



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Quad City Area Chapter*

**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

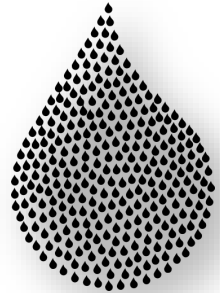
October 2023

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

**In** 2021 a dear friend was diagnosed with stage four cancer. We are closer than sisters and jokingly say our relationship is better than sisters because we don't have to deal with childhood sibling angst. This past month she has drawn closer to death each day. I don't typically cry much, but this month I think I have shed every kind of tear—the slow leaking ones trickling down my face, gut wrenching sobs, or those times when it is not really appropriate to cry, but the tears well up in my eyes and throat making it hard to speak as I try to keep them from spilling over.

According to Google, our emotional tears release oxytocin and endorphins. These chemicals ease our physical and emotional pain and promote a sense of well-being. Crying is a release valve ridding the body of excess stress and tension. Stress chemicals boost heart rate and blood pressure and when we suppress tears, we may experience chest tightness or heavy breathing. Our emotions become heightened and we feel worse. In the short term, holding in our tears can lead to irritability, anxiety, and poor sleep. However, in the long term, research has noted more serious physical outcomes from suppressing tears and denying our grief.



I think I appreciate most what Washington Irving has to say about tears. "There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love."

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb



## October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month.

*We remember the babies born sleeping, those we carried but never held, those we held but could not take home, those who came home but could not stay.*

There is a club of mothers that we all hope to never join and of which far too many are silent members. We are the women who have lost a child we've never even met.

A child for whom we have no memories, no pictures of happy smiles, or stories of budding personalities. Just the grief of what might have been.

*JoAnna Hyatt*

Some would say I didn't even know you. But I carried you, felt you grow. Longed for the day we'd meet.

Dreamed of your future. Not only did I know you, I fell in love with you.

*Paper Heart Family*

### *For the Special Child I Carry Now*

When you are old enough to understand, I hope you will know how thrilled I am that you have been alive long enough to understand.

I hope you will never feel less special than the child who came before you. We never thought of you as a replacement. We will always miss our first baby; but no more than we would have missed you. In fact, you are all of our hopes and dreams. We love you so.

When you are old enough, I hope that you will understand that right now I am praying that someday you will be old enough to understand. And, even if you never understand, I will just be glad that you are old enough.

*Lisa Casimer, TCF, Chicago*

There is no foot too small that it cannot leave an imprint on this world.

A life need not be long-lived for it to have been meaningful.

## CRYING

The natural, normal, cleansing, healing release and response when someone we love dearly dies.

Yet, so often we feel or we are made to feel that there is something wrong with us. With our tears.

So we stop crying, and in doing so we stop releasing, we stop healing.

And all of the feelings, all of the emotions are stored and stuffed deep, deep inside of us.

Sadness. Regret.  
Guilt. Confusion. Fear.  
Anger. To name just a few.



And in time the weight becomes unbearable.  
Exhausting. Overwhelming. Indescribable. Paralyzing.

Please give yourself permission to cry.

Cry. Cry. Cry.

And remind yourself over and over and over and over again that crying is a concrete, tangible sign that you are healing.

Crying is your body's way of releasing all the crap that has been stored and stuffed deep inside you.

Crying is your body's way of making room for new life.

Cry. Cry. Cry. And as the tears fall, let your mantra be, "I am healing. I am healing. I am healing."

When someone we love dearly dies, it's okay to cry.

It's helpful to cry. It's healing to cry. Please give yourself permission to cry. As often as you want to. As often as you need to. Do you give yourself permission to cry?

Tom Zuba

**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](http://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](http://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.

## ***Tips to Help Lighten Grief***

When a loved one dies, life is never the same. We miss our person; roles are redirected and moves may happen. The death can rearrange our world in ways we may have never imagined.

“Gaining the tools and resources needed to mourn in a healthy way is vital to heal and find a new normal without the person who died,” said Stephanie Kohler-Pagan director of bereavement at Lory’s Place.

As we learn coping skills and process thoughts, the overwhelming heaviness begins to lighten. The grief is still there, but it is not a continual heaviness. Sometimes it can even be overlooked for moments of time.

Eventually, grief can become something we wear. It is more manageable, less overwhelming and no longer a huge weight. Most days the grief is light enough to wear, but other days the heaviness may return.

Grief itself also changes. It can surprise us. A smell, a taste, a song, a memory, or a word can bring a flood of thoughts and emotions. That is okay!

That is how grief works. It is an ongoing, unpredictable process. But days turn into weeks, then months, then years. Life events, like holidays, birthdays, and weddings happen. We can learn to celebrate life’s milestones and carry grief at the same time.

Healing grief and learning to live without those we love can be hard, but love and loss can learn to walk together. By honoring our pain and the love we shared, we can find a way to participate in life’s celebrations.

- ◆ **Search and savor.** Search out your blessings and savor even the simplest moments.
- ◆ **Memories.** By sharing things that mean the most to us, we keep the memories of those we love alive.
- ◆ **Imagine.** How would this time be celebrated if your loved one was here? Include that in the celebration.
- ◆ **Love.** Love yourself; love others and allow love to help you learn to carry your pain.
- ◆ **Express emotions.** Be open and honest while sharing your feelings.

*Health Currents*, February 2023

### **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.

## ***Be Patient***

### ***Be patient.***

My child has died.

A light in my life has been snuffed out! A piece of me is gone forever!

It is said the depth of love signifies the depth of grief.

This must be true for my love is deeper than I can say.

My grief is so intense that sometimes moment-to-moment is unbearable.

### ***Be patient.***

Today I may smile and laugh;

But tomorrow I may be cranky.

I am hurting and I am confused.

Sometimes I am angry that I am in this nightmare.

Other times I feel totally and completely at peace

Because I sense my child is free and no longer suffers.

### ***Be patient.***

I know I must move on with my life.

I must because others need me, and I need them.

The road to recovery is difficult because it has its peaks and valleys.

I know my child would want me to move on as well.

I am afraid. Will I forget my child's gentle voice? Will I forget that tender touch?

No! I will take all the beautiful memories for I was blessed to have this child.

### ***Be patient.***

I am told and I read that grieving parents learn from their child's death and teach others.

What am I to learn? What am I to teach?

If I am to teach, it should be positive.

Whatever can I learn and teach from this journey that is positive?

With your compassion and support I can make it.

Along the way I will try very hard to learn the positive messages to teach others.

More than anything I want my child, my family, and friends to be proud of me.

### ***Be patient.***

I may cry; I may laugh; I may be angry; I may be at peace

At any given time today and today's tomorrow.

But tomorrow's tomorrow will bring happiness.

I am trying to seek that happiness now but I am tired and fragile.

I see other bereaved parents who have gone before me.

They have made it down this long hard road.

I will as well.

### ***Be patient.***

Susan Taylor,  
TCF Winnipeg, Canada

## 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**

## To My Grandmother Nandy: Now I Know

At your dining room table, we sat once more, grandmother to granddaughter.

I wanted to know, so you told me again of your painful past – your mother, your sister – in your childhood lost.

But by far the worst was your firstborn child – delivered by forceps from which he died. With each retelling from out of your soul your tears flowed fresh, as if for the first time.

Let's sit at that dining room table again. As mother to mother, I want you to know. About the birth of my firstborn child. Delivered by forceps, from an illness she died.

Tell me again about your son. Though now you've been gone for a number of years. Please tell me again about your son.

And I'll share all about my little girl.

*Baby Stearns was born and died one day in 1919. Sarah Lynn Dubie was born 10/17/1987 – 10/24/1987.*

**Written by Sarah's mother,  
Carolyn Stearns Dubie**

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting**  
**Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at**  
**Bethany for Children & Families**  
**1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois, Second floor**  
*The next monthly meeting of the chapter is*  
**Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.**

<p><b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b></p>	<p>Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com.</p>
<p><b>Rick's House of Hope</b></p>	<p>Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org.</p>
<p><b>SHARE</b></p>	<p>A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 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.</p>
<p><b>Phone Support</b></p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com</li> <li>♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915</li> <li>♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoheartb4@gmail.com</li> <li>♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</li> </ul> <p>Doug, Kay, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.</p>



## Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<b>TCF's Grief Related Resources</b>	<p>There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to <a href="https://www.opentohope.com/tv/">https://www.opentohope.com/tv/</a>.</p>
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <b>TCF e-Newsletter</b> 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>
<b>Grief Materials</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
<b>Amazon.com</b>	<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>
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of the Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<b>Alive Alone</b>	<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 <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</p>
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="https://bereavedparentsusa.org">https://bereavedparentsusa.org</a>.</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<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 <a href="mailto:climb@climb-support.org">climb@climb-support.org</a>. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

## My Witch and My Angel

For Zoë, Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, make-up, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year—1987—I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures. Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes; I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoë's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail



polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly.

With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath—the same one I take every year at every holiday and milestone. With my unsteady hand I will design witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoë's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my little witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I

will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13 year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make-believe?

Zoë will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as OK as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here.

And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoë, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly graze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's OK. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treat' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoë skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom—take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween. Just like his sister.

©1999 by Mary Clark

TCF Sugarland, TX

In memory of Max

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The Compassionate Friends

## Grieving and Growing

To the uninitiated, the phrase almost seems contradictory, but to those who have spent any time in the purposeful grieving process, it makes perfect sense. I believe that there is a difference between being in the grieving process and being lost in grief.

While one seems full of possibilities, the other seems a blind alley filled with frustration and defeat. Mind you, the road aligned with possibilities has its measure of frustrations; but it has the promise of growth and development.

Taking time to grieve, even making time to grieve, is difficult, but necessary. Holding back tears, holding back anger, holding back hurt – repressing all these things takes an enormous amount of energy. One has to go through grief to get through it!

The unexpected spin-off of the grief process is that, Phoenix-like, one emerges from the ashes of the grief process renewed; changed, but renewed. Values somehow change or clarify.

Grief is not through with me – it may never be completely through with me – it still catches me by surprise from time to time.

I played and sang for a friend's confirmation service recently. During the ensuing Lord's Supper, as observer, I was surprised but unashamed by tears rolling down my cheeks. I was puzzled as to why I wept. Finally, it came to me that an element of regret in my grief scenario is that I did not take Cameron through that spiritual observation.

We can grow in grief, in compassion and caring, in strength of character, and in values clarification. They are not automatic. We get them the old fashioned way – we earn them!!



**John Cornutt,  
TCF, Central Oregon Chapter**



## *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.***