



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

September-October 2025

Volume XXXVIII, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Jerry and I attended our first grief support meeting in January of 1987, organized by Pastor Jeff Linman and Kay McDaniel of Port Byron. Kay was looking for a community of grieving families to walk with her on her own grief journey. We met monthly and by early 1988 had a core group of regular attenders who made the decision to affiliate with The Compassionate Friends organization.

In the summer of 1988, the Webbs attended a National TCF conference in Columbus, Ohio. Connecting with a large number of bereaved parents in all stages of grief was a powerful experience. We were challenged by the workshop about creating a Chapter newsletter. We knew there were many bereaved parents in the Quad City area. We also realized only a few were emotionally, physically, or geographically able to attend a support group meeting. We were convinced a newsletter would be a wonderful way to disseminate support, encouragement, and practical tools to grieving families. We returned from the conference filled with purpose and determination. In September of 1988, the first issue of the Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends newsletter was mailed.

For the past 37 years, the newsletter has gone out without interruption, monthly for many years, later 10 times a year, and beginning in January of 2025, bi-monthly. Since October of 2005, the newsletter has been a group effort with Carol Webb curating and writing articles, Bill and Laurie Steinhauser putting it in a newsletter format and arranging the printing at Bethany for Children & Families, Jerry keeping the database, and volunteers from the chapter preparing the mailing. While we will never fully know the impact, we know from correspondence, many have found hope and healing through the newsletter.

For various reasons, the Quad City TCF has come to a crossroads where the printing of this newsletter is no longer practical. This September-October issue will be **the last mailed newsletter, but an electronic/mailed version of the newsletter will continue**. (The electronic version of the newsletter will be available at the QCA TCF website at www.quadcitytcf.org.) The newsletter is a labor of love for us and many others as we fulfill a calling to care for those who walk the same road we have walked, following the death of a beloved child. We give thanks to the many people and organizations who have written, arranged and reviewed content, provided printing and postage, collated, stapled, prepared the bulk mailing, kept up with the mailing list, responded to requests for information, or a listening ear. The electronic version of the newsletter will be available at the QCA TCF website and to any subscriber who provides his/her email address to Jerry or Carol (webbjerryd@gmail.com).

This newsletter allows us and others to live out the last line of The Compassionate Friends Credo: *We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.* For this we are grateful.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Afterglow

We came to the beach in Florida intending to watch the sun set over the Gulf. The sun had already disappeared over the horizon, apparently lost beyond the waters. After a brief period, emerging from where the sun had set, arose a brilliant afterglow, seemingly covering the sky with a glowing, pulsating display of molten gold.

I was struck by the spectacular beauty emanating from the sun already gone from view. Involuntarily I thought, just like our children! When the sunshine of their lives disappeared, we expected eternal darkness to remain. After our initial period of grief, we find that each child has left an afterglow—the memories of the beauty and joy their lives brought us.

It is incumbent upon each of us left on the beach of mortal life to allow ourselves to maintain that afterglow and continue to bring meaning to the “suns” of our lives who have disappeared from view “over the horizon.”

Hopefully, we can help one another honor our children’s lives by perpetuating their afterglow with our own meaningful lives of hope, optimism, and peace.

Toba S. Cohen, TCF/
Bustleton, PA

When a child dies, it is natural to be afraid of any further pain. For a while we may just want to crawl into a hole and lick our wounds. But then we need to have the courage to say to ourselves, “I’m still here – I can fulfill some of the dreams and give the love my child would have given - I can make that life count.” And in that sense of purpose and the good we do, we remain forever in touch with the child we thought we lost.

Excerpts from *After a Child Dies* by Eda Le Shan, Long Island, NY

A Young Life Cut Short

Do not judge a song by its duration
Nor by the number of its notes
Judge it by the
richness of its contents
Sometimes those
unfinished
are among the most
poignant...



Do not judge a song by its duration
Nor the number of its notes
Judge it by the way it touches and lifts the
soul
Sometimes those unfinished
are among the most beautiful...
And when something has enriched your life
And when its melody lingers on in your heart
Is it unfinished?
Or is it endless...

