



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.



The Compassionate Friends
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Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

Just a few weeks after our daughter died we took advantage of an offer from friends to spend a week in their vacation house in north central Missouri. The week of quiet retreat from constant reminders at home of our loss and the demands of everyday life was a much appreciated respite.

While researching this newsletter, I came across a program offered for bereaved parents near Nashville. David and Nancy Guthrie, twice bereaved parents, offer several retreats a year for bereaved parents.

RESPITE is a weekend for married couples to spend unhurried time with other couples who understand the devastation of losing a child, to learn from each other, encourage each other, and experience together renewed hope for the future.

RESPITE is for couples with strong marriages, and for those whose marriages are struggling under the load of grief. It's for those whose faith has grown through this loss, and for those who have lingering questions. It's for those who want to talk about their experience and their child, and for those who are tired of talking. It's for couples whose loss is fresh, and for those who've been walking down this road for a while.

RESPITE Retreats are held at the Hiding Place, a beautiful 12-bedroom lodge owned by a Christian ministry. It sits on a bluff overlooking the Cumberland River about 30 minutes northwest of Nashville in Henrietta, Tennessee. Surrounded by 75 acres of wooded property, it is serene, private, and comfortable. Each couple has a private room with a private bath and either a queen bed or two single beds.

The next retreats with openings are June 1-3, 2018, and June 8-10, 2018. For more information: <http://www.nancyguthrie.com/respire-retreat>. While there is a cost involved, this might be a good Christmas gift to give each other or to suggest to loved ones who are longing to give you something this Christmas that would help you on your grief journey.

During this holiday season as you navigate the corridors of your grief, we wish for you and your family, peace, joy, and love.

Merry Christmas

Sincerely,
Jerry & Carol Webb

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As the Holidays Approach

When the holidays are fast approaching, we who are bereaved always have mixed emotions about having a nice holiday when our child or loved one is no longer with us. We wonder if we will ever be as happy and if we can ever again celebrate the holidays or any meaningful family occasion, especially the first birthday, first Thanksgiving, or first Christmas since our loss. We try to look ahead to how we are going to feel when the time arrives, but it is usually not as hard as we had anticipated. Still, the occasion may not be as enjoyable as we'd like it to be or as we remember it from the past.



I would like to offer a few ideas for what we can do to make our holidays a little better. Consider buying gifts for less fortunate children, adopting a child/family at Christmas time, or inviting a lonely person to share your holiday meal. Make your child's favorite foods and discuss your loved one as you share the meal. Some people like to volunteer to serve holiday dinners for the homeless. Some

bereaved parents want to visit familiar places their child loved to go, while others want to travel where their child had never been.

Several of our Compassionate Friends members put a small Christmas tree at the cemetery and decorate the graves with Christmas flowers and/or a grave blanket. Making a grave blanket is very fulfilling; we did that for 10 years after our daughter Teresa died. Attending a Candlelight program is a wonderful way to honor your child or loved one.

These suggestions are things we feel we can still do for our child, but

they are not reserved for bereaved parents only. All of them can be done for any member of a family or a friend who has died. After someone dies we must keep going and doing things that lift us up. We can't always try to please any people who feel we should act in a certain manner.

Jackie Wesley TCF/East Central Indiana & Miami-Whitewater Chapters

Whenever I hear of parents whose children have died

(or worse, committed suicide) I think of the long, long road ahead of them. I want to rush out and hold their hands, assure them that their darkness will lift, that though their lives have changed irrevocably, they will be able to experience light again, a different light from the one they thought they would live in earlier, but light nonetheless.

I want to present a smiling face. See, this happened to me. It happened, I thought nobody could help, but that was not true. I was helped, by many, many—even though it did not feel like help at the time. It felt like wanton intrusion into my misery.

I will tell them how angry I was. My life had been desecrated. The only thing I yearned for was that the clock should turn back, and I live in the blessed time before. And the only people I wanted to meet were those who had lost their children.

They must know they are not alone. There are others. And there will continue to be others.

