



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

June, July, August 2021

Volume XXXIV, Number 6

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Over the last 16 years, I have watched my husband struggle with Father's Day. For those of us grieving the loss of a child or children, Mother's Day is much more focused. Mothers are supported and it is almost expected that we show our grief. Fathers still tend to be forgotten.

On that Sunday, I see Bill work in the backyard, creating new rows of flowers, placing quartered hosta in freshly dug up areas, enlarging the "islands" that form the perimeter of the yard with more flowers, spending the day weeding, straightening errant plants, creating a beautiful, park-like area.

In years past, the kids used to help him plant vegetables, their favorite—potatoes. Maggie was the only one though who lasted the whole day. He would dig the hole, and she would dutifully drop in a cut-up potato, row after row after row. I don't know what they talked about, but knowing Maggie, she talked nonstop, and Bill simply listened.

On regular days each week that our two-thirds of an acre needed mowing, Bill would cut the backyard with diagonal or perpendicular patterns. Once the 21" row was established, Maggie would join her father in the routine, marching on the row most recently completed making a game of following him, while the starlings dove and climbed around them both, clearing the air of the insects disturbed by the mower. In the six years she lived, daughter and dad had created their own little rituals that only they understood, and only they participated in.

Last year, fifteen springs after Maggie's death, Bill planted a handful of potatoes. This spring, he dug up room for a full bag of seed potatoes in the garden. The boys are all grown, and the backyard is absent the loud noise of children at play. I know that Bill likes to spend time alone reflecting and remembering when he works the soil. He misses his planting and mowing partner. And like many fathers, he mourns in his own way, quiet and introspective, remembering earlier times. One day in a time to come, Maggie's nieces and nephews will turn our backyard into a playground rather than a park. Her children will be missing from that collection, but not her spirit. Perhaps one of them will take up planting potatoes with her grandfather. We wish you sweet memories this Father's Day.

Sincerely,
Laurie and Bill Steinhäuser

Father's Grief

Who ache but feel they must carry on.
Who are frightened by and cannot show
their fear.

Who are angry but cannot strike out.

Who grieve but must be strong.

Who love but are afraid to show their love.

Whose tears cannot fall.

From "A Journey Together" - BP USA Newsletter

Reflection

How Men Grieve

While women are generally open with their emotions, men often keep theirs bottled up. A father may not outwardly show any sadness over the loss of his child, either because of societal pressure to be strong or the feeling that he must be there to support his wife.

Grieving Silently - Many men have been taught that they should not share their emotions or reach out for support.

They are raised to be strong in times of trouble, thus they often grieve silently. This does not mean he is not grieving - it just means he is doing it differently.

Grieving Physically - Men often express their grief physically. A grieving father may throw himself into work or projects around the house, or he may take up a hobby to keep himself occupied and avoid dealing with his emotions. He may turn to physical activity, such as playing basketball or going to the gym to get the anger out. He may avoid contact with his wife because he doesn't know how to deal with her emotions on top of his. Whatever form his grief takes, a father must be allowed to process his feelings in his own way.

Excerpted from *Father's Role in the Loss of Child* - Amy Newman

Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable to the
imagination of the unbereaved.

Iris Murdoch

When a father
gives to his son,
both laugh. When
a son gives to his
father, both cry.

William Shakespeare

Grief is a dynamic process. What worked last year might not work this year and what works this year will change next. Leave yourself open to new ways of approaching where you are. Also, if you have a tough year, don't get attached to thinking, "That's how it is going to be for the rest of my life!" Accept it as simply being a tough year and look to find ways to improve it.

Tom Summit
TCF Muscatine Iowa

Some of the most
comforting words in the
universe are, "Me too" -
that moment when you
find out that your struggle
is also someone else's
struggle, that you're not
alone, and that others
have been down the same
road.

Rita Ghatourey

Dwelling on Our Loss

To an outsider, the idea of meeting with a group of people for the purpose of discussing death, our personal experiences with the death of our children, the "grief process," etc., may seem grim if not altogether morbid. All of us who are involved in The Compassionate Friends have run into someone who has asked, "Why do you do this?" or "Why don't you just try to let it go?" The idea of "dwelling on the loss" is always stated with negative connotations, yet dwelling on the death of a child is not something we can avoid. Indeed, "dwelling" is part of the healing process. It's how we come to grips with the questions, "Why, what if...?" that uncontrollably pop up in our minds, and it is how we learn to accept the unacceptable.

Certainly, there is a wealth of information in books dealing with death and dying. Our faith, our pastors, priests, and rabbis have much to contribute to our healing. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapy may be necessary.

The Compassionate Friends encourages grieving parents to utilize any or all of the above tools, but we also realize the value of learning to verbalize,

openly, publicly, the grief and the loss we feel . . . not in the privacy of our doctor or minister's office, where we are very sheltered, but openly among people who know full well how hard it is to say, "My



child is dead." We do not put any pressure on people attending our meeting to say anything, but the beautiful part of this group is that it enables you to see people who are "down the long road" a way further and to realize that you will be there in time. Are we dwelling on our loss? Absolutely. But we are learning to dwell on it constructively, to dwell on it without guilt and without the isolation we have all felt. We learn how to reach out (in time) to others with a compassion that brings healing to others as well as to ourselves.

