



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

October 2019

Volume XXXII Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This week, the Webb family will be making a pilgrimage. When our daughter died, we chose the baby cemetery in Moline Memorial Garden as a temporary resting place, planning to move her remains when the time came to decide where our final resting place would be. This Saturday, our two sons, daughter-in-law, grandsons, and Jerry's sister will join us to remember Anna's life and her death as we recommit her body to the ground, next to her grandparents, in a small cemetery in central Iowa. A friend asked me if this would be hard, and I answered that I wasn't really sure. We just know, that as we age, taking care of this piece of family business feels right and comforting. Anna lived only four months, and some might be tempted to think her life was not very significant. Only three of the eight Webbs who gather on Saturday ever knew Anna face to face. But her life and death has impacted all of us to some extent. Jerry and I don't know who we would have been or how we would have used our time and energy if it were not for the life and loss of our precious daughter. But we do know the thread of her life and loss runs throughout our family. We **would be** different people with different priorities had we not experienced the life altering experience of child loss. Through loss we realized the preciousness and fragility of human life and the great gift it is to be parents and grandparents. We have had the privilege to minister to other people through our work in Compassionate Friends and Marriage Encounter in memory of Anna as well as in praise of our God who has met our needs through the ups and downs of our grieving and our growing. Our grief experience has given us resources to share with other families facing the challenge of child illness and loss. We have seen God redeem the pain of not being able to raise our daughter by blessing us with a daughter-in-law and granddaughter as well as placing other young women in our lives that we have been able to nurture and encourage. It was incredibly hard to go through pregnancy, childbirth, and the emotional ups and downs of

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doctors and diagnoses, hope and despair. Some might ask if it would have been better had she never lived. Jerry and I are incredibly blessed to be the parents of Anna, and we hope we will continue to honor her legacy through our service to others, giving glory to God for as long as we live.

One Wish

If I could have one wish of course I'd wish you hadn't died
That you'd been born strong of heart and sure of limb,
Old enough to face the world.
But if I could turn back the clock and change it so that you were not
I wouldn't-I couldn't.
Loving you is worth the pain.

Judith Perry

Sincerely,

Jerry and Carol Webb

Wearing a Mask - Halloween is a great time to pretend to be someone else. You can be mean and nasty even though you're usually a pretty nice person, or you can be scary when you usually are the one that gets scared. You can pretend to be strong and powerful or beautiful or mysterious or famous. You can pretend to be anything on Halloween. It isn't fun, though, to try to always wear a mask. Sometimes, for a person who is grieving, it seems like you need to always pretend to be your old happy self. Your friends and others may want you to forget about your loss and go on as if nothing much has changed. But it is really hard to mask your true feelings all the time. It is much better for you, if you can, to take off your mask and just be yourself sometimes. If you let your feelings out, then you are being honest with yourself and others. By taking off your mask and revealing your true self, you will be a much more **REAL** person. It's better to save masks for Halloween.



Please Be Gentle

Please be gentle with me for I am grieving. The sea I swim is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day. My heart is heavy with sorrow. I want to shout and scream repeatedly and ask, "Why?" At times my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss. Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be. Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within my heart and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path. Please will you walk beside me?

Jill Englar, TCF/Westminister, Livonia, MI

You Know You're Recovering from Grief When . . .

Grief is a dark place, so dark you wonder if you will ever see light again. While you're grieving, you are struggling to find your way through a long tunnel of darkness and there is no light ahead. You wonder if you will survive. Maybe you won't find your way out of the tunnel, a terrible thought, and one that adds to your sorrow. Courageous as you have been in the past, you wonder if you have the courage to face this new challenge. Is a life without a loved one worth living? Although you're trying as hard as you can, you may feel mired in grief, and unable to escape its grip. You would feel better if you could see some signs of progress, and the list that follows contains many signs. Give yourself credit for each one because all of the steps you take, large and small, eventually count. The day will come when you realize you are moving forward on the recovery path. Watch for these indications.

- You don't cry as much.
- You can tell your story without sobbing.
- You laugh again, although your laughter feels rusty.
- You have your first belly laugh.
- You are aware of the outside world again.
- You attend your first support group meeting.
- You continue to go to support group meetings.
- You want to help others.
- You think about establishing a memorial.
- You make a life change in honor of your loved one.
- You welcome quiet.
- You can be peacefully alone.
- You choose to live and enjoy the miracle of life.
- You remember your loved one and smile.

People have similar grief symptoms, yet each journey is unique, and no grief journey is like yours. As someone who experienced four deaths in six months, including the death of my daughter (mother of my twin grandchildren), I can assure you that sunshine will return to your life. Your loved one would want you to be happy. So make the conscious decision now, at this moment, to let happiness back into your life. Do this in memory of your loved one. You are worthy of happiness and can claim it for yourself.

