



The Compassionate Friends

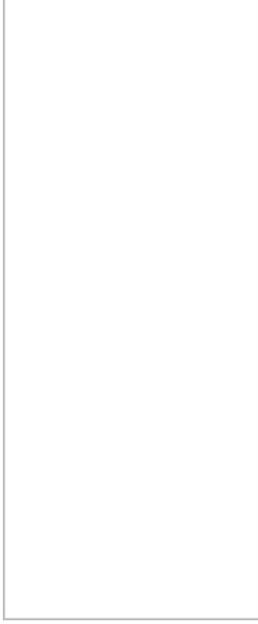
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



1830 6th Avenue
Moline, Illinois 61265

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No.190
Rock Island, Illinois

Return Service Requested



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

Volume XXX

Summer 2017

Number 6

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This year will mark 33 years since the death of our daughter. Her loss was a life-changing event for our family. While it has been many years since we have experienced the pain of deep, all consuming grief, her unseen presence continues to have an impact on us and always will. I recently ran across an article shared in our TCF newsletter many years ago. The first-born son of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, died from scarlet fever in 1920. In 1967, President Eisenhower wrote the following in his book, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*. "I do not know how others have felt when facing the same situation, but I have never known such a blow. Within a week he was gone. I didn't know what to do. I blamed myself because I had often taken his presence for granted, even though I was proud of him... This was the greatest disappointment and disaster in my life, the one I have never been able to forget completely. Today when I think of it, even now as I write of it, the keenness of our loss comes back to me as fresh and as terrible as it was in that long dark day..."

Forty-seven years after his son's death that residual impact remained. I don't share this to discourage those of you who are early in your path of grief. You would not want to forget your beloved child, and I think most bereaved parents are grateful for the mark that their child left on their lives as well as the lives of others. In time - sometimes a long time, the intense, mind numbing, heart aching pain of grief does grow softer and less ongoing, but a part of us will always long for that child - wondering what it would be like if they had lived, being grateful for the time that they were with us and wishing that could have been for so much longer.

Sincerely,
Jerry & Carol Webb



Inside

Only Us Summer	2
Journey of the Survivor	
Healing with Humor	3
Love Gifts	
Facebook and TCF	4
About TCF	
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
Strength Found in Solitude	6
Strength Found in Solitude (continued)	7
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings	8
I Remember...	9
When Communication is Difficult	10
Contact the Editors	
Reflections Board	11

“Only Us”

I have tried many times to explain the pain of losing a child to those that have not lost a child. I've come to the conclusion that there are no words to describe it. You have to experience it to fully understand it. It's more than grief; it changes everything about you in ways that takes years to fully understand.

The pain is all encompassing, and it smothers you with relentless despair. There are times you don't think you will survive it; I've met some that haven't. It's a terrible, terrible thing for one to endure.

It is survivable, in fact I think one can thrive after the processing and hard work is completed. It takes a major transformation of self to get to this point.

I don't wish it on anyone, but I will be here to help others through it if I can. It's the least I can do. I stand at the bright end of that dark, dark tunnel and know the journey is long and dark for those behind me.

Kelly Farley
grievingdads.com

Summer is fast approaching and with summer comes vacations. Whether this is your first or thirty-first without your child, it can be a very difficult time, especially if you are getting together with family. Here are a few suggestions that may help as you work towards finding a new “normal” for your family's summer.

- ♥ Think of your favorite vacation with your child. Talking about it may bring back wonderful memories. Looking at old vacation photos could help also.
- ♥ Try going somewhere that you have never been before. Think about how your child might have enjoyed going there.
- ♥ If you go somewhere that you went with your child, think about a way to celebrate their memory while you are there. Eat at their favorite restaurant, eat their favorite meal. Go on their favorite adventure.
- ♥ Try to journal about how you are feeling about vacationing without your child. Getting those feelings out always help me to be able to move forward.

I hope this summer you can sleep in, day dream and play outside for hours and have sweet memories of you child.

Joanna Jacobs
TCF/Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Reflections Board

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great your grief is or how it affects your life. No one but you can mourn the silence you now know, a silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and death to touch each person in a completely unique way. We must all travel our journey; no one can travel it for us.

Out of the Ashes/FB

If you really want to receive joy and happiness then serve others with all your heart. Lift their burden and your own burden will be lighter.

Ezra Taft Benson

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.

C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*

Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope"

Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*

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.
Ken Munsch, Blake's dad

"Only those who have lost a child can understand the depths to which this pain travels."
From the book, *Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back*

Mourning is one of the most profound human experiences that it is possible to have. The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a loved one and to continue to treasure the memory of that loss is one of our noblest human traits.

