



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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Dear Compassionate Friends,

My younger son recently took a trip with my father to tour sites in Arkansas related to our family's history. Included in the tour were home sites, farm sites and cemeteries, complete with stories about the people who had lived and worked there. Matthew enjoys photography and took a great number of pictures. One of the cemetery shots is of a long row of identical white rectangular markers, each one engraved, Matthews' Infant. My father did not know if these were the children of all one family or of several families in the Matthews clan or even if these babies were all in the same generation. What I do know is that each of those babies, whether they lived a few hours or a few days or not at all outside the womb, was the precious and beloved child of some mother and father and that long after their untimely death they were loved and not forgotten even if they were never spoken of or given a name to say aloud or be placed upon their tombstone.

I recently ran across an article from an old *Guideposts* magazine written by a mother whose child died only nine hours after his birth. She wrote, "I spent many days at the cemetery, just wandering, trying to feel close to God, and to the baby I'd lost. On one visit I felt drawn to a particular grave, that of an infant who'd died nine months before mine. The inscription brought me tremendous comfort: "How very softly you tiptoed into my world. Almost silently. Only a moment you stayed. But what an imprint your tiny footprints have left upon my heart." Back in the 1800's when my ancestors were settling in the hills of Arkansas, infant death was very common. Few families raised all their children to adulthood, some none. But I cannot help but believe that the loss of a child ever became commonplace and that each of those lives represented in the line of grave markers in Matthew's photograph left tiny imprints on a parent's heart.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

National Conference

Online registration is now available on the TCF Website for the 33rd Annual TCF National Conference - July 2-4, 2010 in Arlington, Virginia. A TCF National Conference is an event unlike any other where bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents are able to share with others walking the same grief journey. This is combined with well-known speakers, great entertainment, and more than 100 workshops covering most areas of grief after the death of a child.

www.compassionatefriends.org



e-Newsletter Now Available!

An 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.

Thank you to **Maggie's Fund and Bethany for Children & Families** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

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.

Becoming Whole Again - The Process of Grieving

When we experience any kind of devastating loss, whether it is the loss of a loved one, a dream, or a relationship, feelings may arise within us that are overwhelming or difficult to cope with. This sense of grief can also come up when we are separated from anyone or anything we have welcomed into our lives. And while it may feel like we are caught up in a never-ending spiral of sadness and emptiness, it is important to remember that the grief we are feeling is not a permanent state of being. Rather, grief is part of the process of letting go that in many ways can be a gift, allowing us to go deeper within ourselves to rediscover the light amidst the seeming darkness.

The emotions that accompany any kind of loss can be intense and varied. A sense of shock or denial is often the first reaction, to be replaced by anger. Sometimes this anger can be directed at your loved one for abandoning you; at other times you may feel outrage toward the universe for what you are enduring. And while there are stages of grief that people go through, moving from denial to anger to bargaining to depression to acceptance, the cycles of grief often move in spirals, sometimes circling forward and then back again. You may even experience moments of strength, faith, and laughter in between. While these emotions seem to come and go sporadically, it is important to feel them, accept them, and allow them to flow. With time, patience, and compassion, you will eventually find your center again.

As we move through our grief, we may find ourselves reluctant to release our pain, fearing we are letting go of who or what we have lost. We may even regard our movement toