



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

September 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

We like to watch the CBS television drama, *Blue Bloods*. In one episode, officer Eddie Janko is meeting with a mother who is seeking justice after the death of her son. Eddie says to her, “I understand your pain.” The mother responded as any bereaved parent would, “You can’t possibly understand my pain.”

My dearest and closest girlfriend of many years is seriously considering hospice care as she journeys through late stage cancer. This past week has been very hard for me as I face the realization of what I know will be a great emptiness in my life when she is gone. One evening, Jerry said, “I wish I could read your mind.” He knew I was very sad and he wanted to know what I am experiencing.

Nobody can understand our pain after our child dies. In fact, many people in our life probably do not really want to know. It would be way less uncomfortable for them if we would just get over it. However, a critical factor in healing from grief is the support of other people. Support from your family, friends, or a community of others who have also experienced grief allows you to share your story and your feelings. This is vital to the healing process. Nobody will ever exactly understand your pain, but in the telling, they can share with you the emptiness of loss, the joy of remembrance, your sadness and confusion and, your gratitude for small miracles and unexpected kindnesses. You need not walk this road alone.



Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



For those who understand, no explanation is needed. For those who do not understand, no explanation is possible.

You don't get over it, you get through it...It doesn't get better, it gets different...Every day, just like me,
Grief puts on a new face.

Wendy

The hardest part of losing a child is living everyday afterwards.

Grief is personal and individual, and every person experiences its nuances differently. Your personality, your support system, your natural coping mechanisms and many other things will determine how loss will affect you. There are no rules, no timetables, and no linear progression. This nonlinear process can't be controlled. It's critical that you treat yourself with patience and compassion and allow the process to unfold.

Healgrief.org

Seven Grief Art Activities to Help Process Your Feelings

Grief Art Ideas to Spark a Little Healing

Experiencing loss can be deeply emotional, and the grief that comes from a loss can be overwhelming. For some, it can feel like a roadblock keeping you from moving forward. But addressing your grief head-on isn't always an option.

One powerful way to deal with it is through a unique side door: grief art. You can use art projects to help you process your grief in a constructive and creative way, and here are some of our favorite ways to do so.

Art is such a therapeutic activity because it helps you tap into your deep emotional reservoirs. And as you work through the process of creating that art, you simultaneously work through the emotions that are elicited throughout. Although more research is needed, art as a tool for coping with bereavement has also been associated with positive changes.

It can be far less intimidating to approach grief laterally instead of head-on, and art is a great medium for you to do so. Talk to the page, speak it into the clay, and let it out in your dance moves. Art is there as a resource, and all you have to do is sit down and *start*.

1. Try Stream of Consciousness Poetry.

Stream of consciousness poetry is a style of poetry that's friendly for even the most amateur poets. Basically, you sit down and start writing out exactly what you're thinking. Allow the thoughts, however disjointed they are, to come out onto the page. Add line breaks, write some words in huge font and others in tiny ones, or circle your words on the page into a pattern.

By letting your brain bounce from thought to thought, you're giving your body and mind the chance to enter whatever

closed door you've purposefully kept locked.

2. Create a Grief Scrapbook. Grief scrapbooks might sound strange to someone who's not grieving, but curating a book to represent the big and small moments in your process can make everything more digestible. You can't swallow down the grief connected to a loss in a day or two, but taking a moment to dedicate half a page of a scrapbook to a day or a week lets you have something to center you while you work through those difficult emotions.

3. Make a Self-Portrait Series

Documenting Your

Healing. You can also use photography as a means of grieving through art. You've probably seen slideshows of people taking one picture every day



for a year, or one picture on the first day of school every year, and you can do the same thing for your healing process.

Grab a camera or your phone and take a self-portrait in a mirror every day for the next few months. After you have dozens of pictures, you can collate them into a collage. And the real benefit of having these pictures is getting to see marked visual change in your healing process. You'll look happier six months down the road than you did six days from the event. After all, for some people, seeing really is believing.