Manju Kapur

This is excerpted from the piece titled "Name: Amba Dalmia, Dates: May 19, 1980—November 19, 2001," from *Of Mothers and Others: Stories, Essays, Poems* edited by Jaishree Misra

Reflections Board

We find ourselves dividing our lives into before and after. The death of our child has become a pivotal date for us when remembering when events took place. Our lives were traumatically changed in an instant. Some will agree it gets "softer" as time goes on and others will say no. One thing for sure is, we will never stop grieving our child(ren), even if a semblance of joy returns to our lives.

Karen Cantrell, TCF/Frankfort, Kentucky

Nothing can make up for the absence of someone we love, and it would be wrong to try and find a substitute; we must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation. It remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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*

People keep telling me that life goes on, but, to me, that's the saddest part.

Anonymous

Grieving is bits of many things — memories, regrets, reminders — each of which bears its own special weight in our burden of sorrow. Each bit has to be gone through patiently, silently, painfully, like one goes through old papers in a long-forgotten trunk. Considering each one separately, remembering, and assigning it to some new box within our hearts. Healing, too, is bits of many things: smiles which multiply as the days pass; chilling remembrances turned warm by the returning sun. A day will come when there will be more of healing than of grieving, and reasons for joy will begin to pile up in the freshly-swept rooms of our lives.

From Safe Passage by Molly Fumia

But grief is a walk alone. Others can be there, and listen. But you will walk alone down your own path, at your own pace, with your sheared-off pain, your raw wounds, your denial, anger and bitter loss. You'll come to your own peace, hopefully, but it will be on your own, in your own time.

Cathy Lamb

Continued from page 3

family at the holidays is often a topic of conversation among these couples. They know that some family members think they've grieved long enough and want them to move on. Others want to initiate a conversation about the person who died but aren't sure how. What often happens is that the name of the person who died is never mentioned, and it feels to the person who is grieving that they have been erased from the family.

Do you know a grieving person heading to a family gathering for the holidays? You might ask about their expectations when they're with family. And if they have a strong desire for their loved one to be remembered in a certain way, combined with a fear that it may not happen, you might encourage and help them to write a letter to their family in advance stating clearly what would bring comfort, rather than expect that their family will instinctively know.

4. Tears are not a problem.

For most of us, grief tends to work itself out in tears — tears that come out at times we don't expect. Sometimes grieving people sense that people around them see their tears as a problem to be solved — that tears must mean they aren't doing very well with their grief. But it makes sense that the great sorrow of losing someone we love would come out in tears. Tears are not the enemy. Tears do not reflect a lack of faith. Tears are a gift from God that help to wash away the deep pain of loss.

It is a great gift to let grieving people know that they don't have to be embarrassed by their tears around you — that they are welcome to cry with you. An even greater gift is to shed tears of your own over the loss of the person they love. Your tears reflect the worth of the person

who died and assure them that they are not alone in missing that person.

5. It can be hard to remember why Christmas should be so merry.

In "O Holy Night," we sing, "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices." Grieving people around you feel the weariness of life and death in this world and wonder how anyone around them can rejoice. They are in desperate need of the reality of Christ to break through their loneliness and despair. While we don't want to preach at them, we do look for the opportunity to share with them the comfort and joy to be found in the coming of God himself in Christ to rescue us.

The life of Jesus that began in a wooden cradle will culminate in death on a wooden cross. But it will not be a senseless, meaningless death. It will be a death-conquering death, followed by new resurrection life. The writer of Hebrews explains, "The Son became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14 NLT). The power death has now, to bring so much sorrow, will not be the way it is forever. What Christ set in motion when he defeated death at his first coming will come to its full fruition when he comes again.

This is our great hope at Christmas, and the hope we have to share with those who are grieving at Christmas — that "yonder breaks a new and glorious morn." The Christ who came as a baby and died as our substitute will one day return to consummate his kingdom. And when he does, "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore" (Revelation 21:4).

Nancy Guthrie

What Grieving People Wish You Knew at Christmas

"Happy Thanksgiving!" "Merry Christmas!" "Happy New Year!" As the end of the year approaches, everywhere we turn someone is telling us we should be happy. But for those who've recently lost someone they love, the holidays can seem more like something to survive than to enjoy. The traditions and events that can add so much joy and meaning to the season are punctuated with painful reminders of the person we love who is not here to share in it. Many have wished they could find a quiet place to hide until January 2.

