



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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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



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December 2009, Volume XXII, Number 11

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Dear Compassionate Friends,



I just finished reading a sheaf of updates about the condition of a little boy in our church family who is battling cancer. He has been hospitalized a great deal of time at Iowa City recently. Feelings course through me as I remember the many days and nights we spent in Iowa City with our daughter, Anna. Her first and only Christmas was spent in the neonatal intermediate care unit at University Hospitals.

What underscores these letters from this family is the strong sense of hope and gratitude that permeates each letter even though their child's illness is very serious with little medical hope for a good outcome. And yet they choose to focus on the many things they have to be thankful for – they are not giving thanks for the trial, but they are giving thanks and I think it is this that gives them the courage to carry on even when the future in the short term and possibly the long term holds much pain for them.

In the article in this month's newsletter "Christmas Morning or Mourning" is the following sentence that I think is really significant. **"You can and should not smother or suppress grief, but you must also remain open to the light that still can enter your life."** This is what this family is doing. They are deeply grieving what their family has lost already and may likely lose in the future but their openness to the light, manifested in their grateful spirits, is enabling them to survive.

And so for all of our Compassionate Friends – we know you will be grieving probably deeply and painfully this holiday season, but we also encourage you to "be open to the light that still can enter your life."

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

If I can concentrate on the moral and spiritual side
of the holidays,
I can make it through.
If I can absorb the love and warmth that was the
beginnings, I can give love back.
If I can share the grief and the love that is in me
throughout these holidays,
I can start a new year.

Tom Spray, TCF/Simi Valley



GOAL

Goal in life?

Mine is to get through one day without crying because of thinking of you.

Hey, don't knock it.

It's a good goal: Manageable, attainable, measurable.

One day.

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.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL SERVICE

Thursday, December 3, 2009
at 7:00 P.M.

Bethel Assembly of God Church
3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL

Our Christmas Memorial Service is for every bereaved parent who would like to have his or her child remembered at our candle lighting ceremony. We will light a candle in memory of each child. (We will provide the candles.) All family members are invited. A time of fellowship will follow the service.

If you plan to attend the meeting, or if you cannot make the meeting but would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return this form or give Michelle Cauwels a call (number below) so we will have an idea of how many candles to order. If you have a candle from previous years, please bring it with you.

Child's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Date of Death: _____

Parents' Names: _____

We plan to attend (please circle): yes no

We are unable to attend, but would like our child remembered (please circle): Yes No

I/We would be willing to help in some way (cookies, special music, set-up, clean up).

Name _____ Phone _____

Send to: **Michelle Cauwels (309.755.0783)**
351 15th Ave
East Moline IL 61244.

If you would like to make a love gift to TCF in memory of your child, you may do so at the service or by sending your contribution to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks should be addressed to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Take the Time...to Hurt, to Cry

“Wordless and worldless - endless and forever, grief goes on -
It takes the best - and leaves the rest an empty shell-Life is Hell.”

David was dead four months when I wrote that in my journal. Time is my enemy. As I envisioned the future of my life, I saw only a vast expanse of desert - dry, parched, and empty. It is now a year and a half since David's death, and I recognize that time has become my friend. Now, when I look to the future, I see hills and valleys - struggles, to be sure - but also moments spent at the summit. What has happened? Time is healing.

Take the time

To hurt . . . the pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only resurface later in a potentially more destructive way.

To cry . . . it may feel like once started you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

To “fall apart.” . . .if you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater - you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

To be “selfish” . . . mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

To identify” . . .and seek out resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them.

Having done all that - having lingered in the valley of the shadow - It is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time

To engage again . . . in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

To laugh without guilt . . . savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can rediscover the beauty of a sunset.

To care for your health...grieving is a physical, as well as psychological stress. Your body needs protection.

To be patient...wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time.

The path out to the other side of the valley is steep, and we all often stumble.

But with time spent doing the work of grief -- **you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.**

Bronna Romaoff, PhD, TCF/Albany, NY

Christmas Morning or Mourning

That inevitable awakening lies ahead for each of us, that moment when we open our eyes and face the climax of weeks of colored lights, carols, frenzied shopping, social gatherings, accumulating gifts...even if we have not taken an active part in all of these preparations. Now the prelude is over and the day itself is upon us. However we have participated, with apprehension or dread, with courage or resolve, this is the moment when we confront the ultimate reality of dealing with the holiday without our child.

Will it be morning or simply mourning? Whether this is our first Christmas since our child's death, or one of many, this is far more than a cute play on words. For the answer lies within each of us and not without. The quality of our Christmas is but another in that series of countless decisions we each confront when our child dies.

