

The COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter #1511

November 2026 Newsletter

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents.



A Note from Susan

Dear friends, the month of November brings the stirring of the holidays; they are approaching and are just around the corner. Next, we begin settling in for the winter months ahead of us.
I offered up a thought at our October meetings; Protecting your Peace. What does that mean to you? And how do you do this as we navigate the life we now live after the loss of our children.
We shared and discussed this thought. I want to thank all who joined our meeting and spoke to this topic. I wanted to add a definition I came across; Protecting your peace means guarding your mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being by setting intentional boundaries and stepping away from situations, habits, or people that consistently drain or disrupt your calm.
Key Elements
Self-Awareness: Noticing what restores your energy and what depletes or stresses your nervous system.
Setting Boundaries: Clearly deciding what behavior, you will accept and learning to say "no" without guilt.
Controlling Reactions: Recognizing that you cannot always control external events or other people, but you can choose how you respond to them.
Walking Away: Having the courage to distance yourself from toxic, one-sided, or harmful relationships.
I want to add another thought as we navigate the holidays and the new season of winter;
The word replenish is not a word I have often heard when discussing grief, but it struck me as very fitting – even poignant. We know how it feels to be thirsty and take a long, cool drink of water. It replenishes us. We know how wonderful it feels to sleep after being deprived for long periods of time. It replenishes us.
How heavy with grief but empty from loss, have we all felt?

The analogies that are often used to describe the new and powerful feelings of loss; my heart feels so sad, there is an empty space in my heart. Or my body just feels tired and I feel lost. All of those descriptions are accurate, but they also raise the question of how do we, as bereaved parents, fill that hole in our hearts or renew the emotional side that has “died”?

We need to consciously consider how we can replenish ourselves. We need to follow whatever feels healing to us.
It may be somewhat different for each individual, but we all need a certain amount of time alone to process our feelings and rest our minds and bodies. Grief is exhausting. No one knows the fatigue that comes with grief except for those who have experienced it. Time together with people we know, and trust can also help to restore our balance. It will take months and years to fully internalize and move forward from the event of our child’s death. We need to be patient with ourselves and our family members.

Replenishment can come from rest, relaxation, exercise and diversion. These activities are good for everyone but are certainly needed in greater quantities for the bereaved. Even though watching a movie or going to a concert may seem frivolous in our grief, those activities will provide a diversion that can help to restore energy. Small pleasures like planting flowers, watching birds, eating favorite foods, reading books or planning small trips can be healing and provide breaks from the constant burden of grief.
The activities to help replenish us are simple but the emotions and physical well-being they address are deep and complicated. We need to value ourselves and our families enough to at least try the simple things that will provide some relief from our pain and help to fill us up with positive emotions and thoughts again.

Thinking of you and your families during the holidays. Your friend, Susan ~ Westley’s mom

Chapter Meetings

Northern Illinois Chapter TCF #1511
http://www.iltcf.org/index.html

Zoom meeting
First Thursday of the month
7p.m. to 8:30pm
Susan Banks will email the
link to the meeting.
November 5, 2026

Third Thursday of the month meets at
Millburn Congregational Church
19073 West Old Town Court
Lake Villa, IL 60046.
Park in the lot behind the church, enter through the double glass doors.
Park in the parking lot behind the church, enter through the double glass doors.
It's also ok to sit and listen and when you feel comfortable sharing,
please share with us.
Open discussion
November 19, 2026

Chapter News

Upcoming events for our Chapter.

Sunday December 13, 2026 ~ The 30th Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony; The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. *More information will be shared to our members. See pages 7, 8, 9 of this month's newsletter.*
Our Zoom Candle Lighting Ceremony is Thursday December 3, 2065. 7:00pm – 8:30pm.

Thursday December 3, 2026

The first Thursday of the month meeting on December 3, 2026, is our Zoom meeting. At this meeting you will be invited to light a candle for your loved one and share a picture with those joining the meeting. This will not be a formal Candle Lighting Ceremony, but we will honor the memories of our loved one with readings, lighting a candle and showing a picture. I will send an email and the Zoom link for the meeting the week of November 30, 2026.