While those of us who surround grieving people can't fix the pain of loss, we can bring comfort as we come alongside those who hurt with special sensitivity to what grief is like during the holidays. Grieving people wish we all knew at least five truths, among others, at Christmas.

1. Even the best times are punctuated with an awareness that someone is missing.

I remember a conversation I had with a friend as we prepared to head out on a holiday trip shortly after our daughter, Hope, died. "That should be fun!" she said. I sensed I was supposed to agree wholeheartedly with her. What I didn't know how to explain is that when you've lost a member of your family, even the best of times are painfully incomplete. Someone is missing. Even the best days and happiest events are tinged with sadness. Wherever you go, the sadness goes with you.

2. Social situations are hard.

I have never been able to figure out why crowds are difficult when you're grieving, but they are. Small talk can be unbearable when something so significant



has happened. Meeting new people will likely bring questions about family. To walk alone into a room full of couples when your spouse has died, or into an event filled with children when your child has died can be a soul-crushing reminder of what you have lost.

If you've invited someone in the midst of grief to your holiday event, let them know that you understand if it seems too hard at the last minute and they have to cancel, or that they may only be able to stay for a short time.

If you're going to an event, give a grieving person a call and ask if you can pick her up and stick with her throughout the event for support. When you come upon a grieving person at a holiday social event, let him know that you are still thinking about the person he loves who has died, and invite him to talk about his memories with that person. Don't be afraid to say the name of the person who has died. It will be a balm to the grieving person's soul.

3. Extended family can be awkward and uneasy.

Grief is often awkward — even, and perhaps especially, with those to whom we're closest.

My husband and I host weekend retreats for couples that have lost children, and the difficulty of being with

Continued on page 10

CANDLE LIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE

Wednesday, December 6, 2017
at 7:00 p.m.
Angel of Hope Memorial Garden
Moline Memorial Park Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

The Chapter's 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 place with the candle.) All family members are invited.



If you cannot attend and would like a candle lighted in your child's memory, please complete and return this form to Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, IA, 52806, or email Doug at QuadCityTCF@gmail.com.

Child's Name: _____

Parents' Names: _____

If you would like to make a love gift to TCF in memory of your child, you may do so at the service or send your contribution to Doug Scott (address above). Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

About TCF...

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.

A Flicker in the Distance

In this time of grief, when the darkness is so great,
And your heart is aching so, you feel that it may break.
Remember that in this darkness, there is a candle's light
A flicker in the distance, small but intensely bright.
That tiny little glow that seems so far away
Will grow brighter and brighter with each passing day.
Time does not heal, as they say, but it tends to numb
The ache we feel inside our heart when that darkness comes.
In time your heart will feel lighter and the memories won't bring such pain
The tears won't flow as often and you will find laughter again.
So keep your eye on that distant glow, to see how far you came...
Because at the end of the darkness that flicker becomes a flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux



Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a

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

If you would like to send a donation or love gift, please send it or to our chapter leader, 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, 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:

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor,
Michigan, 49022
CarolynPwebb@gmail.com



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

December 6, 2017, at 7:00 pm

Annual Candle Lighting Memorial Service

at the Angel of Hope Memorial Garden

The next regular monthly meeting is Thursday, December 21, 2017, at 6:30 pm at Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline

Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.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 shoeartb3@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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	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.
TCF's Grief Related Webinars	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.
TCF National Magazine	<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.
Grief Materials	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.
Amazon.com	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.
Previous Newsletter Editions	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.
Alive Alone	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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org
Our Newsletter	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, climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Blue Christmas: Six Tips for Coping with Grief During the Holidays

The rest of the world seems overjoyed with holiday spirit and yet you just want to get in bed and pull the covers over your head. You're grieving. Perhaps your loss was quite recent or maybe it occurred years ago. All you know is that you dread this time of year and cannot wait for it to be over.

While the holidays are definitely a challenge for grievers, using these six strategies will help you feel a little less blue.

Talk about your Loved One – Don't be afraid to mention your loved one when you're at a party or with friends and family. Often people are reluctant to mention the deceased because they are afraid to "upset" you. They don't realize that your loved one is always on your mind and that it's healthy to reminisce. Be the one to share memories and to encourage conversation.