— Shneidman (1980)

When Real Communication is Difficult

From birth we are led to gender based behavior. Men perform tasks. They do not dwell on feelings. Under stress this can push men to drugs and alcohol rather than leaning on others. Women seek support groups, explore emotions, and seek to validate their feelings. The differences are set by society. We had no choice about losing our child, but we can decide how to go on. It is important to make the marriage top priority. We need to validate listening with touch – a hug, a pat. Talk about your deceased child. Talk about the grief process and feelings. Write things out if talking is too difficult. When you are angry, let the other know whether you are angry at them or because your child died. Buy old dishes, say why you are mad, and throw a dish! Write what you are angry about on Styrofoam cups, read each one, and stamp it flat! These communication techniques are especially good for women who are not supposed to show anger. Decide together what to do with your dead child's possessions. Some ideas are to make a quilt of their clothes, donate their toys to charities. Never assume that because someone is not crying that they are not grieving. A common heavy task for men in the workplace is the all too common question "How is your wife doing?" This stifles men's need to express their own pain. "It is difficult to lean on someone who is already doubled over in pain."



Kathy Simone

Notes from a workshop presented by Susan Van Vleck

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, send us your new address.

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
Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242,
309.654.2727.
carolynpwebb@gmail.com

Journey of the Survivor

There will come a day when the tears of sorrow will flow into tears of remembrance and your heart will begin to heal.

The grieving will be interrupted by moments of joy and whispers of hope.

There will come a day when you will welcome the tears of remembrance as a rainbow of the soul, a turning of the tide, a promise of peace.

There will come a day, when you will begin to live forward, finding your new normal and treasuring each tear.

BP USA Newsletter

Healing With Humor

Laughter is not a part of everybody's life, so it is easy to accidentally offend someone with humor. Bereaved parents, especially the newly bereaved, do not feel like laughing; their joy in life has gone. Laughing seems so trivial to them they can easily be offended. Some bereaved parents feel guilty about humor and laughter. They feel they have no right to joy because their child is dead. Appearing joyous can bring condemnation from society, not to mention your spouse, for appearing to not care. People may think, surely if you are laughing you did not love your child as much as I love mine. The truth is, joy makes life better. Joyous talk and laughter do not show disrespect, they show that healing is taking place. If you laughed with your child while they lived, it is OK to someday laugh with your child again. Your dear child has never left your heart and their spirit would surely rather fill your heart with joy than sorrow.

Chuck Prestwood

Love Gifts

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.

Donations and 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 donation or love gift, please send it or to our chapter leader, Doug Scott, c/o Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**



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 TCF...

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.

TCF National Office

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

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (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.



Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is 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.

I remember sitting at a dinner table with friends and their kids on Father's Day — the first one after our daughter Caroline was stillborn. Every day was a tough day, but I decided I would be tough enough to make it through that Sunday.

One of the girls — she couldn't have been more than 3 — started pointing at each of us sitting at the table. "Daddy." "Daddy." "Daddy." Then she got to me: "Daddy."

She was right. Even though my daughter wasn't there at the table with me. I thought of myself as a "Daddy."



Turns out, I wasn't as tough as I thought.

I went upstairs and had a good cry. When I came back downstairs, I didn't pretend to hide anything. This sweet girl's innocent comment triggered a lot of hard emotions. I could have held it in, I guess, but everyone knew. And, to my surprise, I was OK with that.

If you've suffered a stillbirth, a miscarriage or infant loss, you hurt in a way that you can't readily explain to anyone, and you don't truly understand it yourself. If you're like me, you struggle with those feelings and you often end up somewhere between "tough it out" and "break down."

We all share a common feeling — we're missing someone. But we all process that grief differently and that can be really hard to deal with. That's why Share exists. They understand that a Dad's grief is unique, and so is the way each of us handles it. The volunteers and staff at SHARE know that we need someone to listen, someone to tell us it's OK to cry and someone who can help us find our way to hope.

My loss comes back to me when I least expect it. I might see a novelty key chain with Caroline's name on it. There's a Caroline Avenue I pass on my way to work each day. Oh yeah, and there's that Neil Diamond song you've probably heard a million times. Gets me every time.

I know Father's Day can be tough, but I also know that memories are beautiful. I wish you gentle thoughts today and every day.

Brian Henry - Board Member - Share - nationalshare.org

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

Monthly Meeting, Thursday, June 22, 2017, at 6:30 pm at
Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline

Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

Summer meetings are held on

July 27, August 24, and September 27, 2017 at 6:30 pm

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>.

