harry Richards		Winnie Visco
Aaron Carlton		Kristi Strom
John Michael Morgan	sibling	Jane Morgan
David	sibling	Gabrielle Robbins
David		Christiane Robbins
Robby Andrew Wallenberg Bragg		Linda Wallenberg
Michael		Laura Bottenfield
Ashley Cochran		Lisa Cochran
Caleb		Paul & Perla Morley
Alexander		Susan & Ed Herrmann
Murdoch		Cory Crust
Murdoch		Nicole Crust

Birthday Month

Birthdays are given special recognition at our monthly meetings. During your child's birthday month, you are invited to bring a photo or memorabilia to share and display on our Birthday Table. If you're attending via Zoom, share your photo during introductions.

April

CHILD		MEMBER
Samantha		Julie & John Bangsund
Chad Goodspeed	sibling	Brenna Goodspeed
Chad Goodspeed		Betty Udseth
Ashley		Randy Segal & Michon Jenkin
Peter		Eric Strommen
Michael		Jean Shilinski
Matthew (Matt)		Stephen & Carol Hawk
Stefanie		Jayne Darling
Aaron Ginsberg	sibling	Leonora Ginsberg
Cristian		Sara & John Schmidt
Cora		Danielle Grinsel
Abe		David Benson
Mark Frain	sibling	Michael & Terri Frain
Mark Frain		Donna Frain

Living With a Broken Heart

I spend some time each day wondering
How different my life might be.
Why so many people that I love
Are no longer here with me.

Mothers, Fathers, a sister, then our son
Wonderful friends, beloved pets, always another one.
I know where there is love, there will also be pain.
The sadness will continue until we're together again.

When the phone rang that particular morning,
I was sure it was a call from Heaven.
The ashes of my best friend, Gabby, were ready.
It was Valentine's Day. (The time was 11:11.)

The loss of each one has left its mark.
Their legacy is what they gave to those they left below.
"It's not what you take when you leave this world,
It's what you leave behind when you go."

How many more breaths will I be allowed to take
Before it's my time to leave this world?
How many breaks can one heart take
Before it doesn't beat any more?



Tom Murphy
In memory of my son,
Brennan Murphy
TCF Greater Cincinnati
—East Chapter, OH

Our Beloved Children...in Our Hearts Always

especially during the Remembrance Month of their death.



February

CHILD		MEMBER
James		Samantha & Michael Wallad
Tommy		Sheryl Hutton
Alex		Sandra Reem
David Nelson		Jill Harrison
Sarah Tilman		Cathie Tilman
Mitch	sibling	Rachel Shapiro
Ben Freidson	sibling	Debe Fefferman
Benjamin Freidson	sibling	Jenne Freidson
Brandon		Melanie Lawrence-Smith
Brandon	sibling	Maya Lawrence
Alice		Suzanna Bess & Carrie Johnson
Jeremy Klein		Chris Klein
Matthew		Mary Curtis
Allisa Feldman		Harley & Elayne Feldman
Elsey Kirabo		Mary Jo & Winston Peterson
Ben Hansen	sibling	Taylor Gotta
Ben		Karen & Gary Hansen
Christopher		Judi Callas
Sadie Hanson		Dani Hanson
Alex		Chuck & Trudi Campbell
Persephonee		Chris & Ameer Banks
Thomas Scott		Dianne & Bill Jeffery

March

CHILD		MEMBER
Cole Linnell		Jean Thurmer
Abigail Grace		Tom & Christina Monroe
Missy		Mary Feigh and Tasha Feigh
Juli Elisabeth	sibling	Melissa Myers & Michael Crees
Juli Elisabeth		Lisa & Steve Crees
Juliette		Nancy Kilhan
Sullivan		Holly Holmes
Campbell		Jenner Johnson
Jory Day-Monroe	sibling	Seaira Garcia
Jory Day-Monroe	grandchild	Mary Klingelhoets
Steffanie		Kevin & Sue Quick
Steffanie Quick	grandchild	Jan Quick
Steffanie Quick	sibling	Matthew Quick
Keith Rosenwinkel		Wanda VonHoltum
Jaden Dallas Dalton		Karren Gray
Michelle Franta	sibling	Jeff & Melia Liedman
Michelle Marie Franta		Lynn & Stan Liedman
John Alden		Mary & John Alden
Ben Alden		Mary & John Alden
Kendra		Tom & Terri Lindfors
Kendra	sibling	Cole Lindfors
Matthew		Sue Reid & Mark Schmidt
Kyle		Lynda Kubousek
Brenden		Tammy Sperr
Shayde Erin Rudenick		Steve Rudenick
Ben Rueben		Melissa Fischer
Melissa Roeser		Marilyn & Steve Dahlmeier
Nicole Jean Gallery		Janna Gallery
Lauren		Nancy Riesgraf
Paul		Pilar & Steve Hoenack
Grayson Jett		Brian & Jennifer Jett

March (continued)

CHILD		MEMBER
Lauren		Dawn & Peter Duwenhoegger
Ross Alvin Joseph Stenerson		Barbara Stenerson
Barrett Ugland		Renee Forst
Gregory Sather		Nancy Sather
Gregory Sather	sibling	Eric Sather
Gregory Sather	sibling	Joelle & Paul Valentini
Scott		Harriet Lodermeier
Scott	sibling	Cori Plehal
Daniel Hinschberger	sibling	Anna & Todd Lundblad
Daniel Hinschberger		Linda Schaeffer
Jordan		Leslie Holt
John Michael Morgan	sibling	Jane Morgan
Elyse Mary Stern		Robin Stern

April

CHILD		MEMBER
Zachary		Connie Theis
Abe		David Benson
John Pecnik	sibling	Jeanne Klein
Spencer Johnson		Ann Perry
Jesi		Pat & Sue Harding
Rachel Merchant		Deb Merchant
Noah Tweed		Dennis & Sandee Tweed
Michael Habte		Debra Hudson
Jenna Rietmulder		Jay & Holli Rietmulder
Paul Just	sibling	Sarah Barrett
Paul Just		Kelly Barrett
Molly		Pat, Charlie & Tyler Brown
Michael James Lewis		Joanne Lewis
Joseph Daniel Muonio		Michael & Anita Muonio
Calob		Jessica Bartram
Kevin Williams		Shirley Williams
Kevin Williams	sibling	Kim and Ken Williams
Vincent		Jeff Lewis
Sarah		Jane Ramerth & Marc Friedman
Amanda		Dave & Deb Nordgaard
Cynthia		Liz Keller
Anne		Carol Just
Tracy Greenwood	sibling	Tanya Broten
Conner Box-Lindholm		Stacey Lindholm
Tony		Tina Mehok
Hallie		Todd & Kathy Brown
Dominic		Aaron Cepeda
Corey		Mary Feigh and Tasha Feigh



Finding Myself Again

In July 2002, I was just two years into my burgeoning stand up comedy career when my only brother, Russell, who was about to embark on his own career as a pastry chef, was killed in a car accident. He was 21. Just hours after his death, my dad asked me what kind of funeral he would have wanted. I told him I had no idea, I just knew the cake afterwards had better be amazing. And chocolate. That's the thing about the immediate aftermath of grief. You find yourself having surreal conversations about things like cake in the context of one of the most devastating moments one can experience.

That first year was something of a daze, to be honest. I watched myself living in slow motion a lot of the time. I performed comedy almost every night, in-between handing out show fliers and screaming at strangers in Times Square, followed by hanging out and drinking all night with other comedians and the occasional drunk audience member. On the surface, I was getting by. But I was lost.

I wasn't sure who I was anymore without my brother. I was actively leading something of a double life, telling jokes and presenting a version of myself that didn't represent what my life suddenly was. My whole worldview had been turned upside down; my ways of interacting with life fractured. I never talked about Russell on stage. I kept my material to surface level jokes about smoking pot, drinking and thoughts on pop culture. I was desperately trying to hold onto a version of myself that no longer existed. And it wasn't working.

Offstage was no easier. Grief is so often swept under the rug, and we are encouraged to engage in it privately, if at all. Sibling loss in particular is one of the most under-acknowledged losses, in my experience. We are often called "the forgotten mourners." For good reason. There are more books about pet loss than sibling loss.

People seemed insensitive, almost dismissive to my grief, which was further isolating. The first question I often got when someone found out I'd lost my brother was often, "How's Your Mother?" It was rarely followed up or paired with, "How are YOU?" People said I had to be strong for my parents. They just lost a *child*, it must be very hard for *them*.

Fortunately, I had the wherewithal to push back a little. I rarely let anyone off easy. I would often say, "Yes, I imagine they are doing about as badly as I am." Friends were difficult to deal with, as well. Those who knew me before Russell died had a hard time dealing with the new version of me, a darker, more troubled version of myself.

My parents started attending The Compassionate Friends, and encouraged me to come, as they had an active siblings group as well. I resisted for a while, but I ultimately went to a meeting, if only to shut them up. My feeling was, it wasn't going to be helpful, and we'd never have to speak about it again. Ironically, years later, my parents no longer attend and I now run that sibling support group.

This is really when things started to change for me. I had found a place where my feelings were validated, where my struggle was acknowledged, and my process was not judged. A place where I met other people going through a similar process who told stories of their own that I related to, where I wasn't alone. I could even joke about it in my group. Finding humor in the uncomfortableness of grief and death in general has been extremely cathartic. It has allowed me to talk about my grief and my loss in the same way that I talk about everything else.

It was when I started to embrace this new version of me that I started to see real progress. When I let go of wanting to go back

to being the person I had been, I was able to start getting to know this newer me. Not the old me. A new, still heartbroken version, who had found a way to go on.

In the intervening years, I started a podcast called *Where's the Grief?* in which I interview comedians and other creative types who have also experienced tragic loss. (I often remark that it's not ALL comedians, I do interview other sad people too.) It felt like I had finally "come out" as a bereaved sibling, proud of finally being able to talk about my brother without making it weird. And in doing so publicly, I started to see how much of a universal experience grief and loss can be. Showing all the different versions of what grief looks like, and sharing those conversations with others in need who are perhaps at an earlier stage of their journey has been very rewarding. To show other people that it's OK to do it however works for you is also to re-affirm it for myself. Society in general does not deal with the extremes of grief well. Because there is no blueprint, I often thought I was doing it wrong.

People expect you to "go back to normal" at some point. People seem to think there's a standard timeline for healing. They will ask, when it's clear you're still struggling well past whatever that time frame is, "STILL? Aren't you over that yet?" They say, "Your brother wouldn't want you feeling this way." Oh really? NO shit. What incredible insight. I wanted to say to those who were disappointed in my grief process, You think I WANT to feel this way? I don't! But this IS how I feel. Also, Russell isn't here, so he doesn't get a say.

In the early days, grief was so hard because it was so UNfamiliar. I was constantly blindsided by it. It would come out of nowhere. Standing in a supermarket staring at a carton of Apple & Eve apple juice. Hearing one of his songs (P. Diddy, Bad Boy For Life) blaring from a car radio. Even passing a spot in the neighborhood that held the most mundane of childhood memories could be an emotional roller coaster. For me, one thing I've learned is that it's only by acknowledging how I feel that I can DEAL with it. I have found that over time, simply by doing that, the moments of intense grief pass much faster than had I repressed them or ignored them altogether.

There are still moments that come out of nowhere, but I'm much better equipped at managing them. The knowledge that dealing with Russell's absence in my life is a lifetime process is a lot different than the scary thought in the early days of wondering when this pain would go away. Now I know. Loss does not go away.

I am now into my 20th year of grieving - not just for my brother and the life he didn't get to lead, but for the life I knew as well. I lost a part of myself in the process, and while it took time, I feel like I have finally gotten to a place where I feel like myself again. I have done it by really allowing myself to feel all the feelings, to acknowledge my pain, to incorporate this into my life.

I will ALWAYS miss my brother, and I will ALWAYS wonder what he'd be doing if he were still here, what WE would be doing together. But as time has gone on it's not as scary or deeply distressing that it will never go away. It's a reminder that my memories and my feelings about my brother will ALSO never go away.

I will always strive to find ways to be more happy and grateful to have had Russell in my life in the first place than to be soul crushingly depressed that I have to live the rest of my life without him. In a way it's a conscious choice I have made. I don't always succeed, but the knowledge of the possibilities gives me hope for my future.

Jordon Ferber, TCF Siblings, Manhattan, NY



The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

c/o St. Joseph Parish
8701 36th Ave N
New Hope MN 55427

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Child's Name

Birth Date

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