



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

May 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

One Sunday, our pastor gave a dramatic sermon with a member of the congregation playing a role. I was unsure of the costumed “actor’s” name. After the service I asked a friend if he knew the identity of the man who helped with the sermon. He thought a little, having trouble coming up with a name. Then he said, “You know. The man whose child died.” Immediately, I knew the name.

The death of our child becomes such a part of our identity. After our daughter died, I felt conspicuous, as though I had a sign on my forehead – Bereaved Parent. The week before, chatting in a small group, we were asked when we had joined our church. One person said they remembered us because our child died about that time.

As bereaved parents, at least for a time, we are distinguished by the fact our child has died. Perhaps this is fitting. The death of our child changes our lives dramatically, just as we changed dramatically the day each of our children was born.

The Credo of The Compassionate Friends repeats the phrase, “We are who we are today because we have a child who has died.” Ken Finch, TCF, Canada, sums it up well, “Our children were, still are, and always will be part of who we are, what we are, and what we do. Today, tomorrow, and forever.”



Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



The best way to honor the dead is to love the living. For if our lives stop when their life stops, death has killed twice.

Reverend William A. Ritter,
Bereaved father,
and Key Note Speaker
TCF 2006 Conference, Michigan

Their Song of Love

Remembering on this Mother's Day the melody your child etched in your heart. The sweet song of love that only your child could place there.

As this special day brings their song to you, may the warmth of their eternal love fill your heart once again, For their song is never ending.

Patty Erdman, TCF Longview, WA

I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought, and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing our lives have been enriched by having shared their love.

Leo Buscaglia

In grief, the cycles of life and death can be . . . complicated. On the one hand, reminders of hope or renewal or redemption can be comforting and inspiring. On the other, they can be painful and alienating if you're feeling personally disconnected from them. Seeing a bleak winter landscape turn a lush green can be inspiring. It gives hope for the evolution of our lives after loss while simultaneously feeling like an unwanted reminder that the world keeps turning.

In its most practical terms, this spring stretch might bring beautiful moments with friends, family, and in nature. With the joy and comfort you find there, you might also find some pangs of guilt. No matter the highlights of this day, week, or month, it will likely also include reminders that another season has come and gone, that we've moved even further from a past that we love and miss.

whatsyourgrief.com

Growing up

We think of Mother's Day as a special day for our mothers. Later, it becomes a day for our children and ourselves to reflect on our own motherhood. I have taken another step in recent years...a step backward to grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and I must express my awe, my reverence for those mothers who came before me.

I always knew that one grandmother had lost three of nine children to diphtheria, but until Tony died and I came out of my own pit enough to think of anyone else, that was just an interesting and very sad family story. Tony's death times three!!! Unbearable, unthinkable... dear lady! Did I ever show any special appreciation of you?

But now, I go back one more generation to my great-grandmother. Married at seventeen, only five of her twelve children lived to maturity. They died at the ages of: six months, eight months, fourteen months, three-and-one-half years, six years, nine years, eighteen years. How did she survive it? We all know that awful moment at the cemetery, when we are not sure we will even live through the next few minutes...



Seven times she buried a child...over and over.

Was the grief less in those days? I won't discount her sorrow by saying that they were "used to it"...although she personally must have been as used to it as one could be. It is that mother pain that I feel that makes me feel so close to those mothers...

This Mother's Day is dedicated to my female ancestors who share this pain with me. I know that they would not discount my loss of one child. I feel that they welcome him, and with the strength I hope I inherited from them...I'm going to make it too.

**Bonnie Peterson, TCF,
Western Adirondacks, NY**

Believe

Crocuses poke their heads through the crusty snow

To let us know the long, bleak winter is ending and
Spring will come again.

So, too, the long, bleak winter of your aching, breaking heart will end
And spring will come again one day.

Be patient – but believe it –
Your spring will come again.

Betty Stevens, TCF Baltimore, MD



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.

For Grief

When you lose someone you love,
Your life becomes strange,
The ground beneath you becomes fragile,
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;
And some dead echo drags your voice down
Where words have no confidence.
Your heart has grown heavy with loss;
And though this loss has wounded others too,
No one knows what has been taken from you
When the silence of absence deepens.
Flickers of guilt kindle regret
For all that was left unsaid or undone.
There are days when you wake up happy;
Again inside the fullness of life,
Until the moment breaks
And you are thrown back
Onto the black tide of loss.
Days when you have your heart back,
You are able to function well
Until in the middle of work, or encounter,
Suddenly with no warning,
You are ambushed by grief.
It becomes hard to trust yourself.
All you can depend on now is that
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.
More than you, it knows its way
And will find the right time
To pull and pull the rope of grief
Until that coiled hill of tears
Has reduced to its last drop.
Gradually, you will learn acquaintance
With the invisible form of your departed;
And when the work of grief is done,
The wound of loss will heal
And you will have learned
To wean your eyes
From that gap in the air
And be able to enter the hearth
In your soul where your loved one
Has awaited your return
All the time.