Philip Barker, TCF/California

Contact the Editors

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it...

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it...

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and address...

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email...

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022
or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.

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



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

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

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



e-Newsletter Now Available! An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter

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

About The Compassionate Friends

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

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Web site –

www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

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

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

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>

Filling In Holes

Today, my husband and I went to the plant nursery and bought some flowers and bedding plants to go in our gardens. Spring is here, and the weather is beautiful. Not cold at all...but also not so hot that the thought of pattering in the garden brings a groan of dismay.

I remember my first spring in this house. We were so excited. Our family was nearly complete. Our third son was on his way, and we had just had a house built. We were at the plant nursery at least once a week. Our life was busy, bright, untainted by grief.

I remember our second spring in this house. How winter hung on, tenacious, unyielding, both outside, and in our hearts. I remember the first warm spring day. I came home from work early, determined to make SOMETHING grow in my life. Maybe I couldn't get my son to live, but I was going to make something live.

Grief was a raw, open wound then, and my anger was deep. I was angry at the world, at God...at everything. And so, I approached my yard, shovel in hand. I decided I had to have a garden in the middle of my yard. I began furiously digging out the grass, making an oval in the center. It took me hours digging out that oval. But I wasn't through. I then decided I wanted a garden right by my doorway, so I dug out that area too. And then I made big holes, and tore out all the roots and stones and other junk.

I made big holes in my yard that day. And in the weeks to come I DID fill them with things. Funny thing, as I dug those holes and pulled on the grass, my anger drained away. My salty tears mixed with the sweat of exertion and the dirt and ran off my arms undetected to the outside world. Digging those holes provided an outlet for my anger and my hurt.

Today I dug some more holes. But this time, my holes were smaller. And I filled them. With small, delicate flowers, purple and white. I put bulbs in the ground too, filling other small holes. And I reflected back on another hole. The hole in my heart. No, I can't ever fill it with what "should" be there...my son "should" be almost seven now, full of energy, and wanting to plant flowers with Mom. But I have filled that hole with other things. With love and healing and memories. And with the lessons and the gifts my son gave me. I never saw those gifts that spring, as I was digging out holes in my yard. And though I would rather have that hole filled with my son's presence, I am grateful for the gifts he gave. And so I will go on, filling holes.



Lisa Sculley, TCF/Jacksonville, FL

Waiting for Answers

Years ago, I left my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends and drove home in tears. My son, Max, had died a few short weeks before, and I had been anxiously awaiting this evening. These people must have some answers, I thought. With paper and pen in purse, I was ready to take notes and do as they prescribed. I would do anything to ease the ache in my soul.

But when I walked out into the spring air later that night, I felt betrayed. I hadn't heard any answers. Instead of learning how to leave my grief behind, it had been confirmed, made more real with expression. I knew I would miss Max forever. Now I wondered if I would grieve forever. Would it always be this way, a flash of pain aligned with every memory?

During the next months and years, I attended TCF meetings and conferences, read books, raged, kept busy, sometimes spent the day in bed. I wrote, cried, and talked about Max. Slowly, I discovered the answers I had long feared were true: yes, I will grieve forever, and yes, my memories will often provoke tears. But something had changed. My grief was now more forgiving, my tears almost sweet with memory. Max's life took shape again as the anguish of his death began to recede. If I would always miss him, I would also always have him with me in so many ways. I wanted to carry his memory into the future: the joy, the lessons, and the inevitable pain. How could I do otherwise?

As I walked to my car after that first meeting, the TCF chapter leader caught up with me. "How can I stop this pain?" I asked. She put her arm on my shoulder. "Just do what feels right to you," she said, "Listen to your heart. And we'll be here to listen, too." Sometimes the best advice is none at all.

Mary Clark, TCF, Sugar Land-SW Houston Chapter, Texas

Turning Point

Dawn does not so much break as it happens.
Dark slides into light so slowly my eyes
Adjust without thought, as faint pink ribbons
Turn to streamers of orange in eastern skies.
So goes my grief with no strident fanfare.
Sadness and grieving have been all I know.
Then, for a brief moment, it is not there.
Imperceptibly then, the moments grow.
Until I laugh without guilt. Life's more worthwhile,
I don't feel as compelled to visit the grave.
I can remember some good times and I smile.
There was nothing dramatic and I have
Had no revelation, no special thing.
I just felt a bit better sometime last spring.

Richard A. Dew, M.D., from *Rachel's Cry*

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, June 24, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

**Meeting held in-person at 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois,
on the second floor. Masks and social distancing required.**

The next meetings are on July 22, August 26, and September 23, 2021.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com .
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 pm via ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic and in "normal time" in the Adler Room #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 shoearth4@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.

