



# ***The Compassionate Friends*** ***of Northwest Houston*** **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

*Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.*

## **MAY 2025**

### **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

[www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org](http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org)

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.**

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Family Life Center, Room #116  
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.  
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located on the corner of Spring Cypress Road and Klein Church Rd. Please enter off Spring Cypress Road. The meetings are held in the Family Life Center, Room 204

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## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MISSION STATEMENT

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.

### **To the Newly Bereaved**

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.





*Our Children, Siblings, and Grandchildren  
Remembered*

**MAY BIRTHDAYS**

1993- Richard Allen Ginn, Son of Barbara & Richard Ginn  
2008-Aaron Michael Wolf, son of Laura Wolf  
2008-Bryan Russell Lewis, Son of Olga Lydia Lewis  
2008- Alexander Gene Davis, Son of Janice Davis  
2010- Tristen D. Hopkins, Son of Howard & Denise Hopkins  
2008- Kayla C. Ladner, Daughter of Stephen Ladner  
2003- Jeff Costin, Son of Carol & Richard Costin  
2006- Marlinda Raschke, Daughter of Gloria Raschke Sister of Kevin Rasche  
2000- Darrell Wayne McSpadden, Son of Janet & Robert McSpadden  
2006- Michael Beshara, Son of Mike & Elaine Beshara  
1983- Staci Kendall, Daughter of Larry & Tami Kendall  
1990- Sewika Tekle, Daughter of Medhin Boakai  
1976- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery  
1984- Nancy Lizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez  
1987- Cherelle Luter, Daughter of Sylvia Green  
2005- Nevaeh Ramirez, Son of Amy Ramirez  
1986- Allison Todd, Daughter of Ingrid Todd  
1977- Misty, Daughter of Terri DeMontrond  
1990- Traci Foehr, Daughter of Donna & Bubba Foehr  
1982- Justin Ross Heino, Son of Darryl Heino  
1986- Steven Jackman, son of Deborah Jackman  
2011 - Jamie Leonard, son of Carrie Newman  
1999 - James Ropp, Son of Janet Ropp  
1989 - Victor Alberto Renteria Jr, Son of Carla Renteria  
1985 - Aaron Kirby O'Neal, Son of Sylvia Ann Roushion  
1983 - Bryan Pfluger, Son of Penny McElhaney  
2002 - Elijah Tsaftarides, Son of Gerri Tsaftarides  
1997 - Parker Coogan, Son of Tim and Amy Coogan  
1991 - Eric Castelo, Son of Debbie Castelo  
2008 - Jake Hickford, Son of Henry Hickford  
2004 - Gabriella Grace Pena, Daughter of Servando & Jeanne Pena  
1973 - Antonio Ramos Jr., Son of Rosie Aguirre  
1990 - Joshua Bell, Son of Jamie Bell

**"A mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law,  
no pity, it dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its  
path." — Agatha Christie, "The Last Séance"**



## MAY ANGEL DATES

2009-Brendon Chase Mooney, Son of Richard & Joan Mooney

2010-Shaun N. Finley, Son of Barbara Finley

2002- Braden Hughes Patton, Son of Sherill & Chase Patton

2006- Danny Ewing, Son of Steffani L. Ewing

2003- Ronald Lee, Son of Ana Castellanos

2009- Samantha Short, Daughter of Linda Short

1998- Fallon Ginther, Daughter of Lisa Ginther

2012- Hamzah Zubair, Son of Farah Zubair

2012- Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford

2012- Danielle Basford, Daughter of Jerry & Laurie Basford

2013- Patrick Bull, Son of Tom & Gayle Bull

2013- Alan James Stokes, Son of Kellie Harris

2014- Milana Ramirez, Daughter of Deann Ramirez

2014- Tremaine Robinson, Son of Toya Robinson

2014- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk

2015- Vanessa Whitford, Daughter of Russell & Nury Whitford

2017- Joshua Bell, Son of Steve & Donna Bell

2018 - Grace Sanders, Daughter of Mary Parker

2021 - Shawna Merchant, Daughter of Bitsy Hatch

2020 - Darryl Allen, Son of Sandra Allen

2021 - Matthew Benjamin, Son of Nikki Jolivette

2020 - Eric Garcia, Son of John and Louise Garcia

*You left us so quickly;  
there were no goodbyes.  
How long this forever,  
your death and our lives.  
The sadness, the anger,  
the loneliness of three,  
preferring four always,  
how small, this new we.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
From *Stars in the Deepest Night—After the Death of a Child*

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday May 13th. 7pm. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 5201 Spring Cypress Rd. 77379.**

**TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE July 11-13, 2025 in Bellevue, WA**



### Hotel Reservations

This year's conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue. **Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated [reservation link](#).** Our discounted room rate with the Hyatt is \$165 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in Bellevue

### *Registration Includes:*

- Friday Morning Opening Session
- Friday Luncheon Banquet & Keynote Session
- Friday Evening Special Session
- Saturday Evening Banquet, Keynote Session, & Candle Lighting Program
- All General Sessions
- Workshops
- Sharing Sessions
- Special Performances
- Sibling Sunday
- All Activity Rooms

### *Registration Rates*

**Special Opening Rate \$265** ends April 18th at midnight (PST)

**Early Bird Registration \$295** begins April 19th, ends May 31st at midnight (PST)

**Pre-Registration \$330** begins June 1st, ends July 7th at midnight (PST)

**Onsite Registration \$360** begins July 8<sup>th</sup>



Registration fees are fully refundable when canceled by 5/31/2025. 50% of your registration fee will be refunded if canceled between 6/1/2025 and 6/20/2025. Special order items such as Walk To Remember signs, conference mementos, and sponsorships are non-refundable.

*Dear Compassionate Friends,*

*When I lost my daughter DeAndria in July 2008. I thought the world had come to an end. I thought I was the only one who had lost a child, I thought the sun would never shine again, I thought I'd never smile again let alone wanting to see another day. When I found Compassionate Friends all that changed. Compassionate Friends help me find a new normal, a new way of living. When I attended my first conference I learned that I was Not Alone. I learned that the sun will shine again, I learned that I will smile again. The conference gave me a new look on life on how to handle this grief walk we're on.*

*If you haven't attended a conference put this one on your calendar. I've had the opportunity to attend several and have walked away with a new look on life.*

*If you'd like to speak with me personally feel free to reach out. I can't make it this year due to a prior commitment however I'm looking forward to the next one.*

*Regards,  
Loretta Stephens  
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net  
Dees mom*



## Mother's Day

Mother's Day.....a time set aside to honor each mother's role in her child's life.....is often dreaded by bereaved parents. This holiday, like Father's day, is dedicated strictly to us, as parents. Other holidays differ from this one. That difference, which once was so meaningful to us as parents, is now a poignant reminder of all that once was and will never be again.

Bereaved mothers often approach this holiday with much anxiety. Yet, the holiday itself is generally not as difficult as the ramp-up to it. There are television specials, movies, commercials, signs in stores and advertising everywhere we look.....all of which remind us that our children are no longer with us. This is a difficult time for many bereaved mothers-difficult but not insurmountable.

During the month before the second Mother's Day without my son, I realized that it was my perspective that was the problem. I understood that the world was going to continue to spin, the commercialism would build and the reminders would increase until the holiday arrived. I could either ignore the advertisements through my superb channel surfing skills or I could watch them and torture myself. Passing up print ads was simple....I scanned right past them in the newspaper, and I put the mailings in the trash without comment. Each time I actively said "no" to these reminders, I became a little stronger.

As the week before Mother's Day crawled to a close, I thought I had it aced. Then came Mother's Day. My husband gave me a card and a gift. That was it. The gift and card were both lovely and sweet. My husband cried. I cried. Then we settled down and read the Sunday paper. We had both agreed that we would stop protracting the self-torture and live in the moment. Since I was keeping Mother's Day in my heart, the celebrations and thoughts and sales projections of others mattered not. I keep Mother's Day as I choose.

Each of us must work at developing coping skills. Logic is the choice for some. Setting boundaries works for others. Some parents choose to go with their emotions. The decision to celebrate a holiday and the level of the celebration is a choice unique to each parent. We cannot allow others to set our agenda. Mother's Day is the singular holiday which serves to reinforce that I am forever Todd's mom. My child lived, loved and laughed with us, and this holiday brings deep, beautiful memories of that time. I choose to keep those sweet memories of my son in my heart. Making that decision was one more emotional choice in my grief work. Letting go of what was, living in the moment and cherishing my child forever.....all of these have helped me to find an ever brightening light of hope.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my Son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX

**We All Need Support**  
**By: Beth Crocker**  
**Loving Memory of Cheyenne and Emily Crocker**



It's been 20 years since our oldest daughter passed, and 16 since our second daughter went. So much has changed. I knew it would, I feared it would. The decades since came gently, for the most part. The only thing that would occasionally get me was whenever I'd realize how much time has passed, or how much has changed since then, I'd be shocked, because in many ways it still seems so much more recent. I can't say how long it feels, it's vague, but fresh. It's so long ago, but still so real on my heart.