Sunday December 13, 2026,

The Candle Lighting Ceremony is Sunday December 13, 2026. The Ceremony begins at 6:30 pm. The candles are provided at the ceremony. We do invite you to purchase a luminary in memory of your loved one. A luminary is an opaque bag with a weighted base that holds a flameless candle. We will place a name label "In loving Memory" with your loved one's name on the outside of the bag. The luminaries will line the hallway to the sanctuary, the location of the Ceremony. After the Ceremony, please take the luminary in memory of your loved one. You may purchase as many luminaries as you would like. We are asking for a donation of $5.00 for a luminary, but no one will be refused.

The photo montage is a slideshow presentation of our members' loved ones who have gone too soon. We are inviting our new members to send a picture of your child, sibling or grandchild to Susan Banks and the photo will be included in our Chapter's photo montage, presented at the conclusion of the Candle Lighting ceremony.

If you have any questions about the Candle Lighting Ceremony, the Luminary or the Photo request please call, email, or text Susan at 847.366.9375 or Lanwesmar@comcast.net





GIFTS OF LOVE

A donation to our chapter in honor of or in loving memory of your child.

A love gift is a gift of money or of time given to the Northern Lake County Illinois Chapter of the Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died, but donations can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter.
Love gifts are acknowledged each month in the newsletter.

Please remember that our chapter will never solicit for donations. You will never receive an email, text message or phone call soliciting for a donation or a need of money or payment from any steering committee member. I, as the chapter leader will never ask for money for assistance with any chapter finances. We provide the opportunity for Gifts of Love as a place to give a donation in honor or memory of a loved one. ***Susan Banks Chapter Leader and our Chapter Steering Committee members.***

"Loss leaves us empty – but learn not to close your heart and mind in grief.
Allow life to replenish you. When sorrow comes it seems impossible – but new joys wait to fill the void." - Pam Brown

GIVING THANKS

By Sascha, from WINTERSUN

I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see your smile.
I cannot hear your voices now,
my children, who are gone.

But I recall your faces still,
the songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times and winter walks
And sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live
beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see,
you gave me finer ears to hear
what living means,
what dying means,
my children, who are gone.

So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
and you are not with me.
And, while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gifts you were,
and all the gifts you gave to me,
my children who are gone.

"Sometimes I touch the things you used to touch,
Looking for echoes of your fingers."
Iain Thomas



OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED IN NOVEMBER

Each month we remember the children who are sadly missed. Please take a few moments, place them in your thoughts, and remember them on their day together with their parents. None of us ever forget our special days and messages that say "I care" help us to get through them. Our children's lives will go on, if we remember them and celebrate their lives.

BIRTHDAYS

Selene Martinez	*November 1*	*Daughter of Manuel & Linda Martinez*
Nathan Clyde	*November 21*	*Son of Valerie Clyde*
		Sister of Michaela Clyde
James McClintock	*November 18*	*Son of Charles "Chip" & Louise Knoll*
Marcia Castillo-Stone	*November19*	*Daughter of Sissy Castillo*
Luke D. Laskowski	*November 20*	*Son of Pam & Mark Laskowski*
Juan Barbosa-Gomez	*November 21*	*Son of Alma Leticia Gomez*
Javier Ramirez	*November 21*	*Son of Julie Ojeda*
Mitchell Rodefer	*November 24*	*Son of Dennis & Susan Rodefer*
Sharon Beth Gray	*November 25*	*Daughter of Pam Gray*
Amanda Lauren Cecchi	*November 27*	*Daughter of Kim & Steve Cecchi*
Zachary Taylor	*November 30*	*Son of Mike Taylor & Karen Adams-Taylor*
Zachary Maslanich	*November 30*	*Son of Karen Zimmerman*

ANNIVERSARIES

Lila Ruffolo	*November 1*	*Daughter of Jenny Selle*
Andrew C Perkins	*November 3*	*Son of Richard & Thelma Perkin*
Karlis J. Lazda	*November 11*	*Son of Mara Lazda*
Rachel Salomonson	*November 15*	*Daughter of Toni Nesheim & Denny Salomonson*
Erin Dinklenburg	*November 16*	*Daughter of Kelli Brooks*
Kyle Glueck	*November 17*	*Dolores Krason*
Aaron Barrera	*November 18*	*Son of Tammie & Ernie Barrera*
Megan Candice Grace	*November 18*	*Daughter of Tim & Marilyn Grace*
Nicole Parfitt	*November 18*	*Daughter of Robin Parfitt*
Paulene Welch	*November 20*	*Daughter of Grace & Merrel Parsons*
Kevin Lopez	*November 22*	*Son of Diahnn Estes Lopez*
Camden Frisby	*November 23*	*Son of Kris Frisby*
Mickey T. Lesniak	*November 26*	*Son of Isabelia Lugo*
Zachary Maslanich	*November 30*	*Son of Karen Zimmerman*

On the days when no one but you mentions their name,

I am so, so sorry. Say their name bravely.

They are still real. They are still a part of you. They are still yours.

Scribbles & Crumbs

Please let me know if I have omitted a child, misspelled a name or have published an incorrect date. I know how important it is to bereaved families to have their children remembered.
Susan Banks, lanwesmar@comcast.net



Journaling

In October 1996, my world fell apart. All things felt and believed were shattered. My emotions and feelings were swirling inside my head and heart at such a rate I could not deal with it. All the words I needed to say to my daughter on a daily basis, all the words I had to share with her, all the words I needed to tell her of the future were stuck. They were lodged in my mouth with nowhere to go. There were words of sorrow over my loss of something so precious and dear to me, words of fear, longing, love, joy, anger, hate and any number of other words that you can imagine.

What to do with these words? I talked to as many as would listen, but still the words were there, still are in lots of ways. A friend, yes-another bereaved parent who knew, sent me a journal with words of encouragement to use it. I was frightened at first. What do I put in this book? If I wrote the words, would I feel better or worse? How to start? I thought about it for a few days, and then I just sat down and wrote.

Oh, how I wrote! Pages and pages of words, sprinkled with tears, yet containing my sanity. I wrote poems, letters, and holiday greetings. I wrote of my love, my loss, my longing. I wrote for days, I wrote at odd times, unusual places. I carried my little book, still do, and felt like it was a link to her in some way. I do not use it as much now. I guess time has robbed me of that need to say those words. I think they are still there, I just have become use to it. Maybe in a way, holding on to those words now keep her closer somehow. You know time has a way of dimming things for us no matter how hard we try to hold on.

I think I have started holding on more to the words to keep her more alive and near me, if that makes any sense. Does to me anyway. I guess I am still afraid, more than I like to admit, more than others would like for me to be I should say. Journaling is good, if you can do it. Some can, some can't. It was a help to me.

I try to go back sometimes and read some of it. Some of the pages are so blurred because of the tears they are hard to read. Some of it is too painful for me even though I wrote them. I weep for myself when I read them. Some of them I could share most of them I could not. It would be like opening up my heart and soul and letting people see inside. I think someday I will toss them away, but not yet. Not just yet……

~written by Barbara Sockwell, Snellville, Ga

In Memory of Ashley…January 31, 1978 - October 22, 1996

Someone asked me once

If I still talk to my son.

I smiled.

Every single day.

In the quiet.

In the car.

Before I sleep.

My son will never stop

Being someone

I have things to say to.

"Heaven holds my Son"

Dear Siblings,

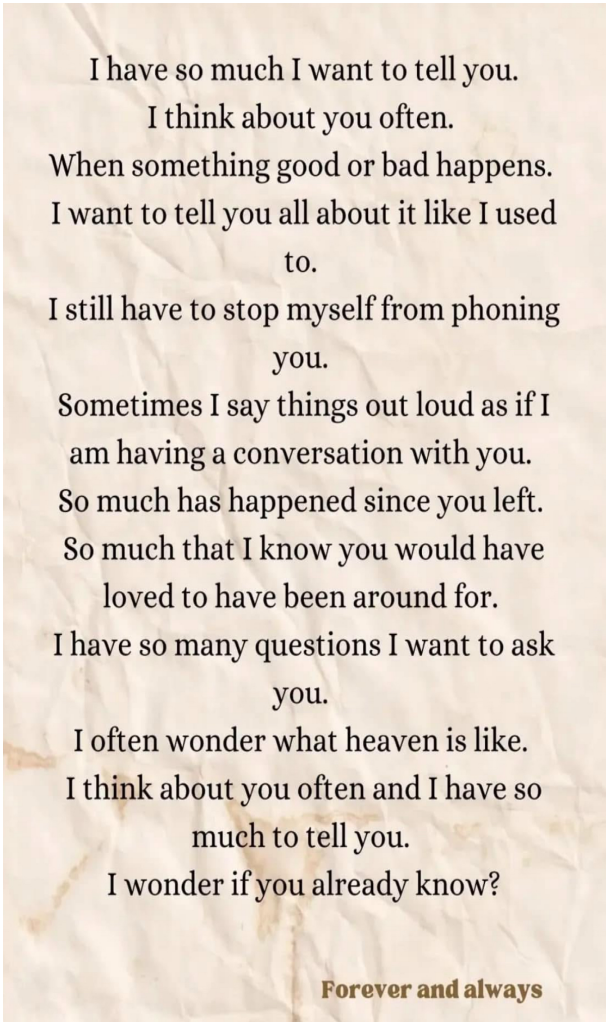
Dedicated to those who have lost
a sibling;
Losing you was like losing a part of myself.
No one knew me like you did. Growing up
With you was a privilege and I am so proud
that I am related to you. I will forever feel you
and forever miss you. Not only were you my
sibling, you were my best friend.
All my best memories were with you.
My life will never be the same without
you here. I carry you in my bones and in my
Heart.
By Sharon Marsh ~ leave her wild

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When a child dies, the entire family is
changed ~ including the siblings.
Siblings may grieve openly or quietly. They may
talk about their brother or sister constantly or
rarely mention them at all.
There is no single way to grieve the death of a
sibling.
What matters is creating space for their grief and
letting them know: Your grief matters.
Your feelings matter. Your sibling matters.
And you are not alone.

**"The loss of a brother
or sister is not small,
unimportant, or invisible.
In fact, it's quite the opposite.
I call sibling loss 'the loss of a lifetime,'
because who else do we expect
to have relationships with that
stretch our entire lives?"**

**Lynn Shattuck
~6 Things I wish I'd Known when I be-
came a Grieving Sibling~**



TCF Sibling Zoom Meetings

SIB Suicide Support - Meets 4th Monday of the month at 9:00 pm ET
Meeting with Jordon - Meets Tuesdays at 7:00 pm ET
Grief Book Club - Meets 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm ET
Write Your Soul - Meets 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm ET
Meeting with Jason - Meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm ET
LGBTQ+ Sibs Meeting - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 9:30 pm ET
Canada Sibling Sharing Circle - Meets 2nd Saturday of the month at 1:00 pm ET
SIBS in Relationships and Partners - Meets 2nd Sunday of the month at 7:00 pm ET

To sign up for TCF SIBS newsletter, visit siblingisland.com or scan the QR code.

Connect with other siblings online with tcfsibs.org
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Gifts of Love

by Cathy Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN



As I type this, it is the day after Thanksgiving. People in the retail business say that it is the biggest shopping day of the year. Before Nina died, I was one of those crazy shoppers who on that day sat out in the parking lot of whatever store that opened at 6 a.m. waiting for them to open their doors so I could shove my way into whatever "blue light special" was being offered.

