Dear Compassionate Friends,

About six months after our daughter died, I became pregnant. I remember a mixture of emotions including the sense I was betraying my beloved child by welcoming another child into our lives. I wept at Anna’s graveside asking her to forgive me for what seemed like abandoning her. That pregnancy ended in miscarriage as did my next. By the time I became pregnant again, I was deeply grateful and relieved, but felt a constant undercurrent of anxiety. At first, I nonchalantly leaned on my faith, believing I, with God, could courageously face an unknown future. As the time for our son’s birth drew near, I wondered if I could really handle the anguish of losing another child.

We know many bereaved couples who have welcomed a subsequent child into their family through birth or adoption. The circumstances for each is different and accompanied by a myriad of feelings and challenges. I had to fight the urge to not hover and overprotect. Some parents struggle with avoiding emotional involvement with their new arrival fearing this child too will be taken. Together the family must integrate a new member into the family structure while still mourning the loss of the child who has died. We have to be careful to remind ourselves and others that this child is not a “replacement,” but a unique and cherished individual just as each of our children are. We may struggle with processing our joy as we welcome a new son or daughter with the depth of our continued sorrow. It is not either/or; happiness and sadness can exist together. The article, The Courage to be a Parent Again explores some of these thoughts and feelings. “Parenting is hard. Parenting after losing a child is even harder.” Give yourself lots of grace as you navigate these uncharted waters and look to others who have walked this journey for support. We Need Not Walk Alone.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb
When you’ve experienced loss, you learn that sometimes you are the person the bad things happen to, and this can make you feel paralyzing vulnerable. Perhaps loss shattered many of the assumptions you held about the world being a safe place. Now you worry because you’re not sure what set of rules the world plays by. Loss and grief can teach you many lessons. Some of these lessons are useful and constructive, while others make life feel a little more challenging.

**Eleanor Haley**

The spirit of those we love will glow within our hearts always. No light born in love can ever be extinguished.

Unknown

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One of the most challenging things about grief is that you’ll think you’ve made significant progress in your healing, but then are reminded of the dream that didn’t happen or the loved one you no longer see. This generates more pain because you feel like you’re worse than you were before. You’re not. What this means is that your healing journey halted for a minute. You may have even taken a few steps back. When this happens, stop and grieve—again. And then allow yourself to look back and see the progress you’ve made. Every time you accept the loss and feel it, you’re headed toward healing. Grieving with hope.

**From You Version Bible app**

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Losing a child means carrying an almost unbearable grief, experienced by many but talked about by few. Yet despite the staggering commonality of this pain, the conversation remains taboo, riddled with (unwarranted) shame, and perpetuating a cycle of solitary mourning.

Your heart will mend, but it will...be a different heart...wear a deep and lasting scar...be a more compassionate heart...know life in a new and different way...understand the eternity of love.

**Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia MI**

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Grief is really hard. After the loss of Grace, I processed with my head and Steph processed more with her heart. We did well when we were able to recognize the differences in the way we processed grief, but we stumbled when we got irritated that the other person was grieving in a way we could not relate to.

**Andy Schoonover**
Change and Challenges

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I begin to realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve too for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving — now serious and absorbed. Our friends and family miss the “old us,” too and their comments show it. “Don’t you think it’s time to return to normal?” “You don’t laugh as much as you used to.” They are grieving too for the friend who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar who shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when our child dies. We wonder, our family wonders, our friends wonder, will he/she come out? Will they make it through the long sleep? What hues will show when they emerge? If you’ve ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of a cocoon, you’ll know that the change is not quick or easy. But worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the new us. When our priorities become different, and people become more important than things. When we grasp a hand that reaches and reach in turn to pull another from their own cocoon. When we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge. Then we can proudly say, “I have survived against overwhelming odds. I am a better person.” Even though our child’s death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and challenges give us hope that we can be happy; we can feel fulfilled again; we can love again.

Sherry Mutchie, Appleton, TCF

Contact the Editors

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it...

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

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and address...

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email...

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

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.quadcitycf.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.
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The Pressure of Parenting After Losing a Child

Parents today feel a lot of pressure. We try to make the right choices from the very beginning. From pregnancy care decisions to what our babies eat, where they sleep, what they watch or don’t watch, etc. The list could go on and on. We all want to make the best choices we can and be the best parent we can be to our children. Whether you have other living children already, or go on to have other children after your loss, parenting after losing a child adds a new level to the pressure we feel as parents. And with the pressure of parenting after loss comes guilt when we feel like we aren’t measuring up.

