



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 10

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Forty years ago, two days after Thanksgiving, our second child and only daughter was born. She lived only four months, succumbing to the impact of multiple birth defects. When she was born, our hearts soared with joy. We fought diligently for her life, treasuring each small accomplishment, believing, with constant hope, she would persevere, in spite of the many difficulties she faced. When she died, our hearts were broken.

In her book, *A Good and Perfect Gift*, Amy Julia Becker says, "All life is fragile and uncertain with potential for heartbreak and potential for great delight." When we become parents there are no guarantees. Our child's life is a precious gift, but with the advent of every child is the reality we do not know what challenges will face them or us. Yet the joy each child brings is immeasurable. Each life precious, no matter how long they live. Each of our children becomes part of who we are regardless of how we are able to parent them. And while Anna's death brought a degree of heartbreak we could not imagine, we give thanks for the great delight of knowing her, even for so brief a time.



Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Some Holiday Stress Relievers:

1. There is not enough time for everything. Ask yourself, "What am I willing to give up?" and then, let them go.
2. Practice saying "No" to the things you do not want to do. Here are versions of the same message: "No thanks." "I just can't." "I won't be doing it this year." "Sorry." Remember, when you say, "No," you don't have to give reasons.
3. Plan ahead. Make yourself sit down and write out your "things to do" list. Then go through it and, as mentioned in number one, ask yourself, "What can I omit?" Also, arrange your list in priority fashion to put the most important things at the top of the list.
4. If you must purchase gifts, ask yourself, "How can I do this with the least amount of stress?" For example, consider using the Internet, having someone else pick up the gifts, consider giving money or gift cards as gifts, or have a family lottery where each person picks a name from a hat and buys only that person a gift. Try one of these ideas this year as an experiment just to see how it works.
5. Start early. Pick a date to get done many of your obligations now. Don't put it off. Remember how crazy last minute stuff can be. You don't need any more craziness in your life.
6. Do not rely on your memory to keep track of things to do in your life. Presume you will forget things and write everything down.
7. Ask yourself, "How can I work smarter, not harder?"
8. And finally ask yourself, "In what ways do I wish to keep things the same and how do I want to change things?"

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.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to our bereaved families, for the materials shared at our meetings, and/or to purchase books for our library. Thank you to the many families who provide love gifts so 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, IA 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**

● Become a patron

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.

Love Never Goes Away

“Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren’t so crushing.” Sound familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouches” can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have. So...we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can’t live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those



are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable... some day. TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don’t have that measure anymore. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, and to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don’t measure your progress against anyone else’s. Be your own timekeeper.

Don’t push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and their moments...but don’t expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don’t get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost – try thinking the good memories come

over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn’t lose our child...HE/SHE DIED. We didn’t lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn’t love so very much it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I’m very, very glad I loved.

Don’t let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

Darcie Sims

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 Website:

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.

Heart Connection — Daily Actions to Support Grief

Grief is felt and experienced differently depending on the time frame since the death of your child, sibling, or grandchild. It's common to feel overwhelmed and hopeless at any time, but especially when the loss is more recent. When those painful waves hit, you can take small steps to better support those moments. Some of the immediate things that help shift your feelings include moving your body, adjusting your environment, being in nature, and connecting with someone.

Taking a walk or practicing yoga moves your body in a way that aids the physical effects of grief. The combination of moving your physical body and changing your breathing affects your thinking and can gently shift current painful thoughts. Spending moments in nature similarly shifts your energy. Taking 20 minutes to tend a garden, water shrubs or flowers, or feel snowflakes fall on your face in the winter, helps to soothe you when you're feeling significant distress. Then it's easier to move forward with your day.

If a pet or animal is part of your life, spending some calm moments



with them can comfort you when you're in pain. Hugging a dog or cat, touching their soft fur, listening to their heartbeat and soft breathing, and sharing gentle space with them has a calming effect. These small actions quiet your nervous system in ways that human interaction sometimes may not. Taking a few minutes to play with a pet also shifts your distress and can bring a needed smile.

Reaching out to talk with a comforting and supportive loved one when feeling low reinforces your human connectedness. You don't need to seek answers or have deep conversations. Hearing the life and vitality in someone else's voice helps as a surrogate for the life energy you may be struggling to feel. Feeling the warm voice of a friend or enjoying the belly laugh of a toddler can help lift you in that moment.

The grief and sorrow you feel are directly related to the deep and profound love you have for your child, brother, sister, or grandchild who has died. While you can't erase those moments of sorrow, small actions can nudge you forward when you can't find your way. You can give yourself these small steps of care at any time and ask for help from those you love to remind you to practice these whenever they are needed.

Sheri O'Loughlin

Grieving Over Christmas

If you are feeling worried about the Christmas period, it can be helpful to think about what your plans are for the weeks ahead and who you'd like to spend time with.

You shouldn't feel pressured to have Christmas as usual if it doesn't feel right, although celebrating as you normally would might be a comfort to you.

This will be different for each person after a bereavement, so plan for a Christmas you feel comfortable with and give yourself permission to do what you want to do.

If you are finding things difficult, you have the right to step away from the usual traditions and rituals until you feel ready to pick them up again.

Remember that all emotions, whether they are ones of sadness, joy, or any other, take up energy. You might not know how you'll be feeling from one day to the next, so be kind to yourself and try not to "over do" things. Take a break and, if you've got a hectic couple of days ahead of you, schedule in some quiet time—whether that's going for a walk if you need to, setting aside a few minutes to yourself with a cup of tea, or spending some time writing in a journal.

Don't feel guilty about the things you think you "should" be doing, and know that it's okay to not be okay. Christmas can be a difficult time for anyone grieving and it can be tricky to escape with festive songs playing in every shop, cards coming in the post, and reruns of old favourites on TV.

Tears are an important and, for some, a necessary part of grief. As much as you may fear that you won't stop crying once you start—you will, and you may even feel a little better for doing so.

Once you've had a think about how you want to approach the holiday season, you may find it helpful to be open with those close to you.

Having conversations with friends and family about how you feel and what your plans are can help everyone support you in ways which are sensitive to your grief.

For many people, Christmas comes hand-in-hand with a number of traditions that can be linked to memories of the person you are grieving. This can leave you feeling upset, especially when you aren't able to do these traditions in the same way.

To help you get through this difficult time, consider the traditions and what they mean for you and those around you.

Maybe you want to keep to them, but don't be afraid to change old ones or create new ones. Starting a new tradition may also help the children in your family, particularly if they're struggling too. It can be difficult for them to know how to act when the people they love are grieving, but finding new ways to remember the person you're missing during this time can bring you together as a family. Examples of this include:

- Buying or making your own Christmas ornament or bauble to

remember those who have died. If a photograph feels too much, then perhaps use a ribbon of their favorite color or a sentimental object.

- Bringing out the person's stocking, or make one for them, so that you, your friends, and family can fill it with cards, messages or letters. You can decide as a family whether you then would like to share these out loud or keep them private.
- Having a small Christmas tree or memory wreath set up somewhere within your home in honor of the person who has gone. You could decorate this tree or wreath with their favorite colors, photographs, or any meaningful objects or messages.
- Making a paper chain with a message or memory of the person you're grieving for written on to each "link."
- Buying a big candle in honor of them and lighting it for periods of reflection and remembrance.
- Making an object or cash donation to a charity you know the person you are grieving would have supported in their honor.
- Setting a place at the dinner table for the person who is not there or making a toast to them at the Christmas meal.
- Decorating their headstone or plaque on Christmas Day.
- Representing the person who has died through an object or symbol in your annual family Christmas photograph, if that's something you do.
- The festive period might be one of the first milestones you have to face after your bereavement. Or it might come after a year of many firsts already.

Either way, it can often bring about unpredictable feelings as you try to navigate through old memories and a new future for the first time.

- It's important to try not to put too much pressure on yourself and those around you, particularly since how you're feeling might change from day-to-day. And while the advice we've already shared might help you to consider what approach you might want to take when it comes to marking the festive period, you might also not know what feels right for you yet.

Remember that that's okay. You're still processing and understanding your grief, and going through your first Christmas or holiday after a bereavement can bring up a whole range of emotions. Try to take each day as they come, and don't be afraid to put yourself first this year.

SueRyder.org



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting December 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. at the Angel of Hope Memorial (see page 11)

January 25, 2024 at 6:30 pm is the first chapter meeting
of the new year.

Bethany for Children & Families
1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois, Second floor

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	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.
Rick's House of Hope	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 852 Middle Road (Vera French), in Bettendorf, Iowa, 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 .
SHARE	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. 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 .
Phone Support	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): <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 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. 8

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	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.
TCF's Grief Related Resources	There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/ .
TCF National Magazine	<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.
Grief Materials	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.
Amazon.com	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.
Previous Newsletter Editions	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.
Alive Alone	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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
Our Newsletter	Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai at climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Some Days Are Like This

Some days are like this;
Loss shows up and takes over.
It snares and envelops my soul,
A leaden net draping over me, heavy and relentless.
Every part of my body pulled down, every limb, every digit, every organ
Dulled
Slow to move
Immobilized.
With heavy arms, and still body I feel the pull of loss
Quietly I sit, not sure if I own it, or if it owns me
My racing pace of circling thoughts winds down
Gradually spinning slower and slower
Time stretches out, almost to a stop.

Why is loss such an oppressor, squeezing breath and life away?
Why does this oppressor possess me when I know only too well how precious
life's spark is
And how limited my time is to have it?
Of course, there are other days, too, when loss has melted away
And the leaden net has lifted just magically, or so it seems.
On those days my feet walk lightly
And laughter comes easily.

Today is Christmas
So we gather with our loved ones, embracing, each other
Maybe warmly, maybe tentatively.
Yet each embrace is shadowed by who is missing
And what has been lost
And all that we miss.

The shadows never leave us
Such loss cannot be outrun or outwitted
It only can be held and felt, merged and submerged in a deep pool of wisdom
And so we gather, we hold, we wonder, we ache.
Some days are like this.

Charles Eadie, in memory of his son, Austin

ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE

Wednesday,
December 6, 2023
7:00 p.m.

The service will be held
at the mortuary
(south of the Angel of Hope) in
Moline Memorial
Park Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue,
Moline, Illinois



The doors open at 6:00 p.m.,
and the ceremony will begin at
7:00 p.m.

There will be coffee, hot cocoa, and cookies served
before and after the ceremony.



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



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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.