Author unknown
Compassion Spring, UK, TCF

It is the gift of hope which reigns supreme in the attributes of the Compassionate Friends. Hope that all is not lost. Hope that life can still be worth living and meaningful. Hope that the pain of loss will become less acute and above all else, the hope that we do not walk alone, that we are understood. The gift of hope is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder of TCF, 1972

Why Routines Help When You're Grieving

Think of your favorite comfort food, the coziest blanket you own, or the pleasure of consuming a warm cup of hot chocolate before bed. All these things make you feel better, right? They're like big, squeezie hugs (as Libby would say) because they are familiar. And it's this familiarity that makes routines so amazing. They're like a comforting, dependable embrace during times of grief.

Knowing simple things like when you're going to wake up in the morning, what you're going to eat, and that you're going to take a walk each Thursday with a friend after work can make a HUGE difference when you're on your grief journey. Grieving is mentally exhausting. Sometimes, you just need to give your brain a chance to "catch its breath." Routines say, "Hey brain, let's not focus on everything right now, let's just get through our morning routine."

Routines can also keep us healthy.

I know, the last thing we grieving souls want to focus on is diet and exercise. But I swear, tiny routines regarding health can make a massive difference in your mood. Like I said earlier, I am not asking you to dive headfirst into a rigorous workout routine or to finally go keto.

Doing minor activities throughout the week and ensuring you get balanced nutrition can make a large difference.

Routines help you stay connected

Even for an introvert like me, who tends to go into my cave when I'm wounded, finding ways to stay

connected is crucial, and routines can help with that as well. Grief can be isolating and lonely, but scheduling time with people to engage in real-life human conversation can be very beneficial for reducing the loneliness felt in grief. Extroverts, on the other hand, may find that they want to slow their role socially and be with fewer, closer friends while grieving.

The best thing about routines is that they are all about YOU. Whether you're a jog-every-morning person (I am so jealous) or a stay-at-home-and-read person (raises hand), your routine should be tailored to what you enjoy, what you will stick with, and what can help you move forward. Creating a routine is completely personal, and you can start with small things that you do in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Whether it's getting up and making your bed, hydrating, doing a five-minute stretch, or having your favorite breakfast before the rest of your family wakes up, it's all about making the routine yours.

Don't hesitate to write it down or even use a printable checklist to track your actions.

Creating a routine brings you a sense of normalcy, a bit of predictability, and a whole lot of resilience.

Whether you are just starting to create a new routine or trying to maintain one you've started, remember to be gentle with yourself. After all, it's all about moving forward, one tiny step at a time.

Brooke Carlock
opentohope.com

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

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

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 46, Wheaton, IL 60187 (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

P.O. Box 46

Wheaton, IL 60187

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.

“It was a long journey out of the darkness, but once I discovered what my purpose was, I began to heal.”

-Heidi Horsley

When I was 20 years old, my 17-year-old brother and 17-year-old cousin were killed together in a car accident. This tragic event turned my world upside down and put everything I ever believed into question. I didn't know how I was going to survive, or even if I wanted to. This was not the life I had planned, it was not the life I had signed up for, and it was not the life I wanted. At 20-years-old, I had to face the rest of my life without my brother. None of my friends had ever had a sibling die and they couldn't relate. They wanted me to get over it, and find closure. We don't get over a loss, we learn to live without the person in our lives. As for closure, it's for bank accounts, not love accounts.

An Unacknowledged Loss. The death of my brother was a double loss. I had lost not only my brother, but also the parents I once knew. I felt extremely guilty that my only brother had died, and my parents still had three living daughters. I have since learned that survivor guilt is normal among siblings. After all, Scott carried the family name, was extremely athletic, popular, and was adored by his sisters. He was very easy going and was an-all around great guy.

I hid my grief from my parents because I was trying to be a good daughter and didn't want to cause them more pain. I worried a lot about my parents since they had lost their only son. I even felt guilty grieving since my parents had experienced the loss of a child.

