



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume XXXI **October 2018** Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan designated October as National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month to bring light to an issue that affects so many people. Each year in the United States, approximately one million children die in utero or shortly after birth, making it one in four pregnancies that result in a loss. Three of those babies were ours – our daughter who died at the age of four months and by two miscarried babies in the year after her death. To me those numbers seem staggering as I realize how many parents have been touched by miscarriage, still birth, or early neonatal loss. In the early days of our loss, though, I felt alone and isolated and judged I was a failure. Many of my friends were successfully navigating pregnancy and delivering healthy babies. Why couldn't I get it right? I also judged that the world did not see our loss as significant. After all, Anna was only a few months old, and we never really knew the other babies. We still had one child to raise and nurture. Life seemed to flow on around us as though these invisible children of ours had never existed. I have deeply appreciated the people, who when we have shared about these years of loss, have wanted to know more, have validated her existence by their willingness to listen to us share how her life has made a difference in ours. Sometimes it is uncomfortable and awkward to introduce this part of our history into the conversation as we build relationships with new friends, but Anna's life is intimately woven into the many years that have followed her death. While researching this newsletter I came across the following quote that resonated with me. "As uncomfortable as it is to talk about a 'dead baby,' it is an injustice to her to not speak her name, or act as if she never existed. I will never forget my daughter, and I will honor her by saying her name. She was here, she did exist, and she changed our lives forever."

Sincerely,
Jerry & Carol Webb

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“It takes strength to make your way through grief, to grab a hold of life and let it pull you forward.” Most times we don’t see the strides in our grief every day. We get up, we work to make it through the day, and as we step into life it pulls us forward. Slowly but surely. We may slide backwards at times. We may feel totally stagnant some days. But if all goes well, at some point we look around and realize, holy crap. I have survived for days, or months, or years when I never thought it possible. The days have gotten easier, when I never thought they would. It wasn’t about overnight transformations or butterflies or rainbows after the storm. It was about slowly but surely putting one foot in front of the other.

Whatsyourgrief.com

When did sadness stop covering everything? I don’t know. It must have first been for moments, then maybe hours, days eventually. Then for a long time no longer ever-present, but just below the surface waiting for a thought to trigger it. Now I live with more joy than sadness but even now sadness surfaces unexpectedly as the dark shape of loss stirs the cauldron and tears are added to the soup of life, salty still, but not as bitter or overpowering, adding an important flavor to the whole of me.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry
*Catching the Light –
Coming Back to Life after the
Death of a Child*



Where Else?

Where else – can you come into a group of complete strangers and talk about the death of your child?

Where else – can you know that you are not alone in your bereavement?

Where else – can others sincerely say to you, “I know how you feel”?

Where else – will you not hear, “It’s time you were over it and started getting on with life,” and other unwelcome advice?

Where else – can you cry without feeling ashamed or laugh without feeling guilt?

Where else – can you reach out to newly bereaved parents who are experiencing the pain you have felt?

Where else – can you share the love and memories of your children with others?

Where else – NO WHERE BUT AT THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS.

Dave Ziv, TCF/Buck Mont Chapter

Disbelief. Numb. Frozen in time. Blank stares. Unable to think. Moving in slow motion. Living in a fog. These are just a few of the ways we respond to initial knowledge of child loss. After the numbing phase, when the thawing out begins, the pain settles on our broken hearts and the raw fear of not having our child with us takes over and controls us for a long, long time. In the meantime, society as a whole expects grieving parents to function “normally” at work, at home and in social settings. Nothing about child loss makes sense!

Clara Hinton – *Silent Grief*

Loss of an Infant

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days, or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to the parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

Shame and guilt. Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. “Other women have live, normal babies, why can’t I?” Should an infant die months after birth, parents may find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

No memories. Parents may only have “souvenirs of an occasion” (birth certificate, ID bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn’t really gotten to know their child.

Loneliness in grief. It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn they may give the impression that you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope that you can “forget this baby” and “have another one.”

Neglected father. Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby too.

Mothers vs. fathers. Since the mother has bonded with her child all during pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife’s grief is so profound and so prolonged.

Claire M. and Sue S., TCF/St. Louis, MO

We are always in search of hope, in search of that magical moment when we remember first that our loved one lived. Hope isn’t a place or a thing. Hope is not the absence of pain or fear or sadness. Hope is the possibility of renewed joy...it’s the memory of love given and received. Hope is here, within the magic and the memories of your heart.

Darcie Sims

As the first Christmas after Teddy died drew close, I began to deliberate over how to sign Christmas cards. I knew I needed to include our son. I settled on a little T inside a hand-drawn star, just to the top right corner of our names and I continue doing that today. Every time I write a card and put that little T in it, it makes me feel proud that we are continuing to include Teddy in our family story. I never want that T to disappear.

