



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

April 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

We would like to share a reflection written by Becky Guens (Quad City TCF). The assignment, part of a course she was taking toward becoming a Certified Lay Leader for her denomination, was to write to her Grief. Grief's response is also in this month's newsletter. Thank you Becky for sharing this with us.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Dear Grief,

You were NEVER welcome in my life over these 65 years. Not when I lost a pet, not when I lost at love, not when I lost respect for myself or someone, not when I lost at a competition, not when I lost a job, or my keys, or cash, or friendship. It was hard enough to say goodbye to my mother (my best friend), my father, my aunt...but especially when my daughter died and left the hugest hole in my heart and soul. How dare you make me lose sight of sunny days, lose hearing the joyous laughter of children or of birds singing. How dare you disrupt my life, distance me from the people and activities that I love for a while.. you hurt me so much. Day after day, life became almost too unbearable, thanks to you. Food (which I love a LOT normally) became tasteless and unnecessary. Bedtime, which is normally a good ending to my days, became a place of no rest. The brain would not turn off.

As if you hadn't compromised me enough, as if I didn't already have more "on my plate" than any person should ever have to face, to top it all off, you compromised my autoimmune system and befell me ill.

But time has passed. I have won...haha. After going to Compassionate Friends meetings, and doing good works every day in one way or another, you began to slip away. That old me is now present and allowing you to disrupt me anymore. I have become less hardened, more determined, kinder and more appreciative...all those things and more have slipped in, pushing you aside. "And there was light, and it was good."

Sincerely, Becky



These days are the
winter of the soul, but
Spring comes and brings
new life and beauty
because of the growth
of roots in the dark.

Iris Bolton,

from *My Son, My Son*

Each bereaved parent must be allowed to mourn in his/her own way and time frame. Each person's grief is unique, even that of family members facing the same loss. Bereaved parents shouldn't expect or try to follow a specific or prescribed pattern for grief or worry if they seem out of synchrony with their partner or other grieving parents.

National SIDS Resource Center

The spirit of
those we love will
glow within our
hearts always. No
light born in love
can ever be
extinguished.

From the TCF Central
Iowa Newsletter

The loss of a loved one is often referred to as a "blow." That is exactly what it is, an emotional blow that affects the spirit the same way that a crushing blow on the head affects the body. For a while you are going to be dazed. None of your reactions will be as in normal life. In a way, this numbness is a merciful thing, because it deadens the psychic pain while it lasts, but no one who has lost a loved one should expect to feel the same as always, or apologize for behavior that is temporarily erratic or different.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale

Grief writes back

Dear Becky,

It is my job to help people heal from their losses. You like everyone else, had to experience me to heal.

I loved sneaking up on you at the most peculiar times and for many, any... or no reason at all.

At first, I sheltered you in a comfortable wrap of haze. Remember when you cried for hours and nothing seemed to matter or make sense? That was me. Remember when your memory was so awful you couldn't even remember reading a page in a book, right after you finished it? That was me. Remember when you lay awake at night, with tears running down your cheeks, because you missed Jill so much? That was me also.

But I must have spread myself too thin, because you started sharing the occurrences with others who knew me then too. You slowly started becoming a new you, and distancing yourself from me. I first noted this when you would smile at the memories of your daughter's laughter and antics, rather than bury yourself in sadness. Instead of remembering what you no longer had, you started being grateful that she had been with you.

You rejoiced at your daughter's marriage, your son's marriage, your new grandchildren's births. They all represented you continuing with a life you had been granted to keep on living.

I noted with great joy, that you wouldn't laugh for a very long time. But I remember with sadness that one day, you were at a Christmas party with your coworkers, and they played a team Reindeer game. The doctors were all wearing pantyhose antlers and red noses, singing Rudolph. It was quite a sight...seeing you bust loose and laugh till the happy tears flowed, for the first time in nearly five months. That was me too...having you get back to feeling.

