

# INSIDE THAT PLACE NOBODY SEES

## A father's journey

Robert's 21-year-old son Kevin was killed by a drunk driver in 2015

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## Self care articles for the bereaved

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## I was very embarrassed at showing my emotions

I am a typical male in that I do not openly express my feelings well, or perhaps not at all. I was very embarrassed at showing my emotions in the first days after my son's death; which is completely insane to feel that way, but yet I was.

Since then, I have not let anyone see very much emotion from me. To anyone who sees me, I am the picture of calm and at peace. But inside, in that place that nobody sees, my emotions are wildly swinging. The inner turmoil that I feel and the barrage of emotions of loss and pain are paralyzing at times. But to see me or relate with me in a work situation, a family situation or a friendship situation, you wouldn't know it. You might even think I've gotten over it or moved on. That could not be farther from the truth. I'm as devastated and upset as I was the day of the loss. I just don't let you know it.

The best place I've found to express my feelings and thoughts is on The Compassionate Friends closed Facebook group "TCF—Loss of a Child." On that website, I am able to privately share some of my saddest moments and even

some horrible thoughts with a group of moms and dads who have lost exactly what I have, and understand what I'm talking about. The group is an absolute godsend. I have also been able to help people who have since come to the group and offer my words of wisdom to help them. This has been a major help to me, the ability to help others.

You also find out that when you lose a child you gain a "death pass" where you can openly talk to others about their loss, because you are in the group. A conversation I never would have had with someone who has lost a child becomes commonplace in the hope that sharing is helping.

What I have learned from other men (and myself) is that we take the responsibility for being the protector very seriously. Many of us feel like we have failed miserably with the loss of our child. We get deeply caught up in the what-if game—what if I had done this or what if I had done that, would my child still be alive? That tears most of us up significantly. We also believe we retain the protector role over our surviving children, spouses or significant others, and family. Showing any kind of emotion or weakness is not allowed. We have to be strong for all of the remaining friends and family.