My children's wish list in hand, I was ready to power shop 'til I dropped. But that was then, and this is now. Five Christmas shopping seasons later, my life, as all of our lives, has changed irrevocably as one precious child is no longer on that shopping list.

Not too long ago, I was in a fitting room trying on some clothes when I overheard the conversation between mother and teenage daughter in the room next to me. There was a volatile exchange of words between the two of them as the mother was trying to hustle her daughter along. She kept saying to her, "You know, I don't have all day to waste because you can't make up your mind." The heated discussion continued and concluded with the girl's mother saying, "That's it! I am never taking you shopping again!" That phrase sent a chill down my spine. It took everything in my power to keep from bursting from my fitting room and admonishing that mother; tell her that I would give anything to have my daughter alive so that she could cause that so-called "inconvenience" that obviously hers was causing her. I then realized that in this woman's agitated state it would only fall on deaf ears.

It has been four and a half years since my daughter died and I still go into the shops that we frequented and see some adorable outfit hanging on one of the mannequins and think, "Nina would have loved that." She was my shopping buddy. She could never say no to an invitation to go shopping. And it wasn't just shopping for herself that she loved. From the time she was very young, she loved buying gifts for others. She would scrape whatever money she had saved from
birthdays, etc. to buy a small gift

for each of us. Interestingly, the gift she gave me our last Christmas together was an angel. At that time, I had not even started the angel collection that I have now since she died.

Be prepared to find "gifts" from your children when you unpack your Christmas decorations for the first time. It seemed as if each box I opened there was something left there from her, something that I had long forgotten about; one box contained a picture of her in a Santa hat smiling that brilliant braces-laden grin, another her carefully crafted handmade ornaments, another one a hand-written card in her just-learning-to-print handwriting, and on and on so many memories. I realized that in a sense, these were Nina's gifts to me now that she wasn't physically here. She was giving me the gifts of memories - beautiful memories that were given in love. Those memories will only increase in value as the years go on. They are invaluable because they are yours and yours alone - no one can ever take those

priceless memories away. Though they may hurt now and probably always will but not as intensely, give yourself a gift - the gift of emotion and allow those healing tears to fall. Give yourself time to grieve.

If I could give each of you a gift I would want to give you the gift of peace, as much peace as you can possibly find. And the hope that you can remember some of the joy and love that was yours from Christmases past.

~reprinted from Holiday Memories
http://www.tcfatlanta.org/HolidayMemories.htm

REQUEST FOR PHOTO FOR
POWER POINT/SLIDE PRESENTATION
OF LOVED ONES

We Remember Them

ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY
Sunday December 13, 2026, 6:30 pm
Zoom ceremony is Thursday December 3, 2026

Millburn Congregational Church
19073 W Grass Lake Road, Lake Villa, IL 60046

Please consider including a photograph of your loved one in the candle lighting ceremony through a Power-Point presentation. It is very touching to see the faces of the children and brothers and sisters and grandchildren of our fellow members of The Compassionate Friends.

If you have a photo that you would like to include in the presentation, please include your loved one's name, age at time of death, your relationship (son, daughter etc.) as well as your phone number and email address. Attach 1 photo to the email or text. If you are not able to send the photos electronically, you can mail them to me, and I will scan them for the presentation and mail the originals back to you.

If your loved one was included in last year's presentation, we will use the same photographs in the Power-Point presentation.

Please send photo and information by November 30, 2026.

Attach it to an email or send it in a text message or mail your photo to:

Susan Banks 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031/email; Lanwesmar@comcast.net

847.366.9375

The Compassionate Friends
Northern Lake County Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

IN LOVING MEMORY LUMINARIES – order form



The Northern Lake Co IL Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is offering an additional opportunity for bereaved families to remember their loved ones during the annual Candle Lighting Ceremony on Sunday December 13, 2026. The ceremony will be at the Millburn Congregational Church, 19073 W. Old Grass Lake Rd, Lake Villa, IL 60046 at 6:30 p.m.

