



The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

April 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

March is an interesting month for us. We live in the Midwest, so March weather is changeable, warmth and sunshine one day, a few days later sleety rain, then a late winter dump of snow. Our daughter, Anna, died at the very end of March. Even though her death crushed our hope she would thrive and overcome the challenges of her severe health issues, I remember that particular March as being very hopeful. Anna was not in the hospital. We spent our days at home savoring time as a family. My aunt came for a visit. There was lots of laughter and cuddling and reading stories. I was filled with hope that month, and treasure those memories.

Many years have passed since we welcomed our new born daughter only to say goodbye a few months later. We are different people. We raised our boys, became empty nesters, welcomed grandchildren, retired. We have served for many years in various ministries. Our lives have been filled with much joy and we are grateful. Sometimes we still wonder how our life would have been different had our daughter lived. While new acquaintances see us as parents to two children, we will always be the parents of three. Just as our experiences raising our sons impacted who we are today, so has the joy and sorrow, hope and despair of loving and losing our daughter. Motivational speaker, author and teacher, Leo Buscaglia says it well. *"I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing our lives have been enriched by having shared their love."*

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



Reflections

I watch with wonderment as you go about your daily tasks. I see determination, the quiet confidence, and wonder if you were always like that or did your child's death touch you deep inside and soften your soul? Did your priorities change? Did your pace slow? Am I seeing the new you or the old? I see you laughing and talking with friends and wonder if you still cry when you're alone and remember your child with death memories too bitter to own? Or have you traveled to a higher plane, another phase beyond the tears and grief and fears and unfold sorrows that trap me in their maze? I don't know. I know only that I look to you and hold on tightly with hope in my heart that someday I, too, can gather strength and find my new start.

TCF, Montgomery, AL

There are no goodbyes for us.
Wherever you are, you will always
be in our hearts. Mahatma Gandhi

So often we think of grief as something that happens to us, instead of something we do. This is unfortunate, since passivity and inaction will not help us to engage the new reality of loss in our lives. This is not to say that grief is a "problem" we can solve, or a "condition" we can make go away, but it is to say that we can be active participants in our emotional well-being. By purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. And this is a powerful choice to make as a New Year and our new lives dawn.

Brad Stetson

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Seleni.org

Good memoirs are the perennials that bloom again after the hard winter of grief begins to yield to hope.

Sascha Wagner, TCF/Des Moines IA



Love Gifts

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

Thanks to:

Carol and Jerry Webb, in memory of their daughter, Anna.

Donations 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 donation or love gift, please send it or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Contact the Editors

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, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it...

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 or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email...

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or
email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



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.

Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at www.compassionatefriends.org. It is also available to read online without charge.



e-Newsletter Now

Available! An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

About The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, 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 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

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 that 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.

Peace

Today is the one-year anniversary of the day my son realized he could no longer live. I know this because he told us so in the writings he left behind. It is not the anniversary of his death.

What I remember of the day is that it was not unlike any other. There were no family fights or friend drama. There were no failed tests or poor academic projects.

It was just a day like today.

That week was just like any other as well. Tom attended high school and college classes, and we worked, going through our days just as we always do. But Tom found a way to spend special time with each of us before he left. He and L.J. spent Monday night playing music together. I tried to record it, but it was not

perfect, so I deleted the file that night.

Tuesday night he and I made



his favorite meal together, pasta with hot sausage red sauce. Then, we played a complicated Wii game which consisted of me pushing random buttons to fend off the bad guys while he worked his magic on the most powerful villains. We played for a few hours, until my hands hurt and I could not see straight from all of the blurred images on the television. He played the music he loved and told me which was his favorite song. I listened to it through his ears but cannot remember the song name. That night, he peeked his head in our room, and played with the light switch, turning it on and closing the

door behind him with a mischievous grin. He spent the next few days with his father, doing the things they loved to do together, including gaming with a great bunch of folks on Friday night. He spent Saturday and Sunday at our house, doing homework, playing on the computer, and listening to music.

That Sunday, as I cooked in the kitchen and talked casually with him, he wrote his final farewell to us. We had no idea of his pain, his plan, or our future.

In his note, he told us that past week had been the happiest he could remember because he was able to live during that time without fear and anxiety of the future. So, a part of me is at peace, if that's possible, because he was able to spend his final hours free from his demons. But how I wish, in that week, he had found the strength to fight through the darkness and tell us of his inner war. How I wish I had seen past his armored wall into his soul, so I could pull him through to the light of our love. I wish we could have shown him how many people appreciated him and were impacted by him, and how many would have stood by his side as he fought his undiagnosed illness so he could win his battle with a full army. I wish...

I miss him every hour of every day. I miss his humor, his intelligence, his presence, his thoughtfulness, and his soul. Someone recently responded on one of my posts that maybe Tom misses me, too. I hope he is beside me as I write and can feel the outpouring of whatever is stronger than love, that I have for him. I pray that through his death, he found the peace he could not find in life.

**Kimberly Starr, TCF Facebook
Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son, Tom**

How long?

