



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

Volume XXX **October 2017**

Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

At church Sunday, we had a conversation with a long time friend whose toddler grandson is fighting for his life. Born with significant physical birth defects, requiring multiple surgeries, his grandson also developed cancer a year ago. At one point the conversation turned to the question of “Why?”- so natural to ask when you think of little children suffering with broken bodies. I told him that in the early years after the death of our daughter, “Why” often troubled me. In time, the longing to have an answer, to understand, to point to a reason softened. Sometimes the answer to “Why us?” “Why my child?” is as simple as “Why not us?” I think what helped me most to not persevere on “Why?” was to focus on “What now?” How would I care for my surviving child? How would I continue to be a wife, mother, teacher, daughter, friend? Adopting a family for Christmas, making baby blankets for the Crisis Pregnancy Center, reaching out to other bereaved families through The Compassionate Friends and this newsletter, continuing with the marriage ministry we were already involved in were ways that we used to honor our daughter and give her life and her death meaning and purpose.

The article “Why?” by Carly Marie in this month’s newsletter talks about ways she found to deal with her “Whys?” Over the years we have found that as we focused away from ourselves and directed our attention outward toward serving others, we could better manage our grief.

If you really want to receive joy and happiness then serve others with all your heart. Lift their burden and your own burden will be lighter. Ezra Taft Benson

Sincerely,
 Jerry & Carol Webb

Inside

| | |
|---|----|
| Why? | 2 |
| Masks | 3 |
| Love Gifts | 4 |
| Facebook and TCF | 5 |
| About TCF | 6 |
| Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings | 7 |
| My Dear “Would Be” Child | 8 |
| Please See Me Through My Tears | 9 |
| Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings | 10 |
| Shards of Grief Linger After Murder | 10 |
| Grief Triggers Can Become Healing Triggers | 11 |
| Contact the Editors | |
| Reflections Board | 11 |



I spent years of my life ask-

ing WHY did this have to happen to me, to us? Why did my son have to die? Why did he have to have that condition? Why didn't I take any photos of him? Why did I not let our daughter see him? Why him?

Why? Why? WHY?! Of course asking these questions was only natural, but I became stuck. I felt as though I was drowning. After a longer time than I would probably like to admit, I came to the realization that I will never really know why so many of these things happened or didn't happen.

The why question only ever brings me more pain. Kind of like when you start asking yourself, 'What if?' We punish ourselves so harshly when we ask ourselves, God or the universe these questions. I often think that the reality of the fact that my son died, was too much for my being to handle and

that somewhere deep in my heart if I kept on asking why, I would be able to change the past and fix everything. Somehow I could bring him back. But I can't. The past is unchangeable. There is nothing we can do about it now. Asking why or what if will only bring more pain.

Asking "Why?" put me in a really dark hole and I didn't emerge from that darkness until I stopped asking Why? and started asking what heals me? What was it that made me feel good? What brought joy to my heart? What lifted my spirits? I channeled my grief into things that made me feel even the slightest bit of happiness. Before too long my whys were turned into amazing wonders. My life became all about love and seeking healing and honoring my precious boy by living a beautiful life for him.

I started to create meaning in my grief.

If you feel stuck in the Why? or the What if?, take some time out to just breathe to calm your heart and mind. Place your hand over your beating heart and feel the love that you have for your child and ask yourself, What Heals You? You may not get an answer straight away, but give it a little time. If you do get an answer, place a little energy into whatever it is that brings joy to your heart. You might want to paint, go for a hike, read a book, sing, dance, cook, garden. Whatever it is, focus on what brings you joy and watch your life begin to heal.

When you wake up in the morning, take a few minutes to think about your day, notice how you are feeling and ask yourself what you can do to help heal you today. It is very important to ground yourself each morning, As you go about your day, if you find yourself in moments where you feel overwhelmed by nega-

tive feelings, take a moment out to stop, breathe, center your heart and start again. At the end of the day, as you lay down to sleep, think about all the blessings that occurred in your life that day, even if it is only a couple. Give thanks for them. When you take gratitude into your sleep with you, you are more than likely going to wake up with it and having gratitude in your everyday life will help with the healing process.

Remember that there is no getting over this. But there is healing to be found and that healing can co-exist with your grief. Grief is of course just a deep form of love and you will never stop loving your child.

Sending you all much love for wherever you are in this walk of life.

With peace,
CarlyMarie

<http://carlymarieprojectheal.com>



MASKS

In idle conversation, you ask me about my children. You are an acquaintance. I do not know you well, and so I don a mask. I speak happily of joys, light heartedly of mischief, but I do not speak of death. I do not want to see the shadow of uncertainty pass over your face and feel the awkward silence that falls like a curtain between us. I do not want to say, "It's OK; that was a long time ago." It will never be quite "okay," and sometimes it seems as if it happened yesterday. And so I take my mask along with me through life like a perpetual Halloween night, to hide just a bit from people and to preserve my strength. For mourning is tiring, and each time I recount that day of death, I am a little wearied. I would rather speak of the joys in his life than the sorrows of his death to strangers who absently ask of children. Yet tragedy is more universal than I had ever known before it touched my life. And so many times I wonder who else looks out from behind a mask.



Karen Nelson, TCF/Columbia, MO

Love Gifts

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

Donations and Love Gifts 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.

Thanks to:

Pam Shultz

If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it or to our chapter leader, Doug Scott, c/o Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.



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.

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About TCF...

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.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Toll Free (877)969-0010
TCF National Web site —
www.compassionatefriends.org
<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (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.



Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is 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

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| TCF Online Support Community | <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> |
| TCF's Grief Related Webinars | <p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p> |
| TCF National Magazine | <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> |
| Grief Materials | <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> |
| Amazon.com | <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> |
| Previous Newsletter Editions | <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> |
| Alive Alone | <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> |
| Bereaved Parents' Magazine | <p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm.</p> |
| Our Newsletter | <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, climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p> |

My Dear “Would Be” Child

You are my “would-be” child, you who would have turned five last week. The children from Kindergarten would have celebrated with you in the morning. The rest of our family would have visited in the afternoon. We would be singing Happy Birthday to you, and you would have impatiently ripped open your presents and whooped in joy.

Excitement would be here, given that you just started Kindergarten two weeks ago. You would say “I’m a big girl now.” I would walk with you and your sister to Kindergarten every day and I’d pick you up before lunch. Your sister would fight with you over the toys you both want to play with at the very same time. Your Kindergarten teacher would have two sets of identical twins in her class this year! You and your sister would each talk to one of the twin boys that live just a few doors down our street, and soon you would walk to Kindergarten with them, holding hands. There would not be one Kindergarten child missing this year.

Both of you would want my attention, often probably at the same time. It wouldn’t always be easy. Both of you talking at the same time would fry my brain. Your sister would have someone to play with and talk to, someone to stay awake with or wake up in the morning. You would share your toys and books and – of course – also fight over them and throw them around in anger.

You would love sweets, especially lollies and Gummi Bears. I would hear you scream for ice cream and say “mmmmh” when eating homemade chocolate cake. Your favorite meal would be spaghetti. If you could, you would start the day eating an ice cream and drinking cordial. On special occasions you’d be equally happy if Daddy would make you banana pancakes. At any chance you would want to lick the bowl when I was preparing a cake. But then you would dislike brushing teeth no matter the



time of the day.

Mostly I would hug and kiss you, my child, I would hold your hand and feel your soft skin. I would brush your curly locks and bear your screams for me to stop because the brush pulls on the knots. You would want me to braid your hair or make pony or piggy tails.

Oh, my dear ‘would-be’ child...

I would do anything to have sleepless nights, difficult discussions or an angry face telling me to go away if I could...

Anything to have you kick me at night sleeping in the same bed when you’re sick or scared of the



monsters under your bed...anything to see you learn to ride your bike, even if it meant you’d fall and many times I’d pick you up and I’d sooth your bruises...

Sadly you’re my would-be child, the one that lives in my heart. The would-be five year old, but forever three days old. Even if you’re not seen by the world out there, you are with me every day, in my heart, in my thoughts, in my dreams, in my sleepless nights, in my quiet moments.

You belong to me as I belong to you. You are part of me, and I am part of you.

Your Mama, always.

Note: I’ve previously heard that some psychologists recommend bereaved parents “do not grow up your child in your imagination.” My personal experience, and that as a grief counselor, is that it is absolutely normal and common to do so. As painful as those “would-be” thoughts can be, they are also a normal way for parents to live out their dreams and hopes of a life that was cut short, the would-be life of their child.

“It is normal for parents to report that they have an ongoing relationship with their child through their memories and mental life.” (Worden J.W. 2002)

Nathalie Himmelrich
stillstandingmag.com

Please See Me Through My Tears

You asked, "How are you doing?"
As I told you, tears came to my eyes...and you
looked away and quickly began to talk again, All the
attention you had given me drained away.
"How am I doing?"...I can do better when people listen,
though I may shed a tear or two.
This pain is indescribable. If you've never known it you
cannot fully understand.
Yet I need you.
When you look away,
When I'm ignored,
I am again alone with it.
Your attention means more than you can ever know.
Really, tears are not a bad sign, you know!
They're nature's way of helping me heal...
They relieve some of the stress of sadness.
I know you fear that asking how I'm doing brings me sadness...
but you're wrong.
The memory of my loved one's death will always be with me,
Only a thought away.
My tears make my pain more visible to you, but you did not
give me the pain...it was already there.
When I cry, could it be that you feel helpless, not knowing
what to do?
You are not helpless,
and you don't need to do a thing but be there.
When I feel your permission to allow my tears to flow,
you've helped me.
You need not speak. Your silence as I cry is all I need.
Be patient...do not fear.
Listening with your heart to "how I am doing"
relieves the pain,
for when the tears can freely come and go, I feel lighter,
Talking to you releases what I've been wanting to say aloud,
clearing space
for a touch of joy in my life.
I'll cry for a minute or two...
and then I'll wipe my eyes,
and sometime you'll even find I'm laughing later.
When I hold back the tears, my throat grows tight,
my chest aches, my stomach knots...
because I'm trying to protect you from my tears.
Then we both hurt...me, because my pain is held inside,
a shield against our closeness...and you,
because suddenly we're distant.
So please, take my hand and see me through my tears...
then we can be close again.

Kelly Osmont

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

Monthly Meeting, Thursday, October 26, 2017, at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline

Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

The next meeting is held on

November 16, 2017 at 6:30 pm

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>.

**The
Compassionate
Friends of
Muscatine**

Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-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**

This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, contact Meagan Moller, Program Manager, at MollerM@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org.
The 24 hour contact number is [563-383-1900](tel:563-383-1900).

SHARE

A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm 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.

**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 doug.scott@mchsi.com
- ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearthb3@mchsi.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.

Shards of Grief Linger after Murder

On a dreary night in December, a knock came at our door with news that would forever alter our lives. The news was that Anne, our only daughter, had been kidnapped and brutally murdered by persons or a person unknown. The shock, disbelief, anguish and anxieties over the next several months, a small piece of the grieving process, were extraordinary, and I have often wondered how we survived.

There was the extreme rage at the person who was responsible for taking Anne's life for no reason except for the pure pleasure of destroying good. But we survived.

There was the awful anger against the legal system for being so callous and insensitive to the needs of the family and friends. The wounds from Anne's death were already deep and unhealing, but listening to and reading about the insinuations and innuendoes by the lawyers made the wounds grow deeper and deeper. The impression was given the family must endure punishment for allowing our daughter to be in the wrong place. This caused a feeling of guilt. But we survived!

There was the fear that Anne would become just another statistic, and the person responsible would go unpunished. Now the fear exists that the person will be released from prison to repeat his acts of violence. I am afraid that fears are addictive and one replaces another. Perhaps the worst fear is, when your faith in God is at its lowest ebb, that you will never be able to respond to normal stimuli again and regain all that faith. All the fears are real; but so far we have survived.

These, I suppose, are normal reactions as the result of a violent act. I believe these anxieties delay a normal (so-called) grieving period until after the culprit has been found, tried and sentenced. After these three things happened, I do know a terrible burden was lifted from our shoulders and we could restart living our lives. Somehow

we survived.
How did we

survive? After much reflecting, I firmly believe we survived by recalling the positive aspects of Anne's life and character. Each individual is endowed with certain instruments, and we hear the music of their lives long after they are gone.

Anne's instrument of love of life was a blessing, and we still can hear the melodies of her song in the night. These melodies cannot be taken away, and they are more valuable than diamonds to us.

Anne's instrument of hope for a future in which to achieve her goals and have some effect on society was the backbone of her dream. The songs of hope in work, in life and the goodness of heart cannot be destroyed by evil or circumstances. Today is gone, but we still hear the songs of hope for tomorrow. These songs of hope, heard in the night, sustain us.



faith love
hope

Anne's instrument of faith that she would lead a productive life and achieve both her spiritual and material goals was music in her heart. The faith she had in herself, her family and her friends transmits to us, urging us to proceed with our lives. The music of her faith is still a beacon in the night.