After Scott's death, my parents received hundreds of condolence cards—I received one. I felt my grief was overlooked and unacknowledged by the world. When I told people I had a brother who died, they would reply, “Wow that must have been very hard for your parents,” or, “Be strong for your parents, they have been through a lot.” And while it was very hard for my parents, it was also hard for me. I felt lost and alone and didn't know how I was going to make it without my brother in my life.

Finding Meaning After Loss. Several months after Scott's death I went on an Outward Bound survival program in the Colorado Mountains, a program Scott had done the year before. Prior to boarding the plane, my father handed me Victor Frankl's book *Man's Search For Meaning*. This book had a profound effect on my healing journey. It's the story of how Victor Frankl survived the Holocaust and found the will to live, even after his entire family perished in the concentration camps. Frankl quotes Nietzsche in the book, “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.” In other words, if you have meaning and purpose in your life, you will be able to get through each day. I realize that I am on this earth to help others who have experienced loss, and to give a voice to the bereaved. Scott's death has defined my life, but in no way has it destroyed my life. I have found hope and joy again. Though my brother is no longer on this earth, he continues to have a profound influence on my life.

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In 1998, I gave birth to my son Alexander and it was such a joy to know that he had some of the same genetic makeup as my brother. I always wanted to give Alexander the gift of a sibling, since the sibling experience has been so important to me. When I held my daughter Samantha, I knew she was the daughter I was always meant to have. My children are extremely close, and it is such a joy to see them together—it brings back so many wonderful memories of my own childhood. Today my life is filled with joy and I have met so many incredible people in my grief journey. I once again have passion, meaning, and purpose in my life. Although I am poorer for having lost Scott, I am so much richer for knowing him for seventeen years. Although he is gone, his memory remains forever in my heart, and he is my guiding light!

Dr. Heidi Horsley is Executive Director and Founder of the Open to Hope Foundation, an internet-based resource offering hope for those grieving a death. Heidi serves on the National Board of Directors for The Compassionate Friends, USA, in NYC and has co-authored eight books.

*There's this place in me where
your fingerprints still rest, your
kisses still linger, and your
whispers softly echo. It's the
place where a part of you will
forever be a part of me.*

Author unknown

Just Those Few Weeks

For those few weeks—I had you to myself.
And that seems too short of time,
To be changed so profoundly.
In those few weeks— I came to know you...
And to love you.
You came to trust me with your life.
Oh, what a life I had planned for you!
Just those few weeks—
When I lost you, I lost a lifetime of hopes, plans, dreams, and aspirations...
A slice of my future simply vanished overnight.
Just those few weeks—
It wasn't enough time to convince others
How special and important you were.
How odd, a truly unique person has recently died
And no one is mourning the passing.
Just a mere few weeks— And no “normal” person would cry all night.
Over a tiny, unfinished baby,
Or get depressed and withdraw day after endless day.
No one would, so why am I?
You were just those few weeks my little one.
You darted in and out of my life too quickly.
But it seems that's all the time you needed
To make my life so much richer—
And give me a small glimpse of eternity.

Susan Erlin, NOKTCF Newsletter

Grief, Healing, and Time

Today someone I loved died. I can't believe it. I don't believe it. Family comes. Friends come. The phone keeps ringing. The doorbell rings again and again. The ringing seems far away. I hear it, but I seem unable to answer. My legs won't move. My feet won't move. I am glued to the chair. Others answer for me. They seem to know I don't remember how.

Tomorrow comes. I didn't want it to ever come. I wanted to go back to the time before you died. There, I said it. You died. Does that make it true? There must be some mistake, I tell myself. Maybe this is just a bad dream I need to wake up from. If only someone would wake me up. When people ask me what they can do for me, I try to tell them the only thing I want is you. They look sad, they gently shake their head, they hug me, and still you're not here.

Your funeral is over. Everyone says I did so well. I hardly cried. Don't they see I can't cry, not yet. I am in shock. I hear someone else say, "Give her time, that's all she needs." I wonder: Can it really be that simple? If it is, I just want to run through time, however much it takes to get to the place where I don't hurt so bad, don't miss you so much. But no, I can't do that. Even if I could, I would only be farther from you. My heart cannot bear that.

