



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

April 2024

Volume XXXVII, Number 4

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This morning, the youth band was leading worship at our church. Our granddaughter plays the piano and sings. She told me she would be leading the song, "Goodness of God." This is a song I love. When I first heard it, my dear friend had already been diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic cancer. For me, the song was a beautiful summary of my friend's life of trusting God and even more so as she walked through the valley of cancer treatment. Kathy asked for "Goodness of God" to be played at her funeral. Ever since Kathy got sick, I have difficulty making it through some of our church's worship songs without tears streaming down my face. Since she died, there are some songs I cannot get beyond the opening chords before my throat gets tight and the tears begin to flow. While I love to hear Hannah lead worship, I wondered how I would manage singing along as she sang this special song. As the song began, I made it through two lines before I had to stop and try to stem the tide. Jerry reached out and put his arm around me, drawing me close. I watched Hannah, wishing I could sing the words that remind me so much of my friend. Then a hand reached over and enveloped my hand in hers. A friend sitting next to us who knows my sorrow was sharing her strength with me. A few lines more into the song and I was singing joyously with the rest of the congregation. "I will sing of the goodness of God." We stayed for the next service to hear the band again and this time I started at the beginning and was able to sing every precious word, my grief eased by the loving touch of two people who care a great deal for me and are walking with me in this grief. May we all have such compassionate friends to walk beside us.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Grief is in two parts.
The first is loss. The
second is the
remaking of life.

Anne Roiphe



When we realize what we have lost and that there is nothing we can do to reverse the situation, we have the choice of spending the rest of our life lamenting what we lost, or spend the rest of our life giving thanks for what we have been given, then turning in hope to what He who gave us good, old days might yet do in giving us good, new days.

Rev. John Claypool

I found people who tried to cope with my tragedy by giving me explanations of why it happened were not helpful... Like every other grieving person, I wondered why. But although I had a world of questions, I did not find any final consolation in any intellectual answers I came up with, nor did I find any particular help in those well-meaning people who tried to resolve the issue by offering explanations of why it happened. Even if we did have the capacity to fully understand, this would not touch the real core of our anguish. We still must deal with how we go on living with the empty chair at the table.

Rev. John Claypool

Writing enables me to express my grief. It gives me someplace to put those forever swirling thoughts and feelings in my mind. Writing can be a very good form of therapy and often what appears on my paper I didn't even know was running riot in my mind.

Sara Millen

I can be grateful for all I have, while also feeling grief for all I've lost.

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

What Do I Do with My Child's Things?

This is a problem that faces all bereaved parents. We discuss it from time to time at our meetings.

Some of us keep the child's room just as it was before the death. We don't want anything touched or moved.

Some of us find solace in giving things away to close friends or relatives. Knowing that someone we love is wearing our child's clothes or playing with his or her toys brings us comfort.

Some of us find we can deal with only a few items at a time: clothes, one month; books another; perhaps toys, a few months later.

Some of us find that as time goes on and we would have gotten rid of the things anyway, it becomes easier. For instance, after a while we realize that if the child were still alive, he or she would have outgrown the clothes. Then it's easier to give them away.

Or he would have graduated from college this year and therefore would no longer use the study desk or clock radio. We can give these things away in the normal time sequence.

The important thing is not to let others rush us into doing something before we are ready and not to let ourselves feel guilty about the amount of time it takes us to make decisions.

When the time is right and the decision is right for us, we'll know what to do.

Nancy Mower

Such a Beautiful Day... Why Am I crying?

This is a question that comes up every spring, particularly from the more newly bereaved. Spring is something we have always looked forward to, before tragedy hit. The cold, drab, bleak winter is finally over. Somehow, we thought that magical time would free us from our pain. Unfortunately, not so! It seems to have the opposite effect.

Perhaps it is because we see this beauty unfolding, and our child is not here to share it. The devastating knowledge that the "magic" of spring didn't change our feelings. The fact that the world seems to go on, just as if nothing had happened, when our world seems to have stopped, seems impossible to comprehend. False expectations. What we tend to forget is that though the seasons change, where we are in our grief cycle is what controls our feelings. Just hold on to the fact that spring is a rebirth of what seems dead, as dead as you feel now. It is true, you will never stop missing your son or daughter; however, hold on to the hope and belief that your spring will come again, too. When it does, it will be different. Just as the trees and flowers aren't the same, you won't be either. But their beauty is still there, and as you start to come back to life again, you will find different joys in life again. We each run on a different calendar, so no time frame can be put on your spring. Just know that your feelings are perfectly normal. It may seem that you are back at square one, but look back, remember what it really was like at the beginning, and I think you will realize there has been progress, and there will be more.

**Mary Ehman
TCF Valley Forge, PA**

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.

As bereaved parents, we often wonder if anyone remembers our child. Life goes on around us, and after a time it seems that we are the only ones who still miss his presence and feel his absence. It begins to seem that our child lived and died without anyone noticing.