4. Custom Draw a Commemorative

Tattoo. If you want something a little bit more permanently expressive of the time you're going through think about ,

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TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at www.compassionatefriends.org. It is also available to read online without charge.



e-Newsletter Now Available!

An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

About The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Website:

www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is that when a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

The Flame

There's an order that life is supposed to follow.
An order of breaths we are supposed to take,
as if we are passing a torch from one generation to the next.
And our torch is supposed to go out before our child's flame is extinguished.
We are supposed to watch them take their first breath.
But not their last.
We are supposed to hear the thud-thud of their heart when it starts beating.
But never the silence when it stops.
That heart that we once carried inside of us. That breath that we gave them.
That life that we kept safe, protected.
So when the order of life is disrupted,
when their torch goes out before yours,
it is as if you too have been robbed of your breath
and as if your heart has stopped beating as well.
There is nothing that can make it less painful.
You would happily blow out your flame if it meant theirs could burn.
But you can't. Even though that's how it should be.
So all you can do is carry them inside you -
like you did once before.
Except now they have to stay in your heart forever.
And though it hurts,
just know that they are safe there.
They are protected.
Because a mother's love is unending.
Because it burns forever with every breath you take and
with every beat your heart makes.
Because a mother's love
is a flame that can
never
be extinguished.

Beckyemsley.com



Dare to Grieve

Sadly, the grieving often feel isolated and alone. They feel abandoned by the people they thought would be there through thick and thin. People they thought they could count on when they needed them the most.

And the griever of the world wait for people to show up and sit with them in the pain. They wait for people to listen with nothing but compassion and love.

Sometimes the validation and compassion show up and sometimes it doesn't. And when it doesn't, it hurts.

With that being said, I have found that those who know loss and grief are some of the most loving, kindest, compassionate people I know. And through their own journeys with loss and grief, they instinctively know what others need.

Once you walk through the fires of loss and carry the flames of grief, you change and there's no turning back.

Perspectives change. Things that once mattered no longer hold weight in your heart. The days of empty and hollow chit chat are gone. And you can't fill the painful hole that now sits in your soul.

The grieving become more aware of the fragility of life and it becomes easier to see the pain that others carry. Because you have been there.

Grief creates a universal bond through our shared experiences of loss and suddenly, you can feel another's

sorrow and pain as if it's your very own.

Perhaps you didn't get the support and compassion you so desperately needed and yet you feel pulled to help others in their time of need. You know how lonely and isolating grief can be and if



you're anything like me, you don't want anyone else to feel stranded in isolation, left to grieve completely alone.

Thank you for your kind heart. Thank you for your compassion and for offering your shoulder for others to lean on. Your grace, compassion, and brave heart are gifts in a world that is full of hurting souls.

I wish you didn't know this pain and I wish you didn't know the burn from loss and grief. But I appreciate you and I see your grief. I know it's there regardless of how long it's been.

You matter. Your grief matters. And from one griever to another, I know you walked through fire to get here.

Michele DeVille

Loss is one of the hardest things life throws at us. It can be deep and dark. It brings thoughts you've never thought and feelings you've never felt. When we're "in it," it can be so tempting to measure ourselves against who we were before the loss, looking back and longing to be that person again. Or we measure ourselves against who we want to be, where we want to get when we're "healed" from this grief.

Needless to say, it can be discouraging.

What we often fail to do is admire the steps we've taken. In our quest for where we wish we were, we miss the progress we've made from our lowest points. I would guess there is something you've managed to do this week that would have felt nearly impossible on your darkest grief day. It might have been huge. It might have been small. It doesn't matter. It matters that you acknowledge it, that you pat yourself on the back.



Camus, in an essay called "The Almond Tree," wrote, "Our task as [humans] is to find the few principles that will calm the anguish of free souls. We must mend what has been torn apart, make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more to peoples poisoned by the misery of the century. Naturally, it is a superhuman task. But superhuman is the term for tasks [we] take a long time to accomplish, that's all."

So even if you haven't found that invincible summer, even if you are still working on what it means to "give happiness meaning once more," you've probably had some moments worth pausing and appreciating. You've probably survived some days that felt un-survivable. Give yourself credit. Remind yourself that sometimes the small things are big things.

whatsyourgrief.com

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.

