



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

May 2021

Volume XXXIV, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

“I miss the memories we will never have.”

Ranata Suzuki

When we first find out we are expecting a baby, our mind jumps forward and we think of all the ways our lives will change, the special adventures we will have, the particular joy that child will bring. As we hold our newborn baby, we may be thinking ahead to kindergarten, piano lessons, Little League, fishing trips, school plays, prom, college, a wedding. Our daughter had a physical disability, and I remember thinking of the ways we would nurture her independence and self esteem so she would be emotionally strong to face the potential unkindness of peers because she was different. Anna died as an infant. We have only a few treasured memories - sweet smiles, excited coos, late night snuggles, a closet filled with pink and feminine attire as well as the hard ones of doctor visits, ambulance rides, oxygen hoses snaking through our home. We wonder what our lives would have been like had she lived. What would she look like today? Who would she have become? How would our family have been different? We have a framed sympathy card on the bedroom wall alongside our “Anna” pictures. “Memory is the special place in our hearts where we can go for comfort in the treasured thoughts we hold dear.” I am grateful for our memories, limited as they are, but sometimes I still feel sad, missing the memories we will never have. We wish each mom reading this a peaceful Mother’s Day, making new memories with your surviving children and being able to savor the memories you have of your child who has died.



Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb

I will forever wish I could be in two places at once.

Mothering a child who is no longer here and mothering my children who are – is a constant balancing act, the infinite art of embracing both/and.

I am here, and I am there.

I am learning how to be two places at once.

2019 Angela Miller/A Bed For My Heart



I talk about him because I'm proud.

I talk about him because he deserves to be remembered.

I talk about him, because even though he's not physically with me, he's never far from my mind.

I talk about him, because he's part of me, a part that I could never ignore or disown.

I talk about him because I love him still, and I always will. Forever. Nothing will ever change that.

Still Standing Magazine

Grief is a response to a loss in our lives that feels irreplaceable.

Megan Smalley

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten .

Rich Edler, TCF, South Bay/LA, CA

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape. ~

from *A Grief Observed*
by C. S. Lewis

May a time come soon that your memories bring more sunshine than rain, more smiles than tears. Though there will still be some bitter lingering with the sweet, you will eventually find reasons – in your own time, no matter how long it takes – to remember the love and the laughter too.

Cathy Seefuetter

When someone we love dies part of us stops existing: somewhere within our journey, we must grieve a loss of self.

Grief to Glorious
Unfolding the Legacy of
Our Children

RELEASE

If I were to continue
Asking "Why?"
I might never

- sleep though the night
- embark on a career
- smile and laugh with others
- see the sunshine or hear the birds
- give love to my cats and dog
- trust God again
- get an answer.

So I cry my tears and hug my memories
And accept that for now
I cannot know or understand.
And with this acceptance

- Comes release
- To sleep deeply
- To work for my future
- To enjoy life
- to appreciate nature
- to love "our" pets
- to trust God

to accept what I cannot change.
You'd be proud of me, Becky.

Why?

Angel Neufeld - TCF, Regina, SK

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

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: 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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<p>TCF Online Support Community</p>	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<p>TCF's Grief Related Resources</p>	<p>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/.</p>
<p>TCF National Magazine</p>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter is also available from the National Office to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
<p>Grief Materials</p>	<p>Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for — or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
<p>Amazon.com</p>	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
<p>Previous Newsletter Editions</p>	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<p>Alive Alone</p>	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
<p>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</p>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.</p>
<p>Our Newsletter</p>	<p>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</p>

A Mother's Chorus: Grieving a Child on Mother's Day

I miss my child every day. This grief of mine will never leave me, and honestly, why should it? I love my child more than I ever could have imagined, and yes, I need mean present tense "love." It is excruciating knowing that my child will never return to my arms. However, a mother's love for her child doesn't require physical presence. This can be proven by the fact that most mothers love their children well before they are even born. I will love my child forever, and therefore, I will grieve my child forever. This is just how it goes.

I know it's difficult for some people to understand my ongoing grief. I guess because they want me to "get better" or return to "normal." However, I actually am normal. I'm just different now. I believe those who say they want to support me on difficult days like Mother's Day, but part of this is accepting me as a grieving mother who will always love her deceased child. Again, this is just how it goes.

My grief is like the weather. Some days it's calm, quiet, maybe even a little sunny. Other days it's a devastating storm that makes me feel angry, exhausted, raw, and empty. I wake up in the morning and wonder, "Am I even alive at all? And if so, how am I supposed to make it through this day?" This is why when you ask me how I feel about Mother's Day, all I can say is that it depends. Of course, I'm going to try my best to cope with the day, but while you're hoping that your Mother's Day picnic doesn't get spoiled by actual rain, I'll be praying that the grief storms stay at bay.

Like many things in a grieving mother's life, Mother's Day is bittersweet to the nth degree. On the one hand, I feel immense joy because I was blessed with my child and I feel gratitude for every moment I was given with them. On the other hand, the pain of missing my child – my greatest happiness, my life's purpose, and my best friend – is intense.

Bereaved mothers live with so many of these confusing contrasts. They are like undercurrents that tug at and toss about our hearts and minds. I am the mother of a child who is not alive. Perhaps a child who you've never met. You can't ask me about their school year, or how they're liking piano lessons, or whether they've chosen a major in college. In my mind, I've imagined my child doing all these things. People don't realize that I grieve each of my child's milestones, knowing they didn't get the opportunity to experience these special days.

Most people don't know how to validate my child's place in the world or my ongoing role as my child's mother. This is a difficult concept for others to grasp. Heck, sometimes even I grapple with the answers to questions like "Do you have children?" and "How many?" I know many bereaved mothers like me long for these questions to have straightforward answers.

Sadly, mothers who have experienced the death of their only child may even wonder whether they get to call themselves a mother at all in broader society. So, in addition to the pain of grief, these mothers have to cope with a sense of being left out, forgotten, and ignored. Can you imagine how that might feel? I think it must be like being stabbed through the heart and when you turn to

others for help, they say, “What blood?”
“What knife?”

Then for mothers who have surviving children, there is this gem of a comment – “Don’t forget, you’re lucky to have other children.” Please let me assure you, a mother does not forget any of her children. This mother loves each and every one of her unique and special children in unique and special ways, but one of her children has died and so her love for this child looks a little untraditional. Mothers do not have a finite amount of love to be shifted, divided, and spread around depending on the number of children they have on this Earth. So please be careful with your comments, because it’s difficult enough for grieving mothers who often feel torn between feeling joy and happiness for their living children and grief for the child who has died.

All that said, you asked me what it’s like to grieve a child on Mother’s Day, so here’s what I have to say.

This day will forever be hard for me. I live with an emptiness that no one can fill, so I may be sad. I may be unsociable, and I may need to take a break to be by myself in a quiet place. Whatever shape my grief takes on this day, please allow me to feel the way I feel and please follow my lead.

Beyond that, acknowledge me as a mother. It makes me feel forgotten and as though my child has been forgotten when people act as though my child never existed. Also, I can sense that people feel uncomfortable talking about my child and I constantly feel like the elephant in the room, but it doesn’t have to be this way. Honestly, I find it really comforting when

someone talks about my child. I love hearing their name spoken out loud! I love hearing stories about them. Maybe you know a story I’ve never heard, or maybe I’ve heard it a hundred times before, but it really doesn’t matter to me. Your acknowledgment alone is one of the



greatest Mother’s Day gifts you could give me.

I guess while I’m offering my two cents, I also have something to say to my fellow bereaved

mothers. No one has it all figured out, but I’ve learned a few lessons along the way. If you’re worried about Mother’s Day, you’re not alone. Try not to get overwhelmed or wrapped up in anxiety. You may actually find that the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. You may want to plan a whole day of activities just to stay busy, or you may feel like doing nothing at all. There is no “right way” to handle Mother’s Day – but do try to plan ahead a little. You may want to reach out to others who are struggling with the day and, if you can, it always helps to face the day with people who love and support you.

Whatever you do, believe you will make it through the day. With time the grief storms will grow smaller and less frequent and you will find a little more balance and room to breathe. Believe you will be okay and have hope that in the future you will find yourself in a place where you can grieve and celebrate on Mother’s Day all at the same time.

-M (from whatsyourgrief.com)

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, May 27, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting held by Zoom due to COVID-19 and the Illinois governor's restrictions on in-person meetings.

Next month's meeting is on June 24, 2021.

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. 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.

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 pm via **ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic** and in "normal time" in the Adler Room #11 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.

Loving Listeners

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.

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of bereaved parents. But for now – right now – it is our hearts that are freshly wounded and our hearts in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess – swelling – erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green-TCF, Livonia, MI

Recently, The Compassionate Friends offered a virtual event, ***Rising Together in Grief and Hope***, featuring David Kessler, Shari O’Loughlin, and David Wood. All three of our inspirational speakers suffered tragic losses of children and siblings and were able to transform their experiences into helping others.

In addition to their presentations, there is a Question and Answer panel at the end of the video where our speakers answer questions from attendees. This event was recorded so that all would have the opportunity to view it.

You can access this event through the TCF Facebook page or the TCF Website.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

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 bereaved families. Some of the Love Gifts are used for materials to share with 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 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.**

Ten Things Bereaved Parents Wish You Knew

- 1) Please don't be afraid to talk to me about my child. My child lived and was very important to me, and it is a comfort to me to know that he or she was important to you, too. My child is pretty much always on my mind anyway...you're not going to "remind" me that he or she is gone.
- 2) If I cry when you speak of my child, it isn't because you have hurt me. My child's death is the cause of my tears. You have talked about my child and allowed me to share my grief and I thank you for both.
- 3) If I seem absent-minded and forgetful, that's because I am! "Grief Brain" is a common malady in bereaved parents. I'm really not losing my mind, but sometimes I may feel like I am.
- 4) Please don't expect my grieving to be over in six months, or even a year. The early months may be the most traumatic for me, but please understand that my grief will never fully end until the day I am reunited with my child in Heaven. And though it may sound strange, I don't really want my pain to completely go away....it helps me feel connected to my child.
- 5) When you ask me how I'm doing, that's a really hard question for me to answer. I will probably tell you I'm fine or I'm doing okay, but neither one of us has enough time for me to fully and accurately answer that question.
- 6) Please excuse me if I seem rude at times. Sometimes I just don't have the emotional stamina to participate in small talk and keep the smile on my face. I may just have to "check out" for a while.
- 7) Please don't tell me you understand or that you understand how I feel. Unless you have lost a child, you cannot understand how it feels. I pray that you will never know how I feel.
- 8) Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so please don't shy away from me. I need your support now more than ever before.
- 9) You may see me struggling emotionally sometimes, especially when I'm at church. This does not mean that I have lost my faith. For a variety of reasons, church is just a very emotional place to be.
- 10) Please understand that the loss of a child changes a person. When my child died, a large part of me died with him or her. I am not the same person that I was before my child died, and I will never be that person again.

**Author Unknown,
Kalamazoo TCF Facebook page**

In his celebrated American play, *Our Town*, Thornton Wilder explores with great tenderness, the common human frailty of taking life for granted. When the leading character Emily, dies in childbirth, she decides, against the advice of her fellow spirits, to relive a day of her life on earth. Emily chooses one of the birthdays of her childhood. She discovers that everyone she loves is so busily absorbed with daily routine that they fail to take time to really see and hear each other. This blindness to the beauty of life is too painful for Emily to bear. She returns quickly to the peace of her grave.

For Emily it is too late. For us, it is not. Our children left us a special gift, a legacy that will last a lifetime if we permit it. It is the gift of awareness. Only when touched by death do we begin to realize the preciousness of life. Unlike Emily, we cannot go back in time. We cannot relive the moments of our lives. We cannot have our children back. But we can go forward with a heightened awareness of those we love and of life itself. We can take the time to smell the roses. We can accept the loving legacy of our children.

Candy Mc Laughlin
TCF/Minneapolis, MN

Mother's Day Dread - Mother's Day for me is just as hard as Father's Day, but for different reasons. It is always difficult for me to see my wife struggle with not being a mother to a living child.

Her only experience with being a mother is the loss of two babies. I know it's something she thinks about every day. We both try to move through our days wishing for something different, something more meaningful than regular "life stuff."

We both know something is missing, but we know we can't change it, so we do it again tomorrow.

We go through the motions and most days, that's enough. But Mother's Day isn't one of those days.

Mother's Day is generally a somber day. We try to stay away from all of the mothers in the neighborhood that are excited about the break they "deserve" when their husband takes the kids for the day. I know they come from a different perspective, but that doesn't mean we want any part of it. In fact, we find it annoying. We would love to spend the day with our children.

As a dad and a husband, I have no idea how to handle this day. Acknowledgement of the obvious with a hug or a day of celebration with a simple gift? Seems weird to me to tell someone "Happy Mother's Day" when we both know it isn't.

As we approach the dreaded "day," I want to wish all grieving moms (and dads) a Peaceful Mother's Day.



Author
Unknown

TCF National Conference 2021

Though we cannot gather in person for the conference this year, please mark your calendars. More information can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org.

The Compassionate Friends
2021 Virtual National Conference
July 16 – 18, 2021



The Compassionate Friends

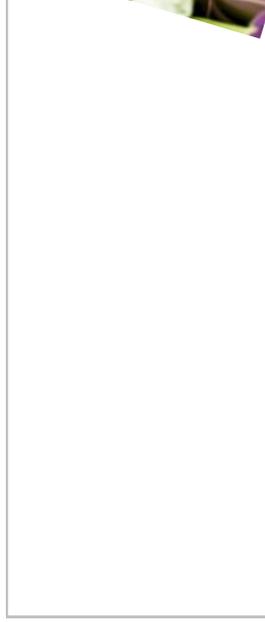
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.