



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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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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March 2010, Volume XXIII, Number 3

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

For some of us, the hardest



part of the grief experience is dealing with other people's actions and reactions to us after our loss. I remember feeling exposed like I was wearing a sign on my head that read "My child died," when we got together with groups of people after Anna died. I felt uncomfortable meeting new people, needing to tell them what had happened to our family but not wanting to deal with the awkwardness if I did. I remember someone at the park asking Mike if he had a brother or sister and then the shock on their face and the embarrassed silence when he replied, "I have a sister. She's dead." And then there are the people who just want us to get on with our lives and can't understand what might be wrong with us because this grief "thing" is taking so long. In all honesty Jerry and I experienced much love, sensitivity, and caring from most of the people in our lives after Anna died, but we know many who have dealt with insensitivity and pressure to move on. I remember the father, who when asked at a TCF meeting by a speaker how long he thought the grief process might take, replied, "Well my employer thinks about two weeks." Those who have not experienced the loss of their child cannot know or truly understand, and we wouldn't want anyone else to feel this pain just so they could empathize with experiential knowledge. But we can help educate them. Two of the articles in the newsletter this month, *Aren't You Over IT?* and *My Old Friend, Grief* would be useful ones to copy and share with the people in your life who care about you, want to help, but just don't know how. And remember as you journey through grief the credo of the Compassionate Friends. We do not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Know that You Will Survive

All veteran grieving parents I have ever had the privilege of meeting and learning from would want me to tell you this first: You will survive.

If your loss was recent, you may think you cannot get through this. You can and you will. It will be excruciatingly difficult, yes, but over time and with the love and support of others, your grief will soften and you will find ways to be happy again. There will come a day when the death is not the first thing you think of when you wake up in the morning.

Many newly bereaved parents also struggle with feeling they don't want to survive. Again those who have gone before you want you to know that while this feeling is normal, it will pass. One day in the not-too-distant future, you will feel that life is worth living again. For now, think of how important you are to your remaining children, your partner, your own parents and siblings, your friends.

As time passes, you may also choose not simply to survive, but to truly live. The remainder of your life can be full and rich and satisfying if you choose life over mere existence.

Alan Wolfelt
from the book
*Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart –
100 Practical Ideas After Your Child Dies.*

Other books from grief counselor Alan Wolfelt include:

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing a Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers

Healing A Teen's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families Friends and Caregivers

All available from Centering Corporation www.Centering.org

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.

For the Special Child I Carry Now

When you are old enough to understand, I hope you will know how thrilled I am that you have been alive long enough to understand.

I hope you will never feel less special than the child who came before you. We never thought of you as replacement. We will always miss our first baby, but no more than we would have missed you. In fact, you are all of our hopes and dreams. We love you so.

When you are old enough, I hope that you will understand that right now I am praying that someday you will be old enough to understand. And, even if you never understand, I will just be glad that you are old enough.

Lisa Casimer TCF /Chicago, IL



Death leaves a
heartache no one
can heal,
Love leaves a memory
no one can steal.

Found on a headstone in Ireland
Central Iowa TCF Newsletter

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now – right now – it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess – to swell and undermine – erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green - TCF/Livonia, MI

Can Spring Be Far Behind?



On Groundhog Day we watch to see if that creature will see its shadow, an omen of six more weeks of winter. At that point I think many of us are weary of the cold weather and are looking forward to spring. Spring is a

renewal and revitalization of nature after a cold, hard winter. We delight in seeing the first crocus, the first robin. With the arrival of spring in March even though we may still have blustery winds, there is the promise of something new in the air. We look forward to the wearing of the green on St. Patrick's Day, the egg hunts for the children and the Easter parade.

But wait, is all this true for all of us, especially for the newly bereaved parent? When a child dies, no matter what season it may be at that time, for the parents it may be a cruel and harsh winter. The day may be radiant, the sky blue, the weather balmy, but for these parents the "winter of our discontent" may be long, difficult and protracted. We are so shattered in our grief that even changing seasons may seem to us as one. But by the law of nature, even the most brutal winter must pass and a more gentle and compassionate climate take its place. Wasn't it Shelley who wrote, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Dave Ziv,
TCF/Bucks Mont Chapter, PA

THE THIRD YEAR

By Janie French

The racking sobs lay quiet
Yet close, stalking,
Waiting to take advantage
of a weak moment.