I'd like to say it's better, it's easier, now... and it is, mostly. After 20 years I've pretty much run the routine cemetery visits into the ground. Posting pictures of the flowers I do four times a year... two birthdays and two passing dates. There was a time when family would join us. They faded away, making excuses, and who can blame them. I'd like to think I'm a happy person, or at least positive person to be around, I don't want my grief bringing others down, or sucking their energy from them. But when I'm left with no support, I find myself wondering, doubting, who I am. My husband, son, and I have been making those cemetery visits alone now for some time. It's nice, too. Maybe I miss the extra support, but it can also be more peaceful.

Then again, sometimes I need the support. The 20th was tougher than I was ready for, but I got through it. Barely. I was a wreck the whole week leading to it, and that might have been all, then back to my current life, but it wasn't all. By the end of the day I was very painfully aware that out of a combined sibling total of 7, between my husband and me, not counting their spouses, not a single one of them made any effort to reach out and check on us that day. My best friend did. Not my siblings. Not even a text message. I posted pictures



on my social networks all week, mentioning my extra struggle with the 20th anniversary, and our siblings saw and acknowledged these posts, but not one of them had so much as commented on any of the threads. They knew. They didn't bother.

So why would I be using this not-so-supportive story to support bereaved parents? I want to remind you that you are not alone, and those with you are not necessarily who you would expect. We need support. We can't do this alone. It hurts when the flesh and blood of our children can't make time for us, I mean our children were their nieces and nephews, and the hard days just pass right by them without a thought. I know, they did think about our girls, and your children are remembered, too, but what we need is for them to tell us they are thinking of us on those days. First, we need to tell them that we need them in those days. After that, it's up to them, so surround yourself with those who support you. No matter the connection. Those are the people you need. Time does heal... almost. Create a new you. A you that still includes your child, and welcome only those who are ready to meet the new you, and walk the journey with you. Leave the rest behind. They are happy in their lives, and will never understand yours. That's ok, it's not their path. It's yours.

Beth Crocker  
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter



Jim Carrey once said: Grief is not just an emotion-it's an unraveling, a space where something once lived but is now gone. It carves through you, leaving a hollow ache where love once resided.

In the beginning, it feels unbearable, like a wound that will never close. But over time, the raw edges begin to mend. The pain softens, but the imprint remains-quiet reminder of what once was. The truth is, you never truly "move on." You move with it. The love you had does not disappear; it transforms. It lingers in the echoes of laughter, in the warmth of old memories, in the silent moments where you still reach for what is no longer there. And that's okay.

Grief is not a burden to be hidden. It is not a weakness to be ashamed of. It is the deepest proof that love existed, that something beautiful once touched your life. So let yourself feel it. Let yourself mourn. Let yourself remember.

There is no timeline, no "right" way to grieve. Some days will be heavy, and some will feel lighter. Some moments will bring unexpected waves of sadness, while others will fill you with gratitude for the love you were lucky enough to experience. Honor your grief, for it is sacred. It is a testament to the depth of your heart. And in time, through the pain, you will find healing-not because you have forgotten, but because you have learned how to carry both love and loss together.

## ***Memories***

My name is Nancy Thornton. I have been traveling this journey through grief for a while. This is my story, unique to me as everyone's is to them. Though we all suffer an unbearable pain, we deal with each day in our own way. There is no "right" way or "wrong" way, just our way.

My son, Jason, died at age 26. His death was unexpected. He died in his sleep from Myocarditis, an inflammation of his heart. I had never experienced such pain in my life and often wished I would just die, too, so I could be with him.

What kept me going was the fact that I had another child who needed me. Amy was 28 at the time. We grieved together, we cried together, we reminisced together. Having someone who knew Jason's life story helped me cope. Amy "broke" when she lost her brother. Siblings often are forgotten and the depth of their pain underrated. She lost her brother, best friend and the one person who shared her lifelong memories.

The memories - some are so painful, they are hard to face and some are so joyful, they bring a smile to our faces, through the pain. There were days that the memories would just fill my head and it was like rewinding a film and playing it over and over.

I find that remembering gives me peace. Sometimes, I would spend hours looking at old pictures and just think about years past. When friends or family would share their memories, it was wonderful. Just hearing his name gave me joy. Sometimes people are uncomfortable talking about our lost children, afraid it will be too hurtful for us. Don't they realize we never forget?

Amy and I attended The Compassionate Friends meetings for several years and the support we got and knowing we had a "safe" place to express ourselves helped us get through the worst of times.

