



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Summer 2024

Volume XXXVII, Number 6

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Father's Day. If someone were to ask of me what I believe to be my most significant accomplishment, in my life, without hesitation, I would say, "Being a father." Not that I believe I am particularly good at it (the jury is still out on that judgment), but because it is the most challenging and fulfilling "project" I have ever undertaken.

Laurie and I were graced with four children, three boys and a girl; two born while we were living in Chicago; two in Iowa. We have loved being parents. We love our children, loved raising them, vacationing with them, learning from them. They are good people with large hearts, wickedly funny senses of humor, and independent thinkers.

Yet, I will admit that parenting is the most difficult and demanding job I have ever had. It has cost me countless sleepless nights, producing worry and anguish untold. The rewards are without measure, and the challenges have caused me to grow, mature, and love more deeply than I ever thought possible.

And as you readers of this newsletter know all-too-well, parenthood can also visit upon one the deepest, most debilitating grief that can ever be experienced in life. Alike to many of you, I carry this with me every day, and I suspect, I will carry it to my grave. It is the grief that descended upon Laurie and me out of the blue on a cold early February day in 2005, when our youngest, Maggie, was not only never going to complete kindergarten, but also would not survive an intra-cranial bleed that first evidenced itself on a school

playground and ended her life before her parents knew it was threatened.

Like the birth and raising of our children, the death of Maggie reshaped and forever altered us. It reshaped who we are, changed our life-paths and those of our sons... It still does.

Our sister-law, about a year after Maggie died, gave us recording of Kenny Chesney's song, "Who You'd be Today."

*It ain't fair you died too young
Like a story that had just begun
But death tore the pages all away
God knows how I miss you
All the hell that I've been through
Just knowing no one could take your place
Sometimes I wonder who you'd be today.*

Like so many of you of The Compassionate Friends, I wonder who my lost child would be today. I miss not seeing her grow to adulthood; I miss the emotional angst and drama that she would have brought into puberty; I miss the banter and quibbling she and her brothers would have exchanged. I miss the children she might have birthed and the glow of love that she always gave to the infants that visited out home. And on this Father's Day, when we gather as a family around our kitchen island, there will be one missing as there has been for the last 19 years.

*Sunny days seem to hurt the most
I wear the pain like a heavy coat
The only thing that gives me hope
Is I know I'll see you again someday.*

Sincerely,
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser

A father's love cannot be measured solely by the footsteps that echo through his hall, but by those that will echo forever in his heart and walk unheard beside him every day.

Out of the Ashes



We live in a world that is beyond our control, and life is in a constant flux of change. So, we have a decision to make: keep trying to control a storm that is not going to go away or start learning how to live within the rain.

*Glenn Pemberton,
Hurting with God*

You fall, you rise, you live, you learn. You're human, not perfect. You've been hurt, but you're alive.

Thank of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to enjoy, and to chase the things you love. Sometime there is sadness in our journey, but there is also lots of beauty. We must keep putting one foot in front of the other even when we hurt, for we never know what is waiting for us around the bend.

*Unknown from TCF Newsletter
Otago, New Zealand*



Hope comes from others who have found meaning and ways to continue the legacy of their children.

*Nate McClendon
Naomi's Dad*

Pregnancy and Infant Loss

In our society, we avoid talking about death. The death of a baby is even more hidden because it so violates our expectations. A difficult challenge for many of us is society's refusal to acknowledge that the loss of an unborn or newly born child is the loss of a unique individual. The fact that our babies were in the womb or in our arms for such a little while adds to the pain and isolation of losing a child. However or whenever it occurs, a baby's death is a profound loss, and one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a parent will confront in a lifetime. Our attachment can begin before conception. When we lose a child, our hopes and dreams for the child have already become a part of our life. The loss of a child, regardless of gestational age, is a loss of part of our future. Memories, so important for the bereaved, allow us to experience a more gradual good-bye. When a child dies before or shortly after birth, we have precious few memories. Our child is gone and we have very little evidence that he or she ever really existed. This abrupt hello-good-bye relationship makes grieving very complex and painful. Unfortunately, many friends and relatives do not recognize the depth of the loss of an unborn or newly born child. Acquaintances may never have seen the baby and find it difficult to imagine our grief over a

child we have never seen or perhaps held only briefly. Because so few people actually knew our child, our grief may be even more isolating. Although nothing can take away the pain, it may be helpful to know what others have experienced or found comforting as they struggled to deal with the intense grief that followed the death of their child. As we travel this path, it may be helpful to seek out those who are supportive in helping us cope with the loss of our babies. May we reach out and comfort one another on this journey.

TCF, Verudugo Hills Chapter

When I am gone, do not fear my memory.

Do not be afraid to speak my name or look through old photographs.

Do not be scared to play old videos so that you might hear my voice and see me laughing.

Do not be wary of visiting my favorite places or eating my favorite foods or singing along to my favorite songs.

I know it will hurt. Those memories will remind you that I am gone.