As bereaved parents, we wanted the children we lost so badly. We wanted to parent them and watch them grow, and we would have given anything to have that opportunity. After losing a child we are painfully aware of what a privilege it is to be a parent. As bereaved parents, we put tremendous pressure on ourselves to be perfect parents. We wanted to be a mother or father so badly and we feel like if we are given the opportunity to do so, we have to get it right, all the time.

When parenting after losing a child, we feel like we should never take a moment of it for granted and always feel nothing but grateful. We know firsthand how lucky we are to have healthy, thriving children with us. We put pressure on ourselves to maintain these high standards of parenting, because we know what a blessing it is to get to parent at all.

Losing Aiden changed my perspective on every aspect of my life, including what a gift the opportunity to be a parent is. But the reality is, no matter how grateful I feel, no one can be a perfect parent all the time. I try my best and give it my all, but no one is perfect. Parenting is hard. It is an amazingly beautiful job. But it is hard. Parenting after losing a child is even harder.

I think all loss parents would agree that we hug our kids a little longer and a little tighter. We give them a few extra kisses when we tuck them in at night. And reflect a little more often how lucky we are to have them, that we get to be their mom or dad. We realize what a miracle it is that they were born healthy and are thriving. Loss parents love a little deeper because we know the pain of losing a child. We love all our children, those in our arms and in our hearts, with all the love we have. But being a parent is still hard.

After Aiden died, I wanted so desperately for the chance to be a mother. When I got pregnant with my daughter, I promised myself that if this baby was born healthy and lived, I would never complain about

Continued next page
how hard parenting is, how tired I was, or how much I needed some time to myself. If I ever had the chance, I would be the best mother ever. Never taking a moment of it for granted.

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to be a mom to my two living children. I know how lucky I am to have two healthy children I get to call mine. Every day I try hard to be a good parent, because I know how precious these little lives are that I have the privilege to raise. I know how easily that life can slip away because I had to watch the life slip away from Aiden. I try hard to be a good parent, but I’m not a perfect parent. Nowhere near perfect.

Just because I feel so incredibly grateful for my children doesn’t mean parenting is easy. Just because I’m grateful to have children alive to wake me in the middle of the night doesn’t mean I don’t get tired. Being grateful beyond words for my healthy children doesn’t mean I never lose my patience or feel frustrated.

Being a bereaved mother has given me a deep sense of appreciation for my children and the incredible experience of being a mother. The sweet moments watching my babies grow and thrive still take my breath away on a regular basis.

But parenting is still hard. Parenting after losing a child is even harder. I have hard moments and hard days. Ones that test my abilities and my limits. I still make mistakes. I lose my patience, mess up, say the wrong thing, react the wrong way.

But I’m trying to let go of the pressure and guilt of parenting after losing a child, and give myself grace instead.

Grace to apologize when I make a mistake and try to learn from it. Grace to ask for support or a break when I need it. Giving myself the grace to fall but get up and try again tomorrow. Grace to know that even though I am trying my hardest, I’ll still make mistakes. And grace to remind myself that my children know how loved they are, even on the days I feel like I failed.

Bereaved parents carry so much pain and hurt already. We don’t need to cause ourselves more hurt by trying to be perfect parents in honor of the children we lost. Then feel guilty when we don’t meet our own unattainable standards.

I am practicing giving myself grace because I know I’m doing the best I can. I think we all deserve a little more grace. Especially when navigating the difficult path of parenting after losing a child.

*Still Standing* Magazine, 12-27-17
The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Upcoming meeting on
Thursday, April 22, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.
Meeting held by Zoom due to COVID-19 and the Illinois governor’s restrictions on in-person meetings.
Next month’s meeting is on May 27, 2021.

| The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine | Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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. |
| Rick's House of Hope | Rick’s House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, 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. At this time, Rick’s has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 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.rloh.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 pm via ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic and in “normal time” 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. |
| Loving Listeners | If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):

♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 dns0826@gmail.com
♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoeartb4@gmail.com
♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@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. |
Comparing grief only seems to draw unnecessary boundaries between people who are otherwise in a position to empathize and support one another. No, you can’t know what anyone else is going through, but you can understand what it is like to feel that kind of suffering because you’ve felt it too. If there’s any benefit we can take from grief being a universal experience, it should be that we’re able to have compassion and empathy towards what others are going through. And we know the value of honoring and respecting the significance of each other’s losses.