Looking back, it took me 5 years before I felt like myself again.

I suffered from medical problems, including a brain tumor, which has left me legally blind. I could no longer drive and, consequently, could no longer attend meetings. Amy moved in with me and my husband to help. She finished her degree, obtained 2 Masters Degrees and was working on her PhD, when she became sick. She was diagnosed with Vasculitis.

The plan for her to help suddenly changed and I became her caretaker for the next 4 years as her health declined. Then the unbelievable happened - she died October 12, 2016.

How could I possibly deal with the loss of my beautiful daughter, my only living child, my best friend? Well, I'm here to tell you I'm still struggling with that answer. Again, the memories.

All of us bereaved parents have two days every year that are particularly hard to deal with. Birthdays and the anniversary of the day our child became an angel. Both of these dates will bring deeply emotional memories and painful feelings. How you decide to handle these days, either by having a party or a ritual or by being alone is a personal choice; but no matter what you choose, it takes time to put the pieces of your life back together and mark another year without your child.

So, my only advice is cherish your memories, they're all we have.

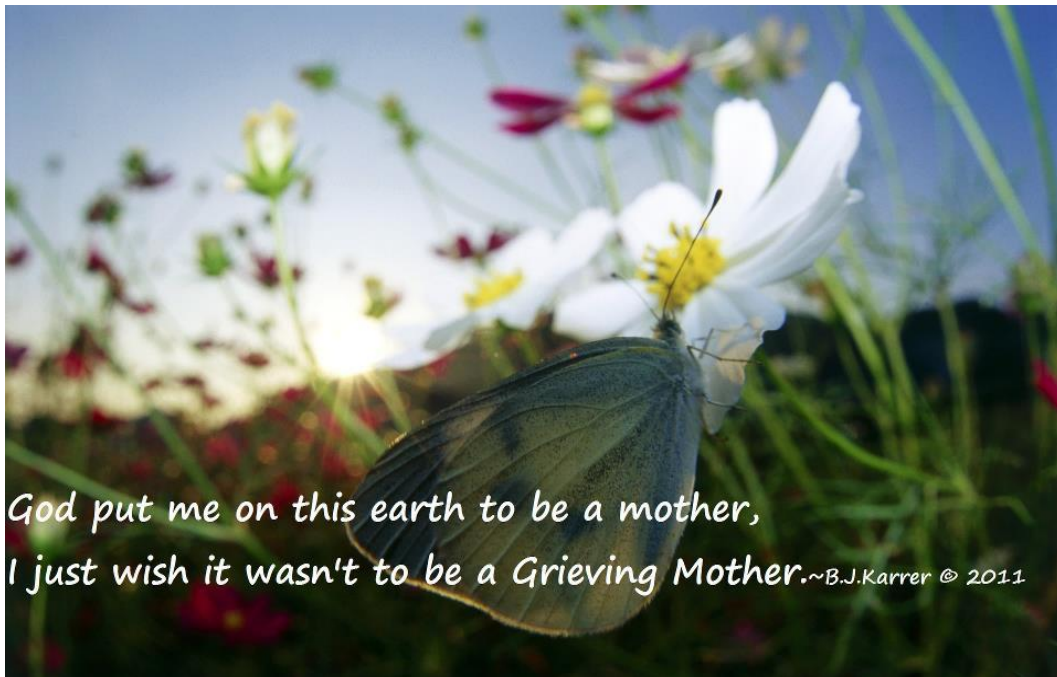
Nancy Thornton  
TCF Houston Northwest Chapter  
Mother of:  
Jason Kramberger 2/1975 – 3/2001  
Amy Kramberger 3/1973 – 10/2016



In Memory of Matthew Joslin Allen  
September 20, 1991 – June 5, 2013  
Submitted by: Jay and Linda Allen