The deafening silence has lifted
To the music of another child's
laughter.
But one instrument is missing
In this life's orchestra.

Heaviness of heart slightly
lighter,
Weariness of head lighter yet.
Not still hanging on to the final
rung,
But up one or two closer to the
top.

Yes, anger still rears its head.
And nightfall is still the time
When the fort is rushed
And the enemy called sorrow
scales the wall.

Year four is unpredictable,
Just as years one, two and three.
Perhaps it will bring fewer battles
stronger hearts and minds.

And hope lingers
that upon the twelfth month
going forward,
life will turn a friendlier face even
still.

Questions without answers. That's one of the things you learn to deal with when your child dies.

Jessie's Keychain

Our daughter Jessica was 14 years old in August 1999 when she went back to school shopping with two of her friends. It was beautiful summer day...a car crash was the furthest thing from our minds. However, the 16-year-old driver wasn't paying full attention to the traffic in an intersection and pulled in front of a tractor-trailer. The passenger side of the car where Jessie was seated took the brunt of the hit. Jessie died the next day. And that's when the questions began to bombard us.

Most of the questions dealt with why the crash had occurred and why Jessie had died. But after a few months, we began to ask ourselves what we were going to do to try to make sense of this horrible thing that had happened. Was there any way to stop this type of tragedy from happening again ... at least once? Was there any way to stop another family from experiencing this hell?

In our vulnerable state, we worried about the safety of Jessie's brother and her cousins and all her friends. Christmas and Jessie's birthday were approaching, and we wanted to be able to give these kids a reminder-both of Jessie and of the frailty of life.

We came up with the idea of a keychain, hoping that if the kids noticed each time they started the car, they couldn't help but be reminded of those issues. We designed the keychain and made and

distributed 250 to family and friends. We brought a sample to the Highway Safety Task Force in which we had become active; they were intrigued with the idea, and helped us pay for the production of thousands more. Now the Motor Vehicle Administration in Frederick, Maryland, offers a key chain to newly licensed drivers after telling them Jessie's story.

In the past 22 months, over 4,000 Jessica Murphy keychains have been distributed. We still don't have any answers, but we have begun to accept that there won't be any. However, one thing we have gained is hope. Hope that at least one child will see Jessie's keychain and will remember to drive more safely. Hope that at least one child will see Jessie's keychain and will remember her and how fragile life really is.

We probably will never know if Jessie's keychain helped save a life...but that doesn't matter. What matters is that the production and distribution of the keychain gave us a positive focus and helped us work through some of our grief. What matters is that maybe someone, somewhere won't die because the keychain reminded them to slow down, buckle up, and drive defensively. What matters is that we have learned that some questions simply don't have answers.

Sue and Don Murphy
TCF/Frederick, MD



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 March 25th at 6:30 pm at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island. The April meeting is on the 22nd.

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.

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.

In one of the stars I shall be living.
In one of them I shall be laughing.
And so it will be
As if all the stars were laughing
When you look at the sky at night.
And there is sweetness
In the laughter of all the stars . . .
And in the memories of those
you love.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
From *The Little Prince*
French aviator and writer, 1900-1944



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: March 25, 2010, at 6:30 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.) Alan and Rosemary Shoemaker — 309-441-5586, or Michelle Cauwels — 309-755-0783 for directions or information. Next month: April 22, 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

My Old Friend, Grief Adolfo Quezada

My old friend, Grief, is back. He comes to visit me once in a while just to remind me that I am still a broken person. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely I have adjusted to a world without him by now. But the truth is, we never completely heal, we never totally adjust to the loss of a major love. We will be all right, but we will never be the same.

And so my old friend, Grief, drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. Sometimes he sneaks up on me. I'll hear a certain song, smell a certain fragrance, or look at a certain picture, and I'll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

Some may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. Grief revisited is grief acknowledged, and grief confronted is grief resolved.

But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a deep sense of loss at anniversaries and holidays, and

even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat, even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting, and because moving on with life does not mean that we don't take part of the deceased with us.

My old friend, Grief, doesn't get in the way of my living. He just wants to drop by and chat sometimes. In fact, Grief has taught me, over the years, that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or else risk emotional paralysis.