The luminary is an opaque bag that has a weight and a flameless, battery-operated candle inside of it. The label on the outside will read "In Loving Memory" and your child's or sibling's name will be printed on it. The luminaries will be used to line the hallway of the Millburn church that leads to the sanctuary where the candle lighting ceremony is held. The soft light will provide a touching and welcoming entrance to the ceremony. *The luminaries will be placed in alphabetical order by last name so that you can easily find your luminary and take it home with you.*

We are asking a donation of $5. for each luminary but no one will be refused. The donations pay for the materials for the luminaries and the remainder will go toward chapter activities and materials.

If you have questions, please email Susan Lanwesmar@comcast.net
Please mail in by November 30, 2026.

_ _ _ _ _ _cut here _

I/we would like to order _____ (total no.) luminaries in memory of the following:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Ordered by (your name): _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

Enclosed Amount: $ _____ Check #: _____

Please make checks to: "Northern Lake CO TCF"
Mail to: Northern Lake CO TCF – 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031

LOVE GIFTS

Enclosed in a check in the amount of _____ to be used as follows (check all that apply):

In loving memory of _____

In honor of _____

Sponsor the newsletter for _____ month) ($25 pays ½ monthly cost)

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that for your child to be included in the "special days" list each month in the newsletter, you must fill out this form that gives us permission to list this information. If you are donating, please make the check payable to The Compassionate Friends. Return to Rosita Hernandez 3016 16th Place, North Chicago, IL 60064. rosehernandez@juno.com

We welcome your comments and/or items submitted for use in the newsletter. Short articles, poems, or book reviews are always appreciated. Please include the author of any written works. Send your items for the newsletter to Susan Banks Lanwesmar@comcast.net 1427 Clavey Lane Gurnee, IL 60031.

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families. Its' mission is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others to be supportive

TCF National Office - 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI - 48393 PH 877-969-0010 - Fax: 630-990-0246. The Compassionate Friends home page can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org

Steering Committee 2026– 2027

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP Susan Banks 847-366-9375 lanwesmar@comcast.net – Son, Westley Banks Age 21 of suicide

TREASURER Rosita Hernandez 847-602-0698 rosehernandez@juno.com Daughter, Victoria Pickett Age 26 of suicide

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

HOSPITALITY Kris Frisby 847-366-3170 Kefrisby88@comcast.net Son, Camden Frisby Age 15 of suicide.

SECRETARY / LIBRARIAN

REMEMBRANCE SECRETARY Shannon Seay 224-456-2891 Seayseven1@comcast.net Daughter, Ashley Seay Age 17 Auto accident.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Susan Banks 847-366-9375 lanwesmar@comcast.net – Son, Westley Banks Age 21 of suicide

NEWSLETTER PRINTING & MAILING Toni Nesheim 847-204-7585 toninesheim@gmail.com & Denny Salomonson, 847-223-7353 drdreno@gmail.com - Daughter, Rachel Salomonson, 19 Auto accident

WOODLAND WALK COORDINATORS Christine Pado 847-455-6642 chpado@gmail.com - Daughter Lindsay Wilcynski Age 29 Pulmonary Embolism

FACILITATORS AT HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH WAUKEGAN, IL. SPANISH AND ENGLISH. Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com & Raphael Vidal rvidal1027@yahoo.com, Son Raphael Vidal age 17 of suicide. Mirtha is available by phone call or email.

FACILITADORES EN HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH WAUKEGAN, IL. Española e inglés. Mirtha Vidal 847-293-1658 mirthavidal1213@yahoo.com & Raphael Vidal rvidal1027@yahoo.com, Hijo Raphael Vidal de 17 años de suicidio. Mirtha está disponible por teléfono o correo electrónico.

Northern Lake County IL Chapter #1511 http://www.iltcf.org/index.html

NORTHERN LAKE COUNTY COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS FACEBOOK

Facebook Pages for Siblings - The Sounds of the Siblings: https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/

TCF SIBS: https://www.facebook.com/groups/tcfsibs/