



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter



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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.

The Quad City Chapter



THE
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FRIENDS

June 2009, Volume XXII, Number 6

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

We began writing and sending this newsletter in 1988, four years after our daughter's death, as a way to share information, comfort and hope with other bereaved parents. Through the newsletter we believe we have honored our daughter's life and given some meaning to her death. Each month that we created and sent a newsletter was another step forward in our healing process. We thought that if through the newsletter we could help other bereaved parents on their journey with grief, the time and effort would be a wise investment.

In this month's newsletter is a story written by Barb Dreyer, a bereaved parent in the Quad City area. Her son died two years ago and since that time she has spoken in many schools to

warn children and parents of the danger of the "choking game." While it cannot negate her family's deep sorrow or the tragedy of her son's death, as she makes a difference in the lives of other young people and families, she honors her son's life and his love for helping other people.

We know of other bereaved families who have found meaningful ways to reach out to others even as they mourned for their child who has died. We believe this is a powerful tool for healing. If you would like to share ways you have found helpful to your healing and to honor the life of your child, let us know and we will share them in future newsletters.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, eating when you are hungry, or sneezing when you nose itches! It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

Rabbi Earl Grollman

Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute.
 We must simply hold out and see it through.
 That sounds very hard at first,
 but at the same time it is a great consolation.
 For the gap,
 as long as it remains unfilled,
 preserves the bonds between us.
 It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap;
 He does not fill it,
 but on the contrary, He keeps it empty
 and so helps us to keep alive
 our former communion with each other,
 even at the cost of pain."

Author Unknown
 Shared by Shirley Bloch
 TCF/San Diego County, CA



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.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: June 25, 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 upcoming months: Thursday, July 23rd and Thursday, August 27th.)

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 qcsos@yahoo.com

MOURNING

The mourning process takes a long time. It begins with news of the death, continues through the ritualized funeral and burial period, and endures for years to come. Even after the symptoms of grief have subsided and the mourning process seems complete, the world is never the same. The process of mourning is similar for all of us but our style of mourning depends on our own experiences and coping skills, life stresses, spiritual beliefs and circles of support....

.... mourning is more difficult when we have other stresses, such as illness or other family problems. The support of family and friends and our spiritual beliefs influence our feelings of grief and guide our style of mourning. In mourning we feel a sense of disbelief that our loved one has died while simultaneously reacting physically, emotionally and socially to our loss. The process is often one step forward, two steps back. But it is through the process of mourning that we find ways to adapt to life without our loved one. (This excerpt is from the article **Learning to Live Through Loss** -North Central Regional Extension Publication No. 537A.)

The entire text can be accessed at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/F882B51E-D479-4009-8C6525BE20EA43E4/91262/NCR537A.pdf>

Phantom Pains

This A.M. when I was in that half-awake, half-asleep stage, I was thinking about what it is like to have your child die. So many people who haven't lost a child cannot possibly understand.

I thought of losing a child as being compared to losing one of your extremities. If you had your arm suddenly amputated you would go into extreme shock. There would be so much pain for a long, long time. As that assaulting, excruciating pain eases, you learn to "get back into life," step by step, but it's a long process of rehabilitating yourself to learn to live without your arm. You start to "get better" and then the phantom pains come and try to haunt you. Unexpectedly, without warning, there you are again in pain, except now people don't understand your pain as well as they once did. So you feel guilty for feeling this phantom pain. There are some friends out there who are more wise and do understand about the phantom pains and will still love and be there with you. Others will leave.

Your hand itches but you can't scratch it. It's not there. The longing to hold your child is there, it's real, but you can't hold your child again while we are still here.

Some unwise people will tell you, "You have other children." Yes, you love your other children just as you love your other arm and legs but they can't take the place of the one you lost. We, as parents who have had a child die, have had part of us amputated. They were born out of us, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, carried in our wombs, nurtured at our breasts. And even those who have been adopted into our lives are knitted into our very souls. So, how can the death of a child even be related to the death of a father, mother, sister, brother, spouse or friend? There are all great losses but having our child die is having part of us taken away. The grief is different; it's not "normal." We are supposed to die before our children. Then I thought about that amputated arm. If that wound isn't cleansed and lovingly taken care of it will become infected. Bitterness and anger (which are normal in grief) can lead to an infection in your soul if you get stuck in it and it is not dealt with. Friends can be loving healers helping to bind up the wound or they can rip open the wound, making it deeper, by insensitive remarks due to a lack of understanding.

We are all at different stages in our journey through this loss and hopefully our healing. But there will always be a part of us that is gone until we are in heaven with them. We will get the phantom pains but we can make a choice each day to go through the pain until we find some hope for our weary souls. We will never be the same but we can survive and maybe we will even turn out to be better people, more in-tune with others. Become "wounded healers." We are already more gifted than a lot of other people in this world because we KNOW what it is to truly love our child. There are a lot of people out there who take their children for granted, just as a lot of us have taken for granted that it is normal to have two arms and two legs. But what if that were different..?