John O'Donohue – BPUSA

To Young Adult Brothers and Sisters

The young adult transition is often a time of rapid, wrenching changes and puzzling, complex, emotional patterns. Then a sudden traumatic loss of a brother or sister, or witnessing long heartbreaking illness can make the load seem too heavy to carry.

Your once hopeful confidence that you are going places with your life can sour with sadness, cynicism, and bitterness. Yet your peers go blissfully on, unable to comprehend why you seem different now...why you haven't "got over it" by now. Your friends may drift off to more cheerful prospects in spite of your valiant efforts to keep pace. Sometimes employers or professors grow impatient with your lapses of concentration and decreased vitality. You may trip over new fears you didn't even know existed.

Young adulthood is a time for happy social occasions, but they aren't as carefree for you anymore. Contacts that used to be entertaining now seem trivial and empty. Maybe you no longer feel the high you once felt from achieving something important to you. And maybe you do OK "outside" but "inside" everything seems overshadowed by your burden of grief.

If any of the foregoing experiences are describing yours, **YOU DON'T NEED TO COPE ALONE!!** Sharing the burden with another who understands your special sorrow is like finding an oasis in the desert. It revives the spirit so you can face the next few steps with renewed strength.

TCF, Portland, OR

He Said, She Said The Different Grieving Paths of Moms and Dads (Women and Men)

*"Give me what I need, help me," she begged.
"No, you give me what I need, you help me," he
replied.*

"You don't grieve at all," she said.

"All you ever do is cry," he said.

Such is the journey with moms and dads as they struggle to find the way after the death of a child. "He" and "She" can be interchanged in all those statements because there is no gender exclusivity to how we grieve. A father may go inward and the mother may cry. Or, a father may wear his grief on the outside, and a mother may keep her pain hidden. Whichever way we endure our pain is how it works best for us. But it can be hurtful when grieving becomes a competition as to who misses or loves the child the most and who is grieving correctly. Add guilt or blame, and emotions are taken to a new and sometimes damaging level. The dramatic differences in grieving styles of moms and dads (or women and men in general) are not unusual. We are not alone in how we feel.

Since our husband or wife has been our closet supporter and best friend over the years, we expect that support to continue after a child dies. We shared everything when they were alive and we expect that to happen now that they died. We laughed with each other and now want to cry with each other, too. But, what we often find is that the person we expect to be able to lean on the most isn't there, and we fall. That confuses, hurts, and angers us. We think, "You've known what I needed in the past, why can't you see what I need now?" Either parent could say that. The mom and dad of a baby who has died have much in common, but also much they can't give each other. What we know is common suffering, our pain is equally intense, and we both feel the loss deeply. But since we

are both in such turmoil and barely able to take care of ourselves, it can be impossible to give each other a safe place to grieve, a harbor for our broken heart where our way of grieving will be understood and respected. Our expectations of each other are high, often times too high. If you have those feelings of abandonment, they are not unusual and, with work, they can be resolved. As in all cases of needs and wants, communication is the key.

Once the thoughts of bringing home a healthy baby was "our" world. Both happy and sad times were "our" times. Decisions were made jointly; they were "our" decisions as to what was best for our child. For the most part, we were able to share our points of view and find a compromise that worked in the "our" world. What we found was that "our" world had suddenly turned to an "I" world, because it had to for our survival. The realization that our closest partner couldn't help us and that we couldn't help them was confusing. We asked, "So, if you can't help me, what am I supposed to do with my suffering?"

The key to coming back to each other is talking and sharing... communication. It is paramount to share our pain with our partner and not judge or criticize his or her way of grieving. Some of us read books on grief and attend support groups. Others find writing, painting, or gardening to be a good way to release the pain. There are also nonverbal ways of sharing our suffering. A hug, a back rub, flowers

given with sympathy and empathy can go a long way to healing wounds that have been opened by our grief. Don't make grieving a competition, make it a collaboration. Our patience will be tested as we see our partner progress at a different rate than us. We may not understand why they cry day after day when we no longer need to do that, or never have. Their anger may dissipate slower than ours. That's ok. We are all different and it is reasonable that we all grieve differently.

Learn the power of, "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you." Work on making your common pain more about "we" and less about "me." Understand that we are not perfect people. We don't live in a perfect world and we all make mistakes. There's no harm or dishonor in saying, "I made a mistake. I didn't do that very well and would like another shot at it." And don't forget the healing power in a heartfelt "Thank you." Those simple words of appreciation can bring people together.

We may need to ask for what we need from our partner, because they might not know. We have heard, or maybe said ourselves, "What do you want from me? What should I do?" If what you need is silence, ask for it. If what you need is a hug, ask for it. If what you need is someone you can feel safe with while you cry or scream your pain, ask for it. Try not to ask for understanding of your pain; that may be impossible. What you probably need is an understanding of how much you hurt. Also listen to what your partner's needs are and give what you can. When you are able to help each other, also thank each other.

This is a tough journey, and there is no need to go through it alone. As parents, we hurt equally, but we aren't born with the coping skills necessary to understand what is happening to us. Through constant and open communication, we can survive and even grow closer. It only takes that first word or a hug to get started.

Excerpted from **Heartbreak to Healing**

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.

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.**



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Thursday, May 25, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois 61265 (NEW ADDRESS)

The next monthly meeting of the chapter is

Thursday, June 22 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

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. 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	<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>

KEEPING YOUR CHILD PRESENT

Death ended Jonathan's life but it didn't end his relationship with me. I learned to keep him present in my life by doing outreach in his name.

Countless books have been written on the process of mourning and what's become known as the Kübler-Ross five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Few books mention the stage of giving as part of the healing process. It was in this last stage, memorializing our son through philanthropy, that we finally healed.

After our son's car accident, we had no idea how to deal with our son's death or how to honor his memory. We just knew we had to get out of the house. We stumbled into the nonprofit world when our family lawyer and friend steered us in that direction. Little by little we reshaped his presence on earth by doing small meaningful acts in his name, things Jonathan would be doing if he were still alive.

Our non-profit took shape in a very grassroots way. Jonathan was a freshman in college, a talented musician, and committed social activist. He had a couple of unfinished projects he left behind: raising monies for a well in Africa and collecting band instruments for a school in rural North Carolina. We were given a chance to pass

Jonathan's future on to those less fortunate by simply picking up where he left off. We raised money to build a Playpump well in Malawi, and



eventually we delivered those instruments to Gaston College Prep in north Carolina.

Beyond the satisfaction we experience by helping others, I feel rewarded by one simple gesture. Thirteen years later, I experience the joy of hearing Jonathan's name spoken. Because of our outreach, our son is still included in conversations; in a new idea, an act of giving. He is present.

I gained perspective on our loss from the insightful writings of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He explained that God kept the "gap" – Jonathan's absence – empty, so we can still feel our son's presence. Over time I started connecting the small yet significant acts that happened in those empty gaps. As I made the connections, our outreach took on new meaning and I began to end my mourning. This is how I found my way back from grief: I kept my heart and mind together and did the work our son didn't finish.

Patty Crist, compassionatefriends.org

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 46TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

July 7, 2023 - July 9, 2023

Sheraton Downtown Denver Hotel
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202

The Compassionate Friends' 46th Annual National Conference in Denver, Colorado on July 7th-9th will be an enriching and supportive event for newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences. Unique and cherished highlights of the conference include the Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. The weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

Reservations can now be made online for the conference and hotel rooms for Sheraton Denver Downtown at TCF's dedicated reservation link. TCF's discounted room rate with the Sheraton is \$159 per night plus tax. Each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. Pre-conference activities are offered on Thursday evening.

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.



Thoughts on Mother's Day

I watch my daughter-in-law put a ponytail in my granddaughter's hair and tie a pink ribbon around it.

I think, "I'm not any good at doing little girl's hair. Do you suppose I would have learned had Anna lived to be a three year old?"

During church I watch my granddaughter throw herself into Jerry's arms. Blonde head buried in his lap as she hugs him.

I think, "How blessed we are to have Hannah. Isn't Jerry a wonderful grandpa for her? Wouldn't he have been a good Daddy for Anna? I wish I had more memories of a little head topped with dark hair snuggling against his shoulder."

The minister talks with tenderness of daughters who are missing their mothers on Mother's Day.

I think, "I am missing my daughter on Mother's Day." One slow tear slides down my cheek and remembering, I let it rest there for a moment before I wipe it away.

I am grateful for all that I have and have had in my life, but sometimes I really miss my little girl and wonder.... what could have been, what should have been, ... especially on Mother's Day.

Carol Webb, Quad City TCF

Everything is a First

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me... NEVER! The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. FORGET? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere – love and concern was translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say – nothing is NORMAL. Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me, "How are you?" Here is my answer: "I am mad Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong.

Liza Ann Jones, TCF Avoca, PA



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**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.