



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

September 2008, Volume XXI, Number 8

The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Because my son died – I can feel a searing empathy with all other mothers and fathers who have lost a child.

Fran MacArthur
TCF/Southern MD

Last month we added almost 50 names of bereaved parents to our Quad City TCF data base. Although these were names garnered from obituaries over two months since there was no July newsletter, it was still, sadly, a much higher count than usual. Perhaps you wonder how you came to be on the mailing list for this resource. Every month we go through the obituaries looking for children who have died in the Quad City area. We enter the families into a data base and then attempt to find addresses for the families using the phone book or an online resource. We typically find addresses for only about half the families, sometimes fewer, so we are glad when we receive a referral from a family friend or someone

hears about The Compassionate Friends and gives us a call. It is tedious work entering the names, and sad work. Our hearts ache for the families who are now in the throes of early grief that we can still remember even though for us it is a distant ache. A few times when they were still living at home one of our sons would do the data entry, and they also expressed the emotional heaviness associated with the task. We, along with Bill and Laurie Steinhauer, who work with us in editing the newsletter, and all the TCF leadership who have worked together to keep the chapter and this newsletter going over the years, care about you and do feel that sense of empathy and desire to walk alongside you in your grief. As the motto of our international organization states, ***We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.***

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Inside

Resources for Grieving Parents and Siblings	2
Another Way We Change	3
TCF Bulletin Board	4
The Reality of Depression	5
My Grief Journal, My Release	6
26 Ways to Effectively Write the Heartache	7
Hurricane Houses	8
Most People Who Suffer a Loss Experience One or More of the Following	9
Another Way We Change (cont.)	10
A Good Job of Dying	11
What's It All About?	11



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter



1830 6th Avenue,
Moline, Illinois 61265

«WholeName»
«Street»
«City», «State» «ZipCode»



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 Meetings September 25, 2008 — 7:00 pm to 9:00 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.) Call Sharon and Dave Ulseth (792-0529) for directions or information. **The meeting for October is on the 23rd of the month.**

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 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 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 or moore-jm@sbcglobal.net

Promise me you'll always remember... You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.

Christopher Robin to Pooh

A Good Job of Dying

In their wartime letters, some soldiers show an almost inhuman nobility of spirit. Here's a fine example from a British private in World War II, included in *Dispatches from the Heart: An Anthology of Letters from the Front During the First and Second World Wars*, edited by Annette Tapert (Hamish Hamilton/David and Charles):

"I want no flowers, no epitaph, no tears. All I want is for you to remember me and feel proud of me, then I shall rest in peace knowing I have done a good job. Death is nothing final or lasting, if it were there would be no point in living; it is just a stage in everyone's life. To some it comes early, to others later, but it must come to everyone sometime, and surely there is no better way of dying.

"Besides I have probably crammed more enjoyment into my 21 years than some manage to do in 80. My only regret is that I have not done as much for you as I would have liked to do. I loved you, Mom, you were the best Mother in the world, and what I failed to do in life I am trying to make up for in death, so please don't let me down, Mom, don't worry or fret, but smile, be proud and satisfied. I never had much money, but what little I have is all yours. Please don't be silly and sentimental about it, and don't try to spend it on me. Spend it on yourself or the kiddies; it will do some good that way. Remember that where I am I am quite OK, and providing I know you are not grieving over me, I shall be perfectly happy.

TCF/Atlanta newsletter



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

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.

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.

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** and **Maggie's Fund** for printing and mailing 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.

Continued from page 3 that describe her Jessie and her journey are so heartfelt and insightful, you can't listen and not be touched. Even though I would listen to the CD only when my wife played it, I realized there was something special about it.

Before Jessie died, my favorite musical artist was Bruce Springsteen. I had been to a few of his concerts and bought more of his albums. But I hadn't heard any of his music in nearly three years when he released *The Rising*. Little did I know that his music would touch me more than ever. Pretty amazing since I had basically stopped listening to "his" type of music. The Rising was released in 2002 and many of the songs were based on what happened on September 11. About losing a loved

one. About grief. About going on. There is an enormous amount of feeling that went into the lyrics. And the songs, for me, evoke a lot of emotion. Some are sad, some are full of energy, some are slow, all are heartfelt. Once again, the words were so important to me.

There are lots of wonderful songs on many CDs. Six years after Jessie died, I'm glad there are times that I can enjoy them now. I needed my time to be alone, to be in silence, but now I'm at a place where I can choose some music that will give me peace and ye, pleasure. And, I think Jessie thinks that's okay.

Don Murphy - TCF/Frederick MD
We Need Not Walk Alone, Spring 2006

Loud music and wild dancing. At one point in my life, not that many years ago, those were things I enjoyed. But, things have changed a lot in the past few years. That happens when your child dies.

My daughter, Jessica, was 14 when she was involved in a car crash five years ago.

When she died, my whole world changed. Not just my family structure, not just my friends, not

just my work. Everything changed, including the music I listened to... or didn't listen to. In the first two years after Jessie died, I didn't listen to the radio or play CDs. Not once. Not at all. I'm not totally sure why. But I think music was something that I associated with being happy and I was anything but that. I would drive to work every day in silence. I had a lot running through my head at the time and music wasn't going to interrupt it. Actually, looking back on it, my time in the car was very therapeutic, sometimes totally silent, sometimes just the opposite. A lot of screaming and a lot of conversations with God happened as I hypnotically made my way down the highway with thousands of other commuters who didn't know the turmoil that was occurring in the vehicle next to them.

I remember the day I started listening to the radio again: September 11. I was on my way home on the afternoon of that horrific day, and I couldn't help but tune in to what was happening. I guess I realized that lots of other Moms and Dads and siblings were going to begin the painful journey of losing a loved one. After that, I would occasionally turn on the radio. At first it was just news and talk radio, but one day, I decided to buy a CD of

classical music. Strange. I had never bought anything like that before. It had always been rock. Just another sign that life was different. So, on my way home that day, I listened to and enjoyed music... again. It was another first. And, it was okay. Actually, it was very nice. Relaxing. Soothing.

Another Way We Change

I discovered that listening to Brahms and Beethoven wasn't so bad after all.

Actually, beautiful violin music can make a grown man cry without too much trouble. Somehow, this new music felt right for me because I felt a connection to Jessie and I thought she would approve. I wasn't the fun-loving guy I used to be and this music fit my mood.

Over the next year, I slowly began to listen to more music. It wasn't the stuff I had once enjoyed but, instead, music that I could relate to in my "life after Jessie" state. The words, of course, had to have meaning. I didn't care for singers screaming . . . after all, that was for me to do, not them.

The business world these days thrives on target markets and is full of specialty items for anything and everything. And grieving people are not immune; they are a market just like everyone else. That's a good thing when an artist is a grieving parent too. A CD that captured my wife right away and that eventually held me was Cindy Bullen's *Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth*. The CD is about her 11-year-old daughter who died of cancer in 1995. Like us, her daughter's name was Jessie. That was enough of a connection right there to listen to the CD. But the words and music

Continued on page 10

TCF Bulletin Board

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

The September Meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on September 25th 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

Iowa SIDS Foundation's
Vine and Dine
Wine Pairings Dinner
and Silent Auction
November 7, 2008
6:00 PM
Davenport Country Club

Most People Who Suffer a Loss Experience One or More of the Following:

- Feel tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
 - Have an empty feeling in their stomach and lose their appetite.
 - Feel guilty at times and angry at others.
 - Feel restless and look for activity but find it difficult to concentrate.
 - Feel as though the loss isn't real; that it didn't actually happen.
 - Sense the loved one's presence, as in finding themselves expecting the person to walk in the door at the usual time, hearing their voice, or seeing their face.
 - Wander aimlessly, forget, and neglect to finish things they've started around the house.
 - Have difficulty sleeping, and dream of their loved one frequently.
 - Experience an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
 - Assume mannerisms or traits of their loved one.
 - Cry at unexpected times.
 - Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in their relationship with the deceased.
 - Feel intensely angry with the loved one for leaving them.
 - Feel as though they need to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable around them by politely not telling about their feelings of loss.
 - Need to tell and retell and remember things about the loved one and the experience of his/her death.
 - Feel their mood change over the slightest things.
- All of these are natural and normal grief responses. It is important to cry and talk with people when you need to do so. By learning about the process of grief and learning also to express our feelings concerning our experience, we are helped to arrive at a healthy readjustment of our lives and a reinvestment of our emotional energy.

From the Hospice Bereavement Team - TCF Newsletter/ Abilene, TX

Hurricane Houses

By Sascha

We grievors remind me of people who live by the ocean, where they build sturdy, good looking homes which offer the most spectacular views. One can tell how their owners cherish these well-tended houses with shiny clean windows like eyes watching the beautiful, unpredictable sea.

But then, there comes a hurricane. In a matter of minutes the treasured, handsome houses are struck, broken, swept away by wind and water, covered by an avalanche of uncaring sand.

I have wondered, weren't the people afraid of another hurricane? Yes, of course, they were afraid, but there was no better place in all the world to live, and so they would stay, they would risk it all again.

I understand those people in their hurricane houses. My life, too, has felt like a hurricane house, at times. My children died, taken by one drowning and by one suicide – leaving me broken and swept aside by a storm of tragedy, overwhelmed by

loss.

Yet, if someone asked me about it today, I would say that, while I was bitterly hurt and hopeless then, I see that my place in life is still the finest because I once had my children. I have learned to accept the lonely beach. I built another house and now a changed “me” lives there in those rooms filled with welcome feelings and cherished memories.

I think that a veteran griever will know what I mean while “hurricane house” may seem impossible for most newly bereaved parents. Perhaps we will all understand next year...or the year after that. There is no hurry.

To honor the legacy of times remembered, to find a new view of life, and for the sake of those who survived with us, many of us have decided to stay on the dangerous beach and to restore our hurricane house with its shiny, clean windows like eyes watching the beautiful, unpredictable sea.

Seeds of Hope

Amidst the weeds of worry even in a field of pain,
Grow little seeds of hope, bright spots to look for,
To savor and cling to, the flowers of our future.
The promises that the pain will end,
Making room for the blossoms of joy.

Susan White-Bowden, from *A Healing Heart*



The Reality of Depression

I have long wanted the world to recognize that mental illness is every bit as real as physical illness, that the brain can become just as sick as any other part of the body. Because a chemical imbalance in the brain is harder to detect than a broken leg or heart disease, this most important underlying cause of suicide frequently goes undetected.

A brain disorder is a matter of biochemistry and genetics. It has nothing to do with willpower, how a person was raised, or failure of character. Most people who attempt suicide are not acting on a sudden impulse or out of moral or physical frailty. They are neither cowards nor heroes.

They are engulfed by an illness that causes unceasing pain, that generates an urge to self-destruct as the only escape from that pain.

Mort Schrag,
Excerpted from an article,
“Thoughts on the Death of William Styron,”
We Need Not Walk Alone, Spring 2007

The freedom of choice is one of our most precious gifts and I encourage you to choose to have joyful memories today of loved ones you have lost. Choose joy as their legacy to you. It is one of the most wonderful gifts you can give to yourself in their memory.

Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker and bereaved parent

“Death ends a life,
not a relationship.”

Mitch Albom
Tuesdays with Morrie



When I grieve,
When I stand by the others as they grieve,
Even in the midst of seemingly unbearable sorrow,
Grief becomes a way to honor life –
A way to cling to every fleeting,
Precious moment of joy.

Cortney Davis

My Grief Journal, My Release

I am very happy that I have kept a grief journal since my daughter, Jessie, died by suicide November 18, 2003. She was 22.

