



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

Volume XXXI **September 2018** Number 7

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This summer we attended a training event for Marriage Encounter Team Couples. One of the wives asked Carol a question about a talk she and her husband were writing. This young mom shared feelings she wanted to explore regarding her stillborn son. Her grief had been complicated by the fact that her family and friends had not been willing to listen to her share her strong feelings of guilt. Her guilty feelings stemmed from her belief that something she had done or not done had contributed to her child’s death. While their reassurances that she should not feel this way had been expressed in kindness and love, she needed to acknowledge and process how she was feeling in order to move forward in her grief.

I remember the guilt I felt after Anna died. Somehow it seemed as though if I was a “good” mother, I could have done what was needed to keep my child alive.

One hypothesis is that we feel guilt because we are trying to make sense of an unpredictable world. Our mind wants desperately to create order from the chaos. On any normal day, we assume that those with whom we sit down to dinner tonight will be there tomorrow. Death shatters that world view. Our mind can trick us into believing that we have the power to prevent the next person we love from dying—if we can just figure out what we did wrong. The problem is that unless we are truly culpable, as in the case of premeditated homicide, our actions did not actually lead to the loss. Most parents eventually realize that it is impossible to control everything in life, and that when the event took place, they were doing the best they could, under the circumstances.

In Marriage Encounter we teach that **feelings are neither right nor wrong** and that there is value in having our feelings heard and not judged. We don’t need to have our feelings fixed, we just need to be able to voice them aloud and not have them minimized or ignored. It is hard to carry a heavy burden of painful feelings alone, and having friends or family who will actively listen to us share is a gift that can ease that burden. And as we share our feelings, painful as they may be, we can in time release them and move forward into hope and healing.

Sincerely,
 Jerry & Carol Webb

Inside

For the Newly Bereaved	2
Grief, Darkness, and Light	
The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden	3
Facebook and TCF About TCF Mission and Vision Statement	4
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
I Loved the Boy	
What Grieving Grandparents Can Do for Their Children	6
It Takes Strength	
Forgiving Ourselves is a Practice	
The Anger of Bereaved Parents	7
In Our Work...	
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings	8
Love Gifts	
Workshop from Alan Pedersen	9
Contact the Editors	
Reopening of School and No Child!	10
Reflections Board	11

For the Newly Bereaved

In the early minutes, days, weeks, months, and even years of grief, we find ourselves in all consuming grief and pain beyond description.

We find it difficult to carry on our everyday lives or to think of little except our children's death.

Even our once wonderfully happy memories, shared with our children while they lived, now bring us pain for a time.

Bereaved parents do not "get over" the death of their children nor "snap out of it" as the outside world seems to think we can and should. The death of our children is not an illness or a disease from which we recover. It is a life altering change with which we must learn to live.

With the death of our children, we are forced to do the "impossible," build a new life and discover a "new normal," for ourselves and our families in a world that no longer includes our beloved children. It is important for newly bereaved parents to know that they will experience a wide and often frightening variety of intense feelings after the death of their child.

It is also important for newly bereaved parents to understand and know that all of the feelings you experience are very natural and normal under the circumstances. Equally important for you to know and believe is that, as much as you cannot possibly believe it, you will not always feel this powerful and all consuming grief.

But right now you must follow the instincts of your soul and allow your bodies and hearts to grieve. The grief resulting from your child's death cannot be skirted over, around or under. You must go through it in order to come out on the other side.

**Shirley Blakely Curle,
TCF, Central Arkansas**

Grief, Darkness, and Light

Grieving is lot like being lost in the dark, being unsure of the way before us and unsure of the illusion of the safety and security we once thought we had. The anchors and footholds we once believed existed simply are no more; the path we were on, the dreams that we had, the projects not yet finished – all seem to have disappeared, and all that remains is the darkness.

It's not easy to find our way in the dark, especially when the ground we are on is unfamiliar and foreign. When someone we love dies, no one asks us if it is okay or if the time is right. The death just happens and we are left to navigate the aftermath without any rules or direction, at least none that makes sense to us.

If we are very lucky, someone will enter into the darkness with us, and as they do, the darkness will begin to lift a bit as it takes on the light of their presence.

