



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

March 2023

Volume XXXVI, Number 3

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Today I am wearing a green zippered corduroy shirt jacket. What I especially like about this jacket is that it was my mother's. When I wear it, I am momentarily engulfed in warm loving memories. Linking objects, items that keep you connected to your loved one, can be powerful. I treasure a crocheted blanket given to us by an Australian friend when Anna was born. When I hold it, and smell its woolly smell, I remember wrapping my daughter snugly in it and cuddling her in my arms. Grief experts view such objects as a healthy coping mechanism in the grieving process, a way to maintain a loving connection with your child who has died. It is natural to fear our child will be forgotten and these selected objects serve as reminders of their life. Alan Wolfelt, grief counselor and author, says, "It's instinctual to reach for linking objects after a person precious to us dies. We miss someone, so we reach for the closest alternative. Linking objects are tangible, so they connect us through touch and smell as well as sight." Some linking objects might serve as a narrative prompt, an opportunity to speak the loved one's name and tell a bit of their story.



Sometimes the smallest object, a shell, a key, a ring, can have profound meaning. Perhaps everything that belonged to your child is important and impossible to part with. Eventually the day will come, perhaps by necessity, when we bereaved parents need to winnow some objects. This is a process and it happens in stages. One author wrote that for years she kept her daughter's purse in the closet until, suddenly one day, she realized she didn't need it any more. Just like most things in grief, there is no one size fits all. Keep them as long as you need to. These choices will be different for every bereaved parent. Jerry and I downsized our belongings when we moved to Michigan and the time will come when we will need to downsize again. However, wherever the next journey leads us, I am pretty sure Anna's Australian blanket will be coming with me.

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb



To "move on" is to put something behind you, forget about it, and never look back.

To "go on," is to forever carry it forward with you, and never forget.

A bereaved parent will never move on. We simply go on.

Tammy Brown

We who grieve set an example for others, especially our children. They need to see it's ok to cry. It's ok to hurt. It's ok to be sad. It's ok to remember out loud. But it's also ok to LIVE! It's ok to laugh. It's ok to have joy. It's ok to have peace. It's ok to LIVE without the guilt of being alive. There are so many moments of life to be enjoyed. Grief shouldn't steal those moments.

Leslie Wachter McDonald

Time itself does not heal grief. It is what a person does in that time that helps them move from a place of intense pain to healing.

Rebuilding a life without our child takes time, energy and patience.

Although we need a time of withdrawal, some time to ponder the unanswered questions, some time to heal, we also need to be aware of our lives that are passing. Regardless of our grief, life simply goes on, and there is much good we risk losing, if we stay too long in a state of suspension of the present and a sad review of the past. A part of learning to "accept the unacceptable" is to sort out the good memories and take them with us into a future that will be happy again.

TCF, Houston NW Chapter

To help yourself heal, do what moves you. And in each new activity, remember the loved one who brought you there. Then, take those first tentative steps into the rest of your life. It won't be easy. It will take time and courage and faith, but you can do it.

Ann Hood

## Three Questions

Why? Why? Why? After months of asking this question, I still don't know why. I only know that asking why is normal and that even if I knew the reason why, I would still cry, I would still hurt, I still wouldn't like it. I have noticed lately that the "why" question is hardly ever running through my head (only on the very bad days). I have a new word running through my mind ...

What? What?  
What? What do  
I do with my life  
now? I think



that moving from the "why" question to the "what" question is part of the healing process (I hope). The "what" question occupies my mind often. It will take time to answer this one.

In the future, I imagine that a third question will need answering: "How?"

Sally Burnell TCF – Des Moines IA

Whomever you've been thinking about, whether they're here or far way or even in heaven, imagine how pleased they'd be to know you recognized what a difference they've made in your becoming.

Fred Rodgers

## Hurting with Hope

Here's something you need to know: hurting with hope still hurts. The sting of death might have been removed, but it still stings. It hurts like hell even when you know your loved one is in heaven. No, we might not sorrow as those who have no hope, but that doesn't mean we won't be sad.

We do a disservice anytime we try to rush people through the process of grief, as though it were spiritual to put a happy face on a horrible thing. Masking pain doesn't heal it any faster; it actually slows it down and stunts your rehabilitation.