**Written by Harriet Hodgson on
Tuesday, August 21, 2018**

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 at climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

A Moving Experience

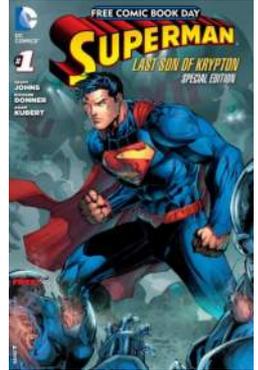
We are sorting through and packing up for a move. It's worse than your usual move from one home of 10 years to another; the house we live in now is the last one we shared with our son, Aaron. We are sorting through and packing up memories, along with the tools, dishes, and books.

I have heard other bereaved parents talk about moving after their child died. For some, it was too painful to stay in a house that held so many images. They spoke of not being able to get away from the sorrow, of running into the pain every time they walked through the door. We never felt that way about our home. This was a place Aaron loved, and we have been very happy here – the last earthly house that Aaron knew.

I know that we will be happy in our new home as well—but that house won't hold a breath of him, as this one does. Now, I can walk out onto the patio and still see him in my mind's eye, drifting across the pool on a raft. I can easily imagine him coming out of his bedroom door, calling "Mom..." as he so often did. The new house won't have any history with Aaron, and so there is a feeling of loss in leaving this old place.

I know that Aaron goes where I go; he is a part of me always and forever. Nonetheless, I will miss walking familiar streets where once he walked. I will miss the feeling of connection as I lie on the side of the hill at the park and watch the clouds drift by. I will miss the scent of his closet and the view from his window. There are stories in these rooms and this neighborhood, stories woven from the fabric of my son's life. I may carry the stories with me, but I am leaving behind the props.

We have packed up his baby book, the special school projects, and the box of cards we received when he died. Hannah still has his treasured rocks in her room, and the boxes of comic books so carefully preserved and alphabetized are ready for transport. Paul is going through the collections of action figures and baseball cards to determine what can be sold or given away, and I expect that his raggedy old "bud" from infancy, No-Way Noah will take up residence somewhere in the new house.



But how do you pack up his passion for life? I know what to do about things I can hold in my hands; what I want to know is – how am I to carry his heart?

I've had a vision of these rooms, empty of all our things: I am doing one last walk through, taking one last look, saying one final goodbye. It is a scene that brings with it a gentle sorrow, and though I know we are moving forward and that all is well, in my heart there is a sense that I am somehow leaving Aaron behind. It makes me think back to those first months when I could not leave the house, even overnight. I told Paul, I know this sounds crazy, but I feel that if I leave I might come home and find a note on the door that says: "Hi, Mom! Sorry I missed you. Catch you later. Love, Aaron."

Six years later, I am not anxious about leaving home; I don't worry that I might miss a visit. The shock and disbelief of early grief has passed away and the reality of Aaron's death has settled on my soul.

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Take the time . . .

To hurt . . . the pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only resurface later in a potentially more destructive way.

To cry . . . it may feel like once started, you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

To “fall apart” . . . if you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater – you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

To be “selfish” . . . mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

To “identify” . . . and seek our resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them. Having done all that – having lingered in the valley of the shadow – it is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time . . . To engage again . . . in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

To laugh without guilt . . . savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can rediscover the beauty of a sunset.

To care for your health . . . grieving is a physical, as well as psychological stress. Your body needs protection.

To be patient . . . wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time. The path out of the other side of the Valley is steep, and we all often stumble. But with time spent doing the work of grief – **you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.**

The Long View

A few weeks after my son Arthur died, I met a nurse. She conducted an assessment for a procedure that I had scheduled months ahead of time. She ran down her list of routine questions. One of them was, “Are you in pain now?”

Jess, my stepdaughter, was with me because she was my ride home after the procedure. We just looked at each other.

I hesitated and answered honestly, “Well, emotional pain,” and then explained it. The nurse stopped and looked at both of us. She said soothing things that I don’t remember. Then she said, “Someday, you will smile again, just not now.”

She was right. That’s the long view of it. At the time Jess and I had no idea that would happen again. Our fresh grief was way too huge and painful to imagine smiling again.

To the tender newer members of TCF, I wish you a someday when you will smile again. You will feel a spark of joy. This will come again.

The Compassionate Friends support group anchored me from one month to the next. I met people who were further down the road than me who had experienced child loss. They smiled, even laughed and they were authentic. They were my role models.

Now as a TCF chapter co-leader, when I see a newer member spontaneously reach out to someone who is at their first or second TCF meeting, I breathe a sigh of relief for both of them. One is helping the other and both will feel that healing on their grief journeys. This is how we work, and it works very well.

Monica Colburg, TCF/Minneapolis, MN
In memory of my son, Art

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

The next regular monthly meeting is

Thursday, October 24, 2019 at 6:30 pm

at Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

Please call 309.736.6601 for information and directions.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Next month's meeting is held on **November 21, 2019.**

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. 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 shoearthb4@gmail.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 LIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Chapter's Annual Candle Light Memorial Service is for every bereaved parent who would like to have his or her child(ren) remembered. You may light a candle in memory of your child. (You can bring a favorite candle or one will be provided. You can also bring a photo of your child to show.) All family members are invited.