They will stab at you like a knife in an open, gaping wound. Raw, excruciating pain.

But after a while, the knife will become less sharp, the wound will become less open, and the pain will become less raw.

And those memories will remind you that I was here.

That I lived.

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.quadcitcf.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.

What They Don't Tell You

Inspired by TCF Sibs and TCF family members who lost a loved one to suicide.

They don't tell you there aren't five stages of grief, but an infinite amount you revisit on a minute-by-minute basis and then go back. They don't tell you about all the group chats. They don't tell you you will relive the night you found your daughter's lifeless body every single day. They don't tell you explaining death to a four-year-old without scaring him is nearly impossible. They don't tell you the greatest reminders you are living in grief happen when you're driving or making dinner. They don't tell you everyone is afraid to say your loved one's name, or share memories, or pictures. They don't tell you your blood boils when people joke about suicide. They don't tell you it will take months for the physical symptoms of grief to subside. Or that your mother quite literally loses it when she can't get a hold of you. They don't tell you your new joys also bring the worst pain. They don't tell you about all the ridiculous assumptions made. They don't tell you that you will begin to question and even doubt everything that you once believed in. They don't tell you people will roll their eyes when you mention him because they are tired of reminders and want you to "move on." Or that family and friends will step into the shadows and not know how to support you when you need it most. They don't tell you

when you see his name carved in stone it's that first day without him all over again. They don't tell you a part of you dies inside because you will never take another picture of them. They don't tell you that you will only remember things in the time frame of before they died and after they died. They don't tell you that you will struggle every, single, day to survive. Or you will never be the person you were before and you have to learn to be a different version of yourself. They don't tell you even the littlest things can break you and bring you to tears. They don't tell you you will flinch every time someone says, "hang in there." They don't tell you you'll feel guilty when you laugh. They don't tell you your grief will become stronger and deeper as time passes. Or that you will never be able to open a random door again. They don't tell you you're going to scream at the top of your lungs, "I WANT HIM BACK!"

**Tiana Schwandt,
TCF Sibling Group,
Minneapolis, MN**



Living Life Is Still an Effort

My husband's family held a reunion in July. We planned to attend and told the family to count on us. But when it came time to buy the tickets and make a commitment, I found I couldn't do it. I simply did not want to deal with the hassles of travelling, leaving home, getting out of my daily rhythm.

I am a different person since my child died. I am a different person than I was six months after my child died. And, I will be a different person in another year.

I find that I am evolving; my basic personality is still intact, most of my mind works well enough, my perception of life, love, people, and events is probably heightened but fairly unchanged. Still, I am a different person.

Now I work at living my life. I make myself do the things I once took for granted...such as getting dressed each day, going to work, handling a number of responsibilities I have chosen to accept. I make myself laugh at silly jokes.

Sometimes I even force myself to really listen to others. I am surprised when I laugh spontaneously, smile for no particular reason or say something "prophetic." What is going on here? Who am I? Why has the joy of life disappeared?

I believe I have found the answer to these questions and even to the questions I haven't yet asked. It lies in the nature of losing one's child to death. Initially we work very hard to maintain sanity.

Gradually we expand the boundaries of our lives. Carefully we add events, people, responsibilities and simple enjoyment. But our progress is measured in months and

years, not days and weeks.

My awakening to this new reality came at a meeting of The Compassionate Friends. It has been rekindled at each meeting since then. I learn about myself by observing others. I note the change in their voice, their body language, their perspective. I see the sorrow in each parent. I see parents whose children have been gone for many years still weep openly and later talk about a special event they are planning. Then I see parents whose loss was recent yet they appear to be normal, controlled and sociable on

many levels and they suddenly and mysteriously crumble before my eyes.

That's the journey. We set our own limits as to what is acceptable for us. Over time we shift

from minimalist boundaries to a good representation of the person we once were. We have major setbacks: birthdays, holidays, death anniversaries. We sob, we scream, we withdraw. But we do go on. With the help of our Compassionate Friends, we move forward and are supported when we suffer a setback. We each deal with the many facets of our grief. We learn from others. We teach others. We grow from the dialogue. Our kindred spirits bring questions, answers, and peace.

Who am I today? A fairly well-balanced mother of one beautiful child who no longer is alive. I am where I should be. When will I stop evolving? Probably never.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



Phantom Pains

This A.M. when I was in that half-awake, half-asleep stage, I was thinking about what it is like to have your child die. So many people that haven't lost a child cannot possibly understand.

I thought of losing a child as being compared to losing one of your extremities. If you had your arm suddenly amputated, you would go into extreme shock. There would be so much pain for a long, long time. As that assaulting, excruciating pain eases, you learn to "get back into life," step by step, but it's a long process of rehabilitating yourself to learn to live without your arm. You start to "get better" and then the phantom pains come and try to haunt you. Unexpectedly, without warning, there you are again in pain, except now people don't understand your pain as well as they once did. So you feel guilty for feeling this phantom pain. There are some friends out there who are more wise and do understand about the phantom pains and will still love and be there with you. Others will leave.