The thing about grief is that you are never over it. You don’t move on from grief – you move forward with it. My heart bears the scars of every loss I have experienced. Yes, time, prayer and community all help you heal, but even healed hurts leave scars. We have to learn how to move forward with our lives, continually making space for the pain that is now part of us and our story. Grief and loss change us. Grief gives us a deeper level of empathy for what others are walking through. It opens our eyes to the pain in this world. It puts all of life in perspective and shifts our focus to what actually matters.

Megan Smalley

Recently, The Compassionate Friends offered a virtual event, Rising Together in Grief and Hope, featuring David Kessler, Shari O’Loughlin, and David Wood. All three of our inspirational speakers suffered tragic losses of children and siblings and were able to transform their experiences into helping others.

In addition to their presentations, there is a Question and Answer panel at the end of the video where our speakers answer questions from attendees. This event was recorded so that all would have the opportunity to view it.

You can access this event through the TCF Facebook page or the TCF Website.

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.

Thanks to
Kory and Kaye Miller, in memory of their daughter, Kora.
Kay McDaniel, in memory of her daughter, Kimberly, and son, Kent.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to bereaved families. Some of the Love Gifts are used for materials to share with 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 donation or Love Gift, please send it to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806. Checks should be made out to The Compassionate Friends. Your gifts are tax deductible.
Many counselors speak of grief never really ending, which is true, and of “heavier” grief enduring for two to three years. From the many bereaved parents I have known personally or professionally, I would say that for most, the second year is harder than the first because by then the reality of the death and just how long a timer they will have to live without their child’s physical presence is really becoming clearer. Grief continues to be difficult through the fifth year. Even parents who may have resigned themselves to their fate and appear to be coping better are still experiencing intense hurt.

It is not uncommon to visit with parents who have experienced the death of a child 40 or 50 years ago and have them tear up still as they tell it. This does not mean that they never dealt with their loss. It’s just that as long as we live, it’s never really over. Life can be good and beautiful again, and yet there will still be moments of sadness and longing for our children and who might have been.

“We Need Not Walk Alone,” Winter 06-06

HELPING OTHERS HELP YOU – TEN RULES FOR SELF-HEALING

Posted on April 4, 2017

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you’ll need their calls.

2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this “We must get together for lunch.”

3. Remind them that you’re bound to have “down” times and their patience would be appreciated.

4. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died — and don’t avoid that person’s name.

5. It’s important for friends to understand that you may appear to be “doing so well” but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it’s tricky and it’s exhausting.

6. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.

7. Tell your friends that it’s all right to express their caring. It’s OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.

8. Let your friends know too, that it’s all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.

9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.

10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can “walk off” feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.
The courage to be a parent – again

Ann and her husband Lance lived a parent's worst nightmare: burying their child. Their five-year-old daughter Grace died suddenly from a virulent form of strep. It was devastating. Their family became "whole" again three years later when they traveled to China to adopt a little girl, Annabelle.

One morning, Ann found Annabelle lying limp on the bathroom floor. Ann and Lance raced Annabelle to the hospital. They were reliving the same nightmare. This time, though, Annabelle survived. Doctors thought the little girl may have ingested a medication carelessly dropped by a visitor to their home during the holidays.

The experience left Ann a little shaken but with a new understanding of what it means to be a parent. Ann writes: A friend whose father was murdered when she was a teenager told me that when her infant son's terminal illness was diagnosed, she told the doctor, “You must be mistaken. I've already had my mine.”

Hadn’t I already had mine? Could it be that [Annabelle] who had changed my sorrow to hope could also suffer some unspeakable tragedy? Of course. It was possible. Since Grace had died, I had met families with multiple losses so I understood no one was safe. It was this understanding that almost kept me from having another child. The risk seemed too great.

Before I was a mother, I leaped repeatedly into love with my arms and heart wide open... Losing Grace had the opposite effect. What I do know is this: There is no safe route through parenthood, or through life. When we offer our heart to others, we do not know what will happen to it. It may grow. It may take us to places we never imagined. But isn't that the risk of love?

From Dedicated to the People of Darfur: Writers on Fear, Risk And Hope

TCF National Conference 2021

Though we cannot gather in person for the conference this year, please mark your calendars. More information can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org.

The Compassionate Friends
2021 Virtual National Conference
July 16 – 18, 2021
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.