Each of us has the capacity to be a light in the dark to someone. More than anything, the person who is grieving needs to feel as if they matter and what they are going through matters to someone else. They need to be shown that in tangible ways that can be seen and felt. Being a light for another may mean sitting with them while they tell their story one more time and really listening without giving advice or hurrying them through. It may mean holding their hand while they cry and being comfortable, allowing them the expression of what they feel inside. It may mean listening without judgment while they rail at the doctors, the one who died, or even God for their aching heart and shattered dreams. It may mean not just dropping off dinner, but staying and sharing the meal with them. It may mean being comfortable with their silence.

It is seldom about saying the "right thing." It is not our words the grieving and broken-hearted hunger for, it is our acceptance of them as they are now rather than our insistence that they be as they were. It is our sincerity and kindness and patience as they make their way through the darkness on their timetable, not ours. It's being a light on their path, not seeking to direct or control their path.

Deb Kosmer, Oshkosh WI

**From Grief Digest – Centering Corporation –
www.centering.org**

The Angel of Hope Memorial Garden

5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois, 61265



In the Quad Cities, in the Moline Memorial Cemetery, the angel-wing shaped planters rise from the earth flanking the two sides of the central circle. **There Quad Cities' Angel of Hope stands.** In the area before the angel lie inscribed bricks that spell out the names of local children who have died before their time, remembered by parents, siblings, grandparents, and relatives who daily live with the absence of a loved child.

This place of solace that has the affiliation of a shared and common loss is a place where grieving parents from our two state area can come to remember whom they have lost. It is a place that grieving Iowa and Illinois parents can sit in communion with other grieving parents who alone can say, *“I know how you feel, I also have lost a child.”*

The memorial has areas with designated paving stones that are suitable for inscription. These stones are available to anyone who would like to remember a deceased child, adult-child, sibling, niece, nephew, or grandchild. The order form is found on the TCF website, where you can download it. <http://www.quadcitcitycf.org>



TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.



Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at

www.compassionatefriends.org.

It is also available to read online without charge.

e-Newsletter Now

Available! An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.



About The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696

Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Web site —

www.compassionatefriends.org

<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is when a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	<p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter is also available from the National Office — to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
Grief Materials	<p>Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for — or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at 402.553.1200 or visit their website at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
Amazon.com	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
Alive Alone	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org</p>
Our Newsletter	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai. Include your full name, your</p>

I loved the boy with the utmost love of which my soul is capable of and he is taken from me – yet in the agony of my spirit in surrendering such a treasure, I feel a thousand times richer than if I had never possessed it.

William Wordsworth, at the loss of his son Thomas, aged 6 ½ — his daughter, 3 ½, died the same year.

What Grieving Grandparents Can Do for Their Children

1. Encourage talking. Like you, bereaved parents have a strong need to talk about what they think and feel.
2. Allow your child to cry. Crying, even sobbing, is healthy and necessary.
3. Talk about your grandchild. Don't worry that it will make your child cry.
4. Listen to your bereaved child. The greatest gift you can give your child is to listen.
5. Physical support is important. You can certainly help your child in this respect if you live close by. The fatigue that is part of grief is debilitating.
6. Take the surviving grandchildren for a day or afternoon. This will give your bereaved child some time.
7. Physically hold your child.

Margaret Gerner

From *For Bereaved Grandparents*

Forgiving ourselves is a practice.

Releasing guilt is a practice. It is a practice where we can begin to find some safety and certainty. We can actively choose to participate in this practice each time we are reminded of our guilt. We can acknowledge our guilt as a natural response to grief. We can begin to forgive ourselves for all the things we should have done. We can forgive ourselves for the things we didn't do.

It takes time but this level of acceptance is possible. There is hope as the pain of our loss begins to lessen to a dull ache to make room for something new.

And, as we practice forgiveness, we learn more about ourselves. And as we learn, we grow. We begin to see ourselves in a new future in a new reality. We grieve. We feel guilty. We can even find acceptance that our child is forever gone.

In time, as we forgive ourselves, release guilt and find acceptance, we begin to look for ways to move forward with our lives as they are, not as we want them to be. We heal and are healed.

Catherine McNulty – www.opentohope.com

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

Whatsyourgrief.com

The Anger of Bereaved Parents

The anger of bereaved parents can often be seen as a reaction of feelings of helplessness and loss of control over events. Our beloved child has died, whether suddenly through accident, suicide or murder, or as a result of illness and disease – and we have not been able to prevent it.

