



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

September 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 7

Dear Compassionate Friends,

For those of us who have had one child die, we cannot imagine the agony of losing another. When we meet parents who have lost multiple or all of their children, we wonder how they can possibly still be standing, breathing, facing each day. Mary Manachi, West Paterson, New Jersey, lost three of her four children to a rare genetic blood disorder at the ages of 12, 19, and 19. Each of her children lived vibrant, active lives in spite of their illness. The lessons she learned from the way her children embraced life helped her to live again after they died. When asked the question, “How can you be happy after all that’s happened?” she responded:

My children understood that life is a holy gift from our Creator. They loved each day they were given, and their enjoyment and gratitude were like sunlight, warming and brightening our time together. In the face of early death, they embraced life. If they loved life as much as they did, honoring it, reaching out to soothe their stricken friends, using their days creatively, am I to love life any less? No! I will not dishonor God – or my children – with gloom and self pity. I embrace life as they embraced it and I shall rejoice and be glad in it!

After her children’s death, Mary continued her children’s legacy of raising money and sponsoring fun excursions for other children with the same disease as well as encouraging their parents.

It takes courage and hope to live again after our child has died. We honor our children when we, in time, choose to live life to the full, loving our surviving children, caring for others who come across our path, trying in our own way to make a difference in a hurting world as we remember our children with love.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



People think that I have survived your death. What they do not understand is that I have to relearn how to survive each day, because each day, you are still gone.

Unknown

The depth of your sorrow diminishes slowly and, at times, imperceptibly. Your recovery is not an act of disloyalty to the one who has died. Nor is it achieved by forgetting the past. Try to strike a delicate balance between a yesterday that should be remembered and a tomorrow that must be created.

TCF, Atlanta, GA

Don't tell me that you understand. Don't tell me that you know.
Don't tell me that I will survive, how I will surely grow.
Don't tell me this is just a test, that I am truly blessed.
That I am chosen for this task, apart from all the rest.
Don't come at me with answers that can only come from me.
Don't tell me how my grief will pass that I shall soon be free.
Don't stand in pious judgment of the bonds I must untie.
Don't tell me how to suffer, and don't tell me how to cry.
My life is filled with selfishness. My pain is all I see.
But I need you, and I need your love...unconditionally.
Accept me in my ups and downs. I need someone to share.
Just hold my hand and let me cry, and say, "My friend, I care."

J. Hendel

I would tell anybody in grief to be kind and gentle to themselves and to not compare their journey to the time and distance traveled by others grieving the same loss... There is hope. It may come as the slightest pin hole of light in the darkest of places, but hope is there and it will find you.

Kris Munsch, Blake's dad

First Encounter

When grief first enters our life, it tends to invade us ... completely and... relentlessly. We are without comfort, we do not feel pleasure, we find no joy. We ache in mind and body. We feel weak and numb. In the deepest core of our being, we are ready to accept that we will never know happiness again. What's more, we feel that this state is entirely appropriate, natural, and irreversible. Nothing can convince us that, given time, we will learn to live again. But we will.

-Sascha

Fifty years ago, industrialists thought they could just bury toxic waste and it would go away. We've since learned it doesn't. It leaks into the water and contaminates the crops and kills animals. Burying grief does the same thing. It leaks into our emotional system and wreaks havoc. It distorts our perceptions of and taints our relationships.

Bill Hybles - *A Better Kind of Grieving*

The Greatest Grief

A sudden accident killed your child. That terrible phone call changed your life with no warning—you didn't get to say goodbye—this has to be the most terrible loss of all.



Your child died by suicide—you feel you should have been able to prevent it. Your guilt is devastating.

How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

You only had one child—now you have none and your focus in life is gone. What's the point of living? What could be more devastating?

You've experienced the deaths of more than one of your children—will it happen again? How does one survive this pain again?

When your baby died, your dreams died—you have few memories and you're too young to be suffering like this—this loss is the most unfair.

Someone murdered your child—an unbelievable violation— you're angry and your frustration with the legal system feeds your anger. This must be the very worst.

You're a single parent—your child has died and you have no one to lean on, no one to share your grief—surely your suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened—your adult child died—you had invested so much in that child—now who's going to care for you in your old

age?

You had to watch your child suffer bravely through a long illness—you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death—how do you erase those horrible images?—Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss, regardless of the cause, regardless of the age. Our own experience is far more painful than we had ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly comprehend what others have undergone? To make comparisons between our own suffering and the pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others.

To say that one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than another tends to place different values on the children who have died.

Each child is worthy of 100% of our grief, each



person's sorrow is 100%, and each loss is 100% of our being. I can't imagine wanting to walk in the shoes of any other bereaved parent, can you?

Peggy Gibson
TCF, Nashville, TN

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., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (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

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

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.

Telling Their Stories

There are many different reasons and purposes for telling our grief story. Telling our story is important for so many reasons but understanding why we are telling it helps us to formulate the story for that purpose and to get the reaction that we want from telling it. There are three basic reasons that we tell a story and as we move through grief, these reasons may change.

1. We tell our story to understand that it is real.

The death of someone we love is so intensely painful, and the details around the death are forever imprinted on our minds. We remember the tiniest detail and we find ourselves wanting to tell it again and again. We tell details about the cause of death, the things that went right and the things that went wrong. In the telling we ask why and what if and maybe we should have. Sometimes we tell it with the odd feeling that maybe telling it this time, the ending will be different. At this time intertwined with our stories are all of our raw emotions. We are trying so hard to understand how something so unimaginable could happen. We don't need others to do anything but sit and listen and absorb the details and the pain. We may find ourselves telling people that we have just met, in a store or on an elevator details about our loss. We have no greater purpose but to tell it over and over.

2. We tell our story to connect with

others.

There is a shift that comes in time where our story becomes a way to connect with others. We share our story to find others with similar experiences. We want to know that we are not alone in our grief and pain. We want to know that there are others that have had similar losses so that we can learn and share with them. We also use our stories to



reach out to others to let them know that we understand, because we are also on the grief journey. The stories start to contain details about our loved one— their interests and passions in life. We want others to know them through us and we seek to introduce them to people who understand. Our grief journey becomes intertwined at this time in sharing the loss, our love for them, and we also share how we live without them. We may share our stories in writings on websites, blogs, or Facebook. There may be emotions but they are not as raw. Our goal is to connect, to not feel alone and to make sure that others know that they are not alone.

3. We tell stories to make a difference and to honor them.

At some point we may decide that the story of our loved one's life and death needs to be shared for the purpose of making a difference, to individuals or entire countries. These

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A Moving Experience

We are sorting through and packing up for a move. It's worse than your usual move from one home of ten years to another; the house we live in now is the last



one we shared with our son, Aaron. We are sorting through and packing up memories, along with the tools, dishes, and books.

I have heard other bereaved parents talk about moving after their child died. For some, it was too painful to stay in a house that held so many images. They spoke of not being able to get away from the sorrow, of running into the pain every time they walked through the door. We never felt that way about our home. This was a place Aaron loved, and we have been very happy here—the last earthly house that Aaron knew.

I know that we will be happy in our new home as well but *that* house won't hold a breath of him, as this one does. Now, I can walk out onto the patio and still see him in my mind's eye, drifting across the pool on a raft. I can easily imagine him coming out of his bedroom door, calling *Mom...* as he so often did. The new house

won't have any history with Aaron, and so there is a feeling of loss in leaving this old place.

I know that Aaron goes where I go; he is a part of me always and forever. Nonetheless, I will miss walking familiar streets where once he walked. I will miss the feeling of connection as I lie on the side of the hill at the park and watch the clouds drift by. I will miss the scent of his closet and the view from his window. There are stories in these rooms and this neighborhood, stories woven from the fabric of my son's life. I may carry the stories with me, but I am leaving behind the props.

We have packed up his baby book, the special school projects, and the box of cards we received when he died. Hannah still has his treasured rocks in her room, and the boxes of comic books so carefully preserved and alphabetized are ready for transport. Paul is going through the collections of action figures and baseball cards to determine what can be sold or given away, and I expect that his raggedy old "bud" from infancy, No-Way Noah, will take up residence somewhere in the new house.

