



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

November 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 9

Dear Compassionate Friends,

*This season I am thankful for
My mind that still remembers you
My voice that still speaks of you
My spirit that still hears you
My heart that still loves you.*

Tanya Lord

The Saturday after Thanksgiving we will quietly remember the birth of our daughter 39 years ago. She was born in the early hours of the morning on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, a little sooner than she was expected. A tiny, dark-haired miracle, we knew almost immediately she had some physical challenges. As we cuddled our precious child, already planning for her future, we were unaware the next four months would be an up and down roller coaster of hope and despair, quiet days at home followed by ambulance rides and hospital stays, joy and deep sorrow. She died four months and a day after her birth in the dark hours just before midnight. How could a tiny, helpless, health-impaired child make any kind of mark in the world. She was here and then gone without celebrating a birthday, taking her first step or saying a word. But we, her family, are different people because she lived and because she died. We believe her life has had purpose because of what we learned by being her parents and how our priorities shifted as a result of those lessons learned. As we join others at the table on Thanksgiving this year, we will give thanks for the many ways we have been blessed and had the opportunity to bless others. And we will remember.

*Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb*



Time by itself does not help us heal – it's what you do with that time that makes the difference.

Amy Moranville Giovanni

Grieving people don't need to be reminded to be thankful for what they have. Believe me when I say they know gratitude on a much deeper level... Grief and Gratitude can sit at the same table.

Give Grief a Voice

This Thanksgiving, ask me about my greatest blessing and my deepest sorrow—

ask me about my child.

Angela Miller

The world may never notice if a rosebud doesn't bloom.
Or even pause to wonder if the petals fall too soon.
But every life that ever forms or ever comes to be,
Touches the world in some small way for all eternity.
The little one we longed for was swiftly here and gone,
But love that was then planted is a light that still shines on.
And though our arms are empty,
Our hearts know what to do.
Every beating of our heart says
We will remember you!



Author Unknown

Grieving the loss of your child is a process... It begins the day your child passes and ends the day the parent joins them..

BJ Karrer

How to Get Through the Holidays When You're Grieving

1. Let Yourself Say "No"

Above all else you need to take care of yourself. If you're feeling sad and not up for going to that holiday party – give yourself permission to say no! Stay home, watch a movie and take care of yourself.

2. It's Okay to Leave early

You might feel like you're up for a social gathering until you get there and realize "I am not okay being here." That's okay! Give yourself permission to go home early – your friends will understand.

3. Always Have an Exit Strategy

Drive to holiday parties yourself so you have the option to leave as soon as



things get too difficult to handle. Avoid hosting if you can – if you host you can't leave. Always make sure you have an escape plan in place.

4. You're Allowed to Change Your Mind

So you've said yes to that thing you said you'd do but now you're absolutely dreading it? Know that you're allowed to change your mind. If you've over-committed yourself, be honest. You're allowed to change your mind.

5. Surround Yourself With Supportive People

Surround yourself with people who make you feel supported and understand that you're grieving and might not be up for celebrating this year.

6. Know It's Okay To Be Sad and It's Okay to Be Happy Too.

You don't have to love this holiday season. A lot of it is hard. Give yourself that it's okay to be sad. It's also okay to feel happy. It's okay to get better. It doesn't mean you're "over" the loss.

loveliveson.com

A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say no one else, I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents; and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us, too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness, also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays. If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery.

I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

Jim Hobbs
Bereaved father – Denton TX

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.

The Tapestry of Life

Thanksgiving at my house is always a crazy affair. With four siblings, their extended families, various cousins, odd aunts, and friends who were unable to travel “home” for the holiday on top of my own expanding family all coming together to celebrate life in this great country. It is loud, lovely, and a little bit lonely. One may wonder how I could possibly feel alone while surrounded by so many people who care about me, love me, and understand the enormous loss that I’ve suffered, but that is the nature of loss. Sometimes it is felt most acutely when there is an abundance of joy to be shared.

I remember one year we had an especially large number as all the out-of-towners came in for Thanksgiving. A cousin, not meaning to be hurtful, commented, “How wonderful it was to have the whole family together.” She, of course, was right but I, listening with my heart instead of my ears, heard “hole” family. And that is the dilemma. No matter how many friends and family I wrap around myself, there will always be a

hole in my family and hole in my heart. Like an unpainted corner in a freshly painted room, it’s the part that stands out.

For many years after Brad died, I was unable to enjoy the blessings of life. Even from the depths of deepest grief, however, I understood there were people patiently awaiting my return to living. Not unlike an accident victim re-learning to walk, I’ve had to re-learn to appreciate this big family of mine. Now I can play with the kids, ogle over the newest members, laugh at the stupid jokes (and tell a few myself), eat too much, drink (a little) too much, and simply enjoy the company of people I’ve loved for so many years.