Express your Feelings – Holding in pent up emotion is not healthy. If you want to cry, let yourself cry. If you need to express anger, write in a journal. Try creative arts to express the many feelings you're experiencing. Use **on-line sites** to connect with other grievers and talk about your feelings. Letting yourself feel the pain and then finding expression for that pain is an important aspect to healing.

Light a Candle – Light a memorial candle at the holiday dinner table to honor the light of your loved one. Remember that although their physical form has gone, they are very much still a part of your life. Hold that love close to your heart and remember that your life has been enriched by their love.

Shop and Share – A frequent sadness for

grievers is not being able to shop for their loved one. Try going shopping for things that you might have purchased for your dear one and then donating those items to a homeless shelter, a hospital, or a charity.

Cut Yourself Slack – Be extremely gentle and kind to yourself. If you don't feel like going to a party, don't go. If you don't want to send cards, then don't send them. Do the absolute minimum necessary for you to celebrate the holidays. Grieving is exhausting and you simply won't have extra energy to expend. When possible, ask friends and neighbors to help you with tasks that feel overwhelming. Try to do your shopping on-line. Set your bar low and give yourself permission to take it easy.

Simple Pleasures – Even if your heart is broken, you can look for simple pleasures to savor. See if you can find one tiny thing each day for which you can be grateful. Notice your health, your loved ones who are still living, even small sensory pleasures like tastes, smells, and sounds. Try shining the focus of your attention on small things in your life that bring you some happiness.

Using these tips will help ease you through the holidays. Remember that grieving is one of the most universal of all experiences – you are not alone.

Ashley Davis Bush, LISCW



Wishing you the Colors of Christmas

This year I will leave behind the clanging reds and the vibrant greens, the glowing golds and the silver glittering plaids of Christmas. I will tune out "Jingle Bells" and "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer" and let "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" play softly in my heart.

This year I will allow time for silence and quiet meditation on the birth of the Christ Child, and turn off the squawking and shrieking of holiday commercials.

I want to be drawn in and comforted by the peace of soft blues and the calm of snowy whites, and to search the sky, the moon and the stars for promise and hope during the winter nights. I will decorate with Christmas angels who stand still in my home, guarding my heart from pain, and the nativity scene which keeps me focused on the truth.

I will not yet open those sacred boxes of Christmas ornaments and priceless mementos which filled my home in Christmas past. I want to think about the praise of the angels where our children celebrate Christmas, and leave behind the chaos the world has created and named Christmas.

I wish for each of us to have the courage to search the memories in our hearts and to not shut them out because of our unspeakable pain. I wish for us to allow the presence and comfort of family and friends who love us, and remember that their celebration is tinged with lingering pain and private sorrow.

I wish for you the peace and softness of Christmas.

Carol Thompson
TCF/Tyler, Texas

Always Remembering Sarah December 2012

Grief IS a life-long journey. An emotional handicap you get up and live with everyday. It doesn't mean you can't lead a happy life, but it is a choice and takes work.

The frequency and intensity of those grief pangs/knives should lessen over time, but the reality is every now and then for the rest of your life, you will feel those pangs. Everyone grieves at their own pace, and in their own way. There is no one way to grieve, and no certain order, and no timeline. There is definitely not an expiration date.

Grief will take on different forms in different people. Not everyone cries; others cry all the time. Some exercise a lot. Others talk about it a lot. Many seek counseling or join a support group, and enjoy the company of a good and understanding listener.

If years after your loss, thinking of your loved one missing a special day or milestone in your life, makes you sad, puts you in a funk, or makes you cry, don't beat yourself up. Allow

yourself the ability to grieve the loss of memories not created. As long as the frequency and intensity of grief eases—even if it is slowly over time—you are coping in positive ways. Alternatively, if years after the loss, you can't bear the mention of your loved ones name, you sleep all day, you aren't participating in your normal every day activities, you do things to "numb" or escape your grief, those are warning signs that you are not coping well, and should seek the assistance you need to begin healing.

Grieving in a healthy manner, taking steps to move forward, and rebuild your life with a new normal doesn't mean you won't have those tough days or tough moments.

There is no expiration date. Grief never fully goes away. That doesn't have to mean you can't and won't live a happy and productive life. What it does mean is the love you shared with loved ones lost, doesn't have an expiration date either. **Lynne B. Hughes**