But how do you pack up his passion for life? I know what to do about things I can hold in my hands; what I want to know is — how am I to carry his heart?

I've had a vision of these rooms, empty of all our things: I

am doing one last walk through, taking one last look, saying one final goodbye. It is a scene that brings with it a gentle sorrow, and though I know we are moving forward and that all is well, in my heart there is a sense that I am somehow leaving Aaron behind. It makes me think back to those first months when I could not leave the house, even overnight. I told Paul, *I know this sounds crazy, but I feel that if I leave I might come home and find a note on the door that says: "Hi, Mom! Sorry I missed you. Catch you later. Love, Aaron."*

Six years later, I am not anxious about leaving home; I don't worry that I might miss a visit. The shock and disbelief of early grief has passed away and the reality of Aaron's death has settled on my soul. Though I know that I will never again see my son walk through the door, I also know that I know—I will never leave Aaron behind. He goes where I go. Still, I will be leaving a piece of my heart in the old house. Should you visit, listen for the gentle beat. You might sense its rhythm somewhere about—gazing out a tree-shaded window, lingering over a bloom in the garden, or drifting gently across the sky. And you will know that a house holds more than the stuff of memories. A house can hold a heart.

Frankie Wilford, TCF, Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX



What Do I Have to Look Forward To?

Those of us who have been with TCF for a while, who have suffered the ups and downs of our grief, and have experienced the healing and help of friends in TCF—we like to think that when we meet a newly bereaved parent, we can pass on some of that help. But it isn't always that simple. A recent meeting is a case in point. After the meeting I talked to the father of a young boy who had been killed only weeks earlier in an accident—one of those freak happenings that sometimes result in only scrapes and bruises, or perhaps a broken bone or two, but this time ended with tragic finality. I said, of course, that there were no magic words to make everything all right once again, that sense of loss and hurt would never completely disappear, but...and I tried to put into words how I felt five years after Teddy's death. I guess I didn't do a very good job, because he said, "I hear you say after five years you're still hurting, and others the same way after many years. What do I have to look forward to?" I don't think I answered that one very well, either, but I've thought about it a lot since. I can remember those terrible days and months of misery, anger, bewilderment; the electric flashes through your whole body as you periodically go through the terror and shock again and again; the desperate denials – "It's a dream. I'll wake up and he'll be here!" Those are not pleasant times, and they take their toll on mind and spirit and body. But I would like that father and all others who suffer like him to know, that, after having gone through the same tortures you are facing, I do today, have control of the hurt. That may not sound like much, but I can remember now with delight and love the blessing that child brought to my life, and know that a love like that is never in vain. It hurts, yes, but not that badly, and not forever. **Herb Tidemann, Enid, OK**

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, September 22 at 6:30 p.m.

**Our meeting is held in-person at 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois,
on the first floor. Masks and social distancing are required.**

The next meeting of the chapter is on October 27, 2022.

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</p>	<p>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. 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.rhoh.org.</p>
<p>SHARE</p>	<p>A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. 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.</p>
<p>Phone Support</p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoearth4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <p>Doug, Kay, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.</p>

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stories focus on why the person died and what message can come of it. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers was founded on such a story. Laws, medical practice and societal norms have been changed by tragic stories being shared. Individuals have taken different paths in life after hearing the stories of our loved ones. There is a lot of power in these stories, but there are some things to keep in mind when planning to tell them either verbally or in writing. These include:

- Make the message simple and directly related to your story. Try not to cloud the message with many details that pull people's attention away.
- Anger has a part in grief but not in trying to make a point. It is easy to dismiss someone who is angry; the message is not being listened to because the anger is in the way. If you are looking for things to change, anger, bitterness, and blame will not help.
- You may want to tug on heartstrings, but not so much that

the focus is more on your personal loss than the issue. It is the best when we can personalize the situation to your loved one but still clearly tell the message of change.

- Remember who the audience is and plan accordingly. What is going to move them the most about your story?
- Finally know that your story will touch, move, and inspire the people it is meant to, and sometimes we will not know who they are. Share your message, gently with everyone.