It's Not Unusual to...

- Feel physically exhausted, but have difficulty sleeping.
- Feel tightness in the throat, heaviness in the chest, or a lump in the stomach.
- Wander aimlessly, forget in the middle of a sentence, neglect to finish tasks.
- Feel restless, look for activity, but be unable to concentrate.
- Think you're losing your mind.
- Feel the need to take care of others who seem uncomfortable around you.
- Feel you don't want to go on.
- Say to yourself, "If only I had..."
- Keep asking, "Why?"
- Feel that the loss isn't real.
- Sense the loved one's presence by expecting him to walk in the door or phone at the usual time.
- Look for him in a crowd or see reminders unexpectedly.
- Need to tell and retell things about your loved one and the death.
- Cry at unexpected times.
- Feel able to cope but then fall back again.
- Feel depressed.

All of these reactions are natural and normal. Know that you are not alone in having them.

Ruth Eisman, Louisville, KY

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

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

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

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

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

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to bereaved families. Some of the Love Gifts are used for materials to share with attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide Love Gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue. **If you would like to send a donation or Love Gift, please send it to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806.** Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**

That First Summer Vacation

Summer time is here and with it, you may be planning a vacation. If you have recently suffered the death of your child, that first vacation can be very difficult. I would like to share with you our experience of the first time we took a vacation after our son, Paul, died, I have included some suggestions to help you through your first vacation and to help you plan around your grief.

If any of you are planning a vacation, here are some suggestions that may help:

- Be gentle with yourself. Don't expect too much on your first vacation. Remember as bereaved parents, the first time we do anything without our kids is tough whether it be going to the movies, shopping or on a vacation.
- Plan to do some grief work because you will, planned or not. Give yourself time enough on the trip if you have a bad day so that you can just do what you feel like doing.
- Know that your child will be on your mind day and night just as he or she is at home. Our grief goes with us.
- Plan to do something your child would have loved to do, but did not get a chance to. Plan this in his or her memory.
- If you plan to visit relatives for the first time since your child's death, remember they mean well even if they seem insensitive with their remarks. They have not lost a child and can't see through your eyes.
- If you have other children, remember them. They are also having a hard time coping on this vacation. Plan some activities that will be especially for them.
- Be especially careful to communicate with your spouse. Plan a vacation that is suitable for both of your needs. Remember, you are both grieving for the same child, but we all grieve differently and in our own way.
- If you have been maintaining your child's gravesite and feel guilty about leaving it unattended, let a family member or friend see to it while you are away. You need not feel guilty, and it could fill a need for one of your family.

Diana Hammock
TCF/Central Coast, CA



Father's Day is Still a Time for Celebrating...

A long time has passed since I've enjoyed a holiday or for that matter any special occasion. With Father's Day coming up shortly, I've decided that this year I'm celebrating. The kids used to love when special occasions came along. I can still remember Stef's eighth birthday, only three months before her death, and how proud she was when we told her she could invite her best friends over for a birthday party. She wore her prettiest blue trimmed party dress with the lace ruffles.

The games they played still stick in my mind. There was "Pin the Tail on the Donkey" and then "Simon Says." I remember clothes flying everywhere in a contest to see which child could put on a complete set of clothes fastest over her party clothes. I remember the hotdogs, punch and cake, the party favors. I remember Stef's giggles.

The memories also wander back to the party our family threw for Stephen's fifth birthday, only three days before the accident which also claimed his life. I still have the picture in my mind of that goofy orange cap someone had given Steve. He loved it, but it was at least two sizes too small. When he tried to put it on, the bill of the cap was up and Stephen flashed us one of those impish grins that reminds you of Spanky and our Gang.

As I'm writing this, the tears are flowing down my cheeks remembering the good times we had together.

A lot of things changed when the kids

died. Christmas, Easter, birthdays all became days other people celebrated. But not us.

I've done a lot of thinking since then. I know Stef and Steve are in a better place than I could ever imagine and that every day is a holiday for them. In my mind, I think Stef and Stephen would be sad if they felt their Mom and Dad couldn't celebrate life anymore.

Pat and I now have another son, Christopher, plus we have our fourth child on the way. We're trying to rebuild our lives and I feel we have been blessed along the way. Of course, Christopher is too young to understand Father's Day, but even without him here, I would still consider celebrating Father's Day

I can still remember the Father's Day a couple of years before Stef and Stephen died. With their mom, they had searched all over for something special for me, finally deciding on a T-Shirt that said "World's Coolest Dad." I still wear that now faded shirt occasionally despite the many grass stains and grease marks.



When Father's Day arrives, I think I'm going to pull out that old T-Shirt and wear it.

I'm going to lay down out in the grass, letting the warm breeze hit me. And I'm going to pretend I'm being caressed by Stef and Steve. I'm going to remember... and I'm going to celebrate!!!!

Wayne Loder, TCF/Lakes Area, MI

TCF National Conference 2021

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

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