How long does it take to put yourself back together? That's one of the questions in the early days of bereavement. There's no one answer that's always right. It's not $64 + 36 = 100$. It all depends: maybe the sun is shining, maybe a flower blooms, maybe something is funny and you laugh, maybe the storm ends with a rainbow. But there are also days when none of those cheering things happen.

Do you really have to be 100% every day? Be reasonable with yourself. You knew your child would stumble, now and then when he learned to walk. Figure that you have to do the same as you try to learn to walk without him.

Just take one step at a time. It will help you to walk through one hour at a time and one day at a time.

As the days go by, perhaps into the thousands, you'll realize you have some energy. Your life has some semblance of shape. Not the way it used to be but better than it has been. Some things seem to get done. This is surprising and pleasant.

Remember there will be down days when nothing goes right, nothing gets finished. If you do demand of yourself some daily success, a small list of mindless jobs for those days might be useful. Mine includes pulling weeds, washing floors or windows, polishing silver or copper pans. You probably have some good ideas to add. The point is to be reasonable. Set no goal. One weed pulled, one pot polished, that's an accomplishment.

You don't need to meet someone else's standards.

Joan Schmidt, TCF, Spotswood, NJ

When we bury the old, we bury the known past, the past we imagine sometimes better than it was, but the past all the same, a portion of which we inhabited. Memory is the overwhelming theme, the eventual comfort.

But burying infants, we bury the future, unwieldy and unknown, full of promise and possibilities, outcomes punctuated by our rosy hopes. The grief has no borders, no limits, no known ends, and the little infant graves that edge the corners and fencerows of every cemetery are never quite enough to contain that grief. Some sadnesses are permanent. Dead babies do not give us memories. They give us dreams.

Thomas Lynch from *The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade*

Getting Unstuck – Finding Hope Through Grief

Every day I drive by a quaint antique shop. It might be my imagination, but it appears to be the same charming furniture outside every single day. In the morning the antique treasures are carefully placed in the front yard, and every evening they are brought back inside. A few Coca-Cola chairs may have been added since the turn of the century, but otherwise, it seems the process is repeated every day.

The death of someone you care about deeply is one of life's most difficult challenges. It's easy to fall into a rut of doing the same things day after day, leaving you lonely and feeling stuck in the sorrow. If you're struggling to move forward, would you consider trying something different to help break through the intense sadness? Hopefully, one of these ideas will help:

- ♥ **Remember.** Memories of your loved one's life are treasured gifts to keep close in your heart. Take some time to record memorable stories and save photos in a notebook or journal. Remembering happier times is a beautiful way to honor the person you're missing, and allow some light into a painful season of life.
- ♥ **Get help.** People who have been where you are now can be a great source of hope and encouragement. It might take a few visits to know if a support group is a good fit for you, but don't give up. A caring group or maybe professional grief counseling will provide a safe place to process traumatic loss.
- ♥ **Find Hope.** Regardless of your religious beliefs, deep sorrow often draws us to seek spiritual help. In my darkest season of loss, I realized I was drowning in the sadness. When I finally called for help, a friend offered to pray when I couldn't find the words. Admitting your inability to cope and allowing someone to be strong for you can be a powerful turning point toward healing. Dr. Gloria Horsley, Executive Director of the Open to Hope Foundation puts it beautifully: "If you have lost hope, we invite you to lean on ours until you find your own," You don't have to go through grief alone.



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

**Our meeting is held in-person at 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois,
on the second floor. Masks and social distancing are required.**

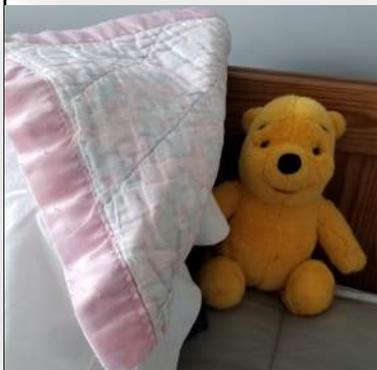
The next meeting of the chapter is on May 26, 2022.

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</p>	<p>Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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>Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org.</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 Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. via ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic and in "normal time" 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>Phone Support</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"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <p>Doug, Kay, Rosemary, and Judy 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>

Eight months later

Now, eight months later, I know the weight of five plates, not six. I recount the forks, numbly placing the extra one back in the drawer.

It continues to feel unfinished at bedtime. Prayers with the three boys, I love yous echoing in the hall and then the walk past her darkened room. Light from the street lamp shining on her white quilt. No reason to pull the shades, turn down the covers on the bed. Her stuffed animals stay in place, almost mesmerizing in their same location night after night.



I look at her clothes, rifle through her things, wishing something were out of place, unfamiliar, new again. But nothing changes. It all remains exactly as I leave it. Her blanket moves only because I like to put it on her bed, now on her chair, now thrown on the table by her bed.

The laundry is quicker too. The loads are uneven, smaller, and I do them anyway, damning God for my sudden inefficiencies. I look for the cherry blossom nightgown, the pink-toed socks, her little shirt with the Princess Kitty.

