



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

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois 61265

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To

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

You are not alone in your grief.



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January 2024
Volume XXXVII, Number 1

Dear Compassionate Friends,

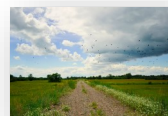
In early 1988, we received a letter from the local funeral home who had provided services to our family when our daughter died. We were invited by Kay McDaniel and her pastor, Jeff Linman, to meet with other local residents for grief support. Kay, a newly bereaved parent, desired to form a community for others who had suffered loss, particularly bereaved parents. Almost four years had passed since our daughter's death, but we decided to attend that first meeting, thinking we could share support and encouragement with others who had suffered devastating loss. Actually, we continued our grief journey as we met monthly, built relationships, and walked beside others in the ups and downs of their and our grief. This newsletter was created when the group realized we wanted to support and encourage bereaved parents even if they did not choose to attend a support group. I feel amazed we are beginning our 37th year of editing this newsletter along with the indispensable assistance of Bill and Laurie Steinhauer and the resources of Bethany for Children & Families.

As we move into a new year, the following quotes from the founder of The Compassionate Friends, Simon Stephens, are a reminder of the purpose of Compassionate Friends and why each of us who are involved continue to reach out. We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.

—Rev. Simon Stephens

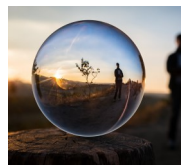
At the very heart of our TCF logo is a pair of hands stretching out to each other over grief's abyss. Our prime objective is that those hands should meet, should touch, and hold firm. Because only together can we make it. —Rev. Simon Stephens



I cannot carry this burden alone, the road is too steep and the pain too great. I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the reality of the feet, which bear its weight. The sharing of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age. To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death. —Rev. Simon Stephens

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

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 – TCF, South Suburban Chicago

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again...even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder; each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always.



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.

New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved

This year I resolve to:

- Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my lifetime whether they are physically present or not.
- Tell their stories, the happy and the sad. They will live on through me.
- Encourage others to share memories.
- Teach others they cannot "make me cry." Tears are only an external expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- Understand crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. "Doing well" means expressing my feelings
- Understand others will not understand my pain, and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.
- Recognize asking for help from those who love us is really a gift we give to them.
- Help others, reaching out to others in pain will help me to heal.
- Do something nice for myself every day.
- Know that if today I cannot do everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- Cry when I need to, laugh when I can and not feel guilty about either one.
- Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret, and anger because I know holding on to these emotions can be damaging.
- Take a risk and let others in my life and heart.
- Take care of my physical, emotional, and spiritual health.
- Reinvest in life a little bit each day...

Tanya Lord
The Grief Toolbox

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.

Thank you to:

Doug & Connie Brock, in memory of son John Brock and grandson Elijah Brock.

Nancy Ronquillo, in memory of her grandson, Charlie Mateusz Ronquillo.

Donations are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to our bereaved families, for the materials shared at our meetings, and/or to purchase books for our library. Thank you to the many families who provide love gifts so 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, IA 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**

Contact the Editors

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

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

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

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

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022
or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.

Live One Day at a Time

Memories, tender, loving and bittersweet they can never be taken from you. Nothing can detract from the Joy and Beauty you and your loved one shared. Your love for the person cannot be altered by time and circumstances. The memories are yours to keep. Yesterday has ended, through you store in the treasure house of the past. And tomorrow? How can you face its awesome problems and challenges? It is as far beyond your mastery as your ability to control yesterday. Journey one day at a time; don't try to solve all the problems in your life at once. Each day is a triumph.

-Robert Earl Grollman

I Wonder

When did sadness stop covering everything? I don't know. It must have first been for moments, then maybe hours, days eventually. Then for a long time no longer ever-present, but just below the surface waiting for a thought to trigger it. Now I live with more joy than sadness but even now sadness surfaces unexpectedly as the dark shape of loss stirs the cauldron and tears are added to the soup of life, salty still, but not as bitter or overpowering, adding an important flavor to the whole of me.



-Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

Loneliness

Why are there times when a bereaved parent feels lonely, even though surrounded by loving people? Loneliness is the outgrowth of separation from one who has given meaning to life. Yes, other relationships offer meaning, but it is normal for the searing pain from the loss of one's child to supersede the pleasure from other experiences. Part of yourself has been invested in another person. When that person has died, in a sense, you are lonely for a part of yourself that has been destroyed. At times you look around you and think that no one else is experiencing the pain you are feeling; that no one else's world has been shattered. The self-centeredness is a natural part of the grief process. Do not deny it, but do not hold on to it as a way of life. Give yourself permission to accept help from others and then reach out and help others. Although your child is not here to give continuity to your life, by having lived and having given purpose to your life, your child can be the bridge of your continuity with life as a thinking, loving, and active person.



-Ruth Eiseman
TCF, Louisville, KY

Saying Good-bye

What does it really mean to us? We just said good-bye to another year gone by. We say good-bye when we leave from visiting with family and friends. But do we want to ever say good-bye to our grief?

We all know that we would like to say good-bye to our grief as we hope that it will also mean the pain and sorrow of our loss has left us forever. But if we say good-bye to our grief, are we afraid that we will forget our loved ones? The biggest fear that we all have is that as time goes by, that we will eventually forget about our loved ones. We hope that is never the case but eventually our advancing age and health may naturally cause us to do so.

We have probably seen it in family and friends that age makes them more forgetful. I would like to think that the pain of our loss will prevent this but you just never know. In my experience with TCF over the years with the different people I have met, some need to try to say good-bye to their grief. Not in the way that would make them forget their child, but say good-bye to their grief so that they can heal and start to slowly move forward. Please note, we never move on from our grief but we try to move forward.

I have seen many people struggle to move forward in their grief because they are still struggling with the death or the circumstances of their child's death. The turning point for me in my grief journey was when I started to concentrate on the happy times and memories of events shared with Melissa and Emily. I started to think back on all the fun times we shared and experiences we had with them, whether it was taking them on a vacation or a visit to their grandparents, celebrating a birthday or holiday, a

special school event, or just sitting home watching television or doing things around the house. I felt that in a way I said good-bye to my pain and suffering that grief brought me. It was part of being able to move forward and cope with their deaths.

My grief will never go away but the intense pain and suffering I felt in those early years has left me. I even try to look for signs from them. I got one of those several weeks ago, when I was leaving to go to work. I tuned the truck radio to my favorite channel and Emily's and mine favorite song started playing. I said thank you, Emily, and smiled and knew that my day was going to be a good one.

Mickey and Steve
TCF, Green Bay WI

The Compassionate Friend's Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt, or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together, as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

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

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at 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.

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>).

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free (877)969-0010

TCF National Website:

www.compassionatefriends.org

Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

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

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 Resources	There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/ .
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 at climb@climb-support.org . Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
January 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at**

Bethany for Children & Families

1701 River Drive, Moline, Illinois, second floor

February 22, 2024 at 6:30 pm is the next chapter meeting.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	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 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. 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 852 Middle Road (Vera French), in Bettendorf, Iowa, 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 Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. 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.
Phone Support	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): ♥ Doug Scott, 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com ♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915 ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker, 309.945.6738, shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio, 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, Kay, 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.

One Word—COURAGE

I will not tell you that you are strong. I know you do not feel strong. A single word could bring you to your knees. I will not tell you that I admire you. I know you do not feel admirable. More like confused and hurting; falling down a deep, dark hole. What I will tell you though, is that you have courage.

Courage you may not have recognized in yourself. Whenever you open a book on grief, read a magazine article on grief, attend a support group, or talk about your grief, you have courage.

Whenever you positively express your suffering, you have courage. When you got out of bed but didn't want to, got dressed, went to work, or took care of children, and then made it to the end of your day, you found courage. Courage that you never wanted to know you had, but courage that you now have.

