



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume XXXII **March 2019** Number 3

Dear Compassionate Friends,

When our daughter was born we could see that she had some orthopedic handicaps. As time progressed, and various symptoms started, we realized that her health issues were more complex. When she was two months old, Iowa City diagnosed her with a rare and devastating syndrome. We strongly denied their diagnosis mostly because they insisted she was blind. We, and others observed clearly that she had at least some vision, because of her responsiveness to visual stimuli. After Anna's death, we put away the articles we had been given describing this syndrome, denying and defying that these cold words could ever define who our child was or could have been. Part of our resistance was rooted in the hopelessness of the syndrome diagnosis. We saw hopeful signs of progress in Anna daily and clung to our belief that perhaps she could survive and thrive. Our hope was strong right until the day she died. Recently, when I was reading an article about a special needs young adult who manifested some symptoms similar to Anna, I revisited the syndrome via the internet. Interestingly, much progress has been made in defining this syndrome and two things stood out to me. First, children with this syndrome, while generally vision impaired, are rarely blind. Secondly, a number of these children have lived well into childhood. We had been told that this syndrome was incompatible with vision or life beyond infancy. As I read the descriptions of cases, I remembered my telling the doctors that they should acknowledge the hopeful behaviors we saw in our daughter because someday down the road another parent would find in them some hope to grasp. It is the same in our grief. We need to hold on to hope – believing that we will be able to move beyond the deep and devastating reality of the loss of our child. While we will not emerge unscarred or unchanged, we will survive. Marilyn Adams sums this up well:

“Hope is a gift given to you by others. It is wrapped within the embrace of a friend or the words of a stranger. Hope is also a gift you give to yourself. But only when the time is right, when finally you are ready to begin to heal. Like anyone who experiences profound loss, this was unknown to me at first.”

And so today, even all these year later, I can move beyond my denial and remember with joy the hope that kept and continues to keep us strong.

Sincerely, Jerry & Carol Webb

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HOPE

I sit down regularly to read the many newsletters I received from the chapters around the country. Most of the time there were articles in them that made me cry a little.

I read about children who are dead and parents who were hurting, but never did I come away from this reading sessions depressed.

I came away with hope – hope that the searing torment does lessen and eventually give way to warm, loving memories of our child.

When we are in the deepest throes of our grief, when our beloved child has just recently been snatched from life by a tragic accident or succumbed to a fatal illness, or died in some other way, can we believe we can ever be happy again? When to simply get up in the morning is a major accomplishment, can we believe that we will ever again be able to function with enthusiasm and purpose?

When every thought of our children brings excruciating pain, can we

believe that we will someday be able to think of him/her and smile? I know it is hard to believe that this will ever happen, but it will.

Words used in defining HOPE are “expect,” “trust,” and “anticipate,” “wish,” “desire,” and “confident.” These are the key words.

If we expect, trust and anticipate felling better, we will in time.

If we wish it, and are confident, the day will come when we will feel better. Of course, it doesn't just happen. It takes long, hard grief work. It takes many painful hours of allowing ourselves to go through our grief.

It takes patience and it takes time. But know you will come to the light at the end of the tunnel.

Know that there is hope. Know that many bereaved parents who have been in the same painful place that you are now have found life meaningful again.

Know that you will in time.

Margaret H. Gerner
BP/USA, St. Louis, MO

Release

If I were to continue asking “Why?” I might never

Sleep through the night
Embark on a career
Smile and laugh with others
See the sunshine or hear the birds
Give love to my cats and dogs
Trust God again
Get an Answer

So I cry my tears and hug my memories and accept that for now I cannot know or

understand.
And with this acceptance comes release

To sleep deeply
To work for my future
To enjoy life
To appreciate nature
To love our pets
To trust God

To accept what I cannot change.
You'd be proud of me, Becky.

A Father Returns to Work

After Kathy died, I, of course, went back to work. Some of my co-workers made the stop at my desk to express their sympathy. I know I turned them off, as my pain and my denial were so great. I could not talk about what had happened and how I felt. I thanked them. Although nobody ever talked to me about it, that was okay as my pain was such, I thought, I could not bear to talk. I threw myself into my work and on occasion was confused because I could not make the kind of decisions I had been making for years. I never made the connection that this inability to concentrate was part of my grief and was normal.

Lunch was the worst time. My habit was to eat with my associates, but often in the middle of the meal I would just have to get up and walk away. Although nobody ever said anything to me about this odd behavior, I do thank them at least for their tolerance. Slowly I readjusted (I thought) and in time (a long time) I was able to perform well again. But I never really grieved until I found THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS and it was here that people helped me to talk. It was almost twelve years before I found TCF as there was no such organization in 1967. My friends, let TCF help you. Don't wait 12 years to talk.

Bill Ermatinger

TCF Baltimore, MD

In memory of my daughter Kathy Ermatinger

Sibling Grief - I was reading an article recently that addressed children dealing with death. For many bereaved parents they are not only dealing with their own grief but they are also dealing with the grief of surviving children who may not have lost just a sibling but a playmate, best friend, or confidante. Some helpful thoughts expressed in the article included:

- **Recognize fears** - Death can be a scary concept for children. They will probably need extra comfort and reassurance not just at the time of the death but in the weeks and months that follow.
- **Answer Questions** - Some children are satisfied with the facts. Others will ask a multitude of questions. Allow questions and answer them, even admitting when you don't have the answer.
- **Let them see you grieve** - Children need to know grieving is acceptable. Allow children to see you cry. Emotional pain is part of losing a loved one.
- **Cherish the memories** – Continue to talk about their sibling. Look through photo albums, talk about funny things their brother or sister said or did or reminisce about pleasant experiences.

