Dear Compassionate Friends,

One hard part of the grief experience is dealing with other people’s actions and reactions to us after our loss. I remember feeling exposed like I was wearing a sign on my head that read “My child died,” when we got together with groups of people after Anna died. I felt uncomfortable meeting new people, needing to tell them what had happened to our family, but not wanting to deal with the awkwardness if I did. I remember someone at the park asking Mike if he had a brother or sister and then the shock on their face and the embarrassed silence when he replied, “I have a sister. She’s dead.” Some people just want us to get on with our lives and can’t understand what might be wrong with us because this grief “thing” is taking so long.

Jerry and I experienced much love, sensitivity, and caring from most of the people in our lives after Anna died, but we know many bereaved parents who have dealt with insensitivity and pressure to move on. One father, when asked at a TCF meeting by a speaker how long he thought the grief process might take, replied, “Well my employer thinks about two weeks.” Those who have not experienced the loss of their child cannot know or truly understand, and we wouldn’t want anyone else to feel this pain just so they could empathize with experiential knowledge. But we can help educate them.

An article in the newsletter this month, “My Old Friend, Grief,” could be useful to copy and share with the people in your life who care about you, want to help, but just don’t know how. And remember as you journey through grief the credo of the Compassionate Friends. We do not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

Sincerely,

Carol and Jerry Webb
My Old Friend, Grief

My old friend, Grief, is back. He comes to visit me once in a while just to remind me that I am still a broken person. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely I have adjusted to a world without him by now. But the truth is, we never completely heal, we never totally adjust to the loss of a major love. We will be all right, but we will never be the same.

And so my old friend, Grief, drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. Sometimes he sneaks up on me. I’ll hear a certain song, smell a certain fragrance, or look at a certain picture, and I’ll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

Some may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. Grief revisited is grief acknowledged, and grief confronted is grief resolved.

But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a deep sense of loss at anniversaries and holidays, and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat, even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting, and because moving on with life does not mean that we don’t take part of the deceased with us.

My old friend, Grief, doesn’t get in the way of my living. He just wants to drop by and chat sometimes. In fact, Grief has taught me, over the years, that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or else risk emotional paralysis.

Old Grief has also taught me that I can survive even great losses and that although my world is very different after a major loss, it is still my world and life is worth living. He has taught me that when I am willing to be pruned by the losses that come, I can flourish again in season; not in spite of loss, but because of it.

My old friend, Grief, has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love, for love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death.

Adolpho Quezada

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well-intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains. The empty space of our missing children lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

Angela Miller
Suggestions for Coping With the “Special Days”

Since love does not end with death, birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and other special days may result in a renewed sense of personal grief. Such occasions emphasize the absence of the person who has died and may reawaken painful emotions leaving you feeling drained. Here are some suggestions to help you cope.

❤️ Have a cake with candles. Have everyone in the family make a wish and blow out the candles together. Share the wishes if you want.
❤️ Buy a present in memory of your loved one. Make it something that lives on such as a tree or flowers you can watch bloom and grow year after year.
❤️ Combine what you would have spent for presents and donate it to a cause special to your loved one.
❤️ Buy or make a birthday card for the one who has died. Inside, tell your loved one something that you never got a chance to say. Write about what you’re feeling, what you’re doing – anything you want to share.
❤️ Visit the cemetery and take flowers, notes, or a balloon bouquet.
❤️ Make the day a celebration of the life of your loved one. Talk about the good things you remember, the funny things, the jokes played, the special moments and memories.

Sasha J. Mudlaff, M.A.
Hamilton’s Academy of Grief and Loss

TCF National Conference 2021
Though we cannot gather in person for the conference this year, please mark your calendars. More information can be found at www.compassionatefriends.org.

The Compassionate Friends
2021 Virtual National Conference
July 16 – 18, 2021

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.
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://quadcitytcf.org).

TCF National Office
48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808
Wixom, MI 48393
Toll Free (877)969-0010

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.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter
One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: 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.

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.

About The Compassionate Friends

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TCF National Office
48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Printed Resources for Grieving Parents &amp; Siblings</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TCF Online Support Community</strong></td>
<td>TCF’s national website offers &quot;virtual chapters&quot; 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 <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click &quot;Online Support&quot; in the &quot;Resources&quot; column.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TCF’s Grief Related Resources</strong></td>
<td>There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to <a href="https://www.opentohope.com/tv/">https://www.opentohope.com/tv/</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TCF National Magazine</strong></td>
<td><em>We Need Not Walk Alone</em> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <strong>TCF e-Newsletter</strong> 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grief Materials</strong></td>
<td>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 <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amazon.com</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previous Newsletter Editions</strong></td>
<td>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alive Alone</strong></td>
<td>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 <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>Bereaved Parents’ Magazine</strong></td>
<td>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="https://bereavedparentsusa.org">https://bereavedparentsusa.org</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>Our Newsletter</strong></td>
<td>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 <a href="mailto:climb@climb-support.org">climb@climb-support.org</a>. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</td>
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The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mowed grass as we’d drive down the road. That’s the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then . . . IT happened. Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with “spring.” If H.G. Well’s time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn’t fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn’t go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It’s much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn’t going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

Pat Loder, TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI
In memory of Stephanie and Stephen Loder
**Spring Is Coming**

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first spring," you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring, the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year.

During my "first year," I expected that spring would cheer me up, and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as flowers seemed to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits." When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?" I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day — that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives alright again.

Unfortunately, there is no magic event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed. The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again.

What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's process will continue, and that can offer us hope. I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, and forsythia, the daffodils, and the greening of the world.

Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

Evelyn Billings, TCF/Spring, Massachusetts
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<tr>
<th><strong>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</strong></th>
<th>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 <a href="mailto:linmac67@machlink.com">linmac67@machlink.com</a>.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rick’s House of Hope</strong></td>
<td>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 <a href="mailto:millerl@verafrenchmhc.org">millerl@verafrenchmhc.org</a> or go to <a href="http://www.rhoh.org">www.rhoh.org</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>SHARE</strong></td>
<td>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 pm via ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic and in “normal time” 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 <a href="mailto:chalyn@shareqc.com">chalyn@shareqc.com</a> or <a href="http://www.shareqc.com">www.shareqc.com</a>.</td>
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| **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 dns0826@gmail.com  
♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoeartb4@gmail.com  
♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotamil.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. |
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 Karen Mundt, in memory of her son Eric.
Doug and Connie Brock, in memory of their son, John, and grandson, Elijah.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with 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.

Recently, The Compassionate Friends offered a virtual event Rising Together in Grief and Hope, featuring David Kessler, Shari O’Loughlin, and David Wood. All three of our inspirational speakers suffered tragic losses of children and siblings and were able to transform their experiences into helping others.

In addition to their presentations, there is a Question and Answer panel at the end of the video where our speakers answer questions from attendees. This event was recorded so that all would have the opportunity to view it.

You can access this event through the TCF Facebook page or the TCF Website.

After Some Time,
It is Still Okay to Cry
It seems to be acceptable to go for counseling or therapy during the early months of grief. But what happens after a certain amount of time has passed and you feel yourself being "ambushed" by the first raw feelings of grief? Most people think you should just "buck up" and look around you and count the blessings you have left. These are worthy and meritorious attitudes, but sometimes they are simply unattainable, at least for a little while. We have lost MUCH when we lost our child. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves that it is okay to relapse, that there is nothing wrong with us when we feel alone and sad, that there is no shame in backtracking to the dark recesses of grief, for it is in those times when we give way to the hurt and pain that we acknowledge how MUCH our child continues to matter to us. We sometimes have to allow ourselves "space" to be sad and permission to cry over the simple sadness of no longer having our child with us. They MATTERED to us. They still do. WE CONTINUE to remember them, to love them, and to miss them. "IT IS STILL OKAY TO CRY." May each of you weep tears of release for the child that you so deeply continue to love and miss. With the deepest respect and compassion for my fellow grievers,