At first I didn't understand why Violet, my grief counselor, suggested that I start a journal and write in it every day. But the many books and magazines I'd consumed about grief also recommended daily journal writing, so I started my first journal.

For the first three months it seemed like I wasn't doing it right. I wrote about who I had lunch with, or where I went for the day. I didn't mention much about my emotions. But even though I couldn't comprehend why I needed to journal, I kept doing it.

Now that I look back on those early days of grief, I realize I was in shock and was aware of very few emotions. But in the next few months, I became more conscious of my emotions, although it was very hard for me to understand everything I was feeling. Grieving like this was all new to me, having never mourned the death of a loved one, other than my grandparents. I felt like there was a Ping-Pong ball inside my head, and with every bounce, I felt a different emotion. Sometimes it seemed like I was going crazy, but Violet assured me that I wasn't crazy, just grieving. She encouraged me to write about my thoughts and emotions, so I began to put my jumbled feelings down on paper. My journal writing helped me to make sense of what was going through my mind, gut, and heart.

What an amazing insight when I finally grasped the concept of journal writing, and how therapeutic it was to my healing. I wrote about all my worries and felt such a release. I wrote about my feelings of isolation, and about how much I cried from missing Jessie so much. I wrote about blame; how it was everyone else's fault, not Jessie's. Sometimes I would write about how confused my emotions felt, but the more I wrote, the clearer things became. I could write anything I wanted and nobody would lay eyes on my journal. I began to realize how much energy I could release, just by writing it down.

Several months after Jessie's suicide, anger began to build up. I did not let it surface; I suppressed it. I wrote about my anger, who I was mad at, and why. Surprisingly, my resentment was not always at Jessie; sometimes it was at other family members. But the more I wrote about I, the more evident my feelings became. If I could write about how furious I was, I would feel a sense of liberation from my sadness. My journal was my release.

I had a routine; I sat at my desk every morning to make my journal entry. Sometimes I would write just a half page, and other times I would fill up a page and a half. When I am ready, I will look back at my journal and be able to see how much I have healed. Thank goodness for my grief journal.

Patti Hansen TCF/Largo, FL

26 Steps to Effectively Write the Heartache

Alice J. Wisler

Used with permission from the author

1. Buy a journal.
2. Find a secluded place to write where you can think clearly without distractions.
3. Candles and/or soft music may create a soothing mood for you as you write.
4. Write freely.
5. Write honestly.
6. Don't worry about grammar or penmanship.
7. Write, at first, for your eyes only. This doesn't have to be shared with anyone.
8. Write daily, if you can.
9. Write to remember your child. Your thoughts and reflections of him or her are a keepsake or a legacy.
10. Write to gain insight into this bereavement journey.
11. Write to chart progress for you to read years down the road.
12. Write with the feeling: I will survive this.
13. Write to identify your emotions and feelings.
14. Write to help solve some of the new situations you must now face.
15. Write to understand the new you (self-awareness).
16. Carry your journal and /or paper with you at all times in case you have the need to write. Even place your journal by your bedside to record in the mornings dreams you find significant.
17. Think of your journal as a friend who never judges and who can never hurt you.
18. Write your spiritual struggles.
19. Write a letter to your child about what has happened since he died.
20. Write a food-related memory you have of your child.
21. Write of hope even if it may only seem too far to grasp during the early season of loss. People who have had a child die many years before you, now speak of hope. One day you will be able to tell newly bereaved parents hope can be gained.
22. Write your own Psalm of agony or of gratitude.
23. Take the memory of your child with you on an outing and write about the day through his eyes.
24. Use your journal as a punching bag in the sense you can spout off through your pen at someone who has been insensitive towards you without having to literally punch him or her.
25. Write to rebuild your self-esteem and self-confidence.
26. Write a poem of love to your child.

Alice J. Wisler is the author of *Down the Cereal Aisle, Slices of Sunlight*, and the new novel, *Rain Song*. She writes in memory of her son Daniel. Visit her website at <http://www.alicewisler.com>.