When I look at the tapestry of my life, when I see its grandeur and its beauty, my eyes are still drawn to the hole left by my son’s death. Over time, the tapestry has grown in size, ever expanding with marriages and births and new friends and experiences, but the hole has remained. Smaller, to be sure, in comparison to the larger picture, but still there, still very much a part of who I am. And that, perhaps is as it should be.

**Richard A. Berman, Editor BP/USA
Newsletter - bereavedparentsusa.org**

Lifts to the Heart

Preparing for Thanksgiving

Many of us who are grieving feel that Thanksgiving is a useless and painful holiday because we do not feel very thankful with our terribly hurting hearts. Maybe we could prepare our hearts for Thanksgiving by peeking into them to find at least one and maybe even more blessings that we could count at this special time of the year. After I lost my two oldest children, 19-year-old Peggy and 21-year-old-Denis, in the same car accident, I learned that the tiniest thing that could ease my heart's burden was indeed a blessing! Discovering these "lifts to the heart" may help you prepare your heart for Thanksgiving. Sometimes amid all the pain, we forget what we could be grateful for. Take an "inventory" of your heart. Perhaps you could be thankful for:

THE STRENGTH TO GET UP EACH DAY

Even if it is not fun. Grieving takes 10 times the energy to get through a day. Exhaustion can be one of the hardest parts of grieving.

THE LOVE OF ONE SPECIAL PERSON

Whether it be spouse, child, or friend giving us encouragement and support. I call my husband "my blotter" because he picks up all my tears and says, "It's okay."

SOMEONE NEEDING OUR LOVE A person giving us reason to live, to nurture, to plan for, to hug.

A SPECIAL HOBBY OR INTEREST an activity that consumes our time and keeps our mind busy. It could be reading "grief" books to survive, writing our thoughts in a journal, making crafts, playing the piano, listening to music, planting a garden, walking along the beach.

A JOB --that keeps our attention and makes hours, days, weeks, and months pass by quickly.

PICTURES that make special moments treasures and keep our happy memories very much alive. **THE YEARS** --we had with our loved one.

SOMEONE REACHING OUT TO US

In a special way. It could be a new friend, a fellow employee, a support group. **MUSIC OR POETRY** --that soothes our soul.



A PET --that makes us laugh, listens to our troubles and never tells anybody, who allows us to cry, and needs us. I could never "repay" my 15 year old Labrador retriever for his untiring devotion!

CLERGY AND DOCTORS who try to help heal us.

A LINKING OBJECT something that belonged to our loved one and brings joy to our hearts, such as a ring, bracelet, watch, jacket, book, golf clubs, garden.

FAVORITE RECIPES of our loved one that brings smiles to our faces. It's French Toast for my Denis and Angel Food Cake for my Peggy!

THOUGHTFUL RELATIVES AND

FRIENDS who have tried to understand our needs and not frustrated us with a “time and schedule.”

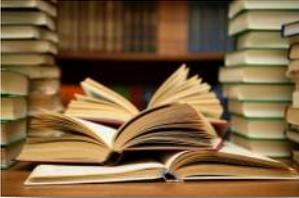
TRADITIONS OR RITUALS that bring a moment’s peace to our hearts. Going to the beach, watching a football game, lighting a candle, hanging a Christmas stocking, coloring Easter eggs, attending church services— whatever touches your heart.

NATURE a pretty flower, a sunset, a gorgeous mountain or ocean view- to stir the love of beauty in our hearts.

CARDS with just the right message- to let us know someone cares about us or remembers our loved one in a special way.

THE PHONE to heal us when we’re feeling low and need to talk to someone else.

BOOKS to bring a soothing message to our weary hearts and to give us a



“thought” to carry us for the moment.

PRAYER to our loved one or to our God or both to send us strength to keep us going through the “Valley of the Shadow.” Talking to our loved one helps our hearts. Including them in our plans makes them a part of the occasion. I always put Peggy and Denis “in charge” of the weather for our special events like weddings and parties. They do such a good job that friends ask for their help too. In

addition to the weather, Peggy and Denis are great at finding parking places.

TIME --that gives back to us what we lose through wisdom and memories. May your Thanksgiving be filled with reasons to be thankful! Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wonderful reason of all.

**Elaine Stillwell - Bereaved mother -
Rockville Centre, NY**

Where Do I Go

Now that you're gone, where do I go
to see your fair smile
to hear your tingling giggle
to smell your dank hair after a swim
to listen to your questions
to touch your gentle cheek
to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go

to share all my years of wisdom
to find someone who'll tell me truth
to answer the phone that won't ring
to tell you I'm sorry
to know that I am loved and
to pour out my love and my tears?

I shall go

to the pictures that hold you forever
to the books we shared
to the music you taught me to love
to the woods we explored as one
to the memories that never fail
to the innermost reaches of my heart
to where we are always together.

**Marcia Alig – TCF, Mercer Area
Chapter, New Jersey**

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, November 17, 2022 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 optional**

The next meeting of the chapter is

Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

<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, shoeartb4@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>



Yes, I Still Attend

Usually, the dismay and disapproval are unspoken, but there is always the look when I mention I attend a support group for bereaved parents each month. After all, my daughter Sarah has been dead for thirty-three months now, and everyone knows I certainly should be over it by now. I don't try to explain.

It is hard to put into words why I still attend. Sometimes I think it may be discouraging to newly bereaved families for me, whose child's death is almost three years past, to be present in the group. But I go back to my first weeks and months of despair, and I vividly remember just being able to see a bereaved parent who was still alive after a year gave me hope. I could not have comprehended anyone could actually survive the death of a child without seeing my compassionate friends each month.

I'm better now. I have some joy and hope in my life, my deep depressions are less frequent. I want to offer to listen to those who need to be heard. I want to offer my empathy to those who want to be understood. But I also receive I love and support from each person I come in contact with at each monthly gathering. Yes, I still attend.

Shirley Marshall Cawyer

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** help with the work of our chapter. This is a way remember a beloved child and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Thanks to:

Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, in memory of Anna Webb, and in memory of niece, Beth Hagerty.

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.**



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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.

When I go, don't learn to live without me, just learn to live with my love in a different way. And if you need to see me, close your eyes, or look in your shadow when the sun shines. I'm there. Sit with me in the quiet and you will know that I did not leave. There is no leaving when a soul is blended with another. When I go, don't learn to live without me, just learn to look for me in the moments. I will be there.

Donna Ashworth

If you ask a widow about the worst kind of grief, they are going to say it's losing a spouse. If you ask a bereaved parent about the worst kind of grief, they are going to say it's losing a child.

And they are both correct. Grief is not a competition.

Miranda Hernandez, Adrian's mom

In one year, author Harriett

Hodgson's daughter, son-in-law, father-in-law, and brother all died. She and her husband became the guardians for their twin teenage grandchildren. Following are some of the things that have helped her on her grief journey.

I prepared for the first Thanksgiving without my daughter. She was born on Thanksgiving Day and I thought I would spend it sobbing. Thankfully, members of my extended family rallied to help us. The family dinner was held at a different location, and members created a loving, protective circle around my husband and me. I missed my daughter desperately, but love and kindness eased my pain. I continue to prepare for Thanksgiving and the anniversary of my daughter's death. What do I do? My plans may help you cope with your upsurges in grief.

Honor your deceased child. *On the first anniversary of our daughter's death, my husband and I held a graveside ceremony. I welcomed family members and gave them a list of our daughter's values titled "Helen's Legacy." To emphasize the points, I read the list aloud. Though the twins didn't say a word, I hoped the points would be "filed" in their minds. Thinking about my daughter's values comforted me then and comforts me now. You may find comfort in your child's values and interests.*

Make quiet part of each day. *Some bereaved parents avoid quiet to escape emotional pain. It doesn't work. Sooner or later, pain catches up with you. Allowing yourself to feel pain helps you to heal. So turn off the background noise and think about your child. Focus on her or his talents, personality, and happy times. Remember that pain comes from love and*

you may find strength in the love you still have for your child

Set a new goal. *Well-meaning friends told me I would have to give up writing to raise the twins. Giving up writing would be giving up on me and, since I was unwilling to do that, I ignored their advice. Instead, I got up earlier, wrote for an hour, gave the twins breakfast, and wrote after they left for school. Months passed and the focus of my work changed from health/wellness to grief healing. Having a goal energized me then and energizes me now. If you haven't set a goal recently, this may be the time to do it.*

Let yourself laugh. *People still come up to me and talk about my daughter's sense of humor. "She could have been a stand-up comic," a friend said. My multiple losses led to another loss, the loss of humor, and it made me uncomfortable. Finally, I realized my deceased loved ones, especially my daughter, would want me to enjoy life and laugh. I remember the first belly laugh I had after my daughter died. Laughing felt good and, as I was whooping loudly, I said to myself, "Helen, this one is for you." Laughter releases stress, so let yourself laugh, though you are mourning.*

Give to others. *I live my mother's lesson: Instead of waiting to be rescued, I try to rescue myself and help others. Giving makes me feel good. I give away lots of books, donate to meaningful organizations, mentor fledgling writers, and write for free. Volunteering in memory of my loved ones is another way of giving. You may give the gift of listening at TCF chapter meetings, grief support group meetings, and social functions.*

Harriett Hodgson
www.harriethodgson.com



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Moline, Illinois 61265

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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.