



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

April 2008, Volume XXI, Number 4

The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Several of the articles this month are intensely personal for us. Recently the infant granddaughter of close friends died. The article, *When You Lose a Grandchild*, really spoke to my heart.

Lifelong Reflections: Sharing the Memory of Bobby is shared by a bereaved parent reflecting on the death of her cousin/playmate when she was a child. A drunk driver killed my cousin/playmate, Ann, when she was four, and I was six. I still have memories of being told by my parents, crying on the playground at school because I felt so sad, and her funeral. She was a girl-cousin in the midst of boy-cousins and brothers, and I missed her throughout my childhood.

We recently returned from Hawaii where we met a bereaved father whose grief is complicated by the guilt he feels related to an estrangement he had with his son for a number of years prior to the son's fatal illness. Two of the articles have segments that address feelings of guilt and judgments of blame.

In the article, *What Helps When it Hurts*, the following statement jumped out at me. I hope you will read the entire article, but if you do not, I hope these words speak to you as they did to me.

“Disloyalty to your loved one is not in finding joy again but in giving up on living when you still have life.”

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Inside

- Dear Compassionate Friends 1
- Resources for Grieving Parents and Siblings 2
- The Butterfly in Our Lives 3
- TCF Bulletin Board 4
- Life Goes On 5
- Lifelong Reflections: Sharing the Memory of Bobby 6
- Everything is a first 7
- What Helps When it Hurts 8
- Beyond Surviving 9
- When You Lose a Grandchild 11
- What's It All About 11



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter
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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.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Chapter Meeting

April 24, 2008 at 7:00 PM
Bethel Assembly of God Church

3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL

From John Deere Road, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church will be on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.)

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) 263-2737 for directions or information.
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. For more information, contact Dave Happ at (563)785-6133.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at the Happy Joe's in Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kathy Matkovic at (309)314-2485 or Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.
Rick's House of Hope	Located at 4867 Forest Grove Drive in Bettendorf, this community resource is for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call Denise Tatoian at 563.324.9580 or 563.421.7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web at www.genesishealth.com — Keywords: "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday of each month at Grace Lutheran Church, 1140 East High Street, Davenport, Iowa. For more information, call (309)792-7808.
Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group	For those who have lost someone to suicide, this group, facilitated by a peer survivor and a professional, meets the third Monday of the month in Moline, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)737-1363. moore-jm@sbcglobal.net

When You Lose a Grandchild

When you lose a grandchild, the grandparent is twice bereaved; once for the grandchild in whom you can no longer take delight, be proud of and love, whose future you will never be able to watch unfold; the second is for your grown children, the parents, who cannot imagine a future at all without their child, but who are attempting to go on in excruciating pain and who you are powerless to console.

One loss leaves a constant and gnawing void in your life.

The other brings a constant challenge to your heart – which aches for all of them.

Lorell Thompson
Grandmom to David Samson (1982-1996)
TCF /Phoenix, AZ

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** and **Maggie's Fund** for printing this month's newsletter. If you are able to assist in the final preparation for mailing of the newsletter in any given month, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb at (309)654-2727.



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

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

Quad City Chapter

Messiah Lutheran Church
302 11th St. N.
Port Byron, IL 61275

The Quad City Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happening of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

Love gifts 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 love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

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, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

When our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten.

Rich Edler, TCF, South Bay/LA, CA

The Butterfly in Our Lives

Most often we hear, in our Compassionate Friends circles, of the butterfly representing the lives of our children who have died. Their spirit lives on and our memories live on, often in fleeting moments. But I think the butterfly's life cycle – metamorphosis – could just as easily represent our own lives.



We seem to fit the four stages of the cycle.

The Egg: When we are small, we are protected, changing, and living in a somewhat small and safe world – much like the butterfly egg attached to a leaf somewhere.

The Caterpillar: The caterpillar is much like our lives before the death of our child or children. We go through the day doing what we need to do. We grow a lot and we change somewhat slowly. We devour many things in daily life – work, church, Little League.

The Cocoon: After the death of our child, we shut ourselves off from so much because of our grief. We often encase ourselves in the blanket of grief and depression that is what protects us from the horrible pain. We don't want to be a part of life because of all the painful memories. There are reminders out there which cause pain.