Carol Mudra, Walnut, CA
from Prodigy Medical Support Bulletin Board/Death of a child

Footprints

How very softly
You tiptoed
into my world
Almost silently.
Only a moment you
Stayed.
But what an
Imprint
Your footsteps
have left
Upon the heart.
Thanks.

D. Ferguson

The best way to honor the
dead is to love the living. For
if our lives stop when their
life stops, death has killed
twice.

Reverend William A. Ritter,
Bereaved father and Key Note Speaker, TCF 2006
Conference, Michigan

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 June 25th 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.

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.

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 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.

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walk without assistance, etc. If you have seizures, you can't drive. Helping kids pair the knowledge of the physical consequences with their personal lives is the key to helping them choose against engaging in this behavior.

I have heard some educators voice their concern that by educating kids on the consequences, we may be putting the idea in their heads. I understand that concern and have thought long and hard about that. I'm not proposing that anyone give kids step by step instructions. However, I do propose that we inform them and equip them with ways to deal with the situation if it arises. Kids are already aware of it. We need to arm them with the facts and tools to avoid peer pressure. If they have heard of it, they already know how to do it. What they don't know is how it is hurting them. We educate kids about the dangers of alcohol and illegal drugs. We don't tell them, "Step one, find yourself a dealer, step two..." On the contrary, we tell them that if you are confronted with a situation in which drugs and/or alcohol are present, these are the things you should do. We tell them the consequences of doing illicit drugs, how drugs hurt their brains and their bodies. Educating kids about the Choking Game is no different.

A proactive stance is important. Unfortunately, I am unable to be proactive with Zach. I can only be reactive. I can, however, be proactive for other children and families. Zach's death must not be in vain. Other people need to know about this tragic epidemic. No other parent should have to get the news I got on that awful August day. No other families should need to bury their children because of not knowing the risks of this deadly "game." Please help me keep all of our other children safe.

**Barb Dreyer – Quad Cities TCF
in loving memory of her son Zachary Hughes
b. December 17, 1991 d. August 5, 2007**

**Zach's death was found to be accidental by asphyxiation resulting
from the choking game by a jury in October 2007.**

Forget Me Not

Our little ones whisper,
"Forget me not,"
as their specialness wraps
around our heart.
Their short little lives
hold meaning and love.
Their spirits have touched us
each and everyone.
They have left their gifts
for us to uncover,
if we open our eyes,
our hearts and our lives.

The road to discovery
is hilly and dark.
Will we long harbor the pain
or set our wings for the light?
Our lives have been changed,
our paths filled with sorrow.
Yet their memories embrace us
and our love lasts forever.
If we open our hearts
their gifts shall unfold...
As we forget them not.

Sherokee Ilse

Give Teens a Chance – Understanding Teen Grief

I had just turned sixteen when my older brother, Tim, was murdered. I was already struggling with the pressures of being a teen. I certainly did not need my life to be any more complicated. It was the most difficult thing I had ever experienced. Eventually, I emerged from my loss with a better understanding of grief. Since then, I have always felt the need to advocate for grieving teens.

Being a parent to a grieving teen can be tough. When I've listened to parents talk about their teen, I've heard them say things like: "My teen doesn't want to talk to me about their loss. They seem so distant. I want to help, but I don't know how. I just want to share a good cry with them."

Being a grieving teen can be tough. Some of the things I've heard teens say are: "I don't want to talk to my parents about my loss because I don't want to upset them. I am really going through a difficult time right now. I feel tremendous weight upon my shoulders. I don't think my parents understand."

Allow a teen to be a teen. Not only has their loss been difficult for them to get through, but they are also getting bombarded with all kinds of other stress. Never allow yourself to compare your surviving teen with the one who died. In my house, we had a bookshelf dedicated to the "greatness" of my brother. One of the things that really angered me was that his memory was being distorted. He was a great brother, but he was no angel. I wanted to

remember him for exactly who he was – good and bad included. One of the most important things that a grieving teen can have is a friend they can talk to. As a parent, this may be you, but more often it is not. There are several reasons for this. The teen may feel that bringing up the subject will only make the parent feel worse. I call this "parenting the parent." Another reason is that as grievers, we all tend to be very selfish. Often the parent feels that they are entitled to the most grief. Grief should not be competitive. Everyone handles his or her grief differently.

No one said this was going to be easy. Give yourself some room to grieve as well as your teen. I have found that when you give a teen a chance to express his or her grief, then they will do the same for you.