But no one lives, however briefly, who doesn't affect the lives of many people. Don't be afraid to ask others to share a memory they have of your child. You might find some real treasures in unexpected places.

Linda Moffatt, TCF St. Louis, MO

SOMETIMES

Sometimes memories are like rain showers sprinkling down upon you, catching you unaware. And then they are gone, leaving you warm and refreshed.

Sometimes, memories are like thunderstorms beating down upon you, relentless in their downpour. And then they will cease, leaving you tired and bruised.

Sometimes, memories are like shadows, sneaking up behind you, following you around. Then they disappear, leaving you sad and confused.

Sometimes, memories are like comforters, surrounding you with warmth, luxuriously abundant. And sometimes they stay, wrapping you in contentment.

Marcia Upsyke, from – *Helping Each Other Through the Seasons of Grief*

THE COWARDLY BRAIN

Your child dies, and because of that trauma, you need for all your systems to go on automatic pilot, without any prompting from you, and function more perfectly than ever before. You find, instead, that your brain, the coward, chooses this time to say, "Excuse me, I have been traumatized here and am no longer capable of concentrating, comprehending, remembering, maintaining any kind of organized pattern, or making good decisions. I really am not functioning well, so if you will excuse me, I think I will go on leave for a while, and when I am better, I will be back. And oh, by the way, I am leaving your emotions in charge while I am gone."

Your emotions, not having had much experience in being totally in control, prove not to be good leadership material. You find yourself reacting in strange ways to odd situations. The people around you, who have not had your experience and who already may be doubting your sanity, now become thoroughly convinced that you are in desperate need of long-term mental treatment. You may find yourself agreeing

with their assessment of the situation, for those first months of emotion-controlled patterns are easily confused with mental illness. How many times have you said, "I think I am losing my mind?" I hope it is a comfort for you to know that your brain has not gone forever. You will find that before it returns to stay, it will check in from time to time for brief visits. When you find yourself acting rationally for a change, maybe even remembering your own name, for example, just say to yourself, "It must have been my brain on a test run." On the other hand you may have a day when you ride around all day with your emergency brake on, or pass the exit that you've used for the past fifteen years. If that happens, just know that your grey matter is not in touch at all that day. Your emotions do not know anything about brakes or exits, you see.

Rest assured, however, that one day when you and it have had the necessary time to recover some of your lost functions, you and your brain will again become one and go about the business of continuing with your life.

Mary Cleckley, Jack's Mom, TCF Atlanta, GA

When Grief is New

In the very early days of grief, my children and I searched the internet for advice. How do we do this grief thing? What will we feel? How long will it last? Some resources were better than others, but few stood out. We wished someone had focused on the first few weeks to guide us through the fog and help us understand that what we were experiencing was “normal.” Here are some tips and insights on what you might experience during your first weeks of raw grief.

- ♥ Numbness – this is an odd sensation; you have lost a loved one, but it hasn’t sunk in, and you can question your own grief response. It’s the mind’s way of slowly adjusting to the reality and protecting you from the full force of the pain of your loss.
- ♥ Exhaustion both physically and emotionally – that can be so bad that it knocks you off your feet. Go with what your body is telling you and don’t feel guilty or lazy by doing so. Take regular naps or sofa rests and be aware that you can wake up from a full night’s sleep and still feel like you could do with another eight hours.
- ♥ The days seeming endless – each day, especially pre-funeral, can feel ridiculously long. You just will the clock to move faster and are ready for pyjamas at 6:00 p.m.
- ♥ Memory and concentration disappear – no, you are not going mad, your brain is overwhelmed and likely won’t perform sharply for many months. Write things down, use calendars, lists, and notebooks. Use speaker phone to jointly attend
- important calls or meetings so you can share the load of remembering details.
- ♥ Nutrition is vital – nausea, an upset stomach and anxiety can impact appetite. We used food as a way to come together, keeping occupied in joint preparation and reflecting on our day in a less intense way over a meal. Saying that, eat and prepare only what you can manage. If you need to rely on frozen meals or takeaways for a while, then that’s better than going without.
- ♥ Getting outside – being cooped up in the house can drive you mad but you might dread bumping into people. Drive to a different area and blow the cobwebs away. Simple walks, the wind in your hair, and the impact of nature and open spaces give a different perspective. Walking alongside one another reduces the intensity of conversation and the less vocal are more likely to share their thoughts and feelings as you stroll.
- ♥ Downtime – reading and watching TV can be a struggle, your mind hasn’t the capacity. Triggers are everywhere and make viewing popular shows uncomfortable. Keep to safe options – basic quizzes, house makeovers, wildlife or cooking shows, or re-watch old favourites that you know the content of well.
- ♥ Meeting up with family and friends – go with your gut instinct and set boundaries. Are you ready to see people and on what terms? Many will be keen to support you but consider if the meet-up will benefit you or not. People will understand if you need more time.
- ♥ We visited relatives who fed us, and

we could leave when we were ready. We met elderly relatives in the park for a short, less intense time. Walks with friends were also a more comfortable way to meet and chat than sitting face-to-face. Whenever you decide to meet up with others, the first time will



undoubtedly be nerve-wracking – even if they are close friends or relatives – but it gets easier each time after that.

