



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Quad City Area Chapter*

**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

**February 2024**

Volume XXXVII, Number 2

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**During** the fellowship time following our daughter's funeral, a mom acquaintance placed her infant daughter in my arms without asking if I wanted to hold her baby. I think she thought I needed to get back on the horse and move on. Thankfully I was too shocked to drop the little girl, but just stood there stupidly, wondering what to do and thinking how much heavier this baby felt than Anna.

A mom, whose surviving twin spent hours each day wailing, was asked by a friend, "Do you think the 'good twin' died?"

I am sure each one of us has stories of things well-meaning friends or acquaintances have done or said, because they did not know what to say or do. After our child has died, the people in our lives usually don't know what to say or do. They may be scared to say or do the wrong thing. Fear may also drive them into silence, saying or doing nothing, which can leave the griever feeling alone and abandoned. In this month's newsletter is a list of do's and don'ts for supporting a grieving parent. You may want to share a copy with close friends and family. They do want to help. They just don't know how.

*Sincerely,*  
Jerry and Carol Webb

One must grieve, and one must go through periods of numbness that are harder to bear than grief. Otherwise, scar tissue will seal off the wound and no growth will follow. To grow, to be reborn, one must remain vulnerable – open to love but also hideously open to the possibility of more suffering.

Anne Morrow Lindberg



Grief has tremendous power over our lives.

The pain of anger or guilt or a need for revenge is a perfectly

natural response to death, especially in the early weeks and months afterwards. But when those feelings persist, they block our ability to heal. Writing in *Seventy Times Seven* about living through a horrible, painful experience like the death of a child, Johann Christoph Arnold suggests peace of heart cannot be found until we can experience forgiveness – of ourselves and of others.

From an address by Madeleine Hill,  
April 13, 1998

## Reflection

### Reminder

Did you wake up in the morning with tears in your heart?

Did you say to yourself, "I should not feel like crying, not like this, every morning?"

But you do know the truth, don't you?

When life deals us such a tragic blow, such enormous damage, we need many mornings to recover.

We need more than a few moments to heal.

Take for yourself the grace of one quiet healing-step at a time.

Trying to rush the work of grief will slow down your renewal.

You only need remember that you will recover some day.

You only need to remember that we all have our own pace, and we all move in our own measure.

Healing takes time.

Sascha Wagner

We are still looking for the right way to express that we think we are doing well enough under the circumstances, while also acknowledging that life won't ever be as good as it once was. At least, even at our happiest moments to come, we will always know that someone is missing. We anticipate that our joys will always have at least an element of sorrow in them. That's not to say that we don't experience joy now and won't in the future – we are neither miserable nor fatalistic. But it is to say that it's in life's best times that we expect to most feel Nick's absence. Grief is tricky that way.

Tim Challies

# Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us. But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together—and to our present relationship.

Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me. When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside

me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I'll hear his voice: "Pay attention, Mom." (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

**Catharine (Kitty) Reeve, TCF Marin and San Francisco Chapters, CA**

**In memory of my son, Philip.  
Reprinted with permission.**



**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](mailto:NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org)

**Website:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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.

## ***The Promise of Spring***

When February comes, there is finally an end in sight to the long winter. Sometimes melting snow reveals the green tips of an early crocus or even the exquisite blossom itself, a soft flower of hope invading a harsh landscape of graying snow and biting wind and ominous sky – a small promise of new life to come.



My heart, grieving for my son who died, was like that image of winter. For somehow, even during the darkest, coldest moments, an unexpected sign of hope would intrude. And as the hours and days and months dragged on, my heart finally learned once again to be open to the promise of new life. Painful memories melted into loving ones. Life that seemed forever dormant once again sprang forth from my heart.



In living hopefully and lovingly, the season of the heart can change. The loving memories of your child, like the flower in the snow, can be the beginning of the end of winter.

**Maryann Kramer  
TCF, Arlington Heights, IL**

## ***Hope***

My heart has been broken.  
My soul has been crushed.  
My mind has gone to depths I never knew existed.  
Places where only God,  
In His most infinite Love, could understand.  
And even He could not console me at times.  
But I am here on earth,  
For whatever reason I still do not know:  
And I have hope that, in time,  
God will show me the way  
And give rhyme to my reason.  
So I wait in hope for a future  
And a new beginning.