Ben Sieff, BS HSSA

Ben Sieff was sixteen when his older brother, Tim, was murdered. He is a former director of Centering Corporation, a non-profit grief resource center, and former president of Ted E. Bear Hollow, a support center for grieving children in Omaha, NE. For more than eighteen years, Ben has presented workshops and facilitated support groups for children, teens, parents and professionals. He is currently employed at All Our Kids, Inc., a scholarship and mentoring program for at-risk children. He is also currently working on his Master's degree in Social Work.

PLEASE LET ZACH'S STORY SAVE ANOTHER CHILD'S LIFE

On August 5, 2007, life as I knew it came to an abrupt halt. My 15 year-old son, Zach, was found dead, slumped over with a rope around his neck. I will never forget the shock, total dismay, disbelief, and extreme depression when the investigator told me, "Zachary hung himself..." When I had spoken to a deputy about half an hour prior he told me there had been an accident and that I needed to get there right away. The deputy wouldn't tell me anything over the phone. When I asked if Zach was alright, and he would only tell me that he really needed to talk to me in person, I knew that meant the worst. I prayed the whole agonizing half-hour drive to the site and reassured myself between tears, stating over and over again, "Zachy will be alright, he'll be o.k."

I didn't understand why he would want to leave the world. He was so happy – just returning from his trip to England three days prior. He excitedly showed me his souvenirs and told me of his purchases of World War II memorabilia (he was a major history buff and was reading books all the time about history). He was so proud of the prices he paid and was proud of the fact that he made investments. "These are worth far more than I paid for them, Mom. But you don't sell them. You don't sell them until you get old, THEN you sell them. They're an investment, Mom." He was a very smart kid and for 15 had a great deal of insight.

He was so happy. He loved helping people. It made him feel good to volunteer, and he was proud of a job well done. He was on the honor roll. He played the tuba in the band. He was a lifelong scout and was well on his way to becoming an Eagle Scout. He had plans. He had goals. He loved to talk and share what he learned. He was in the middle of writing a science fiction book. It is really quite good, especially for a 15 year-old. He had just started on the next chapter the night he returned from England.

Again, he was only 15 years old. He wasn't a perfect kid – I don't believe such a person exists. Zach made mistakes and was moody – all normal for a 15 year-old. Like most kids his age, he thought he knew more than he actually did, and that his mom didn't really know much. But, Zach never gave me any reason to believe he would engage in any major risky behavior. He loved the D.A.R.E. program. He was adamant about his views against drugs and alcohol. He looked forward to getting his driver's license – he would have been 16 in December.

Zachary did not show any of the classic signs of depression. He was outgoing, not withdrawn. He was planning for the future, not putting his affairs in order. The night that Zach died, he had camping survival gear with him, and had set his alarm for the morning so he could get up in time to go to church. Zach was not depressed.

I truly believe that Zach got caught up in what is called, "The Choking Game." I had heard it briefly mentioned on some news show, but I didn't really know much about it. After doing just a small amount of research after Zach died, I am amazed at the extent of the problem. It is extremely prevalent and, like me, most parents are not aware of the problem. What's even more disturbing is that the kids engaging in this activity are not aware of the dangers.

The way to combat this deadly "game" is through education and straightforward talk with kids and parents. Parents need to know about this problem and keep a careful eye open. Kids need to be taught the dangers. The average kid engaging in this activity is between the ages of 10 and 16, some are older, some are younger. The average kid doing this is against drugs and alcohol, does well in school and is intelligent, doesn't cause problems and is considered to be a "good kid" by adults and peers. As intelligent people, these kids are making uninformed, deadly choices. Kids need to know that by depriving their brains of oxygen they are killing their brains. Millions of brain cells die each time they choke themselves. The feeling of euphoria, the warm tingling sensation they feel is a result of brain cells dying. The rush of blood back into the brain causes severe pressure on the blood vessels. This can lead to stroke, seizures, migraine headaches, and other types of permanent brain damage. This activity also stresses the heart, lungs and other internal organs. Performing this activity even once can cause death.

That's what happened to Zach. He performed the Choking Game alone. He leaned into the rope with the intention of standing up (the rope was not tied to the top of the bar, it was not tight around his neck, and he did not jump from a high place). His feet were on the ground when he was found. He passed out before he could stand up. It only takes five to ten seconds for a person to pass out from doing this. Since he was alone, nobody could help him stand up. The slick rope he used would have normally come loose and allowed him to fall to the ground allowing him to regain consciousness. However, due to the extremely humid conditions and high heat that night, the rope dug in.

I do not believe when discussing this topic with children that extreme details (as above) are necessary. I do believe that letting kids know the consequences of their choices is necessary. Kids at this age are self-centered and have not yet fully grasped abstract thinking. They believe they are omnipotent; that it maybe can happen to others, but that it will never happen to them or their friends. I believe that if educators pair the physical consequences with examples from the kids' lives, it would make the most impact. For example, if you have a stroke, it can paralyze you. If you're paralyzed, you can't play sports, go to the mall,

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