



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March-April 2026

Volume XXXIV, Number 2

Dear Compassionate Friends,

As part of

his sermon yesterday, our pastor talked about compassion. One definition of compassion is *to suffer together*.

Just a few months after our daughter died, a young man from our church was killed in a boating accident. I remember my reaction was a strong longing to do what I could to ease the parents' suffering. Irrationally, I thought, "If only my pain could be enough to prevent another parent having to feel this hurt."

The Compassionate Friends was born in 1969 in England. Two families suffered the loss of their sons the same week in the same hospital and were connected through Reverend Simon Stephens, a hospital chaplain. One of the fathers, Joe Lawley, said, "*In the immensity of our grief (and in reality is there any other tragedy of quite this enormity?), we all suffered together.*" The two couples found comfort and support from sharing their grief and decided to offer this to other bereaved parents.

The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, founded in 1988, was the result of Kay McDaniel (whose son had recently died) asking her pastor, Jeff Linman, to help her connect with others who were journeying through loss.

The past six months have been challenging for our chapter as we lost our long term printing and mailing support and had to go to a digital newsletter. In addition, we have had to find a new place for monthly meetings which has also been a journey. The website is in process of being rebuilt but should be up and running in the near future.

What has not changed is our mission to offer 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 help others better assist the grieving family. We continue to fulfill this mission through monthly meetings, a digital newsletter (available through email or online), and telephone friends who are willing to listen on those very hard days when you need to connect with someone who has walked a similar road.

We encourage you to reach out to let us know how we could better serve you and to let other bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents know WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb

Becoming a Sage Grief Traveler

After surviving a journey of grief, the journeyer becomes a sage grief traveler, who is now able to offer advice, wisdom, and share a compass with others facing their own unexpected grief journey. They come to know what all grief survivors know, that grief is a powerful, common and universal feeling, but it is survivable.

TCF Okanagan Valley,
BC, Canada

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
TCF Chapter Newsletter

In a YouTube video, "To Touch a Grieving Heart," there is a wonderful little reminder of the Winnie the Pooh story by A.A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help "a bear wedged in great tightness."

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think grief is like being "a bear wedged in great tightness." And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other, that "we need not walk alone."

Reflections

When Our Children Pass, Who Are We Without Them?

When a child dies, it's not just their presence we lose. We lose pieces of ourselves, the roles we held, the identity we once knew. The person we were as their mom or dad, the future we imagined, the rhythms of daily life...everything changes.

Grief asks us a painful question: Who am I now without them?

The truth is, we will never be the same. But we can continue walking, step by step, choosing to carry their love forward. We learn to breathe for them, to live in ways that honor their memory, and to become someone new, someone shaped by both love and loss.

We may never stop searching for who we are without them, but along the way, we discover who we can become because of them.

Michelle Barbuto

**Grief Seasons, Not Steps:
Living and Grieving When There is No
Set Path**

In grief—and in life in general—we seem to aspire to the idea of forward momentum. We often talk about “journeys” and “taking steps,” but lately I’ve been asking myself: Where exactly are we heading?

I guess when you’re young, it makes sense. Every year, there’s something new to accomplish: finally getting your license or graduating from high school, for example. Many people feel like they’re on a path that could involve things like college, career, new relationships, or kids. There’s always another box to check.

But over time, I think many people find themselves in a place where the milestones are fewer and farther between, and they decide to cultivate a life where they stand. Speaking for myself, I’m an adult with goals and hopes for my life, but I’m not propelling myself toward a new destination. I’m here, raising kids, trying to do my job well, working to build a life of purpose, and hopefully managing to handle all the random obstacles life throws my way.

Ultimately, I’ve ditched the journey metaphor and now see life as a garden growing around me. In some seasons, my garden flourishes and blooms into something wild and wonderful. At other times, things struggle or even fade away. Sometimes the work I put into weeding and watering the garden is what allows it to thrive, while at

other times, things that are out of my control destroy my patch of Earth.

I may not have a green thumb in real life, but metaphorically, I still believe in my ability to plant seeds and nurture them, so the people, interests, and things I care about might continue to grow and add beauty to the world. The roots I’ve laid through work, family, and friendship ground me in a sense of purpose and meaning. Yet, having experienced loss and life’s many ups and downs, I’m also deeply aware that my garden is vulnerable and may not always thrive.

We try very hard to make sure people understand that grief isn’t linear and there are no set steps, stages, or timelines. Yet, we admit to feeling drawn to metaphors like “journey” or “path” when describing the experience of life after loss. Of course, journeys can be roundabout. However, I suspect that when we use such imagery, people often picture something more like a line on a map. I worry the “journey” metaphor leads people to believe they must always be moving forward toward a “better” state of being, thus setting them up for frustration, because life—and especially grief—is inherently full of ups and downs. Of course, when a person feels bad, they naturally strive to feel better. But realistically, very few people, if any at all, manage to get to a place of eternal happiness and

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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.

A GIFT OF TIME

I've been thinking a lot lately about how far I've traveled since Peter died. Sitting quietly, it is so easy to travel back to those early days. I remember feeling trapped in my despair. There was no relief, no respite from the unremitting pain. Time has shown me that, although we each suffer a unique loss, the results seem now to be pretty universal among bereaved parents. And though no one could have convinced me back then, I know now that time itself is a gift.

A few weeks ago at a meeting, there were several newly bereaved parents. While speaking to two of them before the meeting, in their individual distress, they both tearfully said the same thing to me. It took me back, to hear two different people voice the same query... they each said "This kind of thing doesn't happen to me!" I was astounded to hear this vocalized twice within minutes. Of course, I understood. I think I thought the same thing so many years ago although I don't believe I ever said it. Of course, we understand. This is the kind of thing that only happens to "other people." Unless of course, as my friend Maddie Kasden wrote in her famous poem, you become "other people."

We recognize, as time goes on, the unique experience each child's death, no matter the cause, results in them being permanently gone from our sight, from our touch, from our hearing. Their presence was so big in our lives, their subsequent absence leaves a black hole that constantly beckons. It almost seems to vibrate so we fall into it and begin a process of writhing in agony while wrapped in what once was. I daresay even though we truly believe our own pain is

unique to us in the beginning, we discover in time that just about every parent who has this experience suffers the same degree of agony.

I was sure during those early days no one felt what I did. Had I chosen to grieve alone, I might never have discovered how universal my despair was. I might have gotten stuck and spent the rest of my days agonizing and stuck in my grief. I'm glad I made the choices I did...to read all I could about the experience, to come to meetings at The Compassionate Friends where I met, talked and learned from others on the same path as mine, that I wrote and wrote and wrote about what I was feeling so I could refer back to my journey and begin to recognize how I was changing. I'm so glad I met all the people who like me, were learning the same lessons in this academy of grieving. It really does help to not grieve alone.

I'm glad I recognized early on in my journey, how reaching out to others had the most healing power for me. I'm grateful too, that through my experience I recognize that though Peter is no longer in my physical world, he is ever present in my life. He is not forgotten, he's not just a memory. The love I have for him remains constant, and I don't hesitate to refer to him daily. Peter has had the biggest effect on my life. It is Peter who made me who I've become. I am convinced his love continues to surround me and I continue to want to make him proud. He will always be my greatest achievement. He enriched my life beyond all measure. He truly is a gift that keeps on giving.

Marie Levine – TCF Manhattan

Steps To Making Progress

ALLOW YOURSELF

- ♥ To be imperfect.
- ♥ Whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace.
- ♥ To remember your child in whatever way you feel appropriate.

FORCE YOURSELF

- ♥ To keep communication open.
- ♥ To accept offers of help from family and friends.
- ♥ To go through the old routines again.
- ♥ To really listen to your spouse and children.
- ♥ To try an activity you used to enjoy.

CONVINCE YOURSELF

- ♥ That every member of the family will and should grieve differently
- ♥ That you won't feel dead inside forever.
- ♥ That your confusion about intimacy with your spouse is normal.

LET YOURSELF

- ♥ Off the hook for problems.
- ♥ Feel the anger.
- ♥ Feel whatever it is you do feel about God.
- ♥ Treasure your special friends.

TEACH YOURSELF

- ♥ To establish small goals.
- ♥ Everything you can learn about grief.
- ♥ To ignore well-intentioned, unhelpful comments of others.
- ♥ To let go of the moment of your child's death.
- ♥ To embrace the memory of your child.

TALK TO YOURSELF

- ♥ To change the negative ways you think.
- ♥ About anything and everything.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

- ♥ For not being the most perfect parent.
- ♥ For all the things you did or did not do.

FIND YOURSELF

- ♥ Now that you have changed into a different person, without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.
- ♥ Rely on positive techniques (reading, writing, new hobby, etc.).

INDULGE YOURSELF

- ♥ By being selfish, doing something just for you.
- ♥ Because you deserve it.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

- ♥ By talking out your feelings in a safe atmosphere, such as The Compassionate Friends.
- ♥ Through a new activity.

FORGET YOURSELF/GIVE OF YOURSELF

- ♥ Be seeking out other bereaved parents and others in trouble.
- ♥ By concentrating on others who are in pain.
- ♥ To discover WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE.
- ♥ *As a tribute to your child.*

Joe and Elizabeth Rousseau,
TCF Saginaw, MI

Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.



That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12

years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were

experiencing.

And then . . . *IT* happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically – my world, my spring, my life changed.

My five-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His eight-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with “spring.” If H.G. Well’s time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: as much as I wanted to, I couldn’t fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn’t go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other

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Spring

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side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

Pat Loder, TCF Executive Director

But the Pain Keeps Getting Worse

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You can't start healing until you've allowed yourself to feel the hurt of the loss of someone you loved better than yourself. If you've reached this place in your grief, see it as a positive, for it means you have forsaken unproductive things and have made a giant step toward your journey to a place where the pain eases and you learn to live with your loss. We, who are further down the road of grief, encourage you to reach for the plateau where we are. It's easier here. We can tell you honestly the pain is now better, not worse.

**Mary Cleckey,
TCF Atlanta GA**

The Angel of Hope

Monument, located at the Moline Memorial Cemetery, 5001 34th Avenue in Moline, Illinois, offers grieving parents a way to honor the child who has died. The brick apron in front of the Angel of Hope statue is paved with bricks honoring those offspring who have passed. If you would like to purchase a brick, please use the order form on page 9. Call (309)781.9074 with questions or for more information. Make checks payable to Angel of Hope Memorial Garden

c/o Christie Hoffman,
11618 6th Street, Milan,
Illinois 61264



Angel of Hope Memorial Brick Order Form

Name			
Address			
City, State, Zip			
Email Address			
Telephone			
4" x 8" Brick	\$100	Inscription Limits: 13 characters per line (including spaces and punctuation), 1 to 3 lines.	
8" x 8" Brick	\$200	Inscription Limits: 13 Characters per line (including spaces and punctuation), 1 to 6 lines.	

Inscription on a 4" x 8" brick (print):

Inscription on 8" x 8" brick (print):

Call (309)781.9074 with questions or for more information.
 Make checks payable to "Angel of Hope Memorial Garden."
 Please mail your completed order form to:
 Angel of Hope Memorial Garden
 c/o Christie Hoffman, 11618 6th Street, Milan, Illinois 61264

Grief Seasons

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satisfaction. Because, as author Joan Didion famously wrote, "Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends."

The cycle of life has its ups and downs, highs and lows. One day you're feeling steady, and the next, something knocks you off balance. The task of living is not to avoid or outrun all negative feelings and experiences; rather, it is to find ways to withstand frigid winters without losing hope that spring will come again.

It's finding the slow and steady resilience to nurture a life torn apart by loss.

Struggling, especially when you're grieving, does not mean you're backtracking. It certainly doesn't mean you aren't grieving "correctly." You're a human coping with enormous loss, and, painful as it is to admit, this is not the last time you'll face grief. Grief's impact lingers, and as life unfolds, new losses happen to each of us. No matter what happens, you're never really back where you started because you've done some living. You've changed, and your landscape has too. It's become a little wilder and more unpredictable, but you've learned that you can survive and live to see your garden grow once again.

Eleanor Haley – What'syourgrief.com



We will never not
remember those we
have lost.

But the Pain is Getting Worse

When your child dies suddenly or unexpectedly (and even though you had been told that your child was terminally ill, it was still unexpected, wasn't it?) something called shock takes over. I believe shock is nature's way of protecting you from the full impact of the pain of all that you've lost. I don't think a body could physically stand all of that at once, so nature does a kind thing and wraps you in a protective cocoon that keeps out much of the pain. This allows us to continue functioning and do the necessary things involved with the solemn task of making plans for the final rites of someone you love. You may have found yourself able to be the "host or hostess" and taking care of others during this time. People may have commented on how well you were doing and admired your great strength, never understanding it was your cocoon doing its job.

Some parents' protective coating lasts longer than others, but sooner or later this shield starts disintegrating, and it is when the pain starts creeping in that the griever will try to provide his or her own cocoon; they will deny the death by pretending in some way that it didn't really happen, i.e., "He's not dead. He's visiting with Grandmother," or "She's playing with her friends," or "He's at school," or "He's at work," or "She's in her bed asleep." They're somewhere, but they're not dead. That's called denial and it is a normal thing for some people. It is an effort to extend the effect of nature's cocoon.

Denial works for a while for some, but eventually that protective coating also dissolves and slowly but surely you find yourself dealing with depths of pain you've never known before, and it's frightening. You know you have about all the pain you can handle, and you don't know what you'll do if it gets worse. You have then reached what could be described as dealing with the real reality of your loss in all its complexity. It doesn't get any worse than that. It won't be better for a time but you've touched bottom for now.

It's very easy to understand why the newly bereaved see reaching this point as a negative thing. (This time varies from person to person, from a few weeks to some months.) This is when the telephone friends get the most calls and the parent say s/he thinks s/he is losing his or her mind. And why not? Here they are, getting further away from the actual death, but the pain is getting worse. That surely seems like a negative. Those of us who have had the necessary time from our own experience, or who have had time to observe the experience of others, see this as a positive thing. When people tell me this has now happened to them, it tells me they've come a long way. They've come on through the shock and denial and are now dealing head-on with what must be dealt with before their grief will soften.

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Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Quad City Compassionate Friends Chapter Meetings are usually held on the fourth Thursday of each month, at the

East Moline Library at

745 16th Avenue in East Moline, Illinois

from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on

Thursday, March 26th.

Due to a scheduling conflict, the April meeting will be held on

Thursday, April 30th.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine

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.

Rick's House of Hope

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 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. and a Teen Night on Thursdays from 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.

SHARE

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.

Phone Support

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email:

- ♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com
- ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoearth4@gmail.com
- ♥ Judy Delvechio, 563.349.8895, delvechiodj@hotamil.com

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.

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 the Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends (www.quadcitytcf.org) for previous versions of the 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>

A Tough Question

We've all been subjected to inappropriate questions from people who are nosy, socially clueless, or just plain rude. No one likes to be quizzed about matters that are just too personal or embarrassing to merit a glib and effortless answer. Is that a designer purse or a knock-off? Can you afford a vacation this year? How much do you weigh, earn, give to charity, pay in rent, recycle? Have you ever considered Botox? We feel righteous indignation at the lack of manners of these loathsome boors and perfectly justified in responding with hot-tempered sarcasm or icy silence.

For most people, the question, "How many children do you have?" does not belong in the category described. The query falls more into the class of speech rituals employed by those who don't really know each other and have not yet determined whether they have anything of substance to share, part of the repertoire of small talk, bland and unthreatening, designed to grease the verbal engine and get the dialogue up and running. A conversation starter.

For most people, that is. Not for me. I am a parent whose son has died. I find the question emotionally wrought and unsettling, with the power to derail any budding discussion or even bring it to an awkward and abrupt halt. What do I say? I had three children, but I don't have one of them any longer. At least not in the flesh and blood, to touch and feed and argue and celebrate with. Yes, I have a son in my heart and in my thoughts, always and forever, often obsessively. But I do not have a son in the land of the living, where I want him to be. That would be the most truthful answer.

The first year that I lost my son, whenever a new acquaintance asked the dreaded question, I answered, two daughters. The reality of my son's death was too unimaginable and surreal to articulate. I could not say the words without falling apart. I was angry and numb, and could not expose the raw and seething pain I was constantly experiencing. It took all my energy to carry out the motions of living through each day and pretending to be coping. Even now, three-and-a-half-years later, for random schmoozes with nameless strangers who I most probably will never see again, two daughters is enough of an answer. The stitches keeping me intact are still very fragile and disintegrate easily.

Eventually, it became evident that I would have to find a way to express my loss to people I interacted with since my son's death. Life, somehow, goes on. New relationships are formed. If I didn't find the words to speak about my son's death early on in an encounter, the revelation became exponentially more difficult as time passed. And I understood that anyone who would be part of my world had to know about David, no less than about my other children. How many children do you have? Two daughters and a son who died.

Having made that decision doesn't make giving my answer easier. Each time I repeat it, the unfairness and finality the response conveys is reinforced. And the acceptance. Acceptance of its reality and acceptance of the sadness and pain surrounding that reality will never leave me. For a parent who lost a son or daughter, "*How many children do you have?*" is a tough question.

Nora Yood
TCF NYC

No one warns you that loving deeply means, one day, you may grieve just as deeply.

That it will be worth it, but it will also break you.

That the same heart capable of holding immeasurable joy will one day have to hold unbearable sorrow.

And yet, here we are.

Jameson Arasi

As bereaved parents, we grapple with the concept of hope in the midst of our unimaginable loss. We understand that hope cannot bring our precious children back to us.

So, what then can we hope for?

Hope, for us, is not about wishing for the impossible. It's about finding solace in the smallest glimmers of light amidst the darkness. It's about daring to believe that there can still be moments of peace in our shattered hearts.

In the words of various scriptures, hope is described as a source of joy, peace, protection, and strength. But for us, it's also a lifeline, a way forward when the path seems impossibly bleak.

While our journey through grief may never be easy, let's hold onto the hope that we can find moments of respite, that we can honor our children's memories with love, and that someday, we can find a semblance of peace in our hearts.

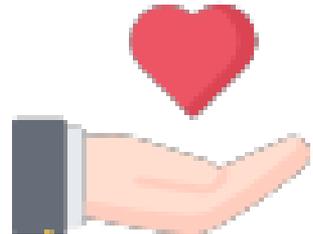
-From TCF Victoria

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 for mailings to recently 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 to the Chapter Treasurer, Laurie Boyce-Steinhauser, 397 West Wachter Road, Galena, Illinois 61036. 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 at 390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022, or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com or webbjerryd@gmail.com.



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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.