

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.



May-June 2026
 Volume XXXIV, Number 3

Dear Compassionate Friends,

On a bitterly cold morning in March 2005, after I cleared the front sidewalk of the overnight snowfall, I stopped to see if there was mail in the postal box. Over the last weeks, cards and letters of condolence had flooded and overwhelmed the box (just as it had Laurie, me, and our three sons following the sudden death of our six-year-old daughter, Maggie). As our tragic news spread, hundreds of letters and cards of support from so many persons had arrived. This day was much the same, but also included a newsletter that contained a salutation: *"To those of you who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group.* I made my way back to the open garage so I could cry in private. I too wished that Laurie and I weren't eligible for membership. At the most recent TCF Chapter meeting, nine of us gathered, all of us wishing much the same. But here we were learning to live with the terrible grief that will remain with us the rest of our days. But, we were not alone. We supported each other, cried, and laughed together, and steeled ourselves to face another day, another month. As Laurie and I drove home, I was reminded of words that Stephen King wrote into one of his characters:

*We did not ask for this room or this music. We were invited in.
 Therefore, because the dark surrounds us,
 let us turn our faces to the light.
 Let us endure hardship to be grateful for plenty.
 We have been given pain to be astounded by joy. We have been given
 life to deny death.
 We did not ask for this room or this music.
 But because we are here, let us dance.*

We are The Compassionate Friends and we are not alone in our grief.

Sincerely,
 Laurie and Bill Steinhauser

Reflections

May of brilliant greens
Harbinger of summer,
Mother of daffodils and tulips,
Warm my soul in your sun glow!
I am in need of that warmth,
Ready again to feel alive.
For so long I have shut out life,
Unwilling to see beauty
In a world without my child,
Unable to feel joy or love or
laughter,
Longing only for him.
I cared naught for life
And would have welcomed death.
It has been a long climb,
My re-entry into life.
In that climb I did not lose the
pain of separation,
But rather learned to
Assimilate it into my soul as a
Part of my life.
I here, he there.
And so, I chance life again,
Mindful of its brevity
Welcoming its brilliant colors,
The song of birds,
The grace of love.

I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love.

-Leo E. Buscaglia

There are three needs of the griever:

- To find the words for the loss,
- To say the words aloud
- To know that the words have been heard,

-Victoria Alexander

Even when you are no longer there to tell their story, the love and impact your child had on the world remains in the lives they touched and the memories others share.

Our instincts tell us to run from pain, But what if, in the case of grief, our instincts are wrong? After all, the reason it hurts so badly is because we love them so much. The pain is from love. If we look at it that way, the pain can be understood not as a bad thing, but as a beautiful tribute. The love and the pain are not forever entwined,

-Colin Campbell, Ruby and Hart's Dad

SOME DAYS ARE JUST HARD

Losing a child is indescribably painful. As any bereaved parent will tell you, the death of a child leaves a huge line running through our lives with "before and after" etched forever in our memories. Days that were previously filled with promise and vitality suddenly seem empty and hopeless. Gradually, we come to accept that our lives will never return to what they once were and that some days are just hard.

Some days are just hard. Some days grief rises up and reminds me that she's still there. She reminds me that grieving Matthew will always be a pivotal part of my life. That's okay. I also know that I will move through it and feel better soon. I know that life continues on, almost with a renewed sense of purpose. And for that, I'm grateful. I've come to embrace yet another paradox of life, knowing that our hearts can be both full and broken at the same time.

-Robin Gaphni, TCF member
From "Some Days Are Just Hard"

Our grief journey is moment-to-moment, literally placing one foot in front of the other, Take one breath at a time just as you do one day at a time, Do not look beyond tomorrow to figure out how you can survive the coming days, You do not have to be strong for others; you can let others support you. Do what you need to do for yourself. It is a hard journey without your child, grandchild, or sibling, but others who are on this journey are here to help,

Karen Cantrell, Frankfort, KY

Summer grace flows directly from winter grief. It presents itself in paradoxes.

However hard it is for you to let go, once you have, something surprising happens: you grasp.

You grasp a new depth of feeling for what others must go through.

You grasp wisdom about what life offers, and how it offers it.

You grasp appreciation for what you've been given. However painful it is for you to accept the reality of death, once you have done so, something else happens: you become more truly alive.

You become more ready to treasure this miracle called life.

You become more prepared for other experiences of rebirth.

You become more open to thoughts of your own death, as you come to realize all that death cannot take away, all that death cannot destroy.

You come to know that within every ending lies a beginning.

From the *Seasons of Grief and Healing*, by James E. Miller

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 W. Wachter Rd., Galena, IL 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.

**To Dads on this Father's Day
Continued from page 3**

A few years after SJ passed, my wife gave birth to our son Jameson.

Now, we are joyfully awaiting the arrival of our baby girl. The love we have for these children is overwhelming, and I cannot help but thank SJ for that. He taught us how precious life is and how each moment matters. For the few hours we had with him, we had everything we could have dreamed of. We gave him everything we could in his entire life, and all he ever knew from us was love. That experience has shaped me as a father. I now pour my heart into every moment I share with my children. There is so much beauty and fulfillment in parenthood, and I am grateful to SJ for giving me the perspective to cherish every second.

To the father who is experiencing his first Father's Day while grieving the loss of a child, I want to encourage you to let it

out this year. Pour your heart out with the people you love. Do not hide from what you feel. Sorrow is not a sign of weakness. Vulnerability is one of the greatest signs of strength. Our children deserve our deepest love, even when that love is expressed through grief. Find ways to honor your child that bring you peace in the midst of pain. Share your sorrow with those who care for you, so the weight of it can be shared. Allow yourself to begin healing. And remember, healing is not forgetting. It is a way of honoring those we have lost.

To all the loving fathers reading this, Happy Father's Day.

-Samson James, nowllymedowntosleep.org



I wish others knew that after the death of my son I still genuinely feel happy, joyful, hopeful. I still laugh often. I still rejoice when others have a baby they get to keep in their arms. I still care deeply. I still aim to love those around me well. And yet I still grieve profoundly. I still ache when I think about each missed milestone with my son. I still wipe away tears often from my face. I still wish more than words can convey that this was not my story. I still have each of these feelings all mixed within my heart. This is the new me."

Courtney C. from abedformyheart.com

I still remember my first Father's Day after SJ passed away, and how hard it was. My wife and I had been trying for so long to start a family, and we were so excited when we found out we would finally be parents. That joy turned to heartbreak when, at twenty weeks, we received SJ's diagnosis confirming his terminal condition.

With SJ being our firstborn, that made my first Father's Day incredibly difficult. Anyone who knows me also knows that I lean into optimism and positivity. However, even with my naturally positive outlook, SJ's absence weighed heavily on my mind and heart. I was committed to not making that day about my sorrow, but instead a celebration of who SJ was. I also wanted to honor my own father, who I am so lucky to have been raised by, and to celebrate my brother and friends who were thriving in fatherhood.

I felt that being sorrowful would be a disappointment to SJ. But looking back now, I recognize that grief may be one of the truest ways we express our love. Grief is a reflection of how deeply we love. We cannot grieve what we do not love, so why would I not allow myself to express how much I love SJ? Over time, through healing, I have come to realize that there is nothing wrong with wishing he was still here. What better way to honor him than to simply say, "I want you here with me."

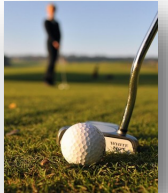
This Father's Day marks my fifth since SJ left us. While they do not get easier, I have found new ways to honor him that bring comfort. My wife and I have chosen special places to lay some of his ashes. It has become a tradition for us to visit one of those places and spend time with him in our own way. We don't always make it

something elaborate, it's often just a quiet and meaningful time to feel like we are with him.

I try to think of him every single day through small, personal things. I absolutely love making him a part of everything I do. At work, I have a little heart shaped note with his name on it next to my keyboard that always brings a smile. When I golf, I have his initials on my glove near my thumb so I see them before every shot. When I listen to worship music, I often include the songs that remind me of him. I find joy in discovering new ways to keep his memory alive and love including him in our family's daily life.

As I reflect on what this Father's Day means to me, I cannot help but think about the impact that "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" has had on my life and my family. As SJ's birth approached, I remember feeling unsure about whether taking photos with him was a good idea. Looking back now, I can say without a doubt that it was the best decision we could have made. Being able to remember him through beautiful photos brings me so much healing. I can still recall those moments so vividly, and we now have those images to help us see him in his siblings and cousins. These photos have brought SJ into the daily lives of our friends and family as well. Many of them have his pictures in their homes. He is remembered often by so many who love him, and we are all able to appreciate his beautiful and perfect face every day.

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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.

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 (www.quadcitytcf.org) for previous versions of the newsletter in PDF 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 .
climb@climb-support.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 Kolantai CLIMB-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

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

745 16th Avenue, East Moline, Illinois

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

The next meeting will be held on

Thursday, May 28, 2026.

The following meeting will be **Thursday, June 25, 2026.**

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the Snyder and Hollenbaugh Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry Ave., Muscatine, Iowa (in the Community Room). Tom Summitt can be contacted at 563.506.0103 or tcsummitt@machlink.com
Rick's RAY of Hope	Rick's RAY of Hope has been the regional center for grieving and traumatized youth for the past 16 years, offering hope and guidance to children experiencing grief, loss, or trauma issues. The center became a program of the Vera French Community Health Center in July of 2015 as Rick's House of Hope. The program was renamed in September 2023. Rick's RAY of Hope offers fall, winter, and spring support groups for children of all ages and developmental levels, special holiday events for coping with that time of year, and crisis debriefing for traumatic situations involving children. For more information, please contact them at 563.383.1900.
SHARE-Quad Cities	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. For more information, please contact Holly at sharequadcities@gmail.com or 309.779.8283 or visit the Facebook page at Quad Cities Share Group.
Phone Support	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email: ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvechio, 563.349.8895, delvechiodjudy@hotmail.com Rosemary and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares.

Were You

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now hit you like a 10-pound sledgehammer. Most of the time you take the pounding and just smile, because you know in your heart there was no ill will meant by the person speaking to you.

As I have said before a parent that has lost a child lives in a different world. They walk in a different lane, they hear with different ears, and their heart will always be sensitive to certain words and phrases, that before their child passed away meant nothing. The one thing I have come to realize, I am the proud father of a son who worked very hard to complete his collegiate career and continues to make me proud to be his father. I am also the father of a daughter who left this world way too soon and walks the clouds of heaven with grace and flare. Knowing I have two children, and will always have two children makes it easy to answer that question with, "Yes I am."

-Brad Benton,
TCF NSW Focus Newsletter



Please Say Their Names

The time of concern is over.
No longer are we asked how we're doing.
Seldom are the names of our children mentioned to us.
For most the drama is over.

There are exceptions: close and compassionate friends, sensitive and loving family.
Still look. Still ask. Still listen.
Thank God for them.

What can be said, you ask?
Please say their names to us.
Love does not die.
Their names are written on our lives.
The sound of their voices replay within our minds.
You may feel they are dead.
We feel they are of the dead and still they live.
They ghost-walk our souls, beckoning in future welcome.

You say they *were* our children.
We say they *are*.
Please say their names to us.
It hurts to bury their memory in silence.
What they were in flesh is no longer with us.
What they are in spirit stirs within us always.

Please understand we cannot forget. We would not even if we could.
We know that you cannot know.
Yesterday we were like you.
We do not ask you to walk this road.
The ascent is steep and the burden heavy.
We walk it not by choice.

What we have lost, you cannot feel.
What we have gained you may not see.
Please say their names for they are alive.
We will meet them again, although in many ways we've never parted.
Their spirits play light songs, appear in sunrises and sunsets.
They are real and shadow; they *were* and they *are*.

Please say their names to us and say their names again.
They are our children, and we love them as we always did.
More each day.

PLEASE, SAY THEIR NAMES.

-Author Unknown

Dear Grieving Mother,

If you are reading this, you are mourning the loss of your beloved child. The grief is crushing you. Child loss is an extraordinary cross and even though words fail, we are still so, so sorry for your suffering. We know you are crushed in spirit.

It's Mother's Day and we see you, broken-hearted Mama. We know there is more to your family than can be seen. We honor and celebrate your motherhood just as God allowed it to be. Today is for you because you are still a mother.

- ♥ Even if your arms are empty, you are still a mother.
- ♥ Even if no one remembers your child, you are still a mother.
- ♥ Even if your child never breathed, you are still a mother.
- ♥ Even if no one says your child's name anymore, you are still a mother.
- ♥ Even if you never knew if your baby was a boy or a girl, you are still a mother.

There is so much we want to say to you on Mother's Day, so much we want you to know. We want you to know that if you venture outside, seeing children with their families may hurt a little. Or a lot. It may be hard to see the baby in the stroller or the child on a swing being pushed by their mothers. It might be hard to see other families together when yours feels so broken. You may be filled with longing to be close to your child who feels so very far away.

There is little we can offer to soften your pain except to remind you that your child is real. Your child's life matters. Your love for your child and their love for you lives on. You are still a mother.

We want you to know that it's ok if you want to be invisible at church when the priest or pastor asks all mothers to stand for a blessing. We want you to know that seeing other moms on social media receiving

homemade cards may break your heart because you wish your child was here. The realization that you won't receive a flower pot fingerpainted with "Mom"—for the first time or the thirteenth time—might be too much to bear. You would trade all the little gifts in the world for one more second in your child's presence, but you want them anyway. Because you are still a mother.

We want you to know that even though your heart is in pieces, your arms are empty, and your plans are shaken, this day is still for you. You can celebrate your motherhood and have breakfast in bed or go to brunch. You don't have to hide. But if you want to or need to, that's ok too. You can stay curled up in bed crying and watching sad movies or turn down any invitations and go visit your child's grave,

Others may remember how hard today is for you, or they may not. Your husband may understand how you feel, or he may not. No matter what happens, this day will pass. Another day will come, and your love and your grief for your child will still be here. You will go on. You will learn to carry your grief through another day, another year. Just as you mothered your child in life, you will continue to mother them in death.

Because you are still a mother, Sweet Mama, you are part of a family that no one chooses: a community of grieving mothers who also suffers through Mother's Day. Each of us carries a child that no one sees. Each of us loves our child unconditionally.

It's not the length of a child's life or the cards or gifts you receive that determines your motherhood. It's the love that you give your child every single day, even in sorrow, even in death.

With deep love comes deep loss. Not even death can strip away the love a mother has for her child,

-Kelly Breaux, redbird.love

Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's Day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's Day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and rereading of that one last card, "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you," will have to last a lifetime.

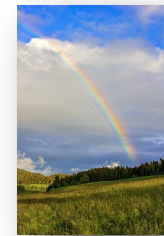
How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance."

Always we struggle with the eternal questions: How does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds, or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain on that day? Where is the fairness and justice in such barter?

The answer comes back again and again—life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot

keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a foretaste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?



No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness, and the love of a child who has departed,

someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving, and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

-Mary Wildmon, TCF Moro, IL

Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time

Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be expected. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle, and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces, and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.



The process of "putting the pieces back together" is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect "what was" with "what is" and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands—it is the creation of a new picture of your life—created one piece at a time.

-Stephanie Elson
The Amelia Center Birmingham, AL

Were You

I never realized what an impact these two words would have on my life after Lindsay passed away. I wrestled with them on a daily basis for many months and it is still a daily battle. Two words are put at the beginning of a sentence to ask a question about something that once was. Before Lindsay passed away people would ask, "Are you Jarrett and Lindsay's father?" My response would always be, very proudly, "Yes I am." After losing Lindsay, many people would ask me, "Were you Lindsay's father?" At that moment it hit me, how do I answer this question? If I say, "Yes I was" it makes it past tense; I was her father yesterday but not today. Almost as if I had sold a car or a house, I was the owner yesterday, but not today. That word makes it all in the past, never to be again, history. I was her father the day she was born and I will be her father until the end of everything that will ever be. Just because she is gone will never change the fact I am her father.

So many times, after a parent loses a child, the words people use mean so much but, they have a totally different meaning when you are grieving. Words spoken that were never meant to cause harm, never meant to be unloving, never meant to offend
Were You, **Continued on page 5**

Father's Day After My Son Died

For me there is a challenge in finding a balance between honoring the grief I am still carrying for my son and being a fully present father for my other kids. One child has passed, but I have two kids out in the world and two kids still living at home, and they are very important to me.

There is this idea (I don't know where it comes from) that parents are not supposed to cry in front of their children. We're supposed to show



strength or something. That idea was probably the first thing that went out the window even before Alex had passed. Grief shows up on its own timetable, and in my case, sometimes suddenly and without warning. I have been overcome with grief many times in the last two years and not exclusively when I am alone. That means my kids have seen me cry many times.

And why shouldn't they? Sure, sometimes when I am feeling painful emotions, I don't want anyone to see me and I don't want

my kids to see in particular. But isolating myself isn't good for me. I don't think trying to make the situation into some kind of emotionally sterile workspace is good for anyone, either. Emotions work best when they are moving and flowing, not when they are bottled up or hidden away.

And my kids have their own grief to deal with. Knowing this it feels more important than ever to maintain the familial rituals we have, like Christmas stockings or watching TV together over dinner. On occasion I still tell my kids bedtime stories even though they

are well past the age for it. We have a family grief that is separate from our individual grief. We grieve because we loved our Alexander and now his story has ended.

When my son spoke about his illness, he

mostly made jokes about it. He never faltered or despaired, even at the end. I wish I could take his death as well as he did, but I cannot. I am wounded and I will never be the same.

But that's ok. Life goes on. And even without him, there is still joy and happiness in the world.

-Mr. Technodad



Angel of Hope Monument at the Moline Memorial Cemetery

Samples of memorial bricks available for purchase and placement at the memorial garden.



The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden, 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):		