I have been with you every step of the way, and I truly meant you no harm. I am not really an enemy. As my grip on you has eased, I feel confident you are going to be as fine as possible, and my job is sort of done. You continue to do good works and take care of yourself. If you need me though, I will be just around the corner. Stay well,

Sincerely, Grief.

Becky Guens, Quad City TCF



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.

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.

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.

FINDING HOPE AFTER THE DEATH OF A CHILD

In 2007 my elder daughter, the single mother of fraternal twins, died from injuries she sustained in a car crash. My daughter was 45 years old when she died, and the shock of her death will be with me forever. Six months later, the twins' father died from the injuries he received in another car crash.

Our 15-year-old grandkids moved in with us and my husband and I became their legal guardians. The twins lived with us for seven years. They graduated from high school and college with honors. My granddaughter married a minister, and they have two little boys. My grandson is a physician and graduated from the Mayo Medical School.

The twins just celebrated their 30th birthdays. As time passed, my husband and I developed an adult-to-adult relationship with them. Though my husband died in 2020, I continue to have this relationship. My grandkids know I love them, care about them, adore my great-grandkids, keep my promises, and continue to write articles and books.

Years ago, when I was dealing with questions, legal procedures, financial procedures, and being a grandmother, I found hope. Frankly, I was surprised. Overcome as I was with grief, I tried to find something positive in each day. The search was painful, challenging, and tiring, but I kept at it. How did I find hope?

My daughter was an organ donor. With permission from our twin grandchildren, my husband and I signed an agreement with an organ donor organization. An organization representative called us a few days later. "Your daughter saved three lives," she said, "and because of her one will see." In a sense my daughter lives on.

Friends and strangers showered us with kindness. At the time, Rochester, Minnesota (my hometown), had a population of about 90,000 people. Because my husband and I were active in the community, we received hundreds of cards from friends, people we barely knew, and strangers. Though some of the comments on the cards make me cry, I was comforted by them and felt less alone.

Memorials in memory of my daughter gave me hope. At the end of my daughter's obituary, memorials to Mayo Clinic were suggested. The checks we received added up to a sizeable donation to Mayo Clinic, which tried so hard to save our daughter's life. Helping Mayo Clinic carry out its mission gave me hope then and gives me hope now.

The twins understood their mother's values. The twins talked about their mother's values immediately after she died. "Even when Mom disciplined us, she was never angry," my grandson recalled. "Mommy always tried to make people smile," my granddaughter shared. The twins knew their mother

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wanted them to go to college and my husband and I helped make this dream a reality.

Signs of spring gave me hope. Warmer weather melted the piles of snow around our house. I was surprised to see green grass beneath the snow. The birch trees in the side yard began to bud. I was really excited to see my first robin and hear its warbling song. The changing seasons gave me hope and I tried to enjoy each one.

Support groups and friends ignited hope. I participated in a church support group for a few months. Later, I joined The Compassionate Friends and found others who understood my story, didn't recoil from it, and had helpful suggestions. Though I'm unable to attend every monthly meeting, I benefit from the meetings I attend. I know TCF members have my back.

I made good things from grief. A week after my daughter died, I sat down at the computer and poured out my soul with words. Writing about grief was my way of coping with it. This led to dozens of grief healing articles and 11 books. In the long run, helping others helped me. Grief expanded my empathy and made me appreciate the miracle of life.

Hope seems like an unattainable goal, yet it becomes visible in articles and books, support from those who understand your journey, changing seasons, living a loved one's values, memorials in memory of your child, and the kindness of family, friends, and strangers. Believe in hope for it will find you. Hope will lead you to a new and rewarding life.

Harriett Hodgson

Miscarriage—The Unrecognized Tragedy

Though it's been almost three years since I experienced a miscarriage, it still evokes painful memories. My husband and I had two healthy daughters at the time and were eagerly anticipating the arrival of our third child. The little one was to complete our family.