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.
Rick's House of Hope	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director, at 563.324.9580, or egordon@rhoh.org or go to www.rhoh.org .
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)	A peer group for suicide grief support 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 or at there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org .
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)	Survivors of Suicide Support Group meets on the second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm. Contact Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425, or laura@secondreformedchurch.net .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets 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 .
Loving Listeners	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearb3@mchsi.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <p>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.</p>

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 Webinars	Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx . Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.
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.
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, Alaska 99509.
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 www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat 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. http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm .
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 Kollantai, climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Strength Found in Solitude

As another Father's day approaches, I think back and remember the amazing parade of men that I have observed over the past 40 years in our support groups for bereaved parents. The assumption of many was that men would not want to take advantage of this type of support—that it would be way out of their comfort zone. My experience over the past 40 years of facilitating support groups for bereaved parents does not match those assumptions. Men's reasons for attending support groups may be different from those of women. They may actually be willing to go beyond their comfort zone in order to help their partner. That's not a bad reason.

I recall the dad who came to a group with his wife just to check it out and make sure it wasn't too weird for his wife to attend. Another accompanied his wife assuming he was there just to support her, only to realize that he too was benefitting greatly from connecting with other bereaved fathers. One commented he couldn't imagine sitting through two hours of a meeting only to admit at the end of the night wanting it to go longer. And a very common statement I have heard from fathers is "Wow, I thought my wife was just overreacting and now I see she's just

like all the other women who come to this group." That validation can sometimes save a marriage.

Occasionally a father will come alone to the support group. One guy reported that his wife led him to the door about a year after their child had died and said, "You need help. Get into the support group. You are driving me crazy. I've been doing my grief work. Now it's time for you to deal with Jamie's death."

Another father, Richard, comes once every year around the anniversary of his child's death. It's been 15 years, and he still he comes—to remember, yes, but also to reach out and offer hope to others. His grief story didn't have a happy ending. His marriage didn't survive after the death of their child.

But he admits to the group that things were already bad before his son died. He had been drinking and using before his son's death and then continued to soothe his pain with even more drinking and drugging, which prevented him from being able to heal and grow after this huge loss. He is now clean and sober and in touch with his feelings. His life is good now. His recovery was the gift he gave his son. Or was it the gift his son gave to him? He's the best show and tell that any support group could have. Some men are quiet and don't offer much about their journey through



grief unless asked. Others are quite demonstrative, speaking eloquently of the powerless feelings and anger that controls their thoughts. I see nods in agreement from other men in the room. Many speak of the lack of support in other settings. But they also admit they rarely ask for it.

The fear of yet another loss, i.e., the marriage, that comes on the heels of a child's death is a common concern reported by couples. Many well meaning friends will caution the parents about the discouraging statistics that point to the near inevitability of a divorce following the loss of a child. This information can be misinterpreted, however. For, as Richard acknowledged, it was not his dead child that ended the marriage. It was his own behavior.

The impact of grief on a marriage is huge and not to be minimized. And because parents, though grieving the loss of the same child, will grieve differently, this grief will be stressful on their relationship. Most couples admit they don't have the energy to care for another's needs. Men are conditioned to believe they are the protector, comforter and fixer in the family. That is a set up for failure. It can be a huge blow to his self-esteem to not have been able to prevent this tragedy and now not be able to make everything better.

Many couples indeed become closer through this shared grief experience, but it's not easy and they will have to go through a dark valley of aloneness before they get to a place where they are renewed and see their

partner, and themselves, in a new light.

I came across a new resource at a conference this past weekend. It is a book entitled *Men, Grief and Solitude- a Different Perspective*, by Daniel Duggan. It speaks of the need for men to seek a period of solitude during their grieving time. Typically friends and family worry when they see their grieving male friend or loved one isolating. They think he's not dealing with his grief or seems indifferent to what has happened. But indeed he may be doing precisely what men tend to want and need to do by their very nature. They find themselves wanting to move inward in order to cope. They go into their cave. They seek a quiet space where they can find healing for their wounds and figure out their next steps. Solitude is not necessarily isolation. Rather it is a place inside where men, including grieving fathers, tend to go to find themselves. Mothers may go there also, but not as quickly and easily as do fathers.

At some point solitude will call us to go beyond ourselves to be there for others. We bring the wisdom we have gathered from solitude out of the cave and into the light to then be a part of helping others heal themselves.

Pat Schwiebert, R.N. -
pat@tearsoup.com

