



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March 2024

Volume XXXVII, Number 3

Dear Compassionate Friends,

And when we have remembered everything,

We grow afraid of what we may forget.

A face, a voice, a smile?

A birthday? Anniversary?

No need to fear forgetting,

Because the heart remembers always.

-Sascha Wagner

March 2024 marks 40 years since our infant daughter died, leaving our house quiet and our hearts broken. So much life has happened since then, more pregnancies, another child, jobs, ministry, a daughter-in-law, grandchildren, moving to a new state, saying good-bye one-by-one to grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, friends. The people who actually knew our daughter and held her in their arms has grown very small. Her life is recorded in family pictures, birth samplers on our bedroom wall, and a bronze marker in a cemetery in Iowa. Her legacy lives on as we minister to married couples in Marriage Encounter, write this newsletter, and reach out to other grievers who cross our path. Our couple relationship has been shaped, in part, by the lessons we learned as we grieved and we grew. When we are gone her reality will fade away and eventually her memory will just be a name in the family genealogy along with ours. But for now, our hearts remember Always.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

What we once enjoyed
and deeply loved, we
can never lose, for all
that we love deeply
becomes part of us.

-Helen Keller



BUT IT HURTS ... DIFFERENTLY ...

There is no way to predict how you will feel. The reactions of grief are not like recipes with given ingredients and certain results. Each person mourns in a different way. You may cry hysterically or you may remain outwardly controlled, showing little emotion. You may lash out in anger against your family and friends, or you may express your gratitude for their concern and dedication. You may be calm one moment – in turmoil the next. Reactions are varied and contradictory. Grief is universal. At the same time, it is extremely personal. Heal in your own way.

-Earl A. Grollman

Living When Loved One Has Died

There is always a part of me
that grieves all and whom I
have lost.

And it's that grief that enhances
beauty within all I still stand and
live for, still while I am alive.

Today I went for a walk with my
family and for a moment of
reflection, I realized why sadness
can be so beautiful.

Because one day beautiful
memories are what keep sadness
company long after the sun goes
down.

From Central Iowa
TCF Newsletter

I do not ask that you
forget your dear
departed. I want you
to remember. I only
ask that you
remember more than
the moment of death,
more than the
funeral, more than
the house of
mourning, remember
life. Remember the
whole life, not the
final page of it.

-Rabbi Maruice Davis

Unconditional Love

What about parents of troubled children? At one of our meetings, we discussed a subject that is not new. "Why did my child have to die? He was so good. I'm a good parent, a good person. There are so many 'bad' kids out there whose parents probably wouldn't care. Why couldn't it have been one of them?" Let's look at these thoughts from a different perspective. Perhaps your child was especially good or gifted. However, it is quite common, in our grief, to remember only the good things, sometimes even putting the child on a pedestal.

In the beginning, there is nothing wrong with that. We need all the comfort we can find. But it is wise for us to remember some of the trying times which humanize our dead children yet do not diminish our love for them one bit.

What about the parents of a troubled child? Do they really hurt less or care less? I think not. It is the nature of a parent to nurture, to care for, and to love their offspring. To love them more than life itself.

The parent of a troubled child might have a harder time adjusting to their loss. Their parenting job may have been very difficult and heart breaking. Their list of "if onlys" may be longer. What are their memories? The immediate may be very sad and painful. They may have to dig deeper into the past to remember the good times. For those parents, the desire to go back in time may be very intense.

Guilt may also be more intense. We all made mistakes, wrong decisions; we are not perfect. Why do we expect it of ourselves? We are human beings, subject to all the human frailties. So, if some children go through rebellious times, it does not make them bad kids or their parents bad, either. Learn to forgive yourself for being human!

We tend to forget our children's lives are influenced by many things outside the family. Peer influence and pressure is tremendous. Once children enter school, it becomes more difficult to "control" and influence them. They are pulled from all directions. Yet parents assume responsibility for all of the problems.

I hope parents who have gone through troubling times with a child who has died will realize no harm is meant by bereaved parents expressing thoughts such as those cited earlier. There is not one bereaved parent who would wish this pain on anyone else. Although we hear those words spoken, we are really hearing the sounds of pain and anguish. Another form of that old question, "Why?"

No matter how your child lived, and no matter how he died, our hearts go out to all parents who are suffering. The bottom line is, we love our children no matter what. That is what unconditional love is all about.

-Mary Ehmann
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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.

Prologue

Cut off in mid-sentence, your life remains
A mere prologue, this...
A book of blank pages where
There should have been adventures.
I pick up your life's open volume
And wonder what might have been written.
Would your story have been straight and true
Or bent before the challenges you faced?
Would the promises of your prologue have been fulfilled
Or disappointment been your course?
Never to know the progress of your tale,
I am suspended in doubt.
Must you remain forever a prologue
Or could I write the script,
And through my life state your meaning?
Yes, I will present your messages,
Love, devotion, joy, and knowledge:
These truths will speak through my pages,
Making your prologue – forever mine.

-Marcia F. Alig, TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

Carry On

We reach within and find resources to carry on when things are roughest.
The most devastating of life's experiences often bring out our best qualities.
When things get better, we look back and wonder how we ever did it.
But we did and it proves we have a great strength within us.
Courage that has never been tested before surfaces and sustains us when it is really needed.
Let us be persistent and keep that courage and strength working now that we have discovered it.
Let its light shine so that others in their dark hours may see it and think, "If they can do it, I can too."
Shine your lights on the paths of your fellow sufferers.
We have shared our suffering, now let us share our joys.
Make your life, your struggles, count!

-Fay Harden, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

TENSES

The past tense does not suit her.
We speak of her in the tense of current time.
She dwells in the present.
She is beautiful.
She is smiling.
She is loved.
She is of action,
Is of the moment,
Is of living now, and here.
The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But we cannot speak of her in only now.
She wears the future well.
She will always be beautiful.
She will ever be smiling.
She will never be without love.
She will live her life to its fullest,
Because she will always know
That she cannot know what the future holds.
The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But now we have no choice in diction.
She is held out of now forever, without consent.
She was beautiful.
She was always smiling.
She was loved.
She has lost all her possibilities
Of present or future, but
The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But we cannot lose her in "would be" and "was."
She must be kept in "is" and "will."
She is beautiful.
She is smiling.
She is loved,
If only in memories.
She will always be beautiful,
She will always be smiling,
She will always be loved,
As long as those memories
Do not fade into the past.
The past tense does not suit her.



-Whitney Reynold

The Courage to Move On

The first time I picked up knitting needles was on a beautiful October morning in 2002, six months after my 5-year-old daughter, Grace, died from a virulent form of strep. Learning to knit wasn't just a way to distract me during the long months of grieving. It also was an attempt to redefine myself. Once Grace was born, I



became the mother of a little girl. That meant I combed her fine blonde hair and taught her the ABCs; that we lay together on the sofa, singing along to her favorite movie, *Oliver!* I had a vision of a future in which Grace grew up and my role changed: I would shop with her for lipstick, teach her to ride waves in the ocean and share my favorite books with her. Once, when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, Grace said, "I want to write books like my mommy, except I'll write mine in nail polish."

When your child dies, that imagined future dies too. Unable to grasp what had happened, I could no longer make sense of words. I couldn't read. I couldn't write. I needed to find something new. Yes, for distraction, for meditation, but also to put me on a path that was not all wrapped up in the person I had been. I needed something without Grace's fingerprints on it.

This is the part of grief that I did not yet know. Like most of us, I knew the common things; how hard each birthday and anniversary would be; how my husband Lorne and I might not sleep or eat very much; how we should try to talk about our pain. Grief brings an emptiness

with it, like someone punched a hole in you. My arms and my lap ached from the emptiness Grace had left behind.

After the death of someone we love, we are forced to figure out who we are now. It is difficult to reach the point where you realize that moving forward doesn't mean leaving behind the person you've lost. I remember how upset I became when we had to buy a new car shortly after Grace died. A part of me wanted to keep everything exactly as it had been. I even resisted painting the living room. Each small change seemed to make our daughter disappear a little more.

Then, that same October when I learned to knit, my husband began redoing the cracked asphalt sidewalk in front of our house. Every weekend, as the leaves changed from green to gold and then began to fall, he dug and measured, and planned an intricate herringbone pattern. When the sidewalk was finished, he began work on the driveway, removing the sharp gravel and replacing it with cobblestones. By the following fall, Lorne had relined our small city yard with beach stones and circular patterns of cobblestone and brick. By the garden, he laid the stones in a heart shape for Grace.

This physical labor distracted him. It helped the long weekends to pass and he found a new passion. Our yard, our driveway, our front walk – all of it had changed. And it was beautiful. One warm spring evening, I looked around our exquisite yard. When we moved to this house, Grace had dubbed it "our happy house." That night I smiled – remembering and believing that, even with changes, it was indeed still our happy house.

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Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

March 28, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois (second floor)

The next chapter meeting is on April 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the Snyder and Hallenbaugh Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa, Chapter. The contact person is Tom Summit, 563.506.0103.
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages three to 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 p.m. and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 p.m. 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@verafranchmhc.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): ♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoearthb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, 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.

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.

Grief is Unique

People in families can grieve quite differently. Maybe a mother needs to cry a lot, but a father needs to work out. Sometimes a younger sister may keep playing as if she doesn't know a person died. An older brother may want to spend all his time with friends, but the middle brother may want to stay around his house and family. Even twins can be really opposite in their feelings: one twin might be so mad he wants to fight and fight, the other might try to do everything perfectly to make his family feel better.

George usually feels like talking on Sunday, but nobody else in his house seems ready to talk. Someone in the family wants to have lots of pictures of the baby around, but another family member doesn't want to see them. Grandma can't bear to hear Daddy's name, but the kids love to hear stories about him. Sue, who is 12, feels better when she can visit the grave, but her other sisters never want to go. John wishes they could do fun stuff again, but his mom doesn't want to do anything.

Maybe there are differences in your family, too. It's hard when people feel differently about the same thing. It would be lots easier if everyone felt exactly the same at the same time, but people are unique in their feelings and in their grief. If your family has different needs and wants, you'll have to figure out some compromises that will be okay for everyone. Try making a list of things you like to do and things

you don't like to do. If everyone makes a list and reads it to each other, you can figure out if there are changes you can make to try to help each other. At least it will help you understand why the people in your family act or say the things they do. It's not easy, but this is a time when lots of patience is needed. Be easy on yourself and be easy on each other.

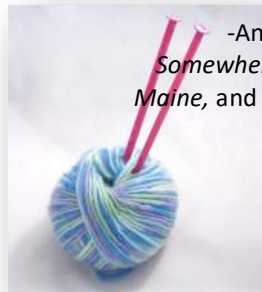
-Barb Coe

Fernside Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

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How to move on. Part of the work of grieving is to channel our emotions and energy into activities that help us redefine ourselves. Some people turn to creative pursuits. For me, it was knitting. The soft clicking of the needles helped me to relax. Some people reach out and help others by volunteering. And some, recognizing that life is precious and short, fulfill their dreams. To help yourself heal, do what moves you. Or do what matters. Adopt a cat. Visit Spain. Ride a bike. Help the homeless. Be a mentor. And in each new activity, remember the loved one who brought you there. Then, take those first tentative steps into the rest of your life.

-Ann Hood, author of
*Somewhere Off the Coast of
Maine*, and *The Knitting Circle*



Reflections on a Grave Seldom Visited

Rose granite –
Etched with the words, “beloved son”
And two dates –
Which show the world
Here was a life but short-lived.
It guards the discarded wrappings
Of a most precious gift.
But the essence of what was our son
Is not there. He remains with us.
He exists in the echo of yesterday’s laughter
And the certainty of tomorrow’s devotion.
He lingers in the half-forgotten fragments
Of elusive dreams,
And hides in the crevices of memory.
We see him – suddenly, briefly in the gesture
Of a sibling
Which seems familiar.
On all that he touched, or wore, or visited,
He left a part of himself
For us to remember.
And all the love –
Which went forth from him to others and
back again –
How could it have died?
It was never a tangible thing
So it followed no rules of mortality.
It still envelops us.
It is what is left.
And it will be there always.

Abigail Sammon
TCF,
Cleveland, Ohio



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.

Thank you to:

Bill and Laurie Steinhauser for Anna Webb on her anniversary.

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.**

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.



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



1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois 61265

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Spring

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.