**Kathleen Leeper, TCF Valley Forge, PA**

## Things TO SAY to a Bereaved Parent (please use)

**DO** allow them to express as much grief and unhappiness as they are able and are willing to share with you.

**DO** allow them to talk about their loss as much and as often as they want to.

**DO** be available to listen, to run errands, to help with the other children, or whatever else seems needed at the time.

**DO** deal with the grieving individual gently and positively.

**DO** encourage them to be patient with themselves and not to expect too much of themselves.

**DO** encourage them to not impose any "shoulds" or "I should be" on themselves.

**DO** give special attention to the child's brothers and sisters at the funeral and in the months to come (they are often in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give).

**DO** let your genuine concern and caring show.

**DO** offer specific help such as running errands, helping complete tax or medical forms, or helping to go through their loved one's belongings.

**DO** recognize that grieving has no time limit and varies from individual to individual both in the way they express their grief and the time required to stabilize.

**DO** talk about your memories of the deceased child and the special qualities that made the child endearing.

**DO** tell the family how sorry you are about the child's death and about the pain they must be feeling.

**DO** acknowledge the death through visits, phone calls, sympathy cards, donations, and flowers.

**DO** remember important days such as birthdays, the death anniversary, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and any other significant day, which may be difficult for the bereaved. A telephone call, visit, or card means a great deal to a bereaved parent.

**DO** make specific offers to help, i.e., "I am going to the store. What do you need? Can I

take your kids on Sunday afternoon? On Thursday I will be bringing by dinner for the family. I will take your child to skating lessons on Sunday. Can I come and baby-sit tomorrow evening to give you a break?"

**DO** you want to get out tonight to talk, walk, or both?

**DO** call. Call often. When you call the bereaved, ask, "How are you doing today?"

**DO** appreciate that your bereaved relative or friend doesn't always return phone calls right away.

**DO** appreciate that nothing you say will ever make the bereaved parent sadder than the reality of what has happened to their child.

**DO** remember that when you phone, even if it is to only leave a message, the bereaved feel comforted by your efforts.

**DO** continue to support bereaved parents well beyond the acute mourning period, even if it means years.

**DO** congratulate the bereaved on good news while appreciating that they still carry a tremendous burden of grief.

**DO** be sensitive that being in the presence of other children of similar age to the deceased may make the bereaved parent uncomfortable.

**DO** give the bereaved time to resume the activities they participated in before their loss.

**DO** know that effort of any kind is appreciated. Learn how to give good hugs. The bereaved need every heartfelt hug they can get.

**DO** expect your relationship with the bereaved to change. When you are bereaved, every relationship is affected in one way or another.

**DO** share your own good news with the bereaved. They still want to hear it.

**DO** say any of the following: Call me at any time if you ever need to talk. I can't begin to imagine how you feel. I am so sorry for your loss.

## Things NOT TO SAY to a Bereaved Parent (please use)

**DON'T** avoid mentioning their loss or the child's name out of fear of reminding them of their pain (they haven't forgotten it!).

**DON'T** change the subject when they mention their dead child.

**DON'T** tell them what they should feel or do.

**DON'T** avoid the bereaved parents because you are uncomfortable (being avoided by friends adds pain to an already painful experience).

**DON'T** let your friends, family, or co-workers grieve alone. There is a tremendous sense of isolation and abandonment during the grief process. You can help by caring, by being there, and by being the best friend you can.

**DON'T** make any comments that in any way suggest that their loss was their fault.

**DON'T** point out that at least they have their other children (children are not interchangeable; they cannot replace each other).

**DON'T** say, "Your loved one is waiting for you over there." "God wanted him." "It was God's will." "God knows best."

**DON'T** say, "You can always have another child."

**DON'T** say, "You should be coping or feeling better by now," or anything else which may seem judgmental about their progress in grieving.

**DON'T** say that you know how they feel (unless you've experienced their loss yourself, you probably don't know how they feel).

**DON'T** suggest that they should be grateful for their other children. Grief over the loss of one child does not discount the parents' love and appreciation of their living children.

**DON'T** tell them not to cry. It hurts us to see them cry and makes us sad. But, by telling them not to cry, we are trying to take their grief away.

**DON'T** try to find something positive (e.g., a moral lesson, closer family ties, etc.) about the loss.

**DON'T** allow your own fears from preventing you from offering support to the

bereaved.

**DON'T** fear that bringing up the dead child's name will create sadness.

**DON'T** say, "If you need anything call me," because the bereaved don't always know how to call and ask for your support.