Your hand itches but you can't scratch it. It's not there. The longing to hold your child is there, it's real, but you can't hold your child again while we are still here.

Some unwise people will tell you, "You have other children." Yes you love your other children just as you love your other arm and legs but they can't take the place of the one you lost. We, as parents who have had a child die, have had part of us amputated. They were born out of us, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, carried in our wombs, nurtured at our breasts. And even those who have been adopted into our lives are knitted into our

very souls. So, how can the death of a child even be related to the death of a father, mother, sister, brother, spouse, or friend? There are all great losses but having our child die is having part of us taken away. The grief is different; it's not "normal." We are supposed to die before our children. Then I thought about that amputated arm. If that wound isn't cleansed and lovingly taken care of, it will become infected. Bitterness and anger (which are normal in grief) can lead to an infection in your soul if you get stuck in it and it is not dealt with. Friends can be loving healers helping to bind up the wound or they can rip open the wound, making it deeper, by insensitive remarks due to a lack of understanding.

We are all at different stages in our journey through this loss and hopefully our healing. But there will always be a part of us that is gone until we are in heaven with them. We will get the phantom pains but we can make a choice each day to go through the pain until we find some hope for our weary souls. We will never be the same but we can survive and maybe we will even turn out to be better people, more in-tune with others. Become "wounded healers." We are already more gifted than a lot of other people in this world because we KNOW what it is to truly love our child. There are a lot of people out there who take their children for granted, just as a lot of us have taken for granted that it is normal to have two arms and two legs. But what if that were different..?

Carol Mudra, Walnut, CA
Prodigy Medical Support Bulletin Board,
"Death of a Child"

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
June 27, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.
Bethany for Children & Families
1701 River Drive, in Moline, Illinois (second floor)
The next chapter meetings are on
July 25th and August 22nd, 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, shoartb4@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	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.
TCF's Grief Related Resources	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/ .
TCF National Magazine	<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.
Grief Materials	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.
Amazon.com	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.
Previous Newsletter Editions	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.
Alive Alone	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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
Our Newsletter	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.

Writing Your Child's Story

The possibility of forgetting even the smallest detail of our child's life is a fear most of us have. In truth, over the months and years, many of these details do dim. Writing them down is a way to keep from losing these memories. This way we will not only have a permanent remembrance of our child ourselves, but this will be a legacy for the other brothers and sisters. Here are some suggestions.

1. Write in a spiral notebook. (This way nothing you write will be lost.)
2. Begin at the beginning. Write all the details of your child's life from his/her birth through the death day.
3. Use your child's pictures to help remind you of occasions and happenings over the years. Ask friends and relatives to tell you anything they remember about your child. (This may make them uncomfortable at first but let them know how important it is to you.) Also write any thoughts or feelings you remember having at that time.
4. Record the bad things your child did and said in his/her life as well as the good things. (It is important to write both the child's good and bad sides so we can remember them as a real person.)
5. Write about your child's death. Record as many details surrounding it as you care to retell. Write about the days before the burial, the funeral, the days after, two weeks, a month or so on. Record how others helped.

Write a letter to your child. Include:

- What I wish I had said to you. What

I wish I hadn't said to you.

- What I wish I had done. What I wish I hadn't done.
 - What I wish you would've done. What I wish you had not done.
 - What I wish I could ask you. What I would love to tell you.
7. Pour out your feelings to your child. Tell him/her of your anger, your guilt. Tell your child how you love him/her. Tell your child GOODBYE.
 8. Don't worry about how well you write. Don't worry about form or grammar. Just write.

Keep your notebook handy. Write any time you feel you want to say something to your child, or when you



remember some detail that suddenly comes into your mind. The many times you have trouble sleeping, write down the things that keep coming into your mind.

Writing about your child or to your child will be emotional. It will probably make you cry. Don't let this stop you. Crying can be extremely helpful in releasing your tensions and will help you with your grief work. Remember writing is just talking written down.

TCF, St. Louis, MO

A Bear Hug for Father's Day

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their child, is to support their wife and surviving children. But our pain is deep too!

Men, by their nature in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk as candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the rock, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are fragile. Or so we are told.

Yet as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed, the words never spoken, the anger, guilt and agony...all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father. What can a father do? Talk with other bereaved fathers. Read books written by bereaved fathers. Talk with a spouse, private counselors and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles.

Try to attend three meetings of **The Compassionate Friends**. You don't have to talk. But you might decide to express a single thought or idea, logically presented, to the small group. You might find peace in this place, and then again, you might not. But, as my own dad often said, "Step up to the plate and see what happens." He was a pretty wise man...a child of the depression, a football player, a Greatest Generation WWII Marine, a fighter, a provider, a protector...a man's man. He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times.

But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried.

Happy Father's Day...May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

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.



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



1701 River Drive
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.