



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January 2015

Volume XXVIII, Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

The New Year is upon us. I am finishing up putting away the Christmas decorations. The last to go is my "Anna" tree that I display in our bedroom. When I look at it I feel peaceful. It is a tiny oasis of memory in the midst of the busyness of the holiday season. There will always be a profound sense of loss for what could have been had our precious daughter not died, but deep gratitude of knowing her, if only for a little while. The following are some comments from other Compassionate Friends as we move into the New Year.

Not gonna lie... Every new year is always difficult for me. Yes, I am beyond blessed in so many ways, and I am thankful for another year of blessings. But I can't help but think how every year takes me further from the last time I spoke to or held and kissed my beautiful son. There are blessings to come this year for sure - but nothing will ever fill that Gabe-sized hole in my heart! **Leslie Perkins, TCF/Quad Cities**

It has a different number. Days have gone by. We've accumulated more time between ourselves and our child's death. We may have rearranged our perspective – have different ideas about what is important and what hardly matters. In this new year, we know that there will be ups and downs, some good moments and some bad. And if we take just one moment, just one hour, just one step at a time – Together we can make it. **Joan Schmidt, TCF/Central Jersey**

We turn the calendar over to start a new year – a new year without you in it. How can it be that time keeps moving along without our children, grandchildren, and siblings. Our hearts are broken; our families are broken, but we are surrounded by love. We know we will make it. We are putting one foot in front of the other, day by day, moment by moment. **Karen Cantrell, TCF/Frankfort, KY**

Inside

Chalkboard Reflections	2
The Holiday Are Behind Us	3
Love Gifts	
What's It All About?	4
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
The Burden of Guilt	6
Grief and Marriage	7
Support Groups for Grieving Parents and Siblings	8
New TCF Facebook Page	9
New Year's Resolution for the Bereaved	
Letting Go	10
Contact the Editors	
Memories Light up the Candlelight Memorial Service	11
The Six Needs of Mourning	

Sincerely, Jerry and Carol Webb

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

Grief walks with you today, your constant companion. But in the morning, tomorrow, the sunrise of hope waits for you.

Sasha

Wounds do not heal without time and attention. Yet, too many of us feel that we don't have the right to take the time to heal from emotional and physical wounds. ~ From Judy Tettelbaum's *Courage to Grieve*

"For some, these feelings will last for years, while for others, anger and guilt will be fleeting as other emotions dominate. As our grief softens over time and we come to understand and accept its complexity, perhaps, in the end, we should not be surprised at the intensity of our feelings. After all, they are only a minute reflection of the intensity of our love. ~ Bill Ermatinger

A challenge in grieving is learning to move forward in life while fearing that you will leave behind loved ones.

Nancy Berns

Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable to the imagination of the unbereaved.

Iris Murchoch

We as bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents are often requesting that others allow us to grieve as long as we need, in the manner that we need without judgment. We have to remind ourselves to have the same compassion for those closest to us. Our spouses, children, parents and siblings need to be given the same "bill of rights" for grieving. We may not "see" them grieve openly, but we must remember, everyone is different in their grief, they are hurting and remembering.

Karen Cantrell, TCF/Frankfort, KY

The Holidays Are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are a part of our memories. In a strange way, as memories in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows.



We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throats tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart. If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within.

Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

Marie Andrews, TCF/Southern Maryland

Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

THANK YOU TO:

Luis and Katherine Adrolles, in memory of their daughter, Isabella.
Bradley and Shari Hilligoss, in memory of their son, Tyler Bradley.
Tony and Linda Kozelichki, in memory of their son, Anton.
John M. Page, in memory of his granddaughter, Anna Katherine Webb.
Robert and Mary Jo Reade, in memory of their daughter, Robin.
Doug and Barb Scott in memory of their daughter, Abby.
Kathy and Jerry Thomas, in memory of their son, JT.
Mindy Kruse, in memory of her son, Alex Hallene.

Love gifts are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue.

If you would like to send a love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*.
Your gifts are tax deductible.

What's it all about?



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Toll Free (877)969-0010
TCF National Web site —
www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is 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.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

Chapter website:

<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
Understanding Suicide	<p>ASAP (Awareness, Support, Action, Prevention): A confidential group that meets biweekly to serve individuals who have contemplated or attempted suicide and those coping with the suicide of a loved one. Christian Care, 2209 3rd Avenue, Rock Island – first and third Wednesdays, 4:00-5:30 pm.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	<p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-newsletter is also available from the National Office -- to subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-newsletter link.</p>
Grief Materials	<p>Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for—or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
Our Newsletter	<p>For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.</p>
Amazon.com	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
Alive Alone	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm.</p>

The Burden of Guilt

Guilt and grief seem to team up together for a long time following the death of a child. In fact, guilt is one very real reason many parents often fall into a depression following child loss. This is especially true when the death of a young child is involved.

A parent is often plagued with such questions as “Why didn’t I see the symptoms of my child’s illness sooner?” “Why did I leave my child unattended by the pool?” “Why did I trust the babysitter when I knew she was inexperienced?” “Why didn’t I follow my gut instincts and take my child to the doctor one day sooner?” Guilt is a heavy burden to carry around, and unattended guilt can cause havoc in the life of a burdened parent.

How does a parent get rid of the guilt associated with child loss? There are things a parent can do to help, but let me preface this by saying that if depression has become part of your life, it is necessary to seek professional help. Depression is real, and there are several medications available to specifically treat depression. Often, it will be suggested to receive counseling for depression along with taking the medication. There are many trained doctors who can help you.

If you feel an overwhelming sadness that incapacitates you, seek help. Or, if you have such overpowering feelings of guilt that you feel like harming yourself or harming someone else, it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Remember, there is help available for depression, and depression is not something that you can just get over in a day or two.

Guilt will greatly interfere with your ability to move forward in grief work. It is extremely important to recognize the fact that you are struggling with guilt and then to do something positive to remove

the guilt from your life. The first, and most difficult, step to take is to forgive yourself. This is no small task, and often will take weeks of concentrated work to do this.

Write a letter that journals your thoughts, including all of the guilt that is weighing you down. In this letter, ask your child to forgive you. It is often helpful to go to the gravesite of your child and read the letter aloud. There seems to be great healing in asking your child for forgiveness. Many parents have held a “forgiveness ritual” where the letter is read aloud, then the letter is taken away and burned, thereby signifying the idea of putting the guilt behind you.

Parents also find great comfort in prayer. Ask God to forgive you, and then remind yourself often that you have truly been forgiven. This way of forgiveness thinking begins a cycle of healthy healing in the difficult journey of child loss.

Remind yourself daily that you cannot change what is done, but you can move forward and live today. This often takes the longest time to do. Parents so often are plagued with the “what if” questions. There is never any resolution to the guilt associated with “what if.” It is necessary to forgive the past, and gradually take steps to move forward into the present. This is no small task for a grieving parent.

Removing guilt from child loss can be the hardest work you will ever do. It takes time to shed guilt, so be gentle with yourself. Forgiveness of self is the most necessary part of all. Seek professional help for depression. Be assured that when guilt is removed from your life, you have accomplished a great step forward in this difficult journey we call grief from child loss.

Clara Hinton

Grief and Marriage

When our son was killed, I remember thinking through the haze of pain that this most horrifying of life experiences would somehow bring us closer. Sharing the loss of a child created and loved by both of us for twenty years would surely deepen the bond between us. I was in for a surprise.

We clung almost blindly to each other until the shock began to give way to ugly reality. As we each moved to our individual pattern of grieving, differences began to emerge. I felt like a time bomb about to explode. I needed desperately to talk about our son. My husband refused to verbalize his feelings and became angry at my overtures. I stopped trying to communicate.

This was beyond my comprehension. Where was my helpmate, my best friend? I felt rejected, unloved and terribly alone. Anger overwhelmed me as I bitterly realized that I wasn't going to be able to share my grieving with the person who meant the most to me in the world. I knew that many marriages fail after the death of a child. Dear God, how could we possibly survive an additional tragedy?

We attended a few Compassionate Friends meetings, and then I continued alone. The gentle acceptance of others who had lost children permitted me to talk or cry without guilt. Our problem was definitely not unique; many other parents expressed similar frustrations. So many couples experience marital difficulties after the death of a child that it is now considered the norm. We weren't going crazy; and just because our grieving styles were different didn't mean that our whole marriage would fall apart. My anger began to dissipate as I slowly faced the fact that I had been placing unrealistic expectations

on my husband. Hurting at least as much as I, he simply could not meet my needs for support.

Much later, the knowledge that support had been there all along from my friends—if I had only asked for it—saddened me. I had to admit that I simply had been too proud to reveal myself as a suffering person in need of help. I will be forever grateful to Compassionate Friends for being there with loving, open arms.

We began to have some honest discussions, agreeing that we needed each other's nurturing in order to survive and find meaning in life. We learned to respect each other's feelings. We tried to please each other in little ways: a hug, a special meal, anything that expressed caring. Patience with each other smoothed over many rough moments. Time spent alone together was very healing. It took a conscious decision from both of us to try harder. Some days, we didn't have any energy left when grief was particularly painful. It wasn't always easy as we couldn't talk about our son for a long time.

As I look back, I see that ignorance of grief and the impact it can have on a marriage was the basis for our problems. But in retrospect, how could we possibly have been prepared for the onslaught of paralyzing emotions that overwhelmed us? Anguish of this intensity can reveal a spouse you've never seen before. Deeply wounded, both of you will be inevitably changed from the experience of losing a child. Back then, understanding these simple facts would have immeasurably helped us.

Pat Retzlloff, TCF/Oshkosh, WI

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday, January 22, 2015, at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>.

The next meeting is February 26, 2015, 6:30 pm..

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</p>	<p>Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</p>	<p>This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director at 563.324.9580, or egordon@rhoh.org or go to www.rhoh.org.</p>
<p>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)</p>	<p>A peer group for suicide grief support meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, 563.843.3655 or at there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org.</p>
<p>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)</p>	<p>Survivors of Suicide Support Group Meets on second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Contact: Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425 or laura@secondreformedchurch.net.</p>
<p>SHARE</p>	<p>A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568 or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com.</p>
<p>Loving Listeners</p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Kay Miller 309.738.4915 ♥ Kirby White 563.271.5908 kombo100@msn.com ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearth3@mchsi.com ♥ Judy Delvechio 563.349.8895 delvechiojudy@hotmail.com ♥ Michelle Curtis 309.644.0486 <p>Kay, Kirby, Doug, Rosemary, Judy, and Michelle are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.</p>

National TCF has a new Facebook page, **TCF - Loss to Suicide**. This page is open to parents, grandparents, and siblings who have lost loved ones to suicide. There is no good way to lose a loved one; different causes create specific pain that can be eased sharing with another experiencing a similar loss. Co-moderators, Cathy Seehuetter and Donna Adams welcome you to this special closed page.

TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their

grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members.

Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family. Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. Check out the Discussion Boards! Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news, such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved

Tanya Lord

This year I resolve to:

- ◆ Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my lifetime whether they are present or not.
- ◆ Tell their stories, the happy and the sad. They will live on through me.
- ◆ Encourage others to share memories.
- ◆ Teach others that they cannot "make" me cry. Tears are only an external expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- ◆ Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. "Doing well" means expressing my feelings.
- ◆ Understand that others will not understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.
- ◆ Recognize that asking for help from those that love us is really a gift that we can give them.
- ◆ Help others. Reaching out to others in pain will help me to heal.
- ◆ Do something nice for myself every day.
- ◆ Know that if today I cannot do everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- ◆ Cry when I need to. Laugh when I can and to not feel guilty about either one.
- ◆ Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret, and anger because I know holding on to these emotions can be damaging.
- ◆ Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- ◆ Take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- ◆ Reinvest in life a little bit each day.

The Grief Toolbox – www.TheGriefToolbox.com

Letting Go

by Rob Anderson

If I do not let go of his death,
I will not find his life.
If I do not let go of my pain,
I will not find my life.
Others may want me to be as
they think I should be.
“Heal quickly, heal today,
heal now so my pain will leave.”
I let go of their expectations
and of mine.
Healing is slow,
slow like a spring flower
resting in winter.
I will not expect things for myself
that my heart cannot do.
My tears will visit frequently,
My smile will return when it is ready.
All I need for healing
are my child and my grief work.
If I fully embrace my pain,
feel it all and not deny it,
I will heal. I will laugh again.
Forever I will miss his touch,
His smile and scent.
If I let go of his death,
I will no longer miss all of him
because his joy, his spirit
and most importantly,
his life will return to mine.

**Please contact the editors, Jerry
and Carol Webb, Box 71,
Cordova, Illinois 61242:**

- If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.
- If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, send us your new address.
- If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and address.
- If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter.
- If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.



MEMORIES LIGHT UP THE CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE



Pictures, candles, mementoes, stories, and fond memories lit up the Bethany Assembly of God Church on Tuesday, December 9, 2014, as the Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends gathered to remember, to laugh, and to cry as we shared our fondest memories of the children we have lost.

THE SIX NEEDS OF MOURNING

Need #4: Develop a new self-identity

Part of your self-identity was formed by the relationship you had with the person who died. You may have gone from being a “wife” to a “widow” or from a “parent” to a “bereaved parent.” The way you defined yourself and the way society defines you has changed. You need to re-anchor yourself, to reconstruct your self-identity. This is arduous and painful work. Many of us find that as we work on this need, we ultimately discover some positive changes, such as becoming more caring or less judgmental.

Exercise: Write out a response to this prompt. Keep writing as long as you want: I used to be _____. Now that _____ died, I am _____. This makes me feel _____.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Healing Your Grieving Heart



The Compassionate Friends

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Moline, Illinois 61265

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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.