



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

October 2021

Volume XXXIV, Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Last night we had dinner with friends. She shared it was her sister's birthday. Her sister died in 2011. Our friend appreciated how some of her friends had reached out to her to let her know they were thinking of her and remembering her sister.

For those of us whose children died when they were very young or a long time ago or both, we sometimes feel sad when we think of how few people are left in our life to remember the preciousness of our child's life. Our daughter died almost 37 years ago at the age of four months, yet her legacy continues to have an impact on us everyday. Sadly, though, the people who knew her, held her, mourned with us when she died dwindles each year. I wonder about the mementoes of her life hanging on our bedroom wall and suppose when we are gone they will be discarded – a bit of history – no longer of great import. Who will hold her in their heart, when we are no longer alive? As I was researching material for this month's letter I ran across the following quote from the website, Bridgetscradle, "I will hold you in my heart until I can hold you in heaven." I realized something I had not thought about before. Part of my job as Anna's mom has been to protect her memory – by loving and caring and serving and remembering. But when my earthly life is over, I will be reunited with her, and the two children we lost to miscarriage. Then I will no longer need to be the keeper of her earthly memory because I will be "holding her in heaven."



Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



*Imagine a love so strong it
made saying hello and goodbye
in the same day worth all the
pain.*

Bridget'scradle.com

*When a baby is
born, it's a
mother's
instinct to protect her
baby. When a baby
dies, it's a mother's
instinct to protect their
memory.*

Bridget'scradle.com

*You were born silent. Perfect and
beautiful.*

*Still loved. Still missed. Still remembered.
Everyday. Stillborn. Still Born.*

THE GRIEF OF GRANDPARENTS

*The relationship between a grandparent
and a grandchild is very special and
unique. When a grandchild dies, the grief
associated with the loss is often so
intense and painful, it leaves bereaved
grandparents feeling hopeless as they
experience what many refer to as a
double loss. Not only do they mourn for
their grandchild, they may also feel a
sense of helplessness because they are
unable to take away the pain felt by
the parents of their grandchild, one of
whom is their own child.*

*Of course I still have times
of sadness. I know I
always will. But I have
decided that in the process
of grieving, we close so
many doors that the only
way to recovery is to reopen
them gradually at our own
pace.*

Libby Gonzales

*Memory is a gift from God that death cannot
destroy.*

Unknown

The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost an Infant

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should the child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. Shame and Guilt - Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

2. No Memories - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few

belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

3. Loneliness in Grief - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily, they hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

4. Neglected Fathers - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.

5. Mothers vs. Fathers - Since the mother has bonded with her child during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

Claire M and Sue S,
TCF/St. Louis, MO

Compassionate Tips for Surviving the Death of Your Baby

How to think about grieving, coping, adjusting and healing.

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



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 of 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

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

The Grief of a Parent Who Has Lost an Infant

Whenever and however it occurs, a baby's death is a traumatic bereavement. Even if a pregnancy is unplanned or unexpected or is very short, a special bond materializes as the parents think about their baby and the reality of becoming a mother or a father to this child. Even if they'd only just found out they were pregnant, the parents are primed to invest, nurture, and protect. With a positive pregnancy test, parents start imagining all kinds of special experiences they will share with their child. In such heartfelt and intimate ways, they forge a deep bond with their baby, even long before the birth.

If you've experienced the death of a baby, you can see how your profound bond gives rise to a profound grief. And even though you never got the chance to know your baby in the ways we normally think of knowing someone, your hopes and dreams for this child are held dear. You have not only experienced the death of a child, but you have also lost the chance to see this baby grow, become a vital part of the family, and realize his or her potential. Death thwarts your best intentions and breaks your heart.

Indeed, after your baby dies, you may have moments when you doubt that you can survive this ordeal. Your longing, anger, sadness, and despair

can run so deep that you may wonder if you will ever emerge from the abyss.

Here are some helpful ideas for grieving, coping, and adjusting to the death of your baby. As always, take in what fits for you; set aside the others to consider down the road.

- ♥ Accept your need to mourn and express your grief. Set aside time for grief to flow through you, whether you find relief in releasing emotions, moving your body, solving problems, or accomplishing meaningful tasks.
- ♥ Have realistic expectations about grief, viewing it as a complex process that has no deadlines, but many waves and unpredictable ups and downs, which eventually bring a gradual sense of healing that creeps up over many months and several years.
- ♥ Accept your preoccupation with your baby as a natural expression of your parental bond and a natural part of your grief. Indeed, reviewing your memories and telling your story can help your grief flow.
- ♥ Understand that the brevity of your baby's life can make grieving especially complicated and painful. By identifying your many layers of loss and the challenges you face, you can embrace the profound impact your baby's death has on you.
- ♥ Do those things that let you feel

close to your baby. For you this might be visiting the cemetery; thinking or writing about your pregnancy and your baby; spending time with your keepsakes such as baby clothes and photographs; memorializing



your baby such as installing a plaque, planting a tree or a garden, building a shrine or box to hold mementos, creating a scrapbook, making a piece of art, or donating your time or resources in your baby's name.

- ♥ Pursue what helps you heal. (This will differ for each bereaved parent)
- ♥ Have faith that eventually you will feel better. Like the many parents who've come before you, you too can survive the death of your baby.
- ♥ Know that even as you grieve, you are healing. Take one day at a time and trust the process.
- ♥ Remember that your grief is normal and *you are not alone*.

Deborah L. Davis Ph.D

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

When men grieve, it often takes a very silent form. I think women tend to talk things out, even cry things out in a way that men don't. Men struggle to be there for each other without trying to solve problems, and we tend to struggle to receive comfort, in part because we like to be our own problem solvers. In my own seasons of sorrow, I've found that silent and listening companionship is often the greatest comfort: to know that I have support when I need it, a brother in adversity, who will grieve with me, pray with me, and pray for me, without trying to foist unseasonable solutions on seasons of difficulty, or give easy answers to difficult questions. That kind of comforting takes real humility.

Caleb Faires

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, , October 28, 2021 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 is on November 18, 2021
(one week earlier due to Thanksgiving).

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 #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): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@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.

You Must Get Over It

The other day a friend of mine and I were having a conversation about how angry he felt when someone said to him, "You must get over it and move on with your life." He lost his son to suicide just a few months ago. Dick said that he would love to get over it, but how and what was it?

Thinking back over my early stages of grief, I remembered feeling the same way as Dick. I was confused at what it was and how to overcome it. Was it our child? Was it the death? Was it our pain? Were they saying that I was not dealing with my grief properly? I was trying so hard to get over it, but how does one stop the overwhelming pain? I wanted to scream and ask what the formula was that would rid me of such intense emotions.

As I walked my individual journey of grief, I learned how to deal with people telling me such things. These are some of the ways I found for coping:

Most people mean well when they say these things. They just don't want you to hurt anymore and try to "push" you forward. They do not understand the hurt and confusion they cause by such statements.

Most people do not understand the process of grieving and we need to gently educate them. They have no idea, unless they have had a similar loss, of the time and energy it takes to walk through grief.

Some people cannot handle the death of your loved one and want you to get over it so they do not have to deal with the issues your loss brings up for them. It is best to limit the time you spend with this type of person, especially in your early states of grief.

You never get over it because that would mean you would have to stop

loving that person or remembering your life together. The pain we feel is just a reminder that we love so deeply. Many times I will tell people just that!

It takes time, commitment and courage to incorporate such a deep pain into ourselves. We have to address the pain directly, feel its power, understand it and fully befriend it before we can rebuild our lives.

I believe this process is one of the most difficult challenges of being human. We need loving and caring people to support us through this difficult time. Often you can find such people in your church, family, support groups, therapists and friends. Build yourself a support system that will aid you through your journey. Limit your interaction with people you do not find supportive. Remember, this is one of the most challenging times of your life and you will need a strong support system.



There is no set time limit to your individual grief journey. The key is to keep moving forward along the path and not become stuck along the way. The

time it takes is of little importance. From time to time, you may even feel you are slipping backwards, and that is perfectly normal. It may be necessary to revisit an event or set of feelings in order to take the next important step forward.

I can tell you that it does get better. It takes courage to face each emotion and keep moving along that road. I have faith that each of you has that courage.

Penny Blaze

Last Moments

Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all
decades...
Priceless words Indelibly
etched on the heart.

Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment—
A quick embrace, a silly
smirk,
Or joyous laughter—
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.

We came too soon to
understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.

Diane Fields,
TCF/Westmoreland, PA



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:

Dan and Sheila Sadler, in
memory of their daughter, Sara
Schoenhaar.

Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, in
memory of their nephew,
Patrick Hagery V.

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.**

What Not to Say to Someone Experiencing Pregnancy Loss

It can be difficult to know what to say to someone who has gone through the life-changing experience of losing a child. Sometimes, the words that are meant to be comforting are actually hurtful. Here are five things not to say when talking to someone who has experienced a pregnancy loss:

1. “At least you know you can get pregnant” While this may be true, it is often little consolation to losing a child. There is no guarantee of being able to get pregnant again and it’s possible that future pregnancies may also result in a loss. Additionally, many women who experience loss have increased anxiety and worry through subsequent pregnancies.

2. “It was early” or “it wasn’t a baby yet” No matter the length of gestation, losing a pregnancy can be difficult emotionally and/or physically. From the moment the pregnancy test shows positive, there is often an immediate attachment to that baby and an abundance of hopes and dreams of a future with that child. It can be incredibly hurtful to dismiss feelings of a connection.

3. “It’s in God’s hands” or “everything happens for a reason” or “it wasn’t meant to happen right now”

Avoid these and other empty cliché statements that often hold little or no meaning and may not provide comfort to the recipient. Also, remember that not everyone may share your religious beliefs. Even if they do, the time following a loss can be one where an individual’s faith is shaken.

4. “You need to get over it already” The grieving process is one that often extends over time and varies for each individual. There’s no right or wrong amount of time to move past a pregnancy loss and everyone should be given the space to mourn in a way that feels right for them.

5. Nothing at all Although it can be difficult to address this topic, ignoring it is the worst thing you can do. One of the most important needs after a pregnancy loss is simply knowing people care and are thinking about you. Reach out in some way even if it places you outside of your comfort zone.

Do not downplay emotions, try to rationalize the “good” in the situation, or dismiss it as not being a big deal. Instead simply say “I’m sorry.” Send a card, email, or text or ask if they want to talk (some people do not and they will let you know). Check back in a few weeks or months because initial support wears off quickly. If you know the baby’s due date, it may be nice to remember it with a small gift or note to the parent(s); they, of course, will remember that date and getting through it may be a challenging experience.

Navigating pregnancy loss can be a learning experience for all involved and it is ok to not have all of the answers. Our organization is here to provide the resources to help guide you through this difficult time so that you can provide the best support possible for those in your life who are experiencing pregnancy loss.



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.