



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
QUAD CITY AREA CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January 2012—Volume XXV, Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Perhaps you've thought about coming to one of our monthly meetings. Perhaps you've even put it on the calendar. Perhaps you've wondered if anything or anyone could really help. Perhaps you've been afraid to expose your pain in front of a group of strangers. We did not attend our first Compassionate Friends meeting until almost two years after our daughter's death. There was not a support group for bereaved parents that we knew of until that time. We went to the first meeting thinking perhaps we could help other parents who were newer in their grief. Over our years of involvement we have been mentors for other bereaved parents but we also found a safe place to continue to deal with our feelings and to complete the realignment of our lives that is part of being a bereaved parent. A support group is not for everyone. One reason we started this newsletter was to share information and encouragement with bereaved parents who may never choose to attend a meeting. But if you are looking for a safe place to share about your child, ask questions, learn more about the grief process, be with others who are also walking the path of grief, we encourage you to join us at one of our meetings. Perhaps the following poem expresses what we are trying to share.

Let's go home . . .
My eyes pleaded to my husband.
We don't belong here.
This is crazy . . .
These people are still hurting.
Two, three, five years later
And they are still coming here.

Why do I feel I have to say something
to that couple who are in this night-
mare even less time than we?

They all seem to know what I'm feel-
ing . . .
Without me even saying it --

Let's go home
We don't belong here.
We won't, we can't be like that.

No one's flinching at my tears.
That steady, endless stream of tears
that never seems to stop.

Perhaps . . . If I don't speak,
If I don't tell them why we came . . .
It won't be true.

Perhaps . . .
One day I'll join their laughter . . .
Let's wait . . . Perhaps we shouldn't
leave just yet.

But wait . . . why are they laughing?
They all lost children, yet they are
laughing somehow.
And wait, why am I nodding at what
he's saying?

Sandy Fein Manhasset, NY

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

The Secret of TCF

The secret of the Compassionate Friends is simple. There is no line between the helper and the being helped. In the early months of people's membership in TCF, it seems that most of the time is spent absorbing ideas, crying, and letting the grief flow, and "learning the ropes" of being a bereaved parent.

The next step is reaching out to others and helping them. It is not a big step, for listening to another person sort out his life helps us to sort out our lives, too. But it is an important step because it is the first point at which the movement is reversed. All the energy has been going inward. We had been feeling so empty inside that we kept withdrawing into ourselves.

But at the point when we turn around is the point when we first listen to another, speak the words of comfort and hope, share our pain instead of just feeling our pain. At that time, the real healing has begun.

**Dennis Klass, PH.D., Advisor,
TCF/St. Louis, MO**

When Winter Comes

When winter comes into our lives
With its uncertain sound,
To strip us of our warmth and joy,
Our petals on the ground,
We may be tempted to forsake
The hope that keeps us warm.
But, we must learn to stand tall;
To always face the sun,
And patiently await the day
When winter's work is done.
For winter winds will cease to howl;
The snows will melt away.
Then we shall see the beauty of
Another summer's day.
And we will have renewed our strength
When summer's wind first blows,
For God will whisper once again
The promise of a rose.

Glenda Fulton Davis



When Is It Okay?

Buy Terri Ray *from Alive Alone Website*
<http://www.alivealone.org/>

A recently bereaved parent said to me. "I laughed today and I felt guilty." His son was murdered because the cash register his son was responsible for held no more than \$20.00.

I didn't know quite how to answer him. My son was murdered in May of 1996 and I still occasionally feel guilt when I revel in the joy of being in love, or the beautiful sunset, or laugh with new friends, or chuckle at one of the myriad jokes my son's friends and I tell about him.

Because I laugh and joke and tease about what my son may or may not be doing now, others are sometimes appalled at what they perceive as my lack of respect for those no longer with us. I long ago stopped trying to explain that it is not a lack of respect for my son or anyone else. It is rather a stubborn refusal to become defined by death and an acknowledgment that my son would be making the same irreverent jokes about me. Laughter is healthy. Humor is therapy. They are simply another coping mechanism.

Some days I cannot stop crying – not necessarily on birthdays that no longer are or death days that loom. I have no idea why. Some days I can't cry – even on those non-birthdays or horrid anniversaries. There is simply no rhyme or reason to it; just as there is not rhyme or reason to why we have to outlive our children.

When is it all right to cry? Whenever we feel like it.

When is it all right to smile and laugh? Whenever we feel like it.

When is it all right to feel guilty because we cry or laugh – never!!!

We cry because we hurt, because we are human, because we love and miss our children. If we start crying in the middle of a grocery store because we see a special on his/her favorite cereal – so what? I don't know about others, but I am long past caring what strangers think.

We laugh because we can sometimes see through the dark clouds and remember our children's laughter.