But at 18 weeks gestation, things went awry, and we lost our wee son. I remember experiencing an overwhelming feeling of emptiness as I left the hospital without our baby. Denial, then shock, sadness and anger caused anguish over the "whys?" and "what ifs?" It wasn't long before I found out how miscarriage may be trivialized as an insignificant occurrence.

My physician, who had not been present when I delivered the baby, confronted me a few hours later. "It was a boy," I sobbed. "Oh," she remarked in an offhanded way, "I didn't see it." I vividly remember my anger toward her nonchalant manner and the way she referred to him as an "it." Don't you know that was our baby, our little son?, I thought. Please don't minimize our loss.

"You have other children at home, don't you?" she continued. Yes, I was screaming inside, but don't you realize that each child is unique and special in his or her own right? Having two at home doesn't in any way lessen the sorrow I feel for this baby. "Go home and enjoy your summer," she added later. "You can start trying again in another three months." Enjoy my summer?! This miscarriage had literally knocked me off my feet. There I was, an adult mother of two, reduced to tears whenever I saw a pregnant woman or new baby. (They seemed to be everywhere I went!) There was no denying the intense emotions I felt. My husband and daughters, as well, were trying to deal with the loss in their individual ways. Even though I tried, it was not an enjoyable summer. Life didn't automatically revert back to normal. Yet my heartache was misunderstood not only by my physician, but also by others as well. I was given the impression that it was inappropriate and even abnormal to be mourning. There was a conflict between the way I actually felt and the way society

expected me to feel. I began to think I must be losing it.

Fortunately, I had a deep need to find out all I could about miscarriage. I read avidly, attended support group meetings and talked to other women who had been through a similar experience. I was relieved to find out that my reactions were healthy and normal. Until then, I didn't know that I was going through the grieving process. The tears, along with the questioning, the heart-to-heart talks with my family and friends, and the memorial service to say good bye to our baby all helped me to heal.

A loss is a loss. Just because it's named "miscarriage" doesn't mean that it's insignificant. Nothing has ever affected me so deeply...Though the deep sorrow I felt has since subsided, I realize that I'll never completely "get over" him. There are still times that I long to hold our son, to watch him grow, to love him...I know I'll never forget

Sara Winslow

Bereavement Magazine,
Colorado Springs, CO
grief@bereavementmag.com

Helping others ... as we help ourselves.
Healing others ... as we heal ourselves.
Touching others .. as our children touched us.
Sharing our pain ... as our pain makes us strong.
Remember our joys ... as our joys help us to endure.
... And
life
goes
on...



Julie Samples - TCF Louisville, KY

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois 61265 (NEW ADDRESS)

The next monthly meeting of the chapter is

Thursday, May 25 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@machlink.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>

Pat Cleans House

The smell of spring is in the air! At your house, it's probably lilacs, lilies, and hollyhocks, but at my house, it's Lysol, Lemon Pledge, and Clorox. These fragrances are the harbingers of my favorite secular celebration, Spring Cleaning. I admit it, friends: I love to clean! A great cook I'm not, but I'll pit my toilets against any in Southeast Texas. Truly, I am most content when all my appliances are whirring, grinding, sloshing, and humming, and hot water is running in at least two sinks.

I learned the joys of tidiness at my mother's knee. She is Norwegian, and for centuries, the women in her family have dedicated their lives cleanliness. When my brothers and I were growing up, we had the cleanest house, the neatest yard, the shiniest faces, and the best-groomed cats on the block. In my high school yearbook next to my picture it says, "Pat sure is clean." Having the Scandinavian Heloise for a mother, how could I have been otherwise?

Early in my indoctrination, my mother taught me the old Norwegian expression, "Ingen kysten skogen mogen!" which loosely translated means, "When in doubt, toss it out!" I still remember when Mom pitched a grimy, smelly old baseball cap that was a souvenir of my dad's tour of duty on the U.S.S. Ticonderoga during World War II. As it turned out, this wasn't just any old cap. Admiral of the Navy "Bull" Halsey had taken it off HIS VERY OWN HEAD and given it to my dad. Judging from Dad's reaction, there was some sentimental attachment to that cap that lingered along with the smell.

