



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 3

Dear Compassionate Friends,

When our child died, the world stood still and continued to stand still. Our lives were irrevocably changed. After the first flush of sympathy and condolences, the lives of our friends and extended family went on. They went to work, attended sporting events, went on road trips, had evenings out, played video games, etc., just as they always had. The sun rose and set and not much, if anything, had changed for them. It was hard for us to understand or accept how little had changed for most people, while our world had been rocked and we would never be the same.

As we were driving south to visit a friend yesterday, I was reminded of this in the context of Ukraine. We have traveled to Ukraine five times beginning in 2013 as part of a marriage ministry. Although we do not share a common language with most Ukrainians, we have relationships with many and keep up with their lives and activities through Facebook and email. We are deeply concerned and saddened as these families are being separated (wives and children becoming refugees while their husbands stay to fight), the basements of churches we have attended become bomb shelters, and the seminary where we presented our programs receiving refugees. There is a scarcity of food and other supplies, and already meager incomes are not sufficient for inflationary prices. Life for all Ukrainians will never be the same. Here in the US, the sun is shining. The Webbs will be celebrating a birthday today with friends. When we grocery shop, the shelves are mostly full. Gas is exorbitantly expensive, but available, and we have the money to fill our tanks. Life continues on. Just as we deeply appreciate when someone mentions a special memory of our child who has died, asks us how we are doing, listens to us share our feelings as we process our grief, shares an encouraging note, or makes a donation in our child's memory, we hope and pray the people of Ukraine will not be forgotten. For them, life as they knew it is no more. As bereaved parents, we understand what that means.

*Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb*



"These days grief seems like walking on a frozen river; most of the time he feels safe enough, but there is always that danger he will plunge through."
David Nicholls, "One Day"

As you adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it's vital you get outside and move. Notice, I didn't say, "exercise," since for some people that may sound daunting. There is no need to make it a big undertaking. Pick short, achievable goals, like a short hike, a walk around the block, a bike ride to the park. Keep these jaunts short, since this will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief.

Brad Stetson

Take one day at a time.... Be realistic, recognize we need to set limits and do those things which are meaningful to ourselves and our families. Know that whatever you choose to do this year, you may decide to do handle things differently next year. Growth and change go hand in hand. And don't forget the comforting discovery many parents have confirmed: the realization when that "special day" (an anniversary or holiday) will likely not be as bad as we anticipated.

Fox Valley Chapter – Aurora IL

Children lose so much when a sibling dies. When they lose their brother or their sister, they lose their family as they know it. They lose their parents, at least temporarily, because parents are so disabled by their own grief. Their place in the family is forever changed, and so is the family itself. And they have fewer tools to handle it with than adults.

Judy Davis, Director of The Sibling Project From TCF, Nevada

I am not alone but am a member of a vast community of suffering people that transcends my own space and time. I am grateful I can keep their company and learn from them.

Jerry Sittser

Now life will be a little less sweet,
Death a little less bitter.

Puritan author

Sorrow

Master teacher,
Etching on the soul
Profoundest truth;
Increasing love,
Compassion, care;
Throwing light
On what endures
And what does not.
On what is worthy
Of our time,
And what is not.
Let me learn
My lesson well
So that the sorrow,
In the end,
Be not in vain.

Joan Splettstoesser
TCF, Kansas City, MO

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:

Merlin and Diane Gehrke, in memory of their son, Aaron.

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.



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 Web site:

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.

Suggestions for Coping With the “Special Days”

Since love does not end with death, birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and other special days may result in a renewed sense of personal grief. Such occasions emphasize the absence of the person who has died and may reawaken painful emotions leaving you feeling drained. Here are some suggestions to help you cope.

- Have a cake with candles. Have everyone in the family make a wish and blow out the candles together. Share the wishes if you want.



- Buy a present in memory of your loved one. Make it something that lives on such as a tree or flowers you can watch bloom and grow year after year.



- Combine what you would have spent for presents and donate it to a cause special to your loved one.

- Buy or make a birthday card for the one who has died. Inside, tell your loved one something that you never got a



- chance to say. Write about what you're feeling, what you're doing – anything you want to share.
- Visit the cemetery and take flowers, notes, or a balloon bouquet.
- Make the day a celebration of the life of your loved one. Talk about the good things you remember, the funny things, the jokes played, the special moments and memories.

Sasha J. Mudlaff, M.A.

Hamilton's Academy of Grief and Loss

Broken Strings

Do you know the famous violinist, Itzhak Perlman?

What beautiful music on the violin this man plays!

Jack Reimer, a syndicated columnist, recently wrote a story about this great violinist Yitzhak Perlman. It seems Perlman had polio as a child and of course you know he walks with crutches and braces on both legs. Instead of arranging to be seated on stage at the beginning of his performance, he chooses to walk across the stage methodically and slowly until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, bends down and picks up the violin, nods to the conductor



and proceeds to play. As Reimer describes it, there is a certain majesty in this ritual.

Well, immediately after beginning a concert – I think it was back in 1995 – everyone could hear a string snap on his violin. Perlman stopped and gazed at the broken string as the audience wondered

what he would do. Then Itzhak Perlman closed his eyes and after a moment he signaled the conductor to begin again.

Though anyone who knows music knows it's impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings, Perlman was undaunted.

Apparently, you could see this great artist recomposing the piece in his head and inventing new fingering positions to coax never before heard sounds from his three-string violin.

The sophisticated New York audience watched and listened in awe knowing they were witnessing a truly extraordinary virtuoso performance.

When the piece was over, they exploded into appreciative applause. Mr. Perlman smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow and said in a soft, reverent tone, "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

Wow! What a wonderful lesson. Whatever strings are broken in our lives, if we concentrate, if we apply what we know, we can still play beautiful music on what we have left. I know it's a lesson I've learned after living in a wheelchair for so many years – I think it was my physical therapist who once told me I had to learn as much as I could do with what little I had left. And it's true – sometimes you have to take

what's left and coax out of life something new and different... Oh sure, there's regret and heartache, but soon you learn that your life becomes a recomposition, a series of new chords. It is truly a process of "learning to be content," as the apostle Paul put it.

When God said in the Old Testament, "Look, I'm about to do something new" or when He had Jeremiah say, "I have plans for you, hopeful plans for a future"... when God said all that, I think He had in mind broken strings. Listen, friend, with God orchestrating it all, it's *got* to be beautiful music, right?

Maybe your life is in a place like this. A death in the family... a new job... a different job, a reassignment and a move to a new part of the country... you've gotten caught in the economic crunch and you're learning to downsize and like it... your life is a recomposition, isn't it? And you have to coax out of life something new and different. With the Lord Jesus Christ as the conductor, your new life, although the strings might be broken, will sound beautiful.

Joni Eareckson Tada
7-22-07

After the First Year

After the first year,
the pain changes from a crushing weight
to a wickedly cutting edge.
Time speeds up from a grinding plodding
to a more normal routine.
And sometimes you forget (for a moment)
that your whole life was destroyed—just last
year.

After the first year, you start to remember
the good times.

You can tell a funny story about your child
and save the crying for later.

But sometimes it seems like you're the
only one left who mourns.

"What's the matter with you anyway? It's
been whole year."

After the first year,
your child seems a little closer and yet still
so far away.

Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten
how he walks, his voice, the shape of his
head, or the solid warmth of his fingers
curving around yours.

Those memories ambush you at many
unlikely moments and tear you apart.

After the first year,
your heart begins to thaw.

You remember that you once loved your
surviving children.

And you love them again.

You remember that life used to hold joy.
And you rediscover some small enjoyment
in living.

You learn to piece your life back together
In a different pattern.

After the first year,
you pick up your burdens and go on.
Amazingly you have survived a blow
more painful than anything you ever
imagined.

Even though you wish you had died too, it
slowly dawns on you that you must still live.
Because after the first year,
comes the second year.

Liz Ford, TCF, Madison, WI

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, March 24, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

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

The next meeting of the chapter is on April 28, 2022.

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. 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@veraafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.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 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 .
Phone Support	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 ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com 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.

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 Resources	There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/ .
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.
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. https://bereavedparentsusa.org .
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 at climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Death From a Grandparent's Point of View

The death of a child affects so many lives: family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings you are experiencing yourself. Each day, you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do to comfort her. It seems there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you



that is gone, but in time you can learn to live with the part that is still there.

Ruth Eaton, TCF – Savanna, GA
In memory of her grandson

When Is It Okay?

A recently bereaved parent said to me, “I laughed today, and I felt guilty.” His son was murdered because the cash register his son was responsible for held no more than \$20.

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

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

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

When is it all right to cry?

Whenever we feel like it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Terri Ray

from Alive Alone Website

<http://www.alivealone.org/>



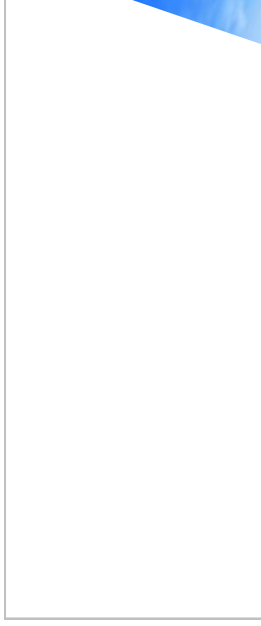
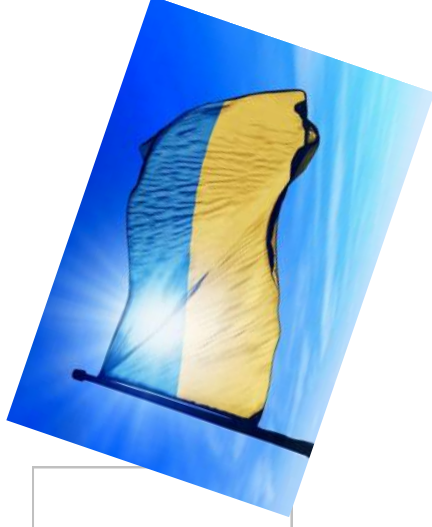
The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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.