The holiday is more than just another day, but like each other it does afford moments for grief and occasions for joy. It is simply more intense, more culturally bound in rituals that establish the significance for certain parts of our lives.

Without doubt, we will each remember our child's anticipation and excitement from holidays past, and we will hear the unnatural silence of absence above numberless other sounds. Allow yourself to cry and let the hurt course through you as you dress. It is your own grief...it belongs only to yourself...and it must not be denied. Wash, brush your teeth, feel the hollowness without being consumed by it, for there are others in your life. Even if you are alone, you are an “other,” a personal-

ity apart from your deceased child and a great deal more than a life summed up in a denial of living.

Therefore, grant yourself moments to grieve, but leave room to sandwich instants of joy between.

A single smile, one quiet laugh, a gentle moment of fondness for the delight of another, even if only from memory...these are all it takes to turn mourning into morning. You can and should not smother or suppress grief, but you must also remain open to the light that still can enter your life.

In my own memories of my son at Christmas I will find both reasons to cry and irresistible urges to laugh. His life was sunshine in mine. In the holiday his memory should not become a shroud to hide away my love for him. On the 25th, as on every other day, I will remember him and long for him, knowing he has forever marked Christmas for me with his own happiness and it is only his permanent physical withdrawal that chills these moments with a seemingly endless sorrow.

If we decide, if we are willing to work on it, we can mix remembrance with mourning and turn it to morning, thus enriching our lives by continuing to feel the laughter and joy our children gave to each of us. It is our deceased child's Christmas gift to us this year and in all the years to come. Take it with the same grace and gratitude with which we accepted all the others from holidays past...from other Christmas mornings.

Don Hackett, Kingston, MA

Don and Kathy's son Olin, died at the age of 17 as a result of an accidental hanging at a boys' camp.

TCF Bulletin Board

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

The next monthly meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on December 3rd at 7:00 pm at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island. The January meeting is on the 23rd.

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

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.

Thank you to:

Bill and Laurie Steinhauser, in memory of their niece, Beth Hagerty.
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Butz, in memory of their grandson, Joshua Memenga.

Steve and Mary Gibbs in memory of their daughter, Lindsay Anne.
Roger and Connie Kahler in memory of their granddaughter, Paige Amy.
Ken and Sandy Keller in memory of their son, Adrian.

Joseph and Pamela Reedy in memory of their son, Justin Willemarck-Reedy.

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.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: December 3, 2009 at 7:00 pm Annual Candle Lighting Service

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.) Alan and Rosemary Shoemaker — 309-441-5586, or Michelle Cauwels — 309-755-0783 for directions or information. Next month: January 28, 2010 at 6:30 pm.

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 Kirby White at (563)271-5908.
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 are 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

When We Remember

When the snow falls, and silence drifts in white across the earth, we remember their joy, the glad cries that broke the hush of fresh winter.

When the family gathers, caught in wonderment around the Thanksgiving table or the holiday tree, we remember their excitement, the anticipation that was impossible to contain.

When the sun sets, and Christmas lights sparkle and shine to challenge the night, we remember their tired but glowing faces, alight in a thrill of happiness that made our day.

When we remember, we feel afresh that brightness, that energy, and we smile . . . and we cry.

For what was, for what can never be.

In our remembering, we are the vessels of yesterday, the bearers of the light, the victims of the dark.

And in our remembering, we are parents, hurting, healing, gathering our strength and our passion to live once more, to destroy an endless light with the sun and starlit joys of the past, forging our memories into the promise of a new and different dawn, a reinvestment in life itself, even without our child.

For we have loved, love still, and have been loved in turn.

Our memories tell us, our intellect compels us, ultimately, to answer our child's love with our own unending love, showing through the quality and commitment of our own lives that both loves have enriched us beyond measure.

May the holidays, for all their sorrow and all their pain, help each of us to build anew our lives, using our joys from the past to create a new day, where sorrow, though never gone, no longer governs our every waking hours.