I'm pretty sentimental myself, but until recently, I was never a saver of things. I figured they'd just add to the clutter and catch dust. That changed when Blake died. I found I couldn't part with anything his

little hands might have touched, from his childish scribbles, to lucky rocks, to plastic dinosaurs. Shortly after he died, I went through all of Blake's clothes and gave away his newest and "Sunday best." The things I saved were his play clothes – shorts and shirts with the mud and pizza stains that never quite came out, his favorite pajamas, his Charlie Brown underwear. My mother and I gently packed them away in tissue paper, as if they were the finest silks and linens. Sometimes when I open that drawer, I think I catch a sniff of Blake's musky little boy scent. The yearning it awakens in me is almost more than I can bear.

This spring, in conjunction with my usual cleaning frenzy, I'm thinking of getting rid of some of the junk I've accumulated since Blake died – stuff I've lugged around, but really don't need anymore. I'm going to call my favorite helpful hardware man and ask him to bring home the biggest box in his warehouse. Into that box, I'm going to chunk the following:

1. That residual bitterness toward those who said or did he wrong thing, or worse, nothing.
2. The vestiges of anger that surprise me when they still crop up from time to time.
3. That awful anxiety about my surviving children and other loved ones.
4. That old bugaboo guilt, for all I should have said, or done, or been.

Friends, this is going to have to be a gigantic box! I'm probably going to need a dolly to get it out to the street so the garbage men can pick it up. Maybe I'll just let it sit in the garage for a while so I can look in it from time to time and think about how far I've come. Better yet, perhaps I'll just dump everything into the recycling bin. Who knows? Something valuable might emerge from all that pain.

Pat Dyson TCF, Beaumont, TX

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

July 7, 2023 - July 9, 2023

Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 46th Annual National Conference in Denver CO will be an enriching and supportive event for newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heart-breaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

Unique and cherished highlights of the conference include the Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. The weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

Reservations can now be made online for the conference and hotel rooms for Sheraton Denver Downtown at TCF's dedicated reservation link. TCF's discounted room rate with the Sheraton is \$159 per night plus tax. Each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. Pre-conference activities are offered on Thursday evening.

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.



Daily Meditation

One of the things so astonishing and costly about losing a loved one is that, while the sun continues to rise and set, newspapers continue to be delivered, traffic lights still change from red to green and back again, our whole life is turned around and upside down. Is it any wonder we feel disoriented, confused? Yet the people we pass on the street are going about their business as though no one's world has been shaken to the core, as though the earth has not opened and swallowed us up, dropped us into a world of insecurity and change.

It is, as Emily Dickinson says, "a new road" – for us as surely as for the one we have lost. It will take us time to learn to walk that road.

Time and a lot of help, so we don't stumble and fall irretrievably. Those who have had their own experience of loss will probably be our most helpful guides – knowing when to say the right word, when to be silent and walk beside us, when to reach out and take our hand. In time, we will be helpers for others.

I have entered a new country. I will be patient with myself. I will look for companions on the way.



Martha Whitmore Hickman
From Working through Grief.

MEDITATION

Birth is a beginning and death a destination.
And life is a journey; from childhood to maturity
And youth to age; from innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing; from foolishness to discretion
And then, perhaps to wisdom; from weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness — and often, back again;
From health to sickness and back, we pray, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness, from joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion, and grief to understanding —
From fear to faith; from defeat to defeat to defeat —
Until, looking backward or ahead, we see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way, but in having made the journey.
Stage by stage, a sacred pilgrimage,
Birth is a beginning and death a destination,
And life is a journey. A sacred pilgrimage to life everlasting.

Gates of Repentance Prayerbook Meditation for the Jewish High Holy Days



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Bethany
for Children & Families

1830 6th Avenue
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.