



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

N o v e m b e r 2 0 2 3

V o l u m e X X X V I , N u m b e r 9

Dear Compassionate Friends,

My closest and dearest friend (besides Jerry) died on September 28. Even though we knew for many months her life would be cut short, I still have a hard time getting my head around her death and the empty hole in my life.

Normally I am a great lover of all things fall, my favorite season. This year I have felt quite resistant to the obvious signs of summer being over. I am going forward through fall like a small child being forced to leave the beach at the end of a beautiful day, kicking and screaming. I feel that same sense of resistance to having to move on in life without my friend's constant support and encouragement.

I told Jerry recently that I am a functional griever. I am often overcome by my sad and empty feelings, but then I put them back in their box and move forward taking care of the tasks or people or situations which are daily part of my life.

As we move toward the holidays, I am reminded of the many firsts I and her family will face this year. I have already had my first birthday celebration without a greeting from her. The holidays are just around the corner.

Tonight, thinking about Thanksgiving, I was reminded of the importance of infusing my grief with gratitude. We can grieve loss while still feeling gratitude for the good things in our lives. Our gratitude provides hope and healing. As we practice gratitude, our grief can be transformed, allowing us to reflect on the blessings of our past and focus on the abundance which still surrounds our life even without our loved one.

I am so very grateful to have shared life for 52 years with my friend. An old Hebrew proverb says, "Say not in grief that they are gone, but give thanks that they were yours."



Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



Whether you're working through grief or creating art, it's all about the process. For many of us, grief isn't something we can confront face-to-face, but art can be a tool for us to go to those places and feel those feelings.

It's not about ignoring the grief, it's about drawing it out

and experiencing it in a safe, constructive way. Because the more you befriend your grief, the easier it'll be to fully move through it.

Megan Cooper

Our daughter, Anna, was born in November, 40 years ago. She died four months later. Her time on earth was short, but she impacted our lives in ways we can only guess at since we do not know who we would have been or how our lives might have been different had we been given the privilege of raising her. One of the talks we share on Marriage Encounter Weekends includes our feelings related to death and of course Anna is part of that. Each time we are surprised by the tears that usually come to our eyes or how shaken we feel when we share openly those deeply painful feelings, even all these years after the fact. Time and trusting God restored our joy many years ago, and we generally remember Anna with a certain wistfulness and speak of her without tears. Sometimes though, the sorrow rushes back as if it were yesterday (usually just for a moment). I think we are glad that this is the case. She is our child, an important part of who we were then and who we have become now. Those occasional rushes of sadness remind us of the reality of her existence. They are also a reminder of lessons learned most importantly that God can and does bring blessings in the midst of pain and hope and healing outgrowth of our pain.

Carol Webb, TCF Quad Cities

"Time does restore to us our quiet joy in the spiritual presence of those we love, so that we learn to remember without pain, and to speak without choking up with tears. But all our lives we will be subject to sudden small reminders which will bring all the old overwhelming loss back to us."

Elizabeth Watson

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I'm working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

-Annette Mennen Baldwin

Hints for Handling the Holidays

Many bereaved families dread this season of holidays – Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Years. These are happy times and other hearts are filled with thanksgiving and joy in an atmosphere of celebration. Often the time of preparation and anticipation brings as much joy as the actual celebration. The anticipation of the holidays, especially in the first year after the death of your loved one, will probably present you with many questions and concerns. It is normal to have anxiety and fears about this “time of joy.” Planning ahead can lessen some of the stress and pain of the holiday season. I offer a number of suggestions for your consideration.

Remember:

- ♥ There is no right or wrong way to respond.
- ♥ Others may not understand your decisions, but that doesn’t make them right or wrong.
- ♥ Your emotions will be more volatile during the holidays, and you are not able to turn them on and off. You need to release those tears. Cry.
- ♥ Communication with others is helpful, even when the other person does not seem to understand.
- ♥ Some holiday activities are essential to the celebration, while others could be eliminated.
- ♥ Be gentle with yourself and give yourself permission to not live up

to everyone’s expectations.

- ♥ You can’t run away from reality, but you can soften the pain by considering each decision and respecting your own needs.

Specific areas of concern and decision:

- ♥ Plan ahead. Listen to your heart and only do those things that feel right to you. Communicate your needs to your family and friends.
 - ♥ Changing routines that are part of your tradition can soften the pain: the time of gift exchange and opening of gifts; the special meal together and/or when you attend services.
 - ♥ Include a stocking for the person who has died and invite other family members to participate in filling the stocking. Light a candle at the dinner table; place an ornament on the tree, and/or a grave blanket on the grave.
 - ♥ Make choices about decorating for the season and shopping for gifts (order through the mail, limit the number of gifts, or have someone else do that for you). Having a shopping list can lessen the pain.
 - ♥ Delegate or accept the offer of others to help wrap gifts, address cards, shop, clean – it could be a meaningful gift that is mutually beneficial.
 - ♥ Consider and decide which party invitations you wish to accept and attend. If the person inviting
- Continue on page 5

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.

- ♥ Continued from page 3
- ♥ understands why you may not feel like attending this year, they will usually accept your response.
- ♥ Be in touch with your own feelings and needs. Be gentle with yourself and know that it is all right if you don't please everyone.
- ♥ The need to talk about your feelings and needs is greater at this time. Find a listening partner to help you through this time. Do not isolate yourself. You need others to help you through this difficult time.
- ♥ Realize that you can change your mind – if earlier decisions don't feel right as the time approaches, then don't follow through. Listen to your heart.

Sign your greeting cards in the way that feels right to you. You may wish to include a poem or writing done in memory of your loved one or include an "in memory of" message as part of your signature.