Days pass. Tomorrow will be one month since you died. I wonder how I can just skip that day. I am afraid of it; of reliving every single detail of your death, knowing that one month ago you were here with me and my world was okay. Now I have no world. Everyone keeps telling me I just need to make a new world. But I liked my old one. I never asked to have it taken from me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to start over. I don't know where the beginning of that world is or how to get there. Everything is so hard and makes me so tired. I just want to

stay in bed.

Days pass and turn into weeks. I am stuck in a world foreign to me, wondering where it is that you are and how you could have left me.

I force myself to go through the motions of living and caring for others. They don't seem to notice it's just pretend, and I am starring in the hardest role of my life. If only they had just an inkling of the place that I am in, of my fractured and broken heart.

I never used to read the obituaries. Now I feel compelled to do so. I feel like a kindred spirit to others who must also travel the road I am on. I still feel so alone. Now they will feel alone, too. I feel like I should say something to them, but I do not know them; I only know their pain.

Months continue to pass. I am back at work, back in church, getting my hair done. It all still seems strange, different, and doesn't matter like it used to. Friends call. Sometimes

I say, "Yes, I will go to dinner." Other times I say, "Thanks for calling, but not today." Many days it is still easier to just be alone where I don't have to hide my tears when they come, where I can talk to you and not feel strange, where I can just be however I am that day and not try to fit into the place others have carved out for me.

Finally, one day I surprise myself. I am humming a tune. For a little while, I feel lighter. I almost smile. I begin to judge myself. *What's the matter with me? How can I be even a little happy when you're not here?* But then I hear your voice in my head—or is it my heart, the place where you live—saying you are glad that I am humming, glad I can smile, encouraging, me to live again. I don't know whether to laugh or cry, so I do both. But later that day I find myself humming again, and I smile, and I know that I am going to be okay.

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Letters to My Son, Andrew

You introduce yourself to me, the solitary stranger in the cafeteria. You're just being friendly. In the course of conversation, you ask, "How many children do you have?" And you are slightly disconcerted when I hesitate. Don't I know how many children I have?

The answer, when it comes, is a shock. "I have three children, two living and one deceased." And now, what do you say? This is your unspoken question; I hear it in your uncomfortable shifting in your seat and the disappearance of your smile.

My 8-year-old son, Andrew, was hit by an SUV and killed in May of 1988. And the not-so-subtle message from our society to those of us who are grieving is, "Just get over it. It doesn't do any good to dwell on the past. I wish you could live in the present."

But we are changed forever by those we love in life and equally by their passing. And so, it has not, in fact, been a long time since Andrew died. The experience of that day 28 years ago lives timelessly in my heart. From then on, I was left to try to make sense of what defied reason, to accept what was unacceptable. Part of me knew that Andrew was gone, and yet another part reeled in disbelief — and still does. I often feel that I stand with one foot in each of two worlds, this living reality and the unknown beyond, mourning for two: Andrew and myself.

To avoid total emotional isolation, I sought companionship from trusted friends and group support from others who suffered losses. I learned that shared tears are far less salty than solitary ones and that open expression lessens the pain of grief. In telling our stories, we learned that we have more in common than we have differences. And, perhaps, most of all, we learned that we are not alone. I listened to other's stories, and I learned to care again — to allow someone new a place in my still fearful heart.

And I learned what truly endures in this uncertain existence: "It is a glimpse of play out an open window, a knowing smile at bedtime, a sleepy head resting on a shoulder, a sigh of contentment, a cheerful wave hello. It is a moment of warmth, a secret shared breathlessly, a casual glance that says nothing in particular, but says all. It is a quick impression, a flash of pride, a stolen hug, a silent tear. It is a thousand, thousand such moments, each of them a heartbeat, all of them a lifetime. It is what we were to each other. It is what we are to each other. It is all that happened. It is all that didn't."

I wrote those words to my son in one of many letters meant to keep our relationship alive and to help find myself again. Those letters have now been published as a book, called, *Dear Andrew*.

