Dear Compassionate Friends,

Over the holidays, our son shared with us a video presentation from Cleveland Playhouse, Songs from the First Noel. The musical, presented off Broadway in 2015, tells the story of a woman, Noel, returning to sell her family home in Harlem following the death of her mother. Her older sister, Noel (the first), died at Christmas time. The pain and grief her mother held onto after the loss of her child profoundly impacted her second child’s life. Noel’s mom didn’t allow any vestige of holiday celebration. In perpetual mourning, only a visit to the grave acknowledged the time of year.

Following the loss of our child, our lives are profoundly changed, but so are the lives of our families, especially our other children, even children born after their sibling died. While our grief journey is important and necessary, it needs to be a journey. We process, we move through (sometimes backwards as well as forward) but at some point we need to emerge on the other side of our grief, not unchanged, but committed to living life, purposefully and joyously. Our other children and family members need this, the knowledge that they are just as important as the child who has died and that as a family you can reinvest in life together.

After the loss of our daughter, I think Jerry and I treasured and appreciated more both the gift of having children and the fragility of that gift. I would like to think that we were better parents because of lessons learned in our experience with grief and loss, but that is hard to know.

As the new year begins, perhaps you will want to look back at your grief journey and think about where you have come from and where you are. If you see that you are stuck in your grief (or someone who loves you asks you to consider this possibility), then consider reaching out for professional help or attend a TCF meeting and learn how others are navigating their grief journey. Your living children need you, aware and present in their lives. Your child who died would not want you to remain in perpetual mourning, but to find a new normal that has room for love, laughter, and family unity.

Sincerely,

Jerry and Carol Webb
Did You Know? The Compassionate Friends was founded 52 years ago when a chaplain at the Warwickshire Hospital in England brought together two sets of grieving parents and realized that the support they gave each other was better than anything he, as a chaplain, could ever say or provide. Meeting around a kitchen table, the Lawleys and the Hendersons were joined by a bereaved mother and the chaplain, Simon Stephens, and The Society of the Compassionate Friends was born. The Compassionate Friends jumped across the ocean and was established in the United States and incorporated in 1978 in Illinois. Each chapter, along with the supporting National Office, is committed to helping every bereaved parent, sibling, or grandparent who may walk through our doors or contact us. Today TCF has over 600 chapters serving all 50 states plus Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and Guam that offer friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members during the natural grieving process after a child has died. Around the world more than 30 countries have a Compassionate Friends presence, encircling the globe with support so desperately needed when the worst has happened.

I know the holidays are very hard when you’ve lost someone you loved. They are unbearable sometimes for me. But after January 1st, I look around and realize that yes…I survived yet another holiday season. With many tears and some smiles, I know I’m strong and can handle whatever comes along. Everyone should take pride in how resilient the human spirit is. Life can still be good.

Karyn Arnold

Someday
Someday, it won’t hurt so bad and I’ll be able to smile again.
Someday, the tears won’t flow quite as freely whenever I think of what might have been.
Someday, the answers to “why” and “what if” won’t be quite as important.
Someday, I’ll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with their grief.
Someday, I’ll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell on your death.
And someday, maybe tomorrow, I’ll learn to accept the things I cannot change...
But, for today…I think I’ll just be sad.

Steven L. Channing,
TCF/Winnipeg MB

Another Year
This is another year just beginning – afresh with new days, new opportunities, new challenges. It occurs to me, however, that it is a very difficult task to keep from concentrating on past years and the sadness we endure just because it is a new year and the calendar has flipped the page. Moving on to a brighter tomorrow and letting go of the pain of yesterday is a gradual process. We cross that threshold one step at a time – a small step, at first, faltering and stumbling – but somehow getting there. With patience, effort and persistence, once again we will be able to celebrate life as the year stretches on before us, putting behind us our sadness, our guilt, our failures and our pain. We will be able to smile again. We will be able to remember our precious children in life rather than death. We will recognize in our days many little blessings and will be able to share our joys with others.

Alice Weening
TCF/Cincinnati, OH
Forever Changed

Can you see the change in me? It may not be so obvious to you, I participate in family activities, I attend family reunions... I help plan holiday meals. You tell me you are glad to see that I don’t cry anymore. But I do cry! When everyone has gone – when it is safe – the tears fall. I cry in privacy so my family won’t worry.

I cry until I am exhausted and can finally sleep. You tell me you admire my strength and my positive attitude. But I am not strong. I feel that I have lost control; and I panic when I think about tomorrow...