Whatever the reason for wanting to tell their stories, we can embrace all the wonderful resources available for doing so. Share your stories on websites or blogs. Submit them to magazines and journals or apply to speak to larger audiences at conferences or in workshops. In sharing their story, I hope that you find peace, understanding, and purpose.

Tanya Lord
thegriefftoolbox.com

If Only

If only is the whip with which we lash ourselves.

If only I had not bought him a motorcycle...

If only I had not let her cross the street alone...

If only I had forbidden him to drive while he was so tired...

If only I had not permitted the surgery...

If only I had allowed the surgery sooner...

If only I had not waited for the ambulance...

If only I had waited for trained personnel to move her...

If only I were an all-knowing, all powerful God, I would not have allowed my child to die. But I am only human.

Theresa Hutchison, TCF, Norman, OK

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.

Thanks to:

Mike and Brenda Busse in memory of their daughter, Kora.
Matthew and Tracy Lindaman in memory of their son, Jack.
Richard and Mary Jo Ferry in memory of their son, Ryan.
Jason and Tami Hurd in memory of their daughter, Kimberly.



Donations 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 donation or love gift, please send it or 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.**

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...

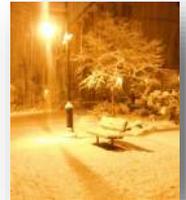
Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or email
CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.

The Death of a Child

The death of a child is so out of season, like a snowstorm on the Fourth of July. Newness of life, bursting with potential, is cut off, severing bud from branch. Tender shoots are ripped from roots by winds so strong. Coldness wrenches life from earth and warmth of flesh from human arms. Clouds of grief rob hearts of mirth. It seems so wrong that one so young dies while life has just begun. There is no joy of harvest, fruit mature. Life is made of fragile stuff – no day secure.



What might have been, can never be, but love's sweet moments are etched on memory. Like initials deeply carved in bark of tree, they can never be erased, but will bring remembrance of a laugh, a tear, a scene or sweet embrace to brighten the future's uncertain skies.

Jan Rogers Wimberley

Does It Still Hurt?

I met 102 year-old Thelma in her home before I photographed her. We chatted and I learned all about her incredible 102 years on this earth. When I learned that she lost her first daughter, Frances Lorraine, at two months old, I lost it. The tears just poured out of my eyes and I had a hard time catching my breath.

I told her that I lost my first daughter too. We talked about her little Frances Lorraine and my little Ava Maria. I paused as I allowed myself to breathe through the tears. Then, I looked at her and said, "I just have one question for you. Does it still hurt?"

Thelma is blind, so she did not look back at me. She looked straight ahead and raised her chin a little bit, very strong and poised in her conviction, and she said, "Yes, it still hurts." It still hurts.



She is 102 years-old, and it still hurts. I knew what she was going to say, but I still needed to ask. I needed to hear her say it. It still hurts.

You are not alone. There is a tribe of women that have carried that immeasurable sorrow for decades. And it still hurts. But, Thelma is living proof of the most magnificent, beautiful, FULL, incredible life after the most heartbreaking of losses. She is a beacon of hope and grace, shining bright for the world. What a comfort.

I will treasure that memory of her until I take my last breath.

Noelle Mirabella Photography

In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here.

You have traveled a dreadful distance. You have come, seeking solace, understanding, hope, threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.

In this place you can relax and breathe . . . the coats of others' expectations taken off. Walk into these few hours as into an oasis where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.

In this place all names can be spoken; in this place each one's story may be told. We will not be discouraged by your sorrow; in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting; we do not count how many tears are shed. Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage, for the long and winding road that is ahead.

And those we love are pleased we are together. They smile down on us, and bless this day, glad for every tiny step we're taking and send their light to guide us on our way.

Traveling with us as we journey onward, sending strength for what the miles may bring, they are a part of everything we do that matters - in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
***Catching the Light – Coming Back
to Life after the Death of a Child***
Written for TCF meetings



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Bethany
for Children & Families

1830 6th Avenue
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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.