She felt sick at school. When she came home that last day, I dressed her in gray sweat pants, hoping the softness would make her overlook their color. Oddly, she didn't mind. She wore a red polo shirt and those pink-toed socks. She pulled her blue and pink teddy bear blanket up to her neck, snuggled in its softness, sucked on her well-calloused thumb, curled her index finger around her small nose.

Her eyes were wide when I checked on her. I closed them softly with my hand and told her to sleep, she would feel better.

The boys brought home their school photographs today. Almost a year older, their baby tender eyes and skin giving way to harsher boyish maturity. New shirts and new smiles and thinner faces. New friends and teachers.

She looks back at me forever with her impish smile, caught between laughter and a reserved look. Red hooded sweater lined with pale pastel flowers. An actual twinkle in her bright blue eyes. One month older than six years. Always.

The boys are used to my stained face, no longer embarrassed when they see an errant tear slip down. I don't try to hide them anymore. I'm not looking for hope or salvation. I would like only to see a new picture she drew, a photo I overlooked, a secret note she hid and I have yet to unearth, a well-loved toy forgotten by me.

—Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser
October 2005

The Gifts You've Given Me

I left the need to know Why behind years ago.
Instead,

I practice finding peace with the inner turmoil,
accepting the unacceptable,
living my truth.

You have given me the gift of uncertainty
and thus, taught me to live in the Now.

The fingers of your loss have quietly
shaped me,
molding away the sharp edges,
my judgment of others,
my innocence.

You have given me the gift of Humility.

You were a child,
my child.

Now you parent.

Invisibly, quietly, from behind the veil,
you show me the meaning of Life.

You have given me the gift of Awareness.

I am not the same.

In losing you,

I found my strength, my sorrow,
my compassion, my Self.

You have given me the gift of Suffering.

These tears carry knowledge
that through suffering came Understanding,
and through understanding came Forgiveness,
and through forgiveness came Love.

You fluttered in my womb like a butterfly,
and now you flutter in my soul,
eternally a part of me.

Eternally giving.



Sara Therese – TCF Tucson, AZ

“Jesus wept.” John 11:35

Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. So technically speaking, He knew there was no reason for Lazarus’ loved ones to mourn. He knew that in a matter of minutes, their tears would turn to joy. So Jesus would have been excused for rolling



His eyes and shaking His head over the people’s reaction to something so ... temporary.

Yet Jesus didn’t give Lazarus’ mourners the side-eye. He didn’t try to talk them out of their grief. He didn’t chide them for their lack of faith. Jesus saw people who were hurting, and it made Him hurt, too. He empathized so strongly with those who were mourning that He wept.

Recipe of Grief

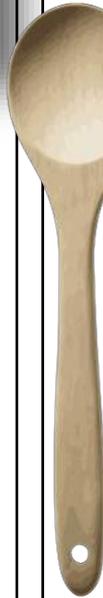
- 1 Cup of overwhelming sadness
- 2 Cups of dark brown sorrow
- 3 Cups of heavy hopelessness

Mix all the ingredients in a blender
Made of mixed emotions.

Pour all of the above into a huge
Jagged glass syringe.

Shoot mixture straight into an
Ordinary healthy heart

Recipe to Heal Grief



1 Cup of overwhelming
forgiveness for God and
yourself.

2 Cups of sorrow, loss and
sadness.

3 Cups of support from
friends, relatives, or support
groups.

4 Cups of time to yourself to
recover and know someday
it will be possible.

Slowly stir all ingredients
while adding all your favorite
MEMORIES and bake on low until
your heart beats strongly again.

Nancy Pearson, TCF/Quad Cities



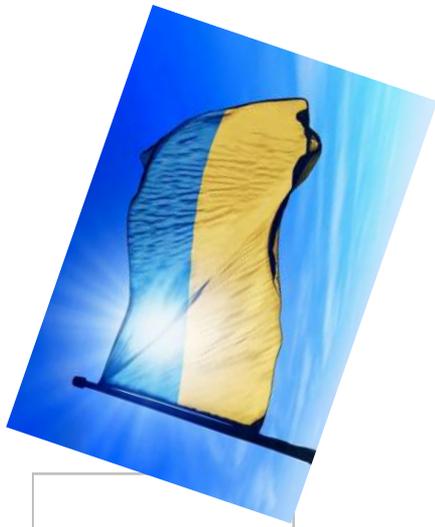
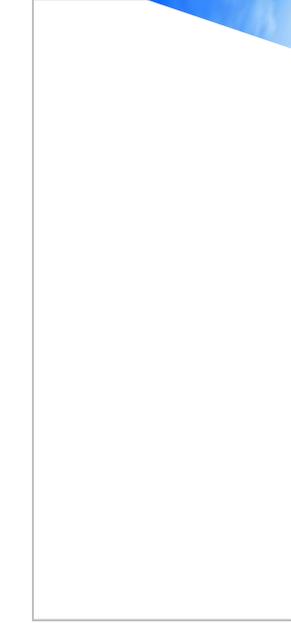
The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.