**DON'T** be afraid if you make your bereaved friend or relative cry.

**DON'T** think that good news (family wedding, pregnancy, job promotion, etc.) cancels out grief.

**DON'T** have expectations for what bereaved parents should or should not be doing at different times in their grief.

**DON'T** forget the overlooked mourners (grandparents, uncles, aunts, close friends, etc.) who need your support too.

**DON'T** force bereaved people to talk about their loss. They will engage you when the time is right.

**DON'T** find yourself saying any of the following: "It was God's will." "It was meant to be." "He's in a better place now." "Time heals all wounds." "I know just how you feel." "You are still young enough to have more children." "Are you not over it yet?" "At least you have other children. "It was for the best." "Now you will have an angel in heaven." "It could have been worse." "It's been \_\_\_ amount of time, and you have to get on with your life."

**DON'T** expect grieving parents to be strong and don't compliment them if they seem to be strong.

**DON'T** be afraid of reminding the parents about the child. They haven't forgotten.

**DON'T** be afraid to cry or laugh in front of the bereaved.

**DON'T** assume that when a grieving parent is laughing, they are over anything or grieving any less.

**DON'T** wait until you know the perfect thing to say. Just say whatever is in your heart or say nothing at all. Sometimes just being there is comfort enough.

**DON'T** underestimate the impact of grief on children. Children understand and retain a lot more than they may show.

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting  
February 22, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.  
Bethany for Children & Families  
1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois (second floor)  
The next chapter meeting is on March 28, 2024 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 852 Middle Road (Vera French), in Bettendorf, Iowa, 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>♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com</li> <li>♥ Judy Delvechio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</li> </ul> <p>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.</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>

## The one phrase we hear

more than any other is, “It will take time for you to get over your child’s death.” We know that this is spoken with care and love. But little do we know at the beginning of our grief just what time

means: the first time, the day time, the night time, the last time,



all of these times. The one thing we can say is “Take it.” Take all the time you need. Grief is hard work and we need to take the time for all of the aspects we talk so much about and really work through it.

Take the time to feel—it is hard, but worth it. We can’t just push those feelings aside because they are part of who we are, how we have managed, and the life we have had. All of our life experiences combine to affect our feelings.

Take the time to talk. Talk to anyone who seems to care about you. Ask your friends and family if they will take the time to listen. If you need a telephone listener, call the National Office. We have time to listen.

Take the time to read. When you read the experience of others, you will realize that you are not alone. Maybe a special book will help you understand what is happening to you during this time we call bereavement.

Take the time to read and re-read the paragraphs or chapters that help.

Take the time to physically take

care of yourself. If you like to walk, jog, or run, go out and use that time to help you feel better. Get enough rest, take the time to sleep late some days, or go to bed earlier if you need to. Sleeping may be an escape, but if it helps you, take the time for an extra few hours. Take care of yourself by eating better. Try to understand that food gives you some energy. Food is better for you than drugs or alcohol. A small weight gain or loss is not unusual. Take the time to understand what is happening to your body.

Take the time to be angry or guilty without letting these feelings ruin your life. You may think that your life is ruined anyhow and who cares, but anger and guilt turned inward can destroy your self-esteem faster than anything. Take time to sort through these feelings and acknowledge them, then let them go.

Know that when someone says, “It will take time,” we can nod and try to accept that as part of our getting through these days, months, and years.

Remember that someday you will take the time to help someone else and that time will be the most satisfying time of all.

**Therese Goodrich,**  
former Executive Director,  
The Compassionate Friends





Love Gifts

If

If

If

If



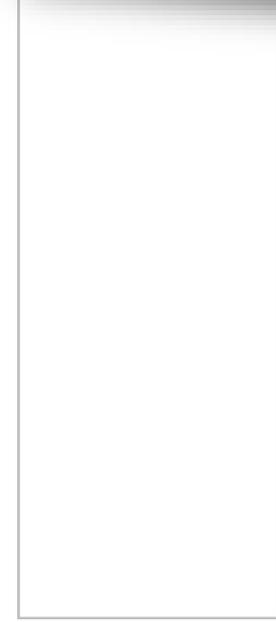
**The Compassionate Friends**  
*Quad City Area Chapter*  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois 61265

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No.190  
Rock Island, Illinois

Return Service Requested



**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.***