By Sister Jane Marie Lamb (in Thanatos)

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

A Holiday Prayer

Bless us, O Lord, through this holiday season. We remember it is a season of joy, but joy does not fill our empty hearts at this time. Walk with us through these days, guide us, listen to our anger, our pain and our emptiness. Bless us with others who will understand our not being in step with their festive celebration, and give us Your peace. Help us to look at life with a new perspective. Bless us with Your grace and lead us to trust the ongoing mystery of each day. Help us to treasure the unspoken blessings, to reflect Your gentleness and hope. May we find courage and comfort in reflecting on Your coming in LOVE and in knowing that You are with us.

SHARE, November/December 1988

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.

Thank you to **Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, in memory of Anna Webb, and niece, Elizabeth Hagerty.**

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to our bereaved families, for the materials shared at our meetings, and/or to purchase books for our library. Thank you to the many families who provide love gifts so 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.**

donate

The First Thanksgiving After the Death of My Son

My 28-year-old son died in July.

Writing these words stops me. I sit in my seat, staring at them.

How can they be true?

It is hard to move past these words today in particular. It is one day before Thanksgiving, and I am wondering how I will make it through tomorrow — the first big holiday without my son.

Jonny would have turned 29 in August. My wife, my daughter, and I survived his birthday with tears and memories and laughter, and then with more tears. Yet, there were fewer expectations on his birthday, fewer customs, and fewer traditions to uphold.



Whereas his birthdays have morphed throughout the years, and we have spent many without him, Thanksgiving is supposed to be a certain way. There is supposed to be turkey and wine and football.

We are supposed to be loud and boisterous. We are supposed to be surrounded by family.

We are supposed to be thankful — thankful for the blessing of our children.

And Jonny is supposed to be there.

My wife, my daughter, and I will have Thanksgiving at my house, along with a handful of friends and family.



I wonder: Who will sit in Jonny's chair? Will anyone sit in his chair, or will it sit empty — a loud vacancy reminding us that things are not as they are supposed to be?

We are certainly not the first family to face the fear of that first Thanksgiving. So many others have survived the holidays after a divorce, the first Thanksgiving after the collapse of a business, or the first Thanksgiving after the death of a spouse.

Today, it feels impossible to simultaneously grieve and celebrate — and yet, that is what so many of us are being called to do tomorrow.

A couple of weeks ago, I had lunch with a friend. We spoke of

Jonny, and I told her that I was worried about the holidays.

Felice said something that has stayed with me.

“Remember that Jonny doesn’t die again on Thanksgiving,” she said.

Jonny died on July 27, 2015. On that day, we began to grieve. We began processing the fact that we would never again hug him or laugh with him or share a joke with him. He died on a hot day in July.

It happened once. It will never happen again.

It already happened, and it will not happen tomorrow.

I remind myself of this over and over because I want to give myself permission to move forward. And I want this for all of Jonny’s friends and family members: my wife, my daughter, Jonny’s girlfriend, and his many, many friends.

I do not want us to feel compelled to relive all of our grief, afraid to create new moments because we are so tragically lost in the past. I want us to make new memories, discarding this notion of what is supposed to be, and mindful that although we are grieving, we are also recovering.

Jonny does not die again tomorrow, and we are recovering.

Tony Rose

The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not “get over” the loss of a loved one: you’ll learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler – *On Grief and Grieving*

Here’s the truth about grief: loss gets integrated, not overcome. However long it takes, your heart and your mind will carve out a new life amid this weirdly devastated landscape. Little by little, pain and love will find ways to coexist.

Megan Devine

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at
Bethany for Children & Families
1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois, Second floor
The next monthly meeting of the chapter is the
Candle Lighting Service (see page 11)

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@verafranchmhc.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. 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.

When We Remember

When the snow falls, and silence drifts in white across the earth, we remember their joy, the glad cries that broke the hush of fresh winter.

When the family gathers, caught in wonderment around the Thanksgiving table or the holiday tree, we remember their excitement, the anticipation that was impossible to contain.

When the sun sets, and Christmas lights sparkle and shine to challenge the night, we remember their tired but glowing faces, alight in a thrill of happiness that made our day.

When we remember, we feel afresh that brightness, that energy, and we smile . . . and we cry.

For what was, for what can never be.

In our remembering, we are the vessels of yesterday, the bearers of the light, the victims of the dark.

And in our remembering, we are parents, hurting, healing, gathering our strength and our passion to live once more, to destroy an endless light with the sun and starlit joys of the past, forging our memories into the promise of a new and different dawn, a reinvestment in life itself, even without our child.

For we have loved, love still, and have been loved in turn.

Our memories tell us, our intellect compels us, ultimately, to answer our child's love with our own unending love, showing through the quality and commitment of our own lives that both loves have enriched us beyond measure.

May the holidays, for all their sorrow and all their pain, help each of us to build anew our lives, using our joys from the past to create a new day, where sorrow, though never gone, no longer governs our every waking hours.

**Don Hackett, TCF, South Shore Chapter,
Hingham, MA**



Holiday Reflection

Since we cannot ignore it or make it go away, we can deal with the situation by making specific plans with our families. We can assess priorities. We can make changes. We can decide what traditions to uphold and which to set aside this year. We can choose to openly acknowledge our grief for our children, siblings, and grandchildren. We can think about some very special gifts. To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process. To our families, we can extend the gift of empathy by remembering that they, too, hurt. To our missing loved ones, we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we may live life to the fullest.

**Candy McLaughlin, TCF
Minneapolis, MN**





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



1701 River Drive
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.