Elle Wright

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

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.



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.

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>

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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	<p>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.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	<p>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.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><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.</p>
Grief Materials	<p>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.</p>
Amazon.com	<p>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.</p>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>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.</p>
Alive Alone	<p>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.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org</p>
Our Newsletter	<p>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. Include your full name, your</p>

The Internal Battle of Parenting After Loss

Parenting is hard. Parenting after loss takes it to a whole other level. From the moment we find out we are pregnant, we immediately begin to imagine our family with our new bundle of joy. Our sole purpose becomes ensuring we are doing everything we can to bring our babies into this world and keep them safe and healthy.

NOTHING WILL MAKE YOU QUESTION EVERYTHING YOU KNEW ABOUT PARENTING LIKE YOUR BABY DYING.

It immediately thrusts you into this world of anxiety. You get this awful feeling that something is going to happen to your other children. Your greatest fear is that death could come along at any moment and steal another one of your children. You MUST remain diligent and eliminate any and all threats. Or so we think. Without even realizing it, you've become a helicopter parent. As if all dangers are magnified for your children specifically more than any other children. Suddenly there is a target on their backs and tragedy could strike at any time. Again. I desperately wanted them to be brave and experience the world...but at the same time I needed to keep them safe. I always loved watching my kids try new things. The very thought of that became frightening.

WHAT IF?

What if they fell. What if a car hit them when they were riding their bike in the court. What if a dog came into our yard and attacked them. What if I



was in the other room and they suddenly choked on their snack. What if there is a shark at the beach. Yes, this was a fear of mine. One of many more and I couldn't possibly list them all.



I checked their breathing at least 3 or 10 times a night. The smoke detector batteries were changed almost monthly. I checked to be sure their windows were securely locked. My 9 and 7-year old's little worlds became even smaller overnight.

Is it normal? Yeah...it is. It turns out a lot of us loss mommas are like this after loss. Is it rational? No. We have this false sense that we can control the world our children live in. We can't.

WE AREN'T ELIMINATING DANGER. WE END UP ELIMINATING JOY, HEALING, AND THE BEAUTY OF WATCHING OUR CHILDREN GROW INTO THEIR OWN LITTLE PERSON.

There comes a time when you need to do a reality check. Let them ride their bike. Go to the beach and let them have fun.

Let them play. Let them be little without all of the fears and worries put on their shoulders.

Sabrina Ivey – SHARE
Newsletter
nationalshare.org

Honoring Your Child

In the days and months after experiencing a pregnancy loss, many parents are unsure of how to honor the memory of their child. In particular, you may want to memorialize your child on the baby's birth date, death date, or estimated due date. Here are six ideas that may help navigate this difficult time:

- 1. Plant a tree or flowers** - It can be comforting to watch something beautiful bloom out of a bad situation. Whether you go big or small, long-term or short-term, perhaps try to pick a tree or flower that has meaning to you in some way.
- 2. Release a balloon** - It is a simple gesture that can carry a lot of emotion. Some parents choose to release a pink or blue balloon if the baby's sex was known and sometimes a note to the baby will be tucked inside the balloon before it is let go. Find a special place, take a moment to reflect, and let go.
- 3. Purchase a special piece of jewelry** - Some parents prefer something tangible they can keep with them as a reminder. A piece of jewelry that features the child's birthstone, name, and/or birth date or due date can carry a lot of sentimental value.
- 4. Get a memorial tattoo** - You may choose a more permanent reminder of the child you lost with a memorial tattoo. Many times the tattoo will include the child's name, if one was given. Images such as angel wings and hearts are also a popular inclusion.
- 5. Create a memory box** - When suffering a miscarriage or other type of pregnancy loss, there is often no opportunity to say goodbye to your child. By [creating a](#)

[memory box](#), you will have the chance to build a memorial to your child.

6. Make a donation - While there is nothing that can bring your child back, [making a donation](#) on behalf of your child means his or her impact is felt for years to come.

Of course, there is no right or wrong way to memorialize, and it's important to do whatever feels right for YOU. Mourning and remembering is a very individual process and each couple must do what feels right in their hearts.

Please note: the underscores in this article are hyperlinks.

Common Reactions in Grief

Grief is an emotional, a physical, cognitive, and spiritual response to a loss.

Sometimes grieving feels so painful and overwhelming, it can be frightening. If you feel you are "going crazy," know you are not alone. Some normal and very common responses people experience in grief are:

- Reoccurring need to tell the story about the loss.
- Restlessness, forgetfulness and/or difficulty concentrating.
- Sensing the deceased person's presence.
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Crying and/or sharp mood swings.
- Feelings of guilt or regret.
- Weakness and lack of energy.

Healing from grief and regaining a balance in life takes time. Remain patient with yourself and nurture yourself, as you would a good friend. Remember, your grief is unique.

From a TCF Newsletter

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

October 25 2018, at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

Due to Thanksgiving, the next regular monthly meeting is

Thursday, November 15, 2018,

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

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	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. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. 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 .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, 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): ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearthb3@mchsi.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com 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.

Annual Candle Lighting Service

December 6, 2018 at 7:00 pm

The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden

5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois, 61265

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:

Robert and Mary Jo Reade

Laurie and Bill Steinhauser, in memory of their nephew, Patrick H. Hagerty, V.

Jerry and Cathy Thomas

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 leader, 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, 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

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 49022

CarolynPwebb@gmail.com



I'm the lady with the dead baby.

It's okay. I'm allowed to be so blunt because it's my truth. I am the lady whose baby died. One day my baby was living and the next day she died. That is what happened. It doesn't offend me if you acknowledge this. It offends me when you don't.

You see, I know that my baby died. I will not forget this. So, when you whisper about it like it's a secret that feels shameful, it makes me feel like you're embarrassed for me. I'm not embarrassed about my baby and I'm not embarrassed that she died. I'm sad that she died. It's different.

I am allowed to be sad that my baby died. Please stop trying to cheer me up. When you respond by trying to cheer me up, it feels dismissive. Being supportive does not mean making me happy, it means sticking around even when I'm not. When you honor my emotions, you honor my child.

When I say my daughter's name and you not-so-subtly change the subject, you are not doing so to "protect me." You are avoiding the subject of my child because you are uncomfortable. If you were talking about your own loved one and I stopped meeting your gaze or frantically switched topics you would be upset with me. Same.

My baby is not an awkward topic. She is a person. She is my daughter. I am not awkward about that, so why are you?

Please understand, I believe that when you do these things it is with the best intentions, but I need you to know that your intentions have a painful impact. So, while you get to stroll away with your good intentions, I am left with the hurtful impact you left behind.

I may be the lady whose baby died but you can still talk to me like you did when I was the lady who was going to have a baby. You can still say her name and let me know that you care about her. You can still ask me how I'm doing and wait around to hear the answer.

Please don't ignore my truth, especially when I am so strongly committed to sharing it. I have not made my baby's death a secret, so I don't need your help in hiding her. That's where the struggle comes from. I have to keep talking about her and saying her name because she can't. I can't stop because then she will disappear.

I know you want to change what happened to me. But, you can't. I will always be the lady whose baby died. I will always be the woman who is living without her child. I am okay talking about that. Are you?

Anunexpectedfamilyouting.wordpress.com

Reflections Board

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will 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."

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross,

Swiss psychiatrist, and author

Grief fills the room up of my absent child, lies in his bed, walks up and down with me, puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words.

William Shakespeare

You can shed tears that he's gone, or smile because he lived. You can close your eyes and pray he'll come back, or open your eyes and see all he's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see him, or be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live in the yesterday, or be happy for tomorrow because of the yesterdays.

You can remember him and only that he's gone, or cherish his memory and let it live on. You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back, or you can do what he would want; Smile...Open your eyes...Love...And go on. David Harkins

We talk about them, not because we're stuck or because we haven't moved on, but we talk about them because we are theirs, and they are ours, and no passage of time will ever change that.

Scribble and Crumbs

Because of you, I love a little more. Because of you I take time to give an extra kiss goodbye. Because of you, there may be dust on the window sill, and I don't care.

Because of you, I live today, before I worry about tomorrow.

Because of you, I don't give up quite as fast. Because of you, now I can help or listen more. Because of you, today, I am Me.

Eileen Wensmen

When grief is new you need not find a reason however good and brave to temper your despair. When grief is new, the heart accepts no answer however wise and kind to ease your mourning. When grief is new, your life can only know disintegration, overwhelming pain. My friend, try to believe what other grievers learned: you will not always hurt as you hurt now, time will restore the soundness of your mind. (All other words are shadows on the wind when grief is new)

Sascha Wagner



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

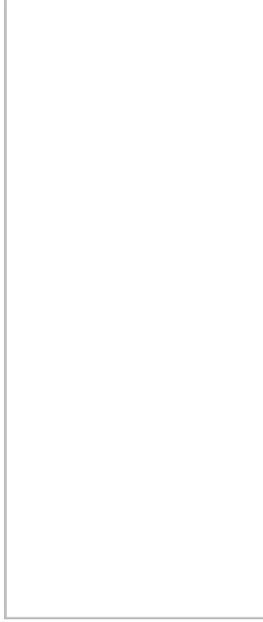


1830 6th Avenue

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.

You are not alone in your grief.