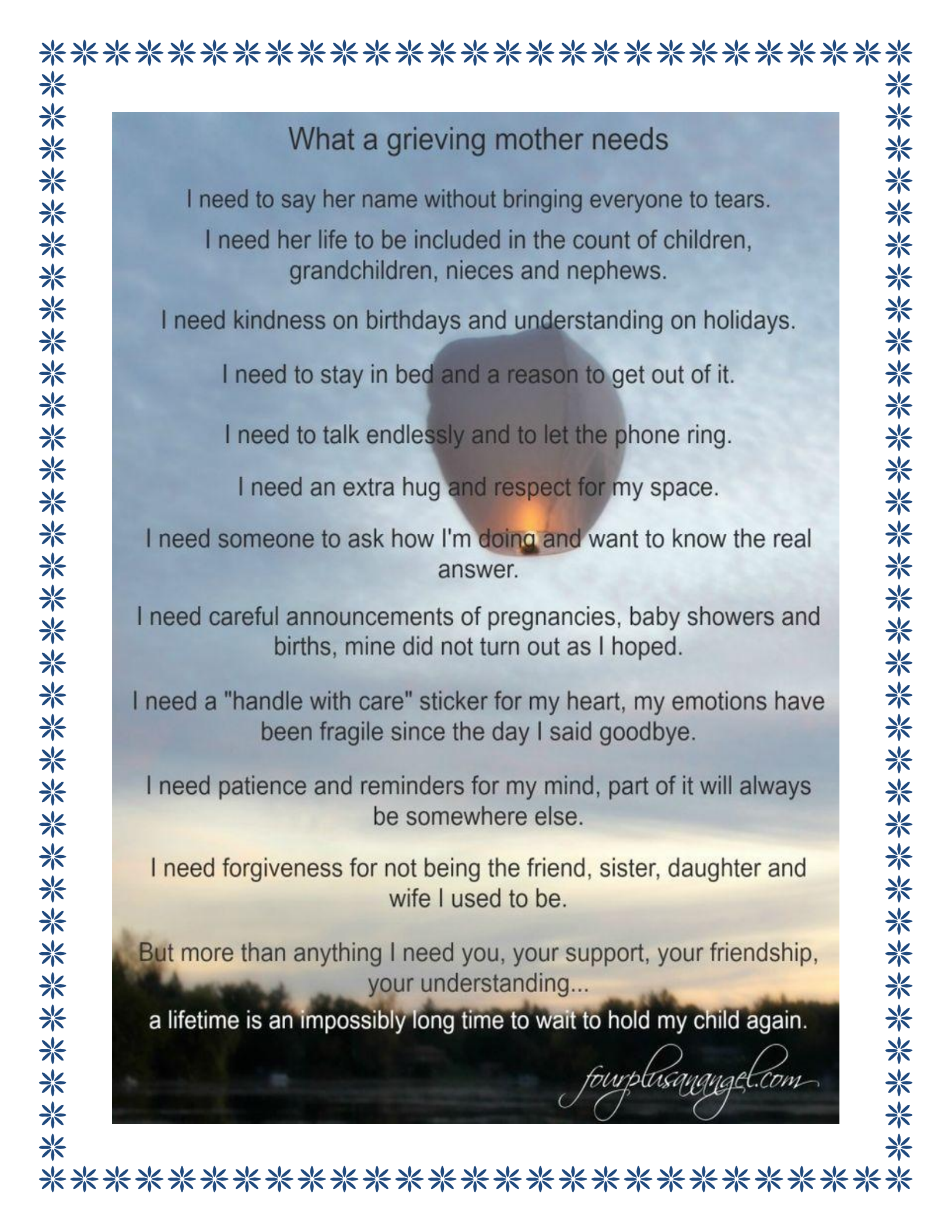
*"As I sit in heaven and watch you everyday,  
I try to let you know with signs I never went away.  
I hear you when you're laughing and watch you as you  
sleep.*

*I even place my arms around you to calm you as you weep.  
I see you wish the days away begging to have me home.  
So I try to send you signs so you know you are not alone.  
Don't feel guilty that you have life that was denied to me.  
Heaven is truly beautiful, Just you wait and see.  
So live your life, laugh again.  
Enjoy yourself, be free.  
Then I know with every breath you take,  
You'll be taking one for me."*



*God put me on this earth to be a mother,  
I just wish it wasn't to be a Grieving Mother. ~B.J. Karrer © 2011*





## What a grieving mother needs

I need to say her name without bringing everyone to tears.

I need her life to be included in the count of children,  
grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

I need kindness on birthdays and understanding on holidays.

I need to stay in bed and a reason to get out of it.

I need to talk endlessly and to let the phone ring.

I need an extra hug and respect for my space.

I need someone to ask how I'm doing and want to know the real  
answer.

I need careful announcements of pregnancies, baby showers and  
births, mine did not turn out as I hoped.

I need a "handle with care" sticker for my heart, my emotions have  
been fragile since the day I said goodbye.

I need patience and reminders for my mind, part of it will always  
be somewhere else.

I need forgiveness for not being the friend, sister, daughter and  
wife I used to be.

But more than anything I need you, your support, your friendship,  
your understanding...

a lifetime is an impossibly long time to wait to hold my child again.

*fourplusanangel.com*

## Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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Infant Child