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Over the years, I have evolved so that my grief is no longer as raw as it once was. Rather, it has settled like a fluid in every cell in my body, and seeks balance with my every thought and movement.

"I'm all right now," I wrote to Andrew. Perhaps this is what it means to heal.

Still, your cafeteria question is not simple. Grief is not simple. And grievers are not living in the past, but in an eternal paradox where their loved one is both present and absent. It is a bittersweet state.

What can you say to me? This one phrase is safe and effective: "Oh, I am so, so sorry." That's all, no more.

And, gratefully, I will say, "Thank you."

Robert Goor

dearandrew@robertgoor.com has been writing for over 20 years and has been a father for over 40. Dear Andrew is his first literary publication.



We never really get over devastating loss. In the thick of it, we almost stop breathing; sometimes even wishing we could. And we know deep within that we will never be the same. Yet, one day we feel the sun on our face again. We find ourselves smiling at a child or a joke or a memory. And at that moment, we realize we are finding our way back. Changed forever? Yes. But also softer, deeper, more vulnerable, and more loving too. And we are breathing again.

Kelly Buckley

Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one you let go of the things that are gone and you mourn for them. One by one you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again.



Rachel Naomi Remen

My Old Friend, Grief

My old friend, Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in a while just to remind me that I am still a broken person. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely, I have adjusted to a world without him by now. But the truth is, we never completely heal, we never totally adjust to the loss of a major love. We will be all right, but we will never be the same.

And so, my old friend, Grief, drops in to say hello.

Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. Sometimes he sneaks up on me. I'll hear a certain song, smell a certain fragrance, or look at a certain picture, and I'll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

Some may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. Grief revisited is grief acknowledged, and grief confronted is grief resolved.

But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a deep sense of loss at anniversaries and holidays, and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat, even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting, and because moving on with

life does not mean that we don't take part of the deceased with us.

My old friend, Grief, doesn't get in the way of my living. He just wants to drop by and chat sometimes. In fact, Grief has



taught me, over the years, that if I try to deny the reality of a major

loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or else risk emotional paralysis.

Old Grief has also taught me that I can survive even great losses and that although my world is very different after a major loss, it is still my world and life is worth living. He has taught me that when I am willing to be pruned by the losses that come, I can flourish again in season; not in spite of loss, but because of it.

My old friend, Grief, has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love, for love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death.

Adolfo Quezada

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Deb Kosmer has worked in hospice for the past eleven years as a bereavement coordinator and social worker. She is the bereaved mother of a son and a stepdaughter, and is a bereaved sibling. From *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Winter 2011/Spring 2012.

If Only They Knew

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death. I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved – this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him. I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him, as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, I do not cry in self-pity for what I have lost. I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, and for all he still longed to hear, for the

poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death. If only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken – that “time heals,” that “you’ll get over it,” that “it was for the best,” that “God takes only the best” – and realize that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we are prepared to try to stand in the shoes of others. We will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts we well as minds.

Jan McNess
TCF Victoria, Australia

OLIVIA'S CANDLE

My husband and I lost our baby, Olivia, during pregnancy and, having no funeral or other traditional means of finding a place for our feelings of loss and love for this cherished person, a person many believe never lived at all, we settled on burning a candle for 24 hours every time the death date passes.

Beside the candle is this poem:

*“To our beloved Olivia, whose life-light burned so briefly:
You are forever a part of us as we remember and relive
The joy with which we discovered you and
The sadness with which we accepted your departure.
The light and the love you lit in us burns on...”*

Patti Williams, TCF/NE, GA

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Due to unexpected circumstances, the monthly meeting of the Chapter will no longer be held at 1701 River Drive in Moline. The search for a new location for our meetings is in process. There will be no September meeting, but the **October 23, 2025 meeting at 6:30 p.m. will be held at a new location. Please check your email for further information!**

The November Chapter meeting will be held on the 20th of the month due to Thanksgiving on the 27th.