The Butterfly: The pain lessens and we begin to heal as we work through the grief process, and we begin to see a ray of light – a little color – some of the weight is removed. We break open our cocoon and begin to reach out ever so slightly and touch life again, just to see if it will hurt too much. As we discover the brighter days and brilliant colors of life, we become more like the butterfly. We are free to once again be a part of life and we can move about more easily and begin to take some of the nectar from life.

Dale Tallant - TCF/Tulare, CA

TCF Bulletin Board

Contact www.preciousparents.org which publishes a newsletter titled HEARTLINE for parents whose infants have died.

The April Meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on April 24th at 7:00 PM at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island.

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 Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

Our Newsletter

For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

Amazon. Com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national Web site, and a portion of the purchase price will be donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter
One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families that contact the national office.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 — (877)969-0010
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org
Visit the sibling resource page at www.compassionatefriends.org



Beyond Surviving

Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can. Struggle with why it happened until you no longer need to know why, or until you are satisfied with partial answers. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings, but all your feelings are normal. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy – you are in mourning. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts. Remember to take one day at a time. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing. Give yourself time to heal. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life. Expect setbacks. Don't panic if emotions return like a tidal wave. You may only be experiencing a remnant of grief. Try to put off major decisions. Give yourself permission to get professional help. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends. Be patient with yourself and with others. Set your own limits and learn to say no. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as the Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide Groups. If not, ask a professional to help start one. Call on your personal faith to help you through. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief – i.e., headaches. Loss of appetite, inability to sleep, etc. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and go beyond just surviving...

Iris Bolton, from *My Son, My Son*



Learn to laugh again. Rediscover your sense of humor. Remember: disloyalty to your loved one is not in finding joy again but in giving up on living when you still have life.

Nurture your body. Be good to yourself! Exercise. Your body can't revitalize without good nutrition and physical activity.

Hug. Take pleasure from physically sharing with others. We all suffer from skin hunger. So reach out and hug someone – and yourself.

Don't be hesitant. If you need outside help, admit it. You want to be willing to be helped and healed. An outside resource may be just the salve you're searching for.

Become a wounded healer. Reach out and help others. It just may help you too.

Let life grow. Develop new interests, skills and friends. Focus your energy away from the past and toward the future. Take small steps and enjoy the small victories. You are a changed person seeking a new life. You can be stronger after grief; the choice is yours. You may have been powerless to help your loved one, but you are not powerless to help yourself. Seize the power right now that abides within you and begin again the journey that is your own life. Grief is the price we pay for love—but we do not have to go on paying forever.

Alexis Stein and Howard Winokuer.
Reprint from *To Life*, Vol. 4, Summer 1986

Life Goes On

The greatest gift that TCF has given me is the knowledge that my feelings are and were normal; I can understand myself and my family better because of this. Life goes on. I am not the same person after Cecelia's death. I have to accept the person I have become. I have had to learn to find peace and happiness in a different way. I am finding new meaning in my life.

I will never forget Cecelia. I miss her more than words could ever describe; however, Cecelia's life goes on. She will always live in my heart.

Judith Simpson, TCF/Savannah

What Helps When It Hurts How to Reinvest Yourself in Living When a Loved One Dies

Feel the pain. Allow yourself to really feel what you are feeling – the whole range of emotions – whether it's sadness, anger, guilt, etc. Denying the feelings may only intensify and prolong the pain.

Cry. Tears may be the most therapeutic tool you have – let them cleanse you and relieve your pain inside.

Talk, talk, talk. Share the pain. Sharing grief diminishes it. You must talk about your feelings, even when you feel you "can't go on," or that "life will never have meaning again." It helps you when someone responds by their presence to your pain.

Talk to the loved one who died. Even though you may feel uncomfortable, it will give you the opportunity to finish your thoughts and feelings you've wished to express. Use statements like: "When you died, I wanted to..." "I miss..." "How could you leave me?" "It was a relief when you died: the ordeal and pain were over..."

Let the words flow. You have already been through the worst.

Keep a journal. Your journal is a private place where you can write anything: unfulfilled wishes, guilts, angers and other thoughts and feelings. Again fill in unfinished sentences: "If only..., I wish we had..., I'm furious with..., I'll never forgive..., I'll never see you..., I remember..."