We laugh when we remember the silly things they used to do. We laugh because our children taught us how and because they would never forgive us if we stopped laughing and enjoying life.

I miss my son terribly. I will always miss my son terribly. I would gladly trade my life for his, if I had that choice. When I laugh, it does not mean I miss him less than others miss their children. When I smile at simple joys like thunderstorms, it does not mean I am "in denial" about my son's death. When I cry, it does not mean I am no longer coping.

Never be afraid to express your emotions. Never feel guilt over finding humor or joy

Terri's son and only child, Patrick, was murdered in Mexico at the age of 22.

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

A NEW YEAR – a time for looking ahead and not behind; a time for faith and not despair; a time for long, great gulps of hopeful expectation. Drink deeply my friend, so that, fortified with the promises it brings, this year will keep you near fresh springs of healing love where you may come to weave old and loving memories with new understandings and acceptance – and find peace.

Shirley C. Ottman, TCF/North Texas

When grief is still very fresh, the most important resolution made may be the dedication to survive each new day.

Bruce H. Conley
Handling the Holidays

To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die. **Thomas Campbell**

There is no doubt that in the immediate aftermath of the death of a loved one, pain and confusion are two of the most probable emotional reactions. Even following a long-term illness, where there has been substantial time to “prepare,” the overwhelming impact of the reality of death is devastating. It quickly becomes obvious that there is no way to effectively “prepare” for the finality of death.

Russell P. Friedman

<http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/about-us/>

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 Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

Thank you to:

Bill and Cynthia Fender in memory of her daughter, Rebecca Jo Batey

Glenn and Sylvia Just in memory of their son, Shawn

Robert and Mary Jo Reade in memory of their daughter, Robin Leslie

Richard and Carol Watters in memory of their son, Robert

Love gifts are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue. If you would like to send a love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.



Our Newsletter

For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.

Amazon.com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families and Maggie's Fund** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

Alive Alone provides bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. This is a self-help network and publications including a bi-monthly newsletter to promote communication and healing.

Email: alivealone@bright.net
Website: www.alivealone.org
Alive Alone, Inc.
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Decide What You Want to Do from *You Can Become Whole Again* by Yolanda Miller

There is much more you can do with grief than just survive it. Being able to "take it" and endure life in spite of your loss may seem the brave thing to do, or even the only choice you have when tragedy comes.

But these two assumptions are wrong. Unhealthy too. Such stoical endurance is in reality false courage. It takes no courage to avoid dealing with the unpleasant things that happen in life. Any coward can do that. But it does require the highest kind of courage to continue experiencing life, whatever the circumstance, and that's the other choice you have.

Which do you opt for? The alternative that seems the easiest – carrying on in spite of your loss? Or the one that seems most difficult, but is in fact the most profitable in the long run – growing as a person because of your loss?

Only you can decide. Only you can want to stagnate in sorrow, or grow, as you heal, in understanding more about life and death through grief. Don't say the choice depends upon what you can or cannot do. It's not a matter of "can" or "can't" but of "will" or "won't."

That lays the responsibility for how you fare solely on your shoulders, doesn't it? Accept the fact, my friend, for that's exactly where responsibility for your recovery rests.

Just For Today

Just for today I will try to live through the next 24 hours
And not expect to get over my child's death
But instead learn to live with it, just one day at a time.

Just for today I will remember my child's life, not his death,
And bask in the comfort of all those treasured days
And moments we shared.

Just for today I will forget all the family and friends
Who don't help or comfort me the way I need them to.
They truly do not know how.

Just for today I will smile no matter how much I hurt inside.
For maybe if I smile a little,
My heart will soften and I will begin to heal.

Just for today I will reach out to comfort a relative or friend of my child,
For they are hurt too.
And perhaps we can help each other.

Just for today I will free myself from my self-inflicted burden of guilt.
For deep in my heart I know if there was anything in the world
I could have done to save my child from death, I would have done it.

Just for today I will honor my child's memory
By doing something for others
Because I know this would have made my child proud.

Just for today when my heart feels like breaking,
I will stop and remember that grief is the price we pay for loving
And the reason I hurt is because
I had the privilege of loving so much.

Just for today I will not compare myself with others.
I am fortunate to be who I am
And to have had my child for as long as I did.

Just for today I will allow myself to be happy,
For I know that I am not deserting my child by living on.

Just for today I will accept that I did not die when my child did.
My life does go on,
And I am the only one who can make my life worthwhile.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, January 28, 2012

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL
 Call Rosemary Shoemaker (309.441.5586) or Michelle Curtis (309.644.0486)
 for information and directions.

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church is on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.) Next meeting: February 26, 2012, at 6:30 pm.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at (563)260-3626 for directions or information or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm in HomeRidge Inn Suites in Bettendorf east of the Bennigan's Restaurant. Please check at the front desk for room location. Please contact Kirby White ahead of time to verify the meeting location; kombo100@msn.com or (563)271-5908.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month at 403 SW 10th Avenue, Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.
Rick's House of Hope	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call (563)324-9580 or (563)421-7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web: www.genesishealth.com — keywords "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and the third Thursday at 6:30 pm 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
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support that meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

Wintersun

There are those days in winter
 When your world is frozen
 Into a vision of eternal ice.
 When earth and air
 Are strangers to each other.
 When sound and color seem forever gone.
 There are those days in winter
 When you feel like dying.
 When life itself surrenders you to anguish,
 To total mourning and to endless grief.
 And then it happens: from the bitter sky.
 A timid sun strides to his silent battle
 Against the grey and hostile universe —
 It changes ice to roses, sky to song.
 And then it happens that your heart recalls
 Some distant joy, a gladness from the past
 A slender light at first, then larger, braver,
 Until your mind returns to hope and peace.
 Let memories be beauty in your life.
 Like song and roses in the wintersun.

Sascha Wagner



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

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.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
 Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
 Toll Free (877)969-0010
 TCF National Web site —
www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

The mission of the Compassionate Friends (TCF) is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child at any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Quad City Area Chapter of The

Compassionate Friends meets on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
 Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Suicide – Why?

I have asked myself this question many, many times. The majority of people who kill themselves are not out of their minds. They are so focused on their emotional pain, however, that they have a kind of “tunnel vision.” Suicide victims feel absolutely helpless and hopeless. They can’t call on their experiences to help them. Their suicidal moods pass, only to return again. They are unable to think of alternatives to death, or how their families will feel.

Many think their families would be better off without them. Just as people die from heart disease and cancer when they “have everything going for them,” so also do they who kill themselves. Wealth and loving families don’t keep people from dying in accidents or by disease. “Having everything to live for” also doesn’t prevent suicide.

Do “bad” or “busy” parents cause suicide? NO! Good or bad parenting is obviously important but it is irrelevant to suicide. To say “bad” parents cause suicide is like saying that only children of “bad” parents get cancer. Busy and career-oriented parents who move frequently because of their jobs do not cause suicide. There are many “bad” parents whose children do not kill themselves; there are many

“good” parents whose children do.

Our society has too often promoted the belief that suicide occurs in “bad” or “sick” families. Historically, society’s efforts on suicide prevention have been spent on blaming families and cheap talk. When this happened to me, I felt isolated, even though people were all around me. Worst of all, nobody wanted to talk to me about what happened. They all avoided the subject. I felt helpless, weak, and lifeless. I couldn’t change my son’s death. I felt hopeless, depressed, and yes, I even had thoughts of suicide myself. The pain went deeper and deeper. I felt like I couldn’t go on. I wanted to die. However, I also felt a sense of relief for whatever reason. I would say, “At least he’s no longer suffering as much as he did.”

I adopted all of these things at varying times. I have talked to other parents who experienced some of them. Almost everyone experiences fear. I can’t stop reliving that moment. It lingers in the back of my mind. I still remember the DCH hospital chaplain and a friend of mine at the hospital coming to my office to give me the terrible news of Curtis’ death. I felt confused, shocked, and dazed.

I survived by looking inside myself and to God for truth, and by connecting to family and friends, and by ultimately choosing to survive. I accepted professional counseling to help me express my intense feelings of guilt and anger, and to support me through the process of mourning. I struggled with the questions of “why” until I satisfied myself that I could live with partial answers.

I gave myself time to heal, which takes a lot longer than the world imagines. Some people postpone the pain of working through the process by denying their subconscious minds that the suicide happened and they doggedly affirm this denial until months or even years have passed. Whatever time it takes is just the amount of time it takes – you can’t rush it.

I am glad to be told there is no right way or wrong way to grieve because we all grieve differently. I’ve learned suicide is not inherited. It doesn’t need to happen ever again in our family. My faith in God’s grace is healing and the meaning of life and afterlife are becoming more real every day. My friends at Compassionate Friends will never know how much they have meant to me, because no one can really explain how hurt I was at that first meeting. I was there in body only. I came in August after

Curtis had died in June. It may have been early in my grief, but I know now it was the thing I needed at that time.

Recently my pastor made a statement that meant a lot to me. He said, “We can do every possible thing to raise our children the best we know how but when they grow up, they will make decisions that we have no control over, and we must not blame ourselves as parents.”

Cynthia Clements,
TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL

You’re Always With Me

Though you’re no longer with me,
every day I find,
one way or another,
you’re back there on
my mind.



I might hear a
piece of music,
and at once my mind is stirred,
back to a treasured moment,
the two of us have shared.

I never try to stop them.
I let them just flow through.
It’s just my way of spending time
once again with you.

Jodie Day, TCF/WA
In memory of her brother, Wayne Day