



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Our daughter, Anna, died when she was four months old. Today she would be 39. That is rather mind boggling. Recently we met a couple grieving the loss of their adult son who died two years ago. A question that has often plagued me and perhaps others who have experienced the loss of an infant or younger child – Is the grief more intense, more difficult, more challenging to navigate depending on the age of the child who has died? Is our loss less significant because our child was so young or perhaps never drew breath? These are some thoughts from other grieving parents.

“Would it be easier to lose an arm or a leg? Either loss would require pain and the need to find a new way to navigate through life. Eventually you might adjust to the loss, but you would never be able to forget what is missing. I sometimes think that we bereaved mothers try to cope by thinking of ways to help things be tolerable. I lost an 18 year-old and have always been happy that my loss was shared by so many other—her friends and siblings still remember her 21 years later. I find comfort that she touched so many. A mother who loses an infant has to carry so much the loss by herself. But she might say it would be harder to lose an older child who she knew. But for both, the loss and pain are always there. If you had the child for one day or 50 years, it hurts like hell every time the birthday and anniversary date rolls around.” Peggy Clover

“Pain is pain. It doesn't matter which is easier or which is more difficult. Relationships were not meant to be broken. When they are, it will hurt. It doesn't matter if the person is an unborn child you never met or an adult child you spent years in relationship with....your heart will ache.” Jamie DJ Shephard

“There are so many differences amongst the similarities, but what binds them all is that the loss of your offspring is a cruel amputation of a living part of yourself - and never, never forgotten.” Sue Young

This quote from the Cancer.net article, “Grieving the Loss of a Child,” on page 11 in this month's newsletter, summarizes the answer well. “No parent is prepared for a child's death. Parents are simply not supposed to outlive their children. It is important to remember that how long your child lived does not determine the size of your loss. The loss of a child is profound at every age.”

Not worse; not better; just different.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



In this new year, I promise to keep your memory alive by speaking your name, telling your story, loving you.
from the TCF Providence RI Newsletter

The moments when each of my children were born were the happiest moments of my life. But by becoming a mother I also made myself vulnerable to a lot of pain – the pain I'd feel when other people would hurt my children and the pain I'd feel if I were to lose them.
Gwen Ford Falkenberry

When Grief Is New — Reminders: Try not to imagine the future, take one day at a time. Allow time to cry, both with loved ones and alone. Don't shut others out from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may grow closer for it. Be realistic with expectations for yourself, family, and friends. When a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't get discouraged because it doesn't last. Take care of yourself, rest even if you don't sleep. Help your body to heal as well as your mind. Share your feelings with others at TCF meetings and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell, a very healthy sign.
Mary E., TCF Valley Forge, PA

Real empathy is sometimes not insisting it will be OK, but acknowledging that it is not.
Sheryl Sandbe

When a child dies, part of a parent dies. That is a fact. We are just beginning to learn all of the facts concerning grief, the effects of grief and the reality of how grief changes the very physical and emotional make-up of parents. Those who say to parents of child loss that they should have closure and move on simply do not understand the facts of what happens to a parent physically and emotionally when a child dies. There are very real changes that take place. The pain of loss is real. Yes, parents will eventually learn how to live with the pain of loss, but there will always and forever be a part of a parent that is missing. Parents of child loss are courageous beyond words. They are living with part of their heart and soul missing, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to compare to this kind of pain. God bless every parent of child loss this day with the continued courage and strength needed to go on.
Clara Hinton (2016)

The Child That's Not There

The child that's not there
Takes up every piece of me.
The child that's not there
Consumes my every thought.
The child that's not there
Makes me feel like I failed.
The child that's not there
Took away a main reason for
being.

But the children that are there
Still somehow bring me joy.
The children that are there
Still need my love.
The children that are there
Don't need any more grief.
The children that are there
Force me to go on.

Tricia Palmer TCF, Tidewater VA
In memory of her son, Gabriel Boyer

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: Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, in memory of their niece, Beth, and their daughter, Maggie, on their shared birthday month.

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



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.



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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.

A New Year's Resolution for Grievors

I resolve to take you with me into the new year and then every day after that.

I'll hold onto memories of you, each a separate thread connected to our life together. I'll jumble them up into a ball, so I'm not constantly getting tangled in the past. But I'll make sure I can still pull out a single string whenever I want to remember.



I resolve to talk to other people about you. I'll tell someone who never knew you about the type of person you were. I'll ask those who knew you to share their stories with me.

I'll sing the songs you used to sing. I'll watch the movies you loved. I'll say the phrases you used to say, and after I'll tell someone standing nearby, *"My child always used to say that."*

I'll imagine what you'd be like if you were still alive today. What would you say to me if we could talk about kids, relationships, religion, and politics? I'll wonder if I would agree with your opinion, but when it comes time to make an important decision, I'll always take the advice I imagine you'd give.

I will play both parts of our relationship because you cannot speak for yourself, and I'll accept this one-sided, unrequited love because it's all there is. I will be happy with what I have left of you but feel sad for what I've lost. And this grief loop will play on repeat forever, and I will be okay with that.

I resolve to do these things this year, just as I've done every year since you died. And I won't apologize or feel foolish for doing any of it because there is no right or wrong way to love someone who's died.

And I love you still.

Eleanor Haley
(whatsyourgrief.com)

SNOWFLAKES

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings.



These patterns change again and again—even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike.

Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed



our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always.

At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

Denise Falzone

With Hope

This is not at all how we thought it was supposed to be.

We had so many plans for you. We had so many dreams.

And now you've gone away and left us with the memories of your smile.

And nothing we can say and nothing we can do can take away the pain, the pain of losing you.

But...

We can cry with hope. We can say goodbye with hope.

Because we know our goodbye is not the end, oh no.

And we can grieve with hope, because we believe with hope

There's a place by God's grace.

There's a place where we'll see your face again. We'll see your face again.

And never have I known anything so hard to understand.

And never have I questioned more the wisdom of God's plan.

But through the cloud of tears, I see the Father's smile and say well done.

And I imagine you where you wanted most to be – seeing all your dreams come true, because now

you're home. And now you're free, and...

We have this hope as an anchor, because we believe that everything

God promised us is true, so...

We wait with hope. And we ache with hope. We hold on with hope.

We let go with hope.

Steven Curtiss Chapman
(Listen on youtube.com)

Thoughts from a Parent Who Lost an Older Child

Perhaps I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me, even if your memories are memories of only one or two days. Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine. In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the "acceptable" diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are placed in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with the help of four treatment centers, the recovery was not to be. One day at a time, my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two- and one-half years, has gone to a place where it can be tolerated.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same: my child has gone to a place where I cannot go, and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one-day-at-a-time, enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin,
TCF/Orange Park,
Jacksonville, FL

For the New Year, Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

- Let's not try to imagine the future – take one day at a time.
- Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
- Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
- Try to be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be perfect understanding?
- When a good day comes, relish it – don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged when it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.
- Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-reducing type multiple vitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
- Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends (or other groups you may choose) and let them share with you.

When you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell – a very healthy sign. I know following these suggestions won't be easy. But it's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Mary Ehmann,
TCF/Valley Forge, PA

How Do We Face Another Calendar Turn Without Them?

It's a dilemma for those grieving. No matter how much we resist, the holidays come and go; no matter how much we protest, the new year arrives. Time marches on. I can offer you this small prayer, spoken in humility and from a deep



place of knowing: I wish for you to be loved unconditionally through grief's loneliest moments, when you go into his room and lay on his bed, when you find a strand of her hair in an old brush, when you simply, purely miss him with every part of your being or when you find yourself listening for the tiny whisper of her voice. I wish you strength to allow weakness, to reach out for the hand of another when you are vulnerable. When the magnitude of the implacable loss has you in its grip, I wish for you the tenderest of grief's touches born of inimitable love. And in your darkest days, I wish for the kindness of others who will join you there, meet you in your pain, and remember with you.

Dr. Jo Cacciatore

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, January 27, 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 February 24, 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. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. 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 pm 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, shoeartb4@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>

THE NEW YEAR: A TIME OF HOPE

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents, a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.



Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months, and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years, or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son – December 29, 2020

Permission to Grieve

Give yourself permission to hurt and ask others to understand. It will be much better for all of you, if you keep from being too brave, too polite. That makes others feel more helpless, more distant from you, perhaps even a bit rejected. If you can, talk very briefly to your immediate family, especially to your partner, and ask for patience, promising yours in return. Because we all react differently to great emotional strain, this can be a time of temporary estrangements in your family – this is also the time to remember all the reasons why you loved each other in the first place. Don't worry about feeling "nothing." Your mind has been dealt a terrible blow, and your old feelings will need time to return. Do let others give you evidence of their devotion, concern, warmth, attention, empathy – after all, these are the

finest gifts we can give to each other. And believe me, honesty in sharing your feelings is a gift from you to them, showing your friends and your helpers that you trust them, that they are important, and that they are appreciated.



Alexandra Sascha Wagner

THIS IS ANOTHER YEAR JUST BEGINNING

This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, this is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page. Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small one at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort, and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures, and our pain. We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others. Whenever that “New Year” begins for you, I celebrate with you that marvelous accomplishment and wish you great peace, courage, and comfort HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Alice Weening, TCF/Cincinnati, OH

Bittersweet Memories One of the most precious things to a parent who has lost a child is the memories. Without them, it would be as if their child never was. With them, it is so bittersweet that it can make a parent laugh and cry, rejoice and anguish, touch the sweetness to the lips and taste the salt from the tears. Memories keep the heart from crushing under the weight of sorrow. They give a parent the chance to be with their child again. They can walk through their memories like they were a movie. When the memories are so vivid, you can almost feel them, touch them, hug them, and kiss them. It is so bittersweet when the reality comes and you realize it is just a memory, a thought, and you are reminded of what you have lost. If you asked a parent if they would give up the memories so they did not have to feel the pain of knowing their child is gone, they would tell you no. As painful as it may be, not having the memories or feeling their presence, is just as unbearable as losing them. There is no happy place to go to, but there is a place to be with your child. You know before you step into that realm that it will be painful, but you know that it will be joyful too. So as we let the memories take us to a time that our child was safe with us, just rest a while until it is time to go, and the next time, try not to think of what is gone but what is still in your heart and will always be.

Vickie Van Antwerp TCF/Brevard, NC

Grieving the Loss of a Child

No parent is prepared for a child's death. Parents are simply not supposed to outlive their children. It is important to remember that how long your child lived does not determine the size of your loss. The loss of a child is profound at every age.

Parents of young children are intimately involved in their daily lives.

Death changes every aspect of family life, often leaving an enormous emptiness.

The death of an older child or adolescent is difficult because children at this age are beginning to reach their potential and become independent individuals.

When an adult child dies, you lose not only a child but often a close friend, a link to grandchildren, and an irreplaceable source of emotional and practical support.

You may find that you also grieve for the hopes and dreams you had for your child, the potential that will never be realized, and the experiences you will never share. If you lost your only child, you may also feel that you have lost your identity as a parent and perhaps the possibility of grandchildren. The pain of these losses will always be a part of you. Yet with time, most parents find a way forward and begin to experience happiness and meaning in life once again.

Cancer.net. 2019



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.

You are not alone in your grief.