Let go. Don't let bitterness engulf you. Resentment is a heavy load and it only hurts you. Find the source of your anger and do everything you can to resolve it—whether you actually clear the matter up with the hurtful person or you resolve the problem in a symbolic way with a friend.

Find your own comfort. Create rituals that feel right to you and give you comfort. Whether it's prayer, meditation, or other activities, rituals can be a source of strength.

Hold off. Tread lightly when making decisions. Mull over and thoroughly explore your options before making a major step. You may still be too vulnerable to make a life-changing decision.

Be kind to yourself. Be patient with the conflict inside you. Find a balance between the happy and sad persons, the angry and peaceful selves, the guilty and glad you – all feelings which may be raging in your mind. Have patience with yourself. Life is too short for you to be the villain in your life.

Lifelong Reflections: Sharing the Memory of Bobby

“I was five and he was six; we rode on horses made of sticks.”

Cher sang the song years after my cousin Bobby died, but it always made me think of him. That was Bobby and I – soon to be six and seven, the last time I saw him. I remember that day so vividly; Bobby and I played outside while our mothers made plans for my birthday, less than a week away. He was going to get to spend the night for the first time. Bobby and I were close. We were the babies of the family, each of us having siblings and other cousins much older than we were. That day he teased me unmercifully as he always did, and I gave in as I always did. One might say that even at that tender age, he had me wrapped around his little finger.

I shudder to think what kind of menace he might have been to me in our teenage years, but I loved it, of course, and people say we never argued and fought like other kids. I even remember walking them to the car that day. My mother remembers being quite skeptical that my aunt would actually let Bobby stay the whole night, but that didn't dampen our excitement. Bobby turned around, ran back to hug my mother and said, “See you Sunday, Aunt Bea!”

On Friday he was dead – two weeks before his 7th birthday, four days before my 6th. Brief glimpses of detailed memory – the last time we played, my parents leaving the house late one night, an aunt leading me by the hand to the casket where Bobby lay – are retained for more than 30 years from the mind of a very small child. I don't remember grief, I don't remember asking questions, I don't remember being frightened that I would die too. I was a little girl, and my life went on. (I wasn't aware and couldn't have known, until I lost my own son many years later, how painful it must have been for my aunt and uncle as my birthday rolled around each year, yet I never failed to receive a gift from them.)

But for 32 years, Bobby has remained in my heart, and I have missed that boy-cousin my whole life. No one ever knew, but when I was a teenager, I used to make believe Bobby was still alive. By that time, he would have insisted on being called “Bob,” but he would always be “Bobby” to me (and anyway, it would be the one way to get him back for that incessant teasing). At those times, I would imagine my life would be very different had Bobby lived. I wouldn't be so shy and tongue-tied around boys, having grown up with the strange creatures. I don't just remember Bobby – I remember who he was, and I know he would have grown up to be a good and kind man. I miss him even still, wondering what his children would be like, and whether we'd still

get along as well as we did that last time we were together. As bereaved parents, we often wonder if anyone remembers our child. Life goes on around us, and after a time it seems that we are the only ones who still miss his presence and feel his absence. It begins to seem that our child lived and died without anyone noticing.

But no one lives, however briefly, who doesn't affect the lives of many people. Don't be afraid to ask others to share a memory they have of your child. You might find some real treasures in unexpected places – like in a lonely teenager's fantasies or in a five-year-old's memory of a warm day in June, still living inside a 38-year-old woman.

Linda Moffatt TCF/Saint Louis, MO

Everything is a First

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me...NEVER! The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. FORGET? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere-love and concern was translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say – nothing is NORMAL. Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me, “How are you?” Here is my answer. “I am mad Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong.

Liza Ann Jones TCF/Avoca PA

The loss of a loved one is often referred to as a “blow.” That is exactly what it is, an emotional blow that affects the spirit the same way that a crushing blow on the head affects the body. For a while you are going to be dazed. None of your reactions will be as in normal life. In a way, this numbness is a merciful thing, because it deadens the psychic pain while it lasts, but no one who has lost a loved one should expect to feel the same as always, or apologize for behavior that is temporarily erratic or different.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale