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**The Compassionate Friends**  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies  
Oscoda Area Chapter

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The Compassionate Friends of  
Oscoda Area  
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## Spring Burst Forth, And So Will You By Grace Ramsberg, TCF Harrisburg, PA

Who could possibly disagree that we all look forward to spring? Most of all, we welcome all the evidence of new life after the seemingly endless cold, sometimes bleak and dreary days of winter. What a difference the new growth of leaves on the trees makes in the appearance of the landscape! There is the sudden burst of color in all the spring flowers and shrubs—from crocus to the beautifully array of colorful azaleas to the fragrant peonies that burst into bloom at the end of May. Somehow, all of this gives us a new burst of energy as we throw off our heavy, warm, restrictive clothing and grab our gardening tools to plant the vegetable gardens and flower beds. However, we still keep a sweater or a jacket close by for those times, now and then, which are too cool for comfort yet.

So it is with us bereaved parents, for whom our whole world became a bleak, cold and desolate winter when a much loved child was suddenly torn out of our lives. If you are at this point in your life now, then it is possible you may not be able to even to be aware of all the beauty of the earth all around you now or in the summer or even in the gloriously colorful fall to come. If this is where you are now in your grief, be very patient with yourself. There are those of us who have gone through several Springs without being aware of them. It was not even possible for us to smile, let alone laugh—and we were positive that we would never be able to do so. Does anyone remember the first time he laughed, as I do? It was at least six months after the death of my son, and I was visiting with a very close friend who made some comment which must have struck just the right chord within me, and I LAUGHED. It was such a shock to hear that sound come from EM that I actually reeled back in my chair and asked, unbelievably, “Did I do that?” For me, that was the first small burst of spring coming back into my life! But, of course, I still had a long way to go.

Be assured—there can be a spring in your life again! But you will have to work for it. It won't come if you just sit back and do nothing. Only you can be the judge of what it is you should do. Although you do have very special needs at this time and it is important not to push yourself beyond the point of your endurance, it may be necessary in the beginning to force yourself moderately to begin the work of building a new life for yourself. Eventually, you, too, will feel the first small burst of spring coming back into your life. During this time, you will still need the protective covering of an understanding friend, as we sometimes need the protective covering of our jackets and sweaters on chilly nights in the spring.

In time, you can be friend helping other newly-bereaved parents. BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN, AND KNOW THAT YOU WILL.



### MONTHLY MEETING

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the Month  
Sacred Heart Church Family Center  
5300 N US 23  
Oscoda, MI 48750

Meeting time: 7:00 pm

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 11<sup>th</sup>:**  
Handling Guilt

**April 9<sup>th</sup>:**  
Ask-it Basket

### CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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**The Compassionate Friends Oscoda**



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No One Tells You What It's Like To Lose A Sibling  
By Sarah Hayden, August 2016 [www.thoughtcatalog.com](http://www.thoughtcatalog.com)

Three years ago my dad died. After that I thought, *Okay, that's it. Nothing bad will happen for a while because it wouldn't be fair. The universe would only dole out so much pain at a time, right?*

That theory was proven wrong just shy of three years after my father's death. On April 19<sup>th</sup> I got a call from my mom. My car broke down that morning so I thought she was calling to talk about it. Instead, what she said turned my life upside down.

“Your brother overdosed today, he's gone.”

I've replayed those words over and over in my head, every day since they were spoken.

No one tells you what it's like to lose a sibling. No one tells you it feels like suffocating, like there's a weight on your chest that never quiet subsides. I feel it every day. Sometimes it's hard to breathe, it's hard to think, it's hard to understand. No one tells you how unimportant everything else seems in comparison.

No one tells you about the guilt. The what-ifs, the things you could have said, the questions you never asked. No one tells you about the moments you realize you didn't know enough about him and about what he thinks and who he is. Or, who he *was*.

No one tells you about the avoidance. It's numbing. It's easier to pretend nothing happened, to speak about him as if he's still here.

No one tells you how overwhelmingly impossible it seems to try to imagine a time where this doesn't hurt. To imagine a day where you don't cry. To imagine what it's like to feel whole again.

No one tells you that when people say you're strong, it makes you feel weak. That your strong exterior really comes from failure to face the pain and an assortment of unhealthy coping mechanisms.

No one tells you how scared you become. Death feels like it's around every corner. I'm scared to answer the phone, I'm scared to do anything mildly dangerous, I'm scared for myself and for everyone I love. I'm scared something will happen to me and I'll leave my mom all alone.

No one tells you these things because there's no warning for your sibling's death. There are no cushions for the blow. No one expects to celebrate their little brother's 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday without him. Because no one expects to live the rest of their life without him. *Honor the sibling who died.*



And then it happens, from a bitter sky,  
a timid sun strides to his silent battle  
against the gray and hostile universe.  
It changes ice to roses, sky to song.  
And then it happens that your heart recalls  
some distant joy, gladness from the past.  
A slender light, then larger, braver, until  
your mind returns to hope and peace.  
Let memories be beauty in your life,  
like song and roses in the winter sun.  
Sasha, Wintersun

March

March is a season of “renewal”. Let your darkened souls feel the warmth of new life as each tree, each bud breaks through the once frozen earth of winter. Let the “renewal” begin in your life. Your frozen heart can begin to live and feel again. Open it up to the warmth of your family and friends and feel the love and yes, life that you thought died with your child.

Nancy Cassell,  
TCF Mommouth, NJ



*"Forever In Our Hearts"  
Our Children/Siblings Remembered*



**Birthdays**



**Remembrances**



**March**

Tony Calabrese



**March**

Aaron Gonzalez



**March**

Ashley Scott



**March**

Nathan Kirkpatrick



**March**

Nathan Kirkpatrick



**April**

Aaron Dean



**April**

Derek Toppa



**April**

Michael Wright



**April**

April White



Memories are a legacy  
of hope and courage,  
left to help us go on  
when the giver is  
gone.

Sascha Wintersun

*Like a bird  
Singing in the rain,  
Let grateful memories  
Survive in time of  
sorrow.  
~Robert Lewis  
Stevenson*



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

# SOME DAYS ARE JUST HARD

*Robin Gaphini*

Posted on January 25th, 2019 [www.compassionatefriends/blog](http://www.compassionatefriends/blog)

Robin writes a blog called "Grief & Gratitude" at [www.griefgratitude.com](http://www.griefgratitude.com)

Losing a child is indescribably painful. As any bereaved parent will tell you, the death of a child leaves a huge line running through our lives with "before and after" etched forever in our memories. Days that were previously filled with promise and vitality suddenly seem empty and hopeless. Gradually, we come to accept that our lives will never return to what they once were and that some days are just hard.

In October 2010, we lost our previously healthy 21-year-old son, Matthew, to a form of virulent strep. What initially masked itself as a severe case of pneumonia was, in fact, a form of strep that attacked his bicuspid aortic heart valve, necessitating valve replacement surgery. But when they actually went in, they found the damage was far more extensive than they thought. And while Matthew survived the surgery (mostly due to his youth), he never regained consciousness. He spent the last week of his life in a coma before he died on October 22nd.

Before that ill-fated day in October, I had never known such sadness and hurt. As anyone who has lost a child will tell you, the pain is simultaneously acute and chronic. It's so piercing and constant you can hardly breathe; it's as if a cement block has been permanently placed on your chest. You don't think it will ever go away. Grieving becomes a way of coping with the tremendous loss that now makes up your life. And while the jagged edges of my own grief have begun to smooth out a bit, I also know that it will always be with me and forever define my family.

One thing I've come to accept over the past two and a half years is that some days are just hard. During the first year, I came to fully expect that every day would be hard. Those early days slogged by at a surreal pace. Grief was ever-present and seemed to hold time at bay. As we approached the first anniversary of Matthew's death in 2011, things shifted a bit, time picked up, and the acute days of grieving became less frequent, although the chronic grief remains.

Now I notice that there's no anticipating when grief will sneak up and wash over me like a rogue wave. It just happens. It can be a song, a special place, a type of food, or just a memory that suddenly slides into my subconscious, and all I can think about is the tremendous hole that now fills my life. I can be having coffee with a friend and laughing one minute, and find my eyes filling with tears the next. And that's okay. In fact, it just brings Matthew closer to me for that moment. I think for bereaved parents, our grief lies just below the surface. Even when I'm laughing or absorbed in a conversation, if you were to scratch me just a little bit, my grief would come bubbling up. I've come to view grief not as the enemy, but rather as an emotion that I now can acknowledge and move into. I know eventually, she'll go back under and I'll just carry her around with me, hidden from other's view, but always there.

In the movie "Rabbit Hole", there's a scene between Nicole Kidman (Becca) and her mother, Dianne Wiest (Nat), that stayed with me long after the closing credits. Becca and Nat are bereaved parents, and while Becca sees their circumstances as completely different (her four-year-old son was killed in an accident, while her brother died of a drug overdose), she and her mother now share the commonality of being bereaved mothers:

Becca: Does it ever go away?

Nat: No, I don't think it does. Not for me, it hasn't, and that's going on 11 years. It changes, though.

Becca: How?

Nat: I don't know . . . the weight of it, I guess. At some point, it becomes bearable. It turns into something that you can crawl out from under and . . . carry around like a brick in your pocket. And you . . . you even forget it, for a while. But then you reach in for whatever reason and—there it is. Oh right, that. Which could be awful—but not all the time. It's

kinda . . . not that you like it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is . . .

Becca: What?

Nat: Fine . . . actually.

This exchange sums up, for me, how so many of us carry the grief of losing our beloved children with us. I bring this up to remind people that for those of us who have lost a child, our grief is present, even if you don't see it. It doesn't go away, even with the passage of time. It doesn't go away even if we seem "better." With time the intense pain subsides, but our grief, like our love, is always there. And that's okay. The beauty of the human spirit is that we have a remarkable ability to continue on, even in the most adverse of conditions. But we will always mourn our children. We don't want them to be forgotten. Ever.

Our memories of them are all we have. Since Matthew died, I've learned that you do begin to put your life back together again, bit-by-bit, piece-by-piece. Its form is different, but it is still a life. It continues to have shape and meaning. And part of that new shape is formed by the memory of your loved one. That memory is present all the time, looking over your shoulder, helping you restructure this new reality. Grief is transformational. My grief has changed me in ways I'm only just beginning to understand. I am more mindful of things, big and small, happy and sad. I don't take anything for granted. I've learned to embrace the paradox of unfathomable loss and profound gratitude for living. I continue to feel Matthew's presence as we all rebuild our lives without his physical body here.

Some days are just hard. Some days grief rises up and reminds me that she's still there. She reminds me that grieving Matthew will always be a pivotal part of my life. That's okay. I also know that I will move through it and feel better soon. I know that life continues on, almost with a renewed sense of purpose. And for that I'm grateful. I've come to embrace yet another paradox of life, knowing that our hearts can be both full and broken at the same time.



### Uneasy Word

Hope is not an easy word for grievers but we, more than most others,  
need to understand what hope can mean for us.

Hope means finding the strength to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace the joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing with tenderness and pride  
our own life and the gifts left to us by those we lost.

~Sascha Wagner

*Spring is in the air and as a bereaved parent, sibling or grandparent, you may experience a "bittersweet" emotion. The changing of the seasons after a child dies can bring with it hopes and dreams that are unfulfilled or memories of what was and should have been.*  
~Karen, Kentucky





*Have you discovered the secret - ? -  
often what makes you cry  
can also make you smile...*

*~Sascha Wagner*

### **Lending Library**

We have many great books in our library and are always on the lookout for new material. If you have any suggestions, please let Charlie or Fran know as we are always adding to our collection. If you have a book from our library and are finished, please return it so it can be circulated again to another family.

If you would like to keep the book, please let us know the title of the book, so we can order a replacement.

Donations for new books are always appreciated and are a great way to honor our loved one on a birthday or anniversary.

To check out our books just click on the link...

[Lending Library for TCF-Oscoda](#)

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*"PEOPLE OFTEN FIND  
THEMSELVES TELLING THE  
STORY OF THEIR LOSS OVER  
AND OVER, WHICH IS ONE  
WAY THAT OUR MIND DEALS  
WITH TRAUMA."*

- ELIZABETH KÜBLER-ROSS -

love lives on.com

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