



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.

The Quad City Chapter



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Dear Compassionate Friends,

Thoughts on Mother's Day ...

I watch my daughter-in-law put a ponytail in my granddaughter's hair and tie a pink ribbon around it.

I think, "I'm not any good at doing little girl's hair – Do you suppose I would have learned had Anna lived to be a three year old?"

During church I watch my granddaughter throw herself into Jerry's arms. Blonde head buried in his lap as she hugs him.

I think, "How blessed we are to have Hannah. Isn't Jerry a wonderful grandpa for her? Wouldn't he have been a good daddy for Anna? I wish I had more memories of a little head topped with dark hair snuggling against his shoulder."

The minister talks with tenderness of daughters who are missing their mothers on Mother's Day.

I think, "I am missing my daughter on Mother's Day." One slow tear slides down my cheek and remembering, I let it rest there for a moment before I wipe it away.

I am grateful for all that I have and have had in my life, but sometimes I really miss my little girl and wonder.... what could have been, what should have been... especially on Mother's Day...

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

RE-ENTRY INTO LIFE

MAY OF BRILLIANT GREENS
 HARBINGER OF SUMMER,
 MOTHER OF DAFFODILS AND TULIPS,
 WARM MY SOUL IN YOUR SUN GLOW!
 I AM IN NEED OF THAT WARMTH,
 READY AGAIN TO FEEL ALIVE.
 FOR SO LONG I HAVE SHUT OUT LIFE,
 UNWILLING TO SEE BEAUTY
 IN A WORLD WITHOUT MY CHILD,
 UNABLE TO FEEL JOY OR LOVE OR
 LAUGHTER,
 LONGING ONLY FOR HIM.
 I CARED NAUGHT FOR LIFE
 AND WOULD HAVE WELCOMED
 DEATH.
 IT HAS BEEN A LONG CLIMB,
 MY RE-ENTRY INTO LIFE.
 IN THAT CLIMB I DID NOT LOSE THE
 PAIN OF SEPARATION,
 BUT RATHER LEARNED TO
 ASSIMILATE IT INTO MY SOUL AS A
 PART OF MY LIFE.
 I HERE, HE THERE.
 AND SO I CHANCE LIFE AGAIN,
 MINDFUL OF ITS BREVITY
 WELCOMING ITS BRILLIANT COLORS,
 THE SONG OF BIRDS,
 THE GRACE OF LOVE.



Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) an American dancer lost both of her young children when a taxicab in which they were riding fell into the water and they were drowned. After their death, she fled to her friend, the Italian actress Eleanora Duse, at Duse's villa in Italy. Duse did not offer Isadora Duncan easy or trite prescriptions for her enormous loss. She allowed Duncan to feel what had happened to her, surely the most tender and generous gesture of consolation.

From MY LIFE By Isadora Duncan

The next morning I drove out to see Duse, who was living in a rose-colored villa behind a vineyard. She came down the vine-covered walk to meet me, like a glorious angel. She took me in her arms and her wonderful eyes beamed upon me such love and tenderness that I felt just as Dante must have felt when, in the "paradiso," he encountered the Divine Beatrice.

From then on I lived at Viareggio, finding courage from the radiance of Eleanora's eyes. She used to rock me in her arms, consoling my pain but, not only consoling, for she seemed to take my sorrow to her own breast, and I realized that, if I had not been able to bear the society of other people, it was because they all played the comedy of trying to cheer me with forgetfulness, whereas Eleanora said, "Tell me about Deirdre and Patrick," and made me repeat to her all their little sayings and ways, and show her their photos, which she kissed and cried over. She never said, "Cease to grieve," but she grieved with me, and, for the first time since their death, I felt I was not alone.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: May 28, 2009 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.) Call Sharon and Dave Ulseth (309.792.0529) for directions or information. (Meetings for the subsequent months: Thursday, June 25 and Thursday July 23rd.)

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 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month 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 is a 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: www.genesishealth.com — keywords "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, 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 Chalyn Fornero-Green at (309)496-2568.
Survivors of Suicide Support Group, Fulton	Location: Second Reformed Church, 703 14th Ave., Fulton, Illinois This support group meets the second Monday of each month and is open to anyone who has lost a loved one through suicide, it's a safe place where survivors share their experiences and support each other. The group is completely free and light refreshments will be served. For more information, call 589-3425.
Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group, Moline	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 the Moline Library, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore 309.235.7174 or gcsos@yahoo.com

It's My Choice - To Be A Survivor Or A Victim

As a bereaved parent, I have a choice on how I will cope with my grief. I can choose...