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:

James Oldham, in memory of his son Keith,

John and Constance Kremer, in memory of their son Jeff,

And Steve and Sharon Skelton, in memory of their son Eric.

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.**

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
Thursday, September 28, 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, October 26, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</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@maclink.com.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</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>SHARE</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>Phone Support</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"> ♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoearb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <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

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 Resources	<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>
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. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.</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 at climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

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creating a tattoo concept to represent your grief. If you've got the drawing skills, you can customize your own design or you can work with a tattoo artist to bring your concept to life.

5. Make a Shadow Box With Mementoes.

There are an infinite number of possibilities when you're making a shadow box. Create whatever miniature scene strikes your fancy. It doesn't have to be pretty, and it doesn't have to make sense. Make a representation for your inner grief or replicate a beautiful memory you have of a person you lost. Once you're finished, you'll have a lovely token to remember both the good and the bad.

6. Craft a Quilt Out of a Loved One's Clothes.

Letting go doesn't have to mean giving away everything your loved one ever owned. But to soften the blow that having so many reminders around can bring, try to convert them into something new. Take some of their old favorite clothes and cut them up into shapes for a quilt. Matching the pieces, picking out the patterns, and sewing the thing together will take time, and you can use that time to sit in all the complicated feelings of grief.

7. Experiment With Different Mediums in an Abstract Piece. Abstract expressionism was a significant art movement in the

1940s and 1950s that emulated a lot of the sentiments behind stream-of-consciousness writing. Essentially, you're unbound by convention and strict planning when making a piece of art. Take inspiration from artists like Rothko and Kooning and tap into your emotional instincts with different mediums.

Try watercolor, acrylic, charcoal, or pastels and spontaneously create something on the canvas. Be fully present in the moment and let your state of mind inform your movements.

It's All About the Process

Whether you're working through grief or creating art,



it's all about the process. For many of us, grief isn't something we can confront face to face,

but art can be a tool for us to go to those places and feel those feelings.

It's not about ignoring the grief, it's about drawing it out and experiencing it in a safe, constructive way. Because the more you befriend your grief, the easier it'll be to fully move through it.

Megan Cooper

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.



What Does Grief Do to Your Brain?

Grief can make you feel forgetful, spacey, and unable to express your thoughts. These effects are likely temporary.

Losing a loved one is a natural and universal life event, but that does not make it any easier. The death of those close to us is one of the greatest stressors we face as humans.

Grief impacts us emotionally and physically. The intensity of this loss can lead to a symptom known as grief brain. When this happens, you may find yourself having trouble sleeping, concentrating, and remembering simple things.

This symptom is a typical part of grief. For most people, it goes away by itself over time.

Feireisen

Grief can rewire our brain in a way that worsens memory, cognition, and concentration. You might feel spacey, forgetful, or unable to make “good” decisions. It might also be difficult to speak or express yourself. These effects are known as grief brain.

Acute grief refers to the symptoms a person experiences during the first six months after losing a loved one. These are usually the most intense.

Your days may involve a mixture of yearning and sadness along with constant thoughts, memories, and images of the loved one. Small tasks can feel overwhelming and exhausting.

In a typical grieving process, these symptoms tend to decrease over time. You’ll notice sharper thoughts and clearer memories coming back.

Everyone is different, and for some, grief lasts a little longer. If symptoms last longer than 12 months, it may be diagnosed as prolonged grief disorder.

Psych Central.com

The relationship between parents and their children is among the most intense in life. Much parenting centers on providing and doing for children, even after they have grown up and left home. A child’s death prevents you from carrying out your parenting role as you have imagined it, as it is “supposed” to be. You may feel an overwhelming sense of failure for no longer being able to care for and protect your child, duties that you expected to fulfill for many years.

Bereaved parents mourn the death and loss of a child of any age. It feels unnatural to outlive a child. It does not make a difference whether your child is three or thirty-three when your son or daughter dies. The emotion is the same. All bereaved parents lose a part of themselves.

Healgrief.org



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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.