Next week... Next year. I go about the daily routine of my job, house work trying to complete my assigned tasks, not to feel the pain, then I drink coffee and smile.

At times I think I am beginning to heal, but the pain rolls over me again with a permanent scar on my heart. You tell me that you are glad to see I’m holding up so well. But I’m not holding up well. Sometimes I want to lock the door and hide from the world.

I spend time with my parents, I seem calm and collected. I smile when appropriate. But I’m not!

You tell me it’s good to see me back to my “old self.” But I will never be back to my “old self.”

Pain and grief, have touched my life...and I am Forever Changed!!

Author unknown

The Compassionate Friends, Queensland, Inc.

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://www.quadcitytcf.org).

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

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.

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

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://www.quadcitytcf.org).
# Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TCF Online Support Community</strong></th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<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. <em>TCF e-Newsletter</em> 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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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<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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One thing that is frequently discussed at our meetings is the despair of thinking you are on the road to “recovery,” when all of a sudden you seem to be back at square one. But are you really? Let’s keep in mind most of us have had no previous experienced “recovering” from the loss of a child. Therefore, we have no point of reference – it’s all new to us.

Actually the “roller coaster” of emotions is perfectly normal. In the very beginning most of us seem to vacillate between dead numbness and excruciating pain. Constant crying, to not a tear left – just dried up and limp. We actually are living minute-to-minute. After a couple of months we might actually have a few hours that we have not cried or felt that deep overwhelming despair. Then, WHAM – back to where we started. We tend to panic and think something is wrong with us. Let’s be realistic! There is something wrong – terribly wrong: we have each lost a child. Let’s be fair to ourselves. We started to play a role to the outside world. Like the old song says, “Laughing on the outside – crying on the inside.” We want to be acceptable to society.

“You are doing so well,” we hear. If only they knew! We may feel we have to fool others, but let us really be honest about our feelings. To deny our feelings, particularly to ourselves, is to block the road to recovery. Remember that recovery in this case does not mean, “getting over it,” it means to gain control of our lives again. So, let’s not worry about what other people think, say, or expect. Our friends (well meaning as they are), sometimes members of our family, even someone who has lost a child should not sit in judgment. Each person grieves differently, due to a person’s general make-up and the relationship with the dead child. Unless someone has totally withdrawn from everything and everybody over a lengthy period of time, the chances are all is in the realm of normalcy. Only after we have walked down the long road of grief and can look back, remembering those early days and weeks, can we see we really are not on square one again. We have just slipped backwards for a time. That is all. Allow yourself that, and then strive forward again. It takes time, a lot of time! We tend to expect too much from others, others expect too much from us, and therefore, we tend to expect too much from ourselves.

Mary Ehmann
TCF/Valley Forge, PA
The Vocabulary of Grief

It seems to me that the vocabulary of grief is so very inadequate. Why can’t we invent some new words to use when bereaved parents talk together? We always fall back on those quasi-medical terms we’ve used when someone in the family is sick.

We hear parents say, “Will I ever get over this?” We “get over” the flu or the chicken pox. “Recovers,” is that a better word? Recovery is about regaining health or regaining control. Perhaps that is a little better. We do ache, we do hurt. But do we heal? I have heard bereaved parents compare their child’s death to the loss of a limb. The injury starts to heal but it still hurts. Even years later the scar is there and we still miss the use of the limb.

Maybe we should use the word “journey.” This new experience can be compared to venturing down a new road. One person wrote that her road has straight stretches but sometimes it just goes around in circles. This journey is filled with deep holes of depression and long hard steep hills of acceptance.

But most of all, our lives become reorganized. We are different, we are no longer innocent. We look at each day and the tasks before us in a new light. We’ll never be our “old selves” again. Not better, just so dissimilar to what we knew before. But we can be whole, loving, growing people reaching out to help the newly bereaved who are beginning their journey.

—

Therese Goodrich
former TCF Executive Director

Getting Better

My tears feel warm on my cheeks now — not burning hot. Is this a sign I’m “getting better?”

When I cry now I am almost often alone. In the car, in the shower, or sometimes taking a walk. I do not cry in public or feel as much panic. Is this a sign I’m “getting better?”

I sleep the night through sometimes and awaken without tears — for a while. They come now while I’m brushing my teeth or making coffee and are always gone before I say, “Good morning.” Is this a sign I’m “getting better?”

Yes, I think so — but when does the pain end? Perhaps when I no longer ask, “Is this a sign I’m getting better?”

—

Shirley Blakely Curle
TCF/Central Arkansas

A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain — it’s called “Longing.”
I long for what was, and what might have been.
I long for his touch and smell of sweat; I long to hold him one more time.
I long to look on his beautiful face and impress it upon my memories and heart.
I long to return to the day before and protect him from his death.
I long to take his place, so he may live and have sons too.
I long for time to pass much faster, so my longing and pain will lessen.
Will they?

—

June Williams-Muecke
TCF/Houston West, TX
### Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting</th>
<th>Upcoming meeting on Thursday, January 28, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.</th>
<th>Meeting held by Zoom due to COVID-19 and the Illinois governor’s restrictions on in-person meetings. Next month’s meeting is on February 25, 2021.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</td>
<td>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>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rick’s House of Hope</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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<tr>
<td>SHARE</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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<tr>
<td>Loving Listeners</td>
<td>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 <a href="mailto:doug.scott@mchsi.com">doug.scott@mchsi.com</a> ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 <a href="mailto:shoartb4@gmail.com">shoartb4@gmail.com</a> ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 <a href="mailto:delvecchiojudy@hotamil.com">delvecchiojudy@hotamil.com</a> 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.</td>
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Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, “Wait, I’m not ready yet!”

The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We’re living the same life—differently.

Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child’s life has had upon the world continues through us.

So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond?

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect. Nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life “on hold.” Rather they are a part of life itself! Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call “me”—a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child’s presence in the life we choose to live.

Paula Staisiunas Schultz,
In memory of Melissa and Jeff

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:
Jo and the Bob Reade Family, in memory of our daughter and sister, Robin L. Reade.

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.
My Forever Brother

When I was 20 years old, I was awakened in the middle of the night to the terrible news that my only brother, Scott, and my cousin, Matthew, had been killed together in a car accident. It seemed inconceivable that my 17-year-old-brother was dead. My brother, whom I had grown up with, shared a history with, and expected to grow old with, was suddenly gone forever from my life.

Scott had unruly blond curls and bright green eyes. He was very athletic, devoured Twix candy bars, chewed cinnamon gum, was a NY Jets fan, and loved playing jokes. I envisioned us attending each other’s college graduations and weddings, raising our kids together, and growing old together. Scott’s death turned my world upside down and put into question everything I ever believed.

Early on the pain was so great, I honestly thought I would die of a broken heart. People said things to me that were not helpful: “Well, at least he didn’t suffer,” “At least it was quick,” and “At least you have sisters.” As I struggled through my own grief, I also worried a lot about my parents and felt the need to “be strong” for them. I often hid my grief from them, and grieved alone, so as not to cause them further pain. I felt guilty for having my own grief because my parents had lost a child.

As I went through my grief journey, I looked to others further along in the grief process for guidance and strength. The journey was bumpy; I had no roadmap. Grief came in choppy, unpredictable waves, not neat, organized stages. Well meaning people told me that I would eventually get over it, and find closure. These concepts were not comforting and did not make sense. I didn’t want to “get over” Scott. To “get over” him felt somehow like I was erasing him from my life. I am the person I am today because Scott was in my life. To deny him would be to deny an important part of myself.

The reality is that we don’t forget, move on, and have closure; but rather we honor, remember, and incorporate our deceased brother and sister into our lives in a new way. With time and support, I went on to transform my life and create a “new normal.” I have found meaning, purpose, and joy helping others who have suffered a loss, and I have met many wonderful and caring people through The Compassionate Friends. Today, I keep my brother’s memory alive through the stories I share with others. Although it has been 30 years, my brother continues to live forever in my heart. He is my guiding light, and although I am poorer for having lost him, I am so much richer forever having known him. He will always play an important role in my life, and he remains forever my brother.

Heidi Horsley
March 20, 2019

https://www.compassionatefriends.org/blog/my-forever-brother/
Do They Know?

Do they know what it's like to lose a son and have to go on living? For him to lose the future that he was supposed to live. For me to lose mine. Do they know? Do they know what it’s like for every day to be a lost dream? To see others reach the pinnacles that should have been his. His dreams left to die. Do they know? Do they know the sadness that I carry for what is forever lost? For the shared moments that make up a life together. Never to exist now. Do they know? Do they know the physical pain of missing him every single day? To yearn for a hug, a spontaneous gift of love given so easily. Never taken for granted again. Do they know? Do they know that I now live in a world forever changed? That I know a moment lost can never be regained. Never waste a moment. Do they know? I hope with every breath in me that they never have to find out for themselves. That they get to watch their children grow up and grow old. To see the dreams yet to be lived. I hope they never know…

Sue McCubbin, April 2010
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.