TO seek out people and resources who will listen and care when I need support...OR retreat from life and isolate myself from sources of support.

TO search for meaningful things to give my life a sense of purpose...OR decide I have no hope or purpose in life and that I have nothing to live for.

TO realize that loss is only one of many factors in my life...OR see myself only as a bereaved parent primarily and allow my having experienced the death to blacken and disrupt all aspects of my life.

TO communicate with family and friends when I need information and help...OR wait for others to discover what I need, get angry, and pity myself when they don't.

TO accept what is gone, or not within my control and take action on what I CAN do...OR constantly pity myself over what has changed and what I CAN'T do.

TO try to understand how my family feels, that they hurt too...OR feel that absolutely no one understands me and what I am going through.

TO look for ways to FIGHT BACK against negative feelings...OR feel that I am helpless and at the mercy of fate.

TO talk about fears with someone I trust...OR bottle up fears and horrors that are unexpressed and let them have power over me.

TO accept my grief as a necessary process in my recovery from loss...OR be ashamed of my grief and pretend all is well to protect the discomfort of others.

TO be angry at the circumstance of the death and seek comfort and strength from God...OR blame God for my circumstances and become angry, bitter, and alienated from HIM.

**Adapted from *Positive Patterns of Survival*,
a segment of the "I Can Cope Course"**

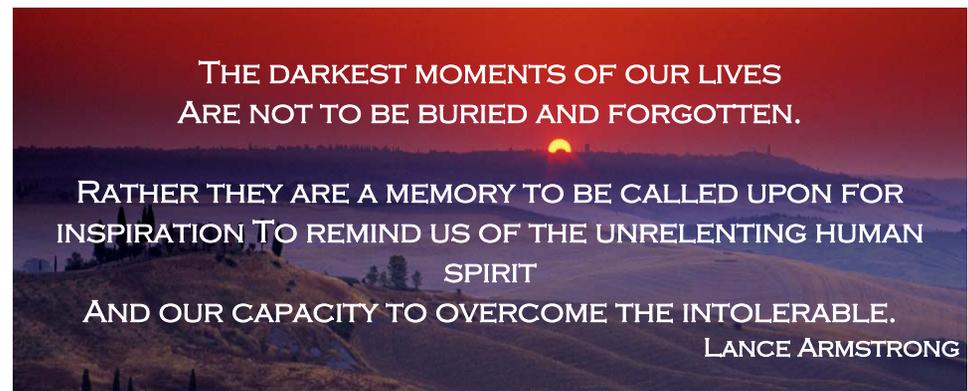
MOTHER'S DAY AND FATHER'S DAY

This time of year is a bittersweet time for bereaved parents. Many are grateful for their surviving children and, at the same time, mourn for and wonder what it would be like if their deceased child had lived. It is difficult to be joyful when part of us is saddened due to the death of a child. This is especially difficult for bereaved parents whose only child or all children have died. Am I really a mother or father now? It is especially appreciated by these parents to be remembered at this time of year by friends and family members.

Grandparents hurt for themselves and also for their bereaved children. Many wonder what role to play when this time of year rolls around once again. Bereaved parents wonder how to handle the celebrations. Do I attend these functions to honor my parents, while I'm mourning my child? Do I make a spectacle of myself if I become unraveled during these ceremonies? Should I attend the gatherings, or simply avoid them to save my sanity? I do not wish to hurt my parents' feelings, and how long will they be alive to honor them?

There are no easy answers to these problems. Each individual must decide what he/she can handle, and that decision will have to be made on a yearly basis. What is helpful for one might be detrimental for another. Time may help to ease the pain and alter the decisions that are made. An honest discussion about the situation with those involved will help to ease hurt feelings. Try to plan other times with grandparents, and let them know you love them even though you may not be able to celebrate these special days. Wherever you are in your grief, may you know that many of us are journeying with you along this difficult path.

Kay Bevington, Van Wert, OH, Editor, *ALIVE ALONE*



TCF Bulletin Board

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

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.

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

The monthly meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on May 28th at 7:00 PM at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island.

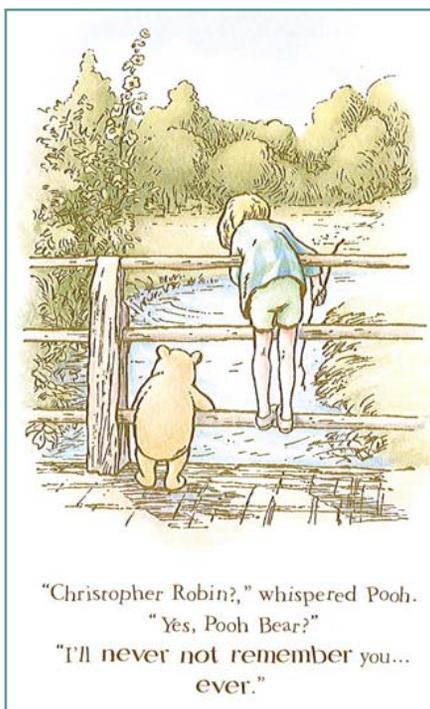
Our Newsletter

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.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.Bethany-qc.org for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.



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.



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

Mission Statement

The mission of the Compassionate Friends (TCF) is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child at any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

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.

MEN REACT DIFFERENTLY TO LOSS

It is difficult to watch someone you care about grieve and hurt. It is even more difficult and confusing when that person grieves in a way you don't understand. Sometimes men's grief differs from women's. It's not less effective or less appropriate. It is simply different. While women tend to react to the loss of a loved one as abandonment, men perceive it as losing part of themselves, as if severing an arm or leg.

In our society, many men find it difficult to express their personal feelings and needs. The natural need to talk about one's grief may conflict with the traditional belief that a man must always be in control of his emotions. Many men find it difficult to show their grief around others. Friends and family may think, "He's over it" when, in fact, he is still hurting.

Many men try to distract themselves with their jobs. They strongly desire to maintain productivity and are often discouraged when, quite normally, they have less energy and less attention to give their work because of their grief.

Often men prefer to take action instead of confronting their feelings. They may increase their physical activity or over commit themselves to employment or community service. Many men feel a sense of failure because they cannot control the situation. They could not prevent the death. They could not protect the loved one who died. (This excerpt is from the article **Learning to Live**

Through Loss – Understanding Men Who Grieve -North Central Regional Extension Publication No. 537C. The entire text can be accessed at: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/F882B51E-D479-4009-8C65-25BE20FA43E4/91263/NCR537C.pdf>

Pictures

I set them out. I put them away...I get them out and start to go through them filled with wonder that the daughter pictured there is no longer going to call or walk in the door or send a card filled with love and humor. Cards that brightened my day, made me laugh and always prompted me to call her and give her a big hug when she walked in the door.

Pictures. I get them out. I run my hand over her face, lingering on her lips, remembering "kissy face mom." And suddenly, overcome with grief, I pull that picture to me and kiss her and tell her how much I love her and how very much I miss her...and then I look again, and see her eyes – eyes that sparkled and twinkled with mischief though at times filled with deep reflection. She was a sensitive, intuitive, young woman who possessed wisdom and insight much beyond her years. She "left us" when she was only 24.

Pictures. At times I hate them. They show me what I don't have. They bring back memories of a time when Jody was healthy and happy. A time when life with her was a joy. I am not yet to a place in my grief healing where I can remember those times very well. I'm still filled with memories of her illness, pain, and death; and I'm still at the place that I want all of those horrible memories to be a bad dream – a dream that I will wake from, hearing Jody's voice calling me to come outside so that we can take some...pictures.

Patty Fallon, TCF/Central Oregon

Four "R's" for the Grief Process

The Quad City Times June 28,1998

Recognize where you are in your grief work right now. If the sink stopping up makes you dissolve into a puddle of tears on the kitchen floor, you probably need some time just to feel your feelings. Knowing where you are will help you feel more in control of what's going on inside you and to trust the process. Remember, we all have within us the emotional resources to accept death.

Ritualize the task of grief you are in. For example, write a minute-by-minute account of the events leading up to the death as a way of getting it out of your head and making sense of it.

Reflect on what has happened, perhaps through a creative endeavor or by exercising a talent through which you explore your inner mind. However, sometimes in your grieving when you ask the question "What do I do next?" the answer is "Don't do. Be."

Re-orient yourself. Take a moment to bring back that sense of who you are and your reality. You have been changed forever by this loss, but you are still the same person, only with an added dimension.

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.

My son Matt

was killed in a car crash when he was twenty years old. He had returned from a year of combat in Iraq four months prior to his death. When I first fell into the abyss of grief I wasn't sure if I would die outright from the pain and despair or trudge through my days zombie-like, feeling only longing and loss. A part of me knew that I had to make a choice and this choice wasn't a one-time, cross-roads kind of decision; rather it was an every-moment, every-waking-breath kind of task I found overwhelming and exhausting. Choose life. Choose life. Choose life. It was a question -- a possibility and something that called for the energy to follow through. There was another underlying option. Choose death. Choose death. Choose death. It had its own dark allure, oblivion...or reunion with my son, if there is such a thing as life after death. I wanted relief from the pain and the heavy burden of living, the demands of my body for food, for rest, for motion, all of which seemed to require an impossible discipline.

Through the blackness of the earliest hours, days and years, I looked for what I thought of as hand-holds, small crevices in the towering wall of grief that threatened to flatten me, that stood directly in front of me. The wall of grief is what my life had become and in the metaphor of journey, if I was going to live at all, I was going to have to climb the wall. One of the most important hand-holds that I clung to, that helped me to scale

the wall, was my love for my living sons and my resolve that they would not suffer yet another loss. Whatever is at my core, my soul or spirit, could not tolerate the possibility that I would burden my living sons with any more pain. The defeated resignation and cowardice in me found its limit when it came to my living sons.

And so I gave myself over to grief and to grace. I decided to do all that I could to struggle not only survive, but to live life in a way that still contained joy, pleasure, goodness, beauty. I told myself that whatever was in my power -- and I'd come to see that very little was in my power -- I would not allow bad things to come from Matt's death...only good things.

The wild paradox of this thought left me lost. How could it be possible that anything good could come from my son's death? The very idea was despicable, and the prospect of making something good from Matt's death seemed both smarmy and outrageous.

Here again came the matter of choice. Choose life. Choose life. Or not. I stumbled and flailed around in the first couple of years. I read books, I swam, I listened to birdsong, I sat in places of staggering natural beauty and stared off into space. I prayed. I shrieked and wailed. I listened to music. I withdrew. And I watched for every moment when I might be able to mother my living sons. I cooked. I did their laundry. I made conversation. We continued our annual tradition of going to Wrigley Field to watch the Cubs play ball, each of us wearing

Continued, next page

brave smiles, feeling the howling absence of Matt blowing between us.

Two years after Matt's death, I arranged to take my sons fishing with my two living brothers, Alan and Mark. The trip was concocted as part of a family gathering in Michigan. Two years after Matt's death I still had no energy to cope with the chaos and demands of entertaining company, having kids big and little underfoot, tending my ailing mother. But despite my hesitation, I felt that having our extended family together would be good for my sons, that a fishing expedition on the big lake would show them that life goes on and there are new adventures to be had even though Matt was gone.

We rented a boat and set out about mid-day. My brother Mark's wife, Ann, came along for the boat ride but didn't plan to fish. The captain baited five poles along the rim of the boat. We settled into our seats and before long were telling stories and laughing. My youngest son Andrew stepped up to take the pole when the first salmon struck. He had caught a perch or two as a young boy, nothing weighing more than a pound. The fight in the large fish bent the pole in half and Andrew's forehead sprouted beads of sweat as he muscled the salmon into the boat. We'd laughed until our sides ached. After several hours each of the men folk had landed a salmon and it was time to turn back. As the captain turned the boat toward shore one of the fishing poles bent in half from the strike of another fish. Any one of the men, young or old, could've taken the fishing pole, but I heard in my heart the call to choose and I thought that I had to at least try to pull in the fish. I believed that if I did, even if I gave up halfway through the ordeal, my sons would see their mom say yes to life.

And so I did. I jabbed the fishing pole into my belly to gain some leverage. I bent from the waist and then leaned back, reeling the fish in for what seemed like hours. The fishing line must have been strung out a thousand yards. Laughing, moaning, carping that I couldn't do it, listening to my family cheering me on, I kept bending, pulling, and cranking the reel. At one point the boat captain stood next to me, taking the pole to adjust some gizmo. I keeled over, landing flat on my back on the deck of the boat. I stuck my legs straight up in the air, as if I were a dead bug. The captain urged me to get up and take up the pole again and so I groaned and scrabbled myself upright. A few torturous minutes later, I hauled the twenty-some pound salmon into the boat.

I have a photograph taken that day. In the picture my brother is helping me hold the fish, we are smiling broadly. The lake is brilliant blue, the powder blue sky behind us fades to white on the horizon. Our hats shade our faces from the bright sunlight.

One of my hands holds the head of the fish, my fingers tucked into its gills, and my other hand cups its belly; my brother grips the belly of the fish too, bearing its weight. The salmon's scales are silver with small black speckles sprinkled down the length of its body. The fins and tail look like delicate fans. There's a long trail of fresh red blood that runs from its gills down its length. In some parts the blood pools into little drops...death in our midst.

I marked this day, this experience as the first sign that I was still capable of joy -- hilarity reigning on our little boat, the hours of laughing and storytelling. I knew I'd said yes to life that day in a way that was clear and unforgettable for my sons and for me.

Nancy Ronquillo, TCF/Chicago