Children take their cues from us and model their reactions accordingly. Show them death and grief are parts of life.

Candy Arrington

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 location, and your reason for interest.</p>

The official first day of spring is only three days away.

For many of you, it may not look or feel like spring is nearing at all, especially those who recently got bombarded with over a foot of snow! But, for what will be 22 years in May since Nina's death (and five years in June since Chris's), whenever spring comes around I can feel that tug of sadness in my heart and the what-if's and if-only's rise up into my thoughts. And I remembered this article I wrote back in 2001, six years after Nina's death, and look at the progression made by all those "one step forward, two steps back" I have made over two decades. For those of you in the early years of your grief, perhaps you will see yourself in my words written 16 years ago, and will find hope for renewed meaning in life again.. Hugs, Cathy

It is mid March, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter for many. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the foot-long icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was

describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had consumed my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Nina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How would I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put, it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step.

However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken. It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac-scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my precious daughter Nina's life would end.

I wondered if my thoughts about spring would ever be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it brought with it the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look to the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know

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that anyone, who has lost a loved one, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of “my early grief”, I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first few years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again does not mean I am dishonoring my daughter’s memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered for me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime!

I will always feel apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring. It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace, hope and healing.

Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again.

With gentle thoughts,

*Cathy Seehuetter, Nina’s mom forever
TCF/St. Paul, Minnesota*

Not Guilt, Regret

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn’t we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate, if that name doesn’t feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt – we feel regret.

Kitty Sanders,
Nashville, Tennessee
Survivors of Suicide Group

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

The next regular monthly meeting is

Thursday, March 28, 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 months meeting is on April 25, 2019 at 6:30 pm

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.

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:

Sandra and Ron Sacco, in memory of their son, Anthony.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue.

If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa, 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.



Contact the Editors

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and

address.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.



Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor,
Michigan, 49022

CarolynPWebb@gmail.com



The Compassionate Friends National Conference

The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves. Join us as together we remember and share the everlasting love we have for our precious children, siblings, and grandchildren.

The 42nd TCF National Conference will be held in Philadelphia on July 19-21, 2019. "Hope Rings in Philadelphia" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website, as well as on our [TCF/USA Facebook Page](#) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Please Don't Tell Me

Please don't tell me I'm richer for having had him. I am too busy being the poorer for having lost him.

Please don't tell me there is a light at the end of the tunnel. What tunnel is that? My only tunnel vision is consumed with blackness right now.



Please don't tell me I'll understand it all one day. PROMISES. PROMISES. There's nothing like here and now explanations. Please don't remind me he is in a better place. My maternal instincts have been grossly abused so that he can be there. Please don't tell me spring will come and birds will sing again. Right now, I only hear they're out of tune, and they jar my no longer musical ears.

Please don't bother to remind me I'll be reunited with him one day. My life is here and now and his face is conspicuously absent.

Please don't tell me things could be worse. I am saturated with the present bleak winter of my grief, and if there's worse than this then STOP THE WORLD, I WANT TO GET OFF!

Do:

Remind me that if I can do but one small act of kindness, give one dot of comfort, be of value to just one other on this strife torn earth, then I can give no greater gift to my lost child.

Notables

With loss comes hope.
There is a light at the end
of the tunnel, and you need
to look for that. You need
to do positive things in
your life to make good
things happen.

Marilyn Adams

Grief walks
with you today,
your constant
companion.
But in the
morning,
tomorrow, the
sunrise of hope
waits for you.
Sascha Wagner

I believe that
love is stronger
than death.
Robert Fulghum

Denial helps us pace our
feelings of grief. There
is a grace in denial. It is
nature's way of letting
in only as much as we
can handle.

Elisabeth Kubler Ross

Grief is a tidal wave that overtakes
you,
smashes down upon you with
unimaginable force
sweeps you up into its darkness,
where you tumble and crash against
unidentifiable surfaces,
only to be thrown out on an unknown
beach, bruised, reshaped
Grief will make a new person out of you,
if it doesn't kill you in the making.

Stephanie Ericsson

Many commented on how
"strong" I was.
Little did they know what
was going on inside me.

James R. White
Grieving: Our Path Back to Peace



The Compassionate Friends

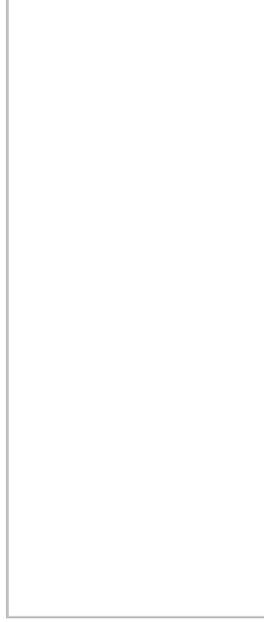
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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.