Expecting someone to bounce back as some sort of benchmark of wholeness is kind of like asking a person who has had an arm amputated if he is over it yet.

There are supposedly stages of grief: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. My experience is that these don't come so tidily as moving from one zone to other. It's messy and muddled. You move in and out of the stages at random. They swirl together like an ugly emotional cocktail. Like a novice surfer getting stuck in the foaming white water, when you manage to get up for a breath, out of nowhere comes a wave you didn't see that takes you over the falls and into a washing machine of pain. Then one day you feel good – and you feel bad for feeling good.

Levi Lusko

**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](http://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](http://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.

Time goes on and your life is still there, and you have to live it. After a while you remember the good things more often than the bad. Then, gradually, the empty, silent parts of you fill up with sounds of talking and laughter again, and the jagged edges of sadness are softened by memories. Nothing will be the same, ever, without your child. But there's a whole world waiting, still, and there are good things in it.

TCF Oklahoma, OK



The angels have no wings  
They come to you wearing  
their own clothes  
They have learned  
to love you  
And will keep coming  
Unless you insist on wings

Lucille Clifton

## A Few Suggestions as You Set Your Own Pace Toward a New Normal

- Your grief is unique to you, just as your relationship with that person was uniquely yours. Consider doing something you once enjoyed together. Take someone along if that feels better.
- Honor your child's memory each day. It doesn't need to be a grand gesture; keep it simple. Touch their picture, light a candle, or simply breathe in remembering their life, then breathe out knowing they will always be a part of you.
- Allow joy and laughter when it comes. It can feel uncomfortable, especially at first, but it doesn't mean you are forgetting. Joy and sadness can co-exist. It may be helpful to remember a joyful memory of your child.
- For some people, especially right after death, grief is ever-present. If you can, take a break. If possible, allow yourself to engage in something that takes your mind somewhere else: a movie, a book, a game, or listening to someone else's story.

All these intentional moments of mourning are taking your grief from inside and expressing it outwardly. These are opportunities to release your grief in small, manageable bits at a time. It is difficult to take it all at once. Instead, try to take it in minutes, then hours, days, and eventually weeks. It takes intention and courage to travel your grief journey. Be kind to yourself.

**Health Currents – Spectrum Health  
Lakeland**

## And Many More...

My family goes a bit overboard with the *Happy Birthday* song. For starters, there are a lot of us so that means anywhere from four to about 20 voices depending on who's present. Also, everyone can sing to some degree so no one is shy about loudly belting out the lyrics or taking license with the harmonies.

At the end of the song, without fail, everyone sings... *"and many more"*... which is a family tradition that has been around for as long as I can remember. (I think some other people might sing it this way but I've never met them.)

Growing up, I thought this was how everyone sang the song until I started going to friend's birthday parties. Everyone would hit their big finish with *"Happy birthday to yooooou"* and out of habit, I'd find myself trailing off into a solo *"...and many mooooore.....errrr nevermind."*

As an adult, I've come to find the verse reassuring and I always sing *"and many more"* under my breath in hopes that my quiet wish might help to safeguard the birthday boy or girl's longevity. I know this is superstitious because life has taught me that "many more" is something we can never be sure of. Each and every birthday we have with our loved ones is a gift; I realized this when my mother received the diagnosis that changed

her "many mores" to "one more."

*"No more"* is the saddest thought of all, and I suspect if you're reading this you understand what I mean. Logically death means our loved ones never grow a year older, although logic does little to clear up our confusion when



their birthday continues to happen year after year. Someone we love is gone, but

we find that even in death their birthday still belongs to them; there's no such thing as *"no more,"* as long as we're here on earth to remember them.

There is a misconception among some that holding on to our loved ones keeps us stuck, but the truth is, continuing our relationships with people after they've died and learning to love them despite their physical absence is good.

Your loved one's birthday, for however many years they spent on earth, was set aside as a day for you to honor and celebrate them. And even though they aren't here now, the day can still belong to them. True you may feel pain because on this day their absence feels magnified, but don't let this be the reason why their birthdays are met with dread instead of celebration.