Old Grief has also taught me that I can survive even great losses and that although my world is very different after a major loss, it is still my world and life is worth living. He has taught me that when I am willing to be pruned by the losses that come, I can flourish again in season; not in spite of loss, but because of it.

My old friend, Grief, has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love, for love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death.

Aren't You Over IT?

Oh, you're not over IT, are you?"

Sound familiar? As if you don't have enough grief in your life, you have well-meaning people in your life talking to you about IT. See if any of these ring a bell:

"IT's been going on too long."

"IT's not like you."

"IT's changed you."

"How long is IT going to go on?"

You are likely reading this article because someone has said the IT word to you; or maybe they just give you that look: "You're not over IT." What is this IT of which they speak? Let's look.

As you are keenly aware, the people around you have expectations about how you should be reacting to having your precious child ripped from your grasp. When people see you in pain, they are rightfully concerned about your well-being. Here are a few concerns that others may have of you (realistic or not):

Concern #1: You will stay in grief forever. If not forever, then for years and years. If not years and years, then for a few years. If not for a few years, then for a year or more.

Concern #2: You will wallow in IT. You will cry for hours and hours. You will have the same looks on your face for years: sad, angry, confused, tired, pathetic, guilty, hopeless, helpless. You will not be able to perform your duties at home and work at your previous level.

Concern #3: IT has changed you. You have become someone new to them. IT is almost like a stranger has taken over not only your body but your mind as well. You will not be able to be there for them

like you used to.

In addition to concerns that people have about you, another way to think of the IT problem is to consider IT talk as a form of bargaining, which often is revealed in the form of a yes/but statement. It might go something like this:

"Yes, I know you've experienced a terrible tragedy, but I want your old self back."

"Yes, you are different, but let me see if I can find a way that you won't be so different."

"Yes, you are hurting, but at least..."

"Yes, you are hurting, but look at what your pain is doing to me."

A yes/but statement starts out with, "I'm empathetic—or at least I'm trying to be." But then the next statement changes the focus and comes out sounding something like this: "But I don't want to admit that the death of your children really has changed you—forever. IT is too much for me to handle, so you do something about IT."

Much has been written about the clichés of grief, but understanding the thinking behind it can perhaps give you some insight into why in the world people would say such foolish things. You, of course, are the one who shouldn't have to try "fixing" others who complain, whine, and bemoan about IT. Yet, we all know the essential lesson in relating to the people in our life: the only person you can truly change is yourself.

So what am I getting at? This: the next time someone gives you an IT statement, rather than saying to yourself, "How insensitive," consider engaging in self talk that goes something like this: "Okay, okay, calm down. Remember that this person is worried that I have changed forever—and I

have. This person is trying to bargain the old 'me' back—and that won't happen."

So what can you do? You have three choices:

Break off the relationship and never hear about IT from this person again. Perhaps you've done that with some people already.

Continue putting up with IT talk, perhaps now realizing the thinking behind some of it. Talk to other TCF parents and compare the IT statements they've heard. Ask them how they've dealt with it. The next time you are in conversation with another parent you might say something like, "Say, do you have any suggestions for dealing with IT-problems?"

Don't wait: Write a letter to the person (I know, I know—it takes energy you don't really have—asking the person to drop specific statements when around you. Finish your note by stating that despite their worries and concerns, you are a different person and nothing—absolutely nothing they say or do is going to change that.

Let me finish with a question: If the roles were reversed and it was you who was engaging in IT talk, wouldn't you want your friend to tell you?

I thought so.

**Dr. Bob Baugher,
TCF/South King County**

I Am Spring

I am the beginning.
I am budding promise.
I spill cleansing tears of life
From cloudy vessels
Creating muddy puddles
Where single-cell creatures
abide
And splashing children play.
I am new green growth.
I softly flow from winter's barren
hand.
On gentle breeze I fly –
embracing sorrow.
With compassion, we feather
nests
Where winged voices sing winter
-spring duets.
As frozen ice transforms to
playful stream
I whisper truth—life is change.
I am spring.
I bless long, dark wintry days.
I crown mankind's pain
With starry skies
In deepest night
Lighting solitary paths from
sorrow to joy
As the wheel of life turns round
and round.

Carol Clum
In memory of her son, Jason, and her
granddaughter, Hannah