<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. Tom Summit can be contacted at 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	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 the Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends for previous versions of the Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format. www.quadcitytcf.org
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.

You're SO Strong

In the months following my 10-year-old daughter Libby's death, there was one phrase that I heard over and over again. "You're SO strong."

People whispered it in my ear in the midst of teary-eyed hugs. They muttered it as they pityingly patted my back. They surrounded me in groups and proclaimed it like an award.

They wrote it in condolence cards and social media comments.

It was a phrase that might elicit extreme pride or snarky disdain, depending on my mood. "You're SO strong."

Is "You're SO strong" a compliment? This phrase always baffles me—perhaps because I don't understand exactly what people mean when they say it. Is it a compliment? Like, "Hey, this grieving thing? You're knocking it out of the park!"

Or is it a veiled judgment? "How could you possibly be wearing makeup when your daughter just died? I could never do that."

What, exactly, does it mean to be strong after one's child has died? Am I strong because I'm getting out of bed in the morning? Because I'm taking showers and trying to smell generally clean?

I don't feel SO strong. Maybe it's because I'm already back to work, or because I venture out of the house to drive my still-living teenage sons to their events? Am I strong because I'm not breaking down into a sobbing mess when I'm out in public?

Why do I hear this phrase so often? Because here's the thing. I don't feel strong.

I feel numb, and on most days I spend at least part of my evening with my face in my hands, tears pouring down my cheeks, and my breaths coming in heaving gulps alternating with otherworldly wails that I don't even recognize as my own voice.

No griever is "weak." I get up every morning and take a shower and make myself

presentable because I have to go to work. I have to go to work because I used up all of my sick and vacation days, and I'm a single mom and I have a mortgage to pay.

I drive my sons to their events and try to spend time with them whenever I can because we are all we have left. They are 19 and 17 and soon I will be alone, so I'm trying to soak in every last second before my family becomes unrecognizable.

People grieve the loss of a child in so many different ways, but none of them should be labeled as "strong" or "weak." Everyone's situation is different. Many grievers mask their anguish and save it for private moments. Others shed tears for all the world to see. Some find it difficult to face the day and stay curled in the fetal position watching Netflix. Others frantically bounce around from activity to activity in an effort to distract themselves from their pain.

Moving forward isn't necessarily "strength." Many times, we grieving parents don't have a choice but to keep going. Maybe we'd love to melt into a ball of depression, but we don't have the option. People still depend on us—whether it's other children in the family that need love and attention, or partners who are also processing the loss, or family members, funeral directors, employers, insurance companies... There are bills to pay and texts to return and forms to fill out and the world just seems to keep moving forward.

We don't understand HOW it keeps moving forward, exactly, now that our children are gone, but we try to keep up as best as we can. Sometimes we can't.

And do you know what? It's all ok. We are not "strong" or "weak." We are dealing with the unimaginable in the best ways that we know how. That makes us all survivors and rockstars.

Brook Carlock
opentohope.com

Your absence is a weight I never imagined
I'd have to bear.
It's not just the loss of you but the shape of
you in my life,
the space you filled, your love in my life.
This weight isn't something I can put down
or set aside;
it's a part of me now, woven into every
breath and step.
It's the heaviest thing I've ever carried,
not because it overwhelms me every moment,
but because it's constant—unchanging in its
depth.
And yet, somehow, I keep moving,
learning to carry what I cannot leave behind.
Louise Rees, TCF/Victoria

I used to beg grief to go away.
Now I understand,
It's the last piece of you I get to keep.
It's in the quiet moments,
The sudden tears,
The way my heart skips when I think of
your laugh.
This grief is the thread that ties me to
you
In a world that keeps
moving without you.
And I'll never let it go.
Author Unknown



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.

Thank you to Frank Vretis in memory of his son, James Vretis.

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 the Chapter Treasurer, Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, 2946 Summertree Avenue, Bettendorf, Iowa 52722. 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 electronic version of the newsletter, please send us your email address. If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and email address...

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if your email address has changed...

Please contact: **Jerry and Carol Webb**, 390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022, or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com or webbjerryd@gmail.com.



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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.