We encourage you to find your own

ways, big or small, to honor and remember your loved one on their birthday. Perhaps words like celebration, fun, and happiness are absent from your vocabulary these days but don't rule out the possibility of having moments of laughter in celebrating and remembering your loved one. Set aside time for reflection and sad emotions, but also leave a little space for joy.

Here are some ideas for celebrating the day.

- ♥ Invite some friends or family over to share memories with you.
- ♥ Meet some family at a favorite restaurant to share a meal together.
- ♥ Fix one of your child's favorite dishes or fix a favorite cake or dessert.
- ♥ Buy presents for a charity. Ask the organization for a list and invite friends or family to join you in giving gifts in your child's memory.
- ♥ Spend some time at one of your child's favorite places or doing a favorite activity.

**Excerpted from**

***And Many More* by Eleanor Haley – [whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)**

## **The Vocabulary of Grief**

It seems to me the vocabulary of grief is very inadequate. Why can't we invent some new words to use when bereaved parents talk together? We 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. Recovery, 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 writes 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**

## Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

**The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 23, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. at**  
**Bethany for Children & Families**  
**1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265**  
*The next monthly meeting of the chapter is*  
**Thursday, April 27, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.**

<p><b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Rick's House of Hope</b></p>	<p>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 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 <a href="http://www.rhoh.org">www.rhoh.org</a>.</p>
<p><b>SHARE</b></p>	<p>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 <a href="mailto:chalyn@shareqc.com">chalyn@shareqc.com</a> or <a href="http://www.shareqc.com">www.shareqc.com</a>.</p>
<p><b>Phone Support</b></p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, <a href="mailto:dns0826@gmail.com">dns0826@gmail.com</a></li> <li>♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915</li> <li>♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, <a href="mailto:shoartb4@gmail.com">shoartb4@gmail.com</a></li> <li>♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, <a href="mailto:delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com">delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</a></li> </ul> <p>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.</p>

## Just Tell Me How

The pain is overwhelming at times.

It comes crashing in like a wave and knocks me off my feet.

As I sit there and ponder, the tears well up and start pouring down my face like a raging waterfall.

Every passing thought going straight to you.

Great memories of you.

Thoughts about that horrible day and the days that followed, and I can't help but wonder what you're doing today.

People say "Don't let it become who you are," "You have to get over it," and the best one of all, "You have to let it go."

Please could someone, anyone, just tell me how I could accomplish any one of those things?

He is part of me, so therefore he is part of who I am.

Get over it? It's not like he had just spilled the milk, and I was having a fit.

Let it go, how?

He is my child.

**Gina Turek – TCF Fox Valley Chapter, IL**

## Stillborn

I carried you in hope, the long nine months of my term,  
remembered that close hour when we made you,  
often felt you kick and move as slowly you grew within me,  
wondered what you would look like when your wet head emerged,  
girl or boy, and at what glad moment I should hear your birth cry  
and I welcoming you with all you needed of warmth and food;  
we had a home waiting for you.

After my strong laborings, sweat cold on my limbs,  
my small cries merging with the summer air, you came.

You did not cry.

You did not breathe.

We had not expected this; it seems your birth had no meaning,  
or had you rejected us?

They will say that you did not live, register you as stillborn.

But you lived for me all that time in the dark chamber of my womb,  
and when I think of you now, perfect in your little death,

I know that for me you are born still;

I shall carry you with me forever, my child you were always mine,  
you are mine now.

Death and life are the same mysteries.

**Leonora Clark**

## Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or



from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a beloved child and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Thanks to:

Wesley Johnson, in memory of his son, Ryan.

Susie and Darren LeBeau in memory of their son, Ryan Lee Rudsell.

Bill and Laurie Steinhauser in memory of Anna, daughter of Jerry and Carol.

**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 Treasurer, 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, 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



## Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time

Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be anticipated. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

**Stephanie Elson**

### **Alike but Unlike**

We are alike, at the same time we are very unlike. Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling grief are different; but we are alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt, we experience many of the grief symptoms alike, and we are alike in our need for help. While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away each other's pain, we can help each other by simply being there and listening to each other.

**Dennis Klass,  
TCF St. Louis, MO**



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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.***