Our desperate frustration emerges in anger, either against particular others, against the whole world, or against God.

Someone must be responsible; someone must be to blame for our loss, our suffering, and our pain. After all, the inevitable process of aging cannot be an explanation for such an early death.

So, our anger is directed against those seen to be responsible, or sometimes simply against those nearest to us.

In this way our anger may be turned on doctors and hospital staff, on police, or on the driver of the vehicle involved in our child's death.

Writers on bereavement have often mentioned the anger, conscious or submerged, which can exist against the loved one who has died.

This can present an enormous problem to bereaved parents.

How could we be angry with the child who has died? But we could, after all, be angry with our children when they were alive, and still love them, couldn't we? Better, surely, that anger is brought to the surface rather than repressed and added to our burden of unnecessary guilt.

The worst outcome is that anger, unacknowledged and unexpressed after our child's death, is turned inward leading to despair and deep depression. We have all felt the beginning of this descent in the temptation to blame ourselves.

Like all the welter of emotions which hit us in the terrible weeks and months following our loss, it needs to be faced and talked about with those who will listen with real empathy and understanding.

Denis Pye, TCF/United Kingdom

In our work, we often connect with grieving people who are struggling to get a handle on certain grief-related emotions and experiences. When a person feels stuck, overwhelmed, or confused, we often suggest journaling (or other forms of writing).

Research has shown that journaling has benefits related to physical health, mental health, sleep, grief-coping, etc. Anecdotally we know this practice helps to...

- combat avoidance
- process experiences and emotions
- connect with positive memories
- organize thoughts
- calm down and de-stress
- shift perspective
- relieve anxiety.

Best of all, journaling is a low barrier coping option; it's private, confidential (if you keep it that way), cost-effective, and accessible. Though people will often create a barrier for themselves by saying, "*I'd like to journal, but I'm not a good writer,*" the truth is that one need not be a good writer to journal.

In case you need the reminder, journaling is for your eyes only. Journal entries don't have to be a certain length, they don't have to follow rules related to structure, spelling or grammar, and, unless you're writing your memoirs, the end product is irrelevant. It's the doing of the thing that matters.

whatsyourgrief.com

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

September 27, 2018, at 6:30 pm at

Bethany for Children & Families,

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265

The next regular monthly meeting is Thursday, October 25, 2018,
Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

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

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine

Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com.

Rick's House of Hope

Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org.

SHARE

A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com.

Loving Listeners

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):

- ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com
- ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearth3@mchsi.com
- ♥ Judy Delvechio 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:

Jeffrey and Karen Hutchinson, in memory of their son, Jesse.

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

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



Alan Pedersen, Executive Director of the Compassionate Friends, has presented a workshop on grief and regret at various conferences. An audio file of this workshop can be accessed at <http://hopehealinghelp.com/multimedia-archive/letting-go-of-your-guilt-and-regrets/>

Contact the Editors

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

If you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, send us your new address.

If you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the

newsletter, send his/her/their name and address.

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

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 49022

CarolynPwebb@gmail.com



Reopening of School and No Child!

by Don Hackett, TCF Kingston, MA In Memory of his son, Olin

Summer ends, and across our nation, from the middle of August to the week after Labor Day, schools open for another year. For those parents surviving a child of school age, be that from nursery school to college or university, this can be as trying a time as the holidays.

School buses travel again the busy highways of our cities and the quiet lanes of our countryside. Anxious parents stand with children about to make the first ride to school. Gaggles of youngsters play at countless stops across our land. America's most precious and costly activity is renewed. The children are off to school.

I remember well the silences of the September mornings of those first years. The bus no longer stopped at our home. It simply drove casually by, the people within never realizing it once carried the focus of my love, the repository of my dreams. The drone of its wheels marked anew the mind-numbing dullness of my fragmented senses as it moved its way down the tree lined lane once alive with my son's comings and goings.

It was always impossible to avoid "back to school" sales. Seeing young people and their weary parents gather young school supplies and clothing was just too much in those earliest years. Somehow, the perfect notebook, the brilliant sweater, the odd-shaped erasers were simply unendurable. The stream of vehicles heading for Cape Cod for that final Labor Day weekend, the last family outing to end the summer was another scene to avoid. It was a ritual from which we seemed excluded. Could we still be a family without him?

Those years are gone now. Having returned to education, I now have "back to school" buying to do myself. I see the buses arrive to unload their treasured passengers, no longer feeling the emptiness of a bus that drives on, barren of hopes and dreams. But I do and will forever remember the pain of those unhappy years and sometimes I reflect on the many parents who now feel as I did.

If you are such a parent, if you mourn a child who leaves a school desk somewhere unfilled, I promise that you are not alone in that pain. But even though you are not alone, you know that you are forever marked, that the death of your child or children has altered you in some basic

manner.

Perhaps time and much grief work remain before your spirit can yield up the agony and permit a new self to emerge. That time and work was necessary for me, as it actually is for all of us. For me, grief resolution finally recalled me to my original work. I teach. I no longer administer or direct. The need for that fled before bereavement's assault.

I teach math, science, and social studies to sixth grade children, ages 11 to 12 over the course of a year. In wondrous ways they have restored love to my living. There is nothing of an intellectual character with enough value to equal that, so I have given them the love and caring that was mine, evoked by and for Olin. Thus do Olin's gifts live on, called forth and given new life through the innocent and selfless love of school children.

All who walk this road realize this is not substitution. Such is not possible. But it does reflect qualities of successful reinvestment, something each of us sorely needs.

Today as schools prepare for another year, I look forward to a new group of children. But cautions arise within as well, the legacy of that time over 12 years ago, when the world came to a sudden halt, when the laughter of lifetimes ceased, when dreams evaporated with a morning mist.

For those of us who dare live and love again, for those fortunate enough to have found a reinvestment encouraging the same, there is always risk. After all, tragedy can strike again. Our present or past pain grants no immunity. Students, the children within the school, invited me, albeit unknowingly, to take that risk again, although certainly not at the rich and deep level of father and son. Nevertheless, it feels right, and though I will never again know the depth of love which belonged to Olin and me, I welcome the chance to live once more on its margins.

So schools, which were once just another manifestation of hurt, have helped me to restore purpose and balance to daily living. There is surely such a reinvestment awaiting all of us, but we must seek the circumstances and create the opportunities for it to occur. I pray that all of us who have not yet had such good fortune may soon do so. All of our children would want this for us as well. With that thought in mind, it is indeed worth striving for that dimension in life once more.

Reflections Board

You give yourself permission to grieve by recognizing the need for grieving. Grieving is the natural way of working through the loss of a love. Grieving is not weakness nor absence of faith. Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, or sneezing when your nose itches. It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

Doug Manning

I wasn't prepared for the fact that grief is so unpredictable. It wasn't just sadness, and it wasn't linear. Somehow I'd thought that the first days would be the worst and then it would get steadily better – like getting over the flu. That's not how it was.

Meghan O'Rourke

Grief takes a long time. In fact, it never completely ends, because you will never stop missing the person who died. You will always feel pangs of grief over the absence of this person in your life.

But instead of focusing on the long-term, consider adopting a one-day-at-a-time approach to your grief. There is only today. Tomorrow you will concern yourself with tomorrow.

Today you will feel whatever you are feeling, and you will express those feelings outside of yourself. Today you will take care of yourself, and you will accept the caring of others.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt

I thought I could describe a state: make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out not to be a state but a process.

C.S. Lewis

She changed me at a cellular level. I am better because of her. I live with an ache in my heart that nothing can fix, but I have a fire in my soul that I know is her.

Michelle Curtis Villalobo

It is the gift of HOPE which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends.
HOPE that life can still be worth living and meaningful
HOPE that the pain of loss will become less acute and above all else, the HOPE that we do not walk alone, and that we are understood.
The gift of HOPE is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

Rev. Simon Stephens []
Founder of The Compassionate Friends



The Compassionate Friends

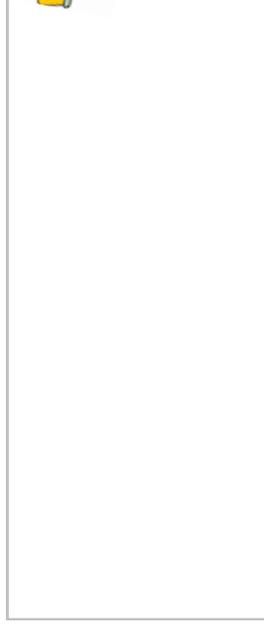
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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September

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.