Courage is not easy to find, let alone keep. However, it can be found; it can be kept. During those horrible days when you may think you are going to die, keep courage firmly in front of you. When your pain is overwhelming, keep courage firmly in your heart. Courage is where your healing lives.

The opportunities to find courage are many, if we pay attention. When you went to the grocery store, even if you

collapsed on the floor at the sight of your child's favorite food, but made it back home, you found courage. When you looked through photo albums of your child and cried and cried, you found courage. When you spoke their name, told their story and allowed yourself to grieve, you found courage.

Courage born can never die. Courage found can never be lost. It can be difficult to wake up every day and find courage. The devastation from our child's death is like nothing we have ever experienced. Words like happy, smiles, laughter, meaning, and joy are concepts in a distant reality we think we will never know again.



So when you hear the bereaved parents talk about the return of their smile or how they have found meaning again, let that give rise to your courage. Try to have an attitude that says, "If it can happen for them, maybe, just maybe, it can happen for me." It is true, it can happen for you, it has happened for thousands of parents who did their work and did not let death win.

Bring courage into your life, and it will bring along partners of hope, a positive attitude, and the desire for a better day.

Rob Anderson, Sugar Grove, IL

Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt, and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, "It's different with me! You don't understand!" This is the "normal" response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.



Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt, and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child's death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of "Why?"

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary) that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought to be gone forever. Each one must use one's spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—return not occur, although the term "recovery" is used. I prefer the term "healing," a process whereby our lives

come to a new "normal." Healing implies a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child's death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that's all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

Robert Gloor
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

The Sounds of Silence

The sounds of silence are everywhere—it is the silent pain of the loss of our son, Andy, it is the silence of our home because one of our children is gone, and it is the silence of the sudden quiet that comes over people when we mention Andy.

We have become both better and worse in the six years since Andy died of cancer at the age of 22. We are better because we are able to get on with our lives and even enjoy ourselves occasionally. We have gotten worse because, as the years go by, we feel his loss more deeply. We feel his loss every time we participate in a celebration marking some milestone of our friends and relatives or their children. We feel the loss because any celebrations of our own will always be incomplete—one person will always be absent and not there to celebrate with us or to enjoy his own milestones. The pain of his absence is always present at these events.

When Andy died, the pain of his loss was a sharp, acute, screaming pain that tore a hole inside of us. Now, the pain is a silent, quiet, steady pain. The hole is still inside us, covered by a scar, but it is still there. It doesn't scream out loud any more but instead just remains as a quiet, steady, and never-ending ache and sadness—a silent pain.



The silence of our home is a different kind of quiet. By now, if Andy had

lived, he probably would have been out on his own. We would have been "empty

nesters" anyway. But, when a home becomes empty because of the death of a child, it is a different kind of empty nest. Our daughter Lesley is married and out on her own, the way it should be. But, Andy is gone for a different reason.

So, the silence of our empty nest is not the silence of knowing we raised two children and now they are both out leading their own lives. Instead it is the silence of a home that is empty because one child is gone forever—of having to deal with the reality that phone calls only come from one child, not two; that only one child stops by for a visit, not two; that one child is forever gone from the nest. There is a silence in our home that often seems to pervade every space. It is a sad silence, not the temporary quiet of a happy home.

And then, there is the silence of relatives and friends when we talk about Andy—not about his death, but about the things he did while alive. It is as if Andy has become a forbidden topic because he died, as if his death wiped out the 22 years he did live. It occurs when a relative whispers that our son died when someone asked how old he was—like his life and what happened to him was a big secret. It occurs when people suddenly get a funny look on their faces and don't know what to say next when you mention something about Andy. It occurs when you get the feeling that people want to avoid you because you remind them of a horror that could happen to anyone. It is a silence that reminds you that your emotions and feelings are different from that of others and that you will always have to live with the sounds of silence resulting from your son's death.

Mel Winer
In memory of Andy