- ♥ Alcohol – don't judge yourself, drinking more alcohol than usual can help as a short-term measure, especially for dropping off to sleep and numbing painful thoughts. Set yourself a time frame to revert to normal levels.
- ♥ Journaling – grab your mobile phone or a simple notebook and start documenting in the early days. Life becomes a blur – it helps down the line to be able to recall feelings, important details, and milestones. In the moment, it helps you to reflect and unpick what you're feeling. Journaling has been shown to be as useful as therapy, especially for those who don't find talking about their feelings easy.
- ♥ Messaging – receiving texts or messages on WhatsApp or social media can be overwhelming and bring a reality that your numbness can't relate to. You can feel a pressure to respond. A simple heart

or thank you can be a holding message. Getting others to coordinate responses is useful. My partner fielded my friends, so they were able to keep in touch without direct contact when I wasn't up to it.

- ♥ Indulge those pets – savour their unconditional love and company that doesn't involve deep conversation or awkward silences. Having to get up to feed them each day also helps with routine. They often sense changes and bring you the tactile comfort you desperately need.
- ♥ Getting the balance – don't be afraid to smile or laugh if it feels right in the moment. I was trying to transfer my son's Spotify account and was asked to send a photo of his ID but instead sent customer services a bunch of my random holiday pics (told you your brain won't be performing sharply)! When I realised what I'd sent, it was a moment of pure, raucous laughter. And it felt right. I still laugh about it now.
- ♥ Grief changes as you emerge from the initial numb stage. Some things get easier, others get harder as the reality of your loss sinks in and people around you move back into their regular routines, as you try to figure out where you go from here. Extra torment can come from judging or rushing your own grieving process. Being kind and patient with yourself is one of the best things you can do at every stage.

**Suzanne Howes,
TCF United Kingdom**

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

April 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois (second floor)

The next chapter meeting is on May 23, 2024, 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 Snyder and Hallenbaugh Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa, Chapter. The contact person is Tom Summit, 563.506.0103.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</p>	<p>Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages three to 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 p.m. and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 p.m. 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>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 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <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

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>

YOU CAN SURVIVE

Recently, a dear friend of mine lost her son to suicide. Unfortunately, this brought back memories of the loss of my two sons. The questions were there as my friend cried, “Why?” I couldn’t tell her why: all I could say was that she may never know.

Why did my son take his life? Why was his older brother killed at work? These are questions to which I have never found the answers. I don’t believe that God is a cruel God so I can’t blame Him. Accidents happen, and sometimes surviving siblings take their lives. I was lucky to have my boys as long as I did. I value every memory, every picture.

I don’t have the answers but I do know how to survive. I’ve found that talking with someone with whom you feel “safe” is a good thing. Writing about my loss has been a tremendous help and I am so grateful for the Compassionate Friends newsletter. In that venue, I felt “safe” in baring my soul. I walked and talked with a dear friend who later told me that he couldn’t understand a word I said because I was crying so hard...but you know what? It didn’t matter because he listened!



Surviving the loss of a child requires a lot of grief work. I wrote and talked and read until I was exhausted every night. Since there is emotional and physical pain and aching, sleep is so important at this time. Get in the shower and let the rush of water wash away your tears, your aches, the feeling that no one in the world knows how deeply you are hurting. The shower is a “safe” place, where no one hears your sobs, and no one asks questions or tries to express sympathy with words that mean nothing to you right now.

The one thing that is most important in recovery is that you need to feel “safe” whether talking, reading, crying, screaming, or sleeping. Talk to that trusted friend. Let the shower wash away your pain. Take care of yourself. Let your caring friends hug you. Let the reading of other parents’ losses make you aware that you are not alone. They’ve already gone through it and survived. So can you...

I enjoy Life; I appreciate Life so much more. Life is good!

Joan Conley, TCF/Kamloops
In memory of my two sons, Jim and Jeff
TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Then there was Graham, our neighbor, who had lost his teenage son in India four years earlier. I asked him how he was doing, and he said that he was accommodating to it. I thought about this a lot. Accommodating. Not getting over, or moving beyond, or turning the page – all of which sounded wrong to me, almost disloyal. But accommodating. It sounded strange to say, but it felt right.



A few days later, I saw a tree growing in a hedgerow near our house. I looked closer at its large roots, extending

down around an enormous boulder and into the ground. And this is what I realized Graham meant by accommodating. The large boulder lies there forever, cold, inert, but somehow the tree had found a way to build a life around it.

Thomas Harding
TCF United Kingdom

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 our bereaved families, for the materials shared at our meetings, and/or to purchase books for our library. Thank you to the many families who provide love gifts so 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, IA 52806.** Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**



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.



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Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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Moline, Illinois 61265

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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.