If you cannot attend and would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return this form to Lisa Rains, 2341 7 ½ Street, East Moline, Illinois 61244, or email Lisa at AngelOfHope@gmail.com.

Child's Name: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Friday, December 6, 2019
at 7:00 p.m.
Angel of Hope Memorial Garden

The service will be held *inside*
the Mausoleum at
Moline Memorial Park Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265



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,
Michigan, 49022 or email
CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



Transition in Grief

It is good to speak of our children, to recall the wonderful memories of their lives. It is good to honor our children with ritual, ceremony, prayer, and thanksgiving for the gift that will always be our child. It is good to celebrate the life of our child, to cherish our time with them.

It is also wise to acknowledge that by honoring our child in these ways, we are doing our grief work. This work also involves pushing, pulling, and dragging ourselves through the purgatorial fog that transcends our every thought after our child dies. The grief is overwhelming; the process of grief work is demanding, punishing, and often harsh.

Either we stay in one place, “stuck” in our grief, or we reach out and help ourselves. There are no other choices.

The loss of our child to death is the most traumatic event of our adult lives. We have lost the future, and we have lost an immense piece of ourselves when our child died. We must work to rebuild ourselves. Rebuild ourselves for a new life: a life without our child sharing this physical plane with us.

But as we share our child with others, speak of the life that no longer is, celebrate that life in ritual, ceremony, and memories shared, we are doing our grief work. At first it is difficult. The throat swells, the breathing is shallow, and the words are so difficult to find. But we pursue, for we do not want the memory of our child to be erased.

We carry our child forward into the future; we see the world for two now. We cherish this new journey that we take for our child and ourselves. This effort is our child’s legacy. Our child will live as long as we live...through our words, actions, thoughts, memories, and memorial efforts.

And as we do these things that are good, we find the burden lifts ever so slightly. Days, weeks, months, and then years pass. At some point we realize that we, too, have transitioned. Our subconscious mind has accepted the worst that life can give, and we have emerged as different people cherishing the goodness that is always our precious child.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
10

A Tear Fell

I rode by your school by chance
today
And I just happened to look that way.
The boys all had their ball caps on;
Then I remembered my son was
gone.
Just when I thought I was doing so
well,
Before I knew it – a tear fell.
Then on Sunday as I sat in church
looked around and missed you so
much.
Saw other boys in their Sunday suits
And I remembered you were just as
cute.

People all think I'm doing so well;
They don't know today – a tear fell.
When I'm reminded of what might
have been
It gets too hard to hold it in.
When life will catch me off my guard,
That's when I seem to be hit so hard.
It seems all roads lead back to you
As I take each day and try to get
through.
They say time makes it better, but I
cannot tell.

I only know today – a tear fell.

Carolyn Bryan, TCF Orange Park, FL

Continued from page 6
Though I know that I will never again see
my son walk through the door, I also
know that I know – I will never leave
Aaron behind. He goes where I go. Still, I
will be leaving a piece of my heart in the
old house. Should you visit, listen for the
gentle beat. You might sense its rhythm
somewhere about – gazing out a tree-
shaded window, lingering over a bloom in
the garden, or drifting gently across the
sky. And you will know that house holds
more than the stuff of memories. A house
can hold a heart.

**Frankie Wilford, TCF/Carrollton-Farmers
Branch, TX. In Memory of my son, Aaron**

Notables

There's no way around grief and loss: you can dodge all you want, but sooner or later you just have to go into it, through it, and hopefully come out on the other side. The world you find there will never be the same as the world you left.

Johnny Cash

An important way to cope with grief is having an outlet, be it interpersonal, be it artistic, which will allow you to not have to contain your grief, but will give you an opportunity to express it, to externalize it to some degree.

R. Benjamin Cirlin
grief counselor

It is not really a question of whether I could have wanted never to have you with me, if had I known how deeply your dying would break my life today. There is only one certain truth: even if I had known that there would come to me the cruel grief I suffer today, I would endure it all again for the wonder of having had you in my life.

Sascha Wagner

Time does not really heal a broken heart; it only teaches a person how to live with it.

Sascha Wagner

Small Signs - Since grief can make us lose many of our own deep feelings, we often disregard what small signs of love we are given by those who are in our life. When grief makes us lonely, it is difficult to appreciate the small affections, attentions, or connections that come to us. But those small signs of loving attention do deserve notice. If we let them touch us, they will give us warmth and strength and hope.

Sascha Wagner

The friend who holds your hand and says the wrong thing is made of dearer stuff than the one who stays away.

Barbara Kingsolver
High Tide in Tucson: Essays from Now or Never



The Compassionate Friends

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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.