Faye McCord, TCF/Jackson, Mississippi In memory of Lane McCord (1965-1998)
Take Heart - As agonizing as life’s journey is right now without your loved one, the path to adjustment will slowly become a kinder walk. Take comfort in realizing that the pain of your loss would not be so intense if your love had not been so strong. Take heart in knowing how deeply you loved in the time you had together. Gradually replace thoughts of loss with memories of love. Recall as many moments of pleasure as moments of pain.

Coming to terms with your grief in this way does not mean you will forget your loved one. You will have that person with you forever; a part of you will always remain connected to that person, that time. Yet there is much to do with the rest of your life. Take hope in knowing that the lessons of loss will lead to a fuller understanding of the meaning of life.

Larry A. Platt, 
*When a Death Comes Unexpectedly*

To love deeply is one of life’s most profound gifts, and the loss of a loved one is one of life’s most profound tragedies. That they can happen simultaneously, and that we somehow manage to, one day, find even a morsel of joy in our hearts again, is profoundly and wonderfully mysterious.

Joanne Cacciatore

It is not uncommon to visit with parents and learn that they’ve experienced the death of a child 40 or 50 years ago, and have them tear up still as they tell it. This does not mean that they never dealt with their loss. It’s just that as long as we live, it’s never really over. Life can be good and beautiful and meaningful again, and yet there will still be moments of sadness and longing for our children and what might have been.

Deb Kosmer, 
Author, “Grieving Parents Look for Gentleness and Understanding from Friends and Counselors”

I will learn to live in the sunshine of your life instead of the dark shadow of your death.

Unknown

Laughter is not a sign of “less” grief. Laughter is not a sign of “less” love. It’s a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It’s a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It’s okay to laugh.

Marianne Waite

Perhaps it is not so much saying GOOD-BYE to our loved one as it is saying farewell to the old us and the life we shared.

Darci Sims 
*Footsteps*
On Surviving Siblings

I gained a greater understanding of how powerful guilt can be for surviving siblings observing my son, Michel, after the death of his sister, Kristen. As parents, it is our role to support, nurture, and protect. This is not the role of siblings, yet it gets twisted into their grief as well. As a result, it is common for brothers and sisters to feel that they failed in some way.

Siblings may often believe there must have been something they could have done to prevent the death. And sadly, it is not uncommon for siblings to believe they caused the death by wishing ill thoughts on their sister or brother during a disagreement or fight. This can have unfortunate repercussions if the sibling dies. Well-intentioned people may add to the confusion by making statements like, "You need to be strong for your parents," adding an unnecessary burden for the child to now care for us. Michel also heard, "God must have needed Krissie," causing him to fear that God may want him too.

Survival guilt is also common. Not only do parents believe they shouldn't outlive their children, but brothers and sisters often feel guilty for being alive and enjoying life. They may believe as well that they need to be the perfect child to make up for the loss. This is a real complication of grief. As parents, we need to be aware of this and reassure them that they don't need to make up for anything, nor can they. We might want to tell them that the greatest gift they can give us is to be their own person and live life to the fullest.

When death lands on the doorstep of our surviving children at a tender age, it most likely becomes their threshold into adulthood, for understanding death can demand adult-sized answers. I definitely noticed this with my son who was only nine when his sister died suddenly. He became a quieter, more serious boy. The innocence of his childhood was left behind when he realized his sister, his buddy, was gone forever.

Watching our surviving children come to terms with death of this magnitude, I've always felt, is the double-edged sword of the bereaved parent. We are wrestling with our own grief and the endless questions with answers that don't come easily, making us, once again, feel as helpless as we did when our child died. Being open and honest with our children and their struggle and keeping the channels of communication open, can actually bring us closer to them. We can heal together.

Carole Kearns
TCF/Marin County
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.