Don Hackett, TCF/South Shore Chapter, Hingham, MA



Tips for Coping with the Holidays

1. Limit social gatherings – choose the ones you feel give you the Christmas spirit. Be sure to keep in mind your children’s needs also.
2. Change tradition
 - ☼ The holiday meal:
 - Go out for a Christmas meal
 - Ask others to share in the preparation of the holiday meal.
 - Ask someone else to host this year’s Christmas meal.
 - Eat at a different time.
 - Have a different menu than usual.
 - Have a candle light dinner.
 - Have people over for dessert only.
 - Invite exchange students or college students or senior citizens to share a Christmas meal.
 - ☼ Go to a different church and participate in their service
 - ☼ Choose a different time or day for a holiday church service to attend.
 - ☼ Limit decorating for Christmas – do what you feel is important but include your child in participating.
 - ☼ Hang one stocking and have each family member put a note inside telling your loved one what you would like to share with them if they could be with you at Christmas; or hang a stocking for everyone.
 - ☼ Open presents on a different day than you usually do.
3. Give a memorial gift of flowers, books, or money to church or charitable organization in memory of your loved one. Place a Christmas wreath at the cemetery.
4. Buy an ornament or something that is special in memory of your loved one. If you are not ready to hang an ornament for your loved one on the tree this year, wait until next year. Buy a poinsettia or Christmas cactus in memory of your loved one.
5. Make your gifts or buy sheet music, tapes, books, or artwork as gifts. Let the children do the wrapping of presents. If wrapping is too much of a chore, shop where wrapping is done for you. Consider giving a recent photo of your loved one as a gift.
6. Lighting a candle may be comforting, while a prayer is read in memory of your loved one in church or in the privacy of your home.
7. Keep a holiday diary of how the family is.
8. Limit holiday baking or have family members participate in the baking and decorating of cookies. Buying “holiday treats” may be another option if you find you have little time or energy to make your own.
9. Spend Christmas alone reading a book you’ve always wanted to read. Use this time for reflection or spend Christmas with your children only.
10. Rent videos to have quiet days at home rather than going visiting over the holidays. Listen to relaxation or healing tapes. Listen to your favorite music or FM radio channels.
11. Write one Christmas letter and copy to send out to family and friends or have your name preprinted inside Christmas cards and purchase preprinted return address labels, or perhaps don’t send greeting cards this year. Or add a simple memorial/service card inside your Christmas card.



Continued next page

Even for the fortunate ones, Christmas is not without its shadows. Were it a religious celebration only, there would be no room for sorrow, but we have made it – and quite properly so – a family festival. And thereby we have made ourselves dreadfully vulnerable. Whoever has lost someone through death or dissension, whoever had a dammed up reservoir of love, whoever remembers a greener Christmas of warm embraces and leaping hearth fires – that person has to call upon his courage to face Christmas this year.

And there is no escape. For the rest of the year he can bluff his loneliness with busy work. But now the radio plays *Holy Night* or *I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas*, and his heart contracts in an agonizing spasm. He drives through streets at dusk which are lined with lighted windows and shining Christmas trees. Miles and miles of little homes, so gay and confident and warm, with people moving about inside, people who care for one another, and he feels utterly bereft. I know all the proper things to say at this point. I usually say them. I really believe them. But first of all let us acknowledge that Christmas is heartbreak-

ing time for a good many people.

Among the gifts, which the Wise men brought to the Christ child, was the bitter myrrh of Araby, the same myrrh that would one night embalm his crucified body. The swaddling clothes of the baby, prefigured the grave clothes that would bind him – but so briefly – in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Mary had been warned that a sword would pierce her heart. And so, even on the first Christmas night when the angels sang and the great star hovered and the child was born, there was implicit tragedy in the manger. Suffering lay ahead, and pain that He would accept, transcend, and conquer.

If you find myrrh among your gifts this year, if your heart has already felt the piercing edge of the sword, embrace the bitter pungency and the world as part of the Christmas festival. Offer up your pain in adoration. That is the priceless gift you can make, a gift worthy of a king. Give of your myrrh. Give humbly, brokenly, and with abandon. God will accept your pain.

It was the Child Himself who said, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Adele Starbird TCF/Palo Alto, CA

12. Avoid Christmas shopping on weekends. Go shopping during less busy times (e.g., mornings) or do catalog or online shopping. Have a list made out beforehand and divide shopping responsibilities with family members. Give money gifts or gift certificates in a Christmas card.
13. If you take a vacation – remember you may be preoccupied with thinking about the deceased. Preoccupation may make you oblivious to harmful situations. It can also slow your reflexes making driving long distances potentially dangerous.
14. Allow yourself to leave holiday functions early. Inform the hostess of your feelings beforehand.
15. Share Christmas with another bereaved family or take food to shut-ins and visit with them.

Remember – do what is meaningful for you – be flexible – allow for change during this holiday season. You can always return to your traditional holiday preferences if you choose.

Bonnie Gensch, RN, Resolve Through Sharing, Lutheran Hospital, La Crosse, WI, 1987