We will not believe Anne's dreams have ended, but we believe they will find their place in the world to come. The music that was set in motion by her love, hope and faith will move, everlasting, in sweet memories forever. The wounds from the loss of a loved one cannot be healed by words or deeds. These terrible burdens are borne by each of us in our own way and, hopefully, we survive.

Bill Boggs

In memory of Anne - TCF/Atlanta, Georgia

Grief Triggers Can Become Healing Triggers

As I was driving down the street about a year after my son Brendon died, a young man was standing on the side of the road. When I passed him, I looked in my mirror to see what he was going to do. As he began to run across the street, he had the exact same gait; same arm and leg motion as my son. It was Bren in someone else's body. My heart leapt and my tears streamed. I pulled off the road. My grief had been triggered.

My wife, Kathy, works as a checker in a grocery store. It took her almost two years after Brendon died to muster the strength to get the job. It was a leap of faith. A few months after she started, a woman came through her line to buy the same brand of chili we'd found on the stove when we went to Bren's apartment to get clothes to bury him in. Her grief triggered, and she started to cry. The woman reached in her purse, said nothing, and handed Kath a Kleenex. She knew something very sad had happened.

What was it for you? We've all experienced those painful sights, scents and sounds that remind us of our children's deaths. Was it a trip to the grocery store where you saw their favorite cookie and found yourself on the floor sobbing? At the mall were you suddenly hit with a scent that said, "It's you; it smells just like you," and you had to sit down? In your car, as you flipped through radio stations, did a song come on that was your song together and

you had to pull to the side of the road?

Grief triggers can be crushing, and it's okay to let them knock us down. It's okay to occasionally walk backwards and let those emotions wash over us. It's important we experience them fully and not push them away. But if we do our work and positively express our suffering, they can't keep us down. They can't win. As we move forward in our journey it's possible to know that death did not take all when it took our kid's bodies. Death can never take their spirit, their life force. It can't have our memories or our love; only life gets those. Death is not as powerful as it thinks it is, if we don't let it be.

Healing triggers happen when those same sights, scents and sounds that once knocked us down, now lift us up because they're a reminder of our living, breathing, laughing, loving children. By using our time wisely and embracing the power of letting go and forgiveness, we can transition from grief triggers to healing triggers. In embracing those healing memories is where we can find our smile and find our children.

Always remember, for our children to have died, it meant they had to have lived first, however long that was. If we focus on their living, and let go of their dying, we can heal; we can smile and find meaning again.

Rob Anderson

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, send us your new address.

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
carolynpwebb@gmail.com

Reflections Board

Time is the passing of moments lived one at a time. Our recovery depends on what we do with each moment. We cannot sit back and say, "TIME will heal me." TIME is merely the movement of the clock. Our successful return to comfortable living is what we do while the clock is moving. We have to look at the beauty left us in life instead of what we no longer have. We must find reasons to go on.

Margaret Gerner, TCF/St. Louis, MO

The passage of time alone does not cause our grief to end, but its softening touch helps us to survive

Wayne Loder

*As far as I can see, grief will never truly end.
It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does - forever.
It's simply the way the absence of your loved one manifests in your heart.
A deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love.
Some days, the heavy fog may return,
And the next day, it may recede, once again.
It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.*

Scribbles and Crumbs

Real empathy is sometimes NOT INSISTING that it will be okay but acknowledging that it is not.
Sheryl Sandberg

Your broken heart requires at least as much care as a broken bone. With proper care you can be confident that you will heal. The same powerful forces that mend a broken bone will heal your emotional pain, but a wounded heart needs time and proper care to heal.

Harold Bloomfield, MD

Incongruities

Thoughts of you can bring a smile to my face...and tears to my eyes. Memories of you tug at my heart filling it with love...and longing. I feel so thankful for having had you in my life...and yet so sad that you are gone. I'm comforted by the sense of your presence surrounding me at times ...while loneliness overwhelms me. My life is filled with incongruities; they assure me I am healing...and that I never **will**.

Gayle Block, TCF/Baytown, Texas

Sometimes, carrying on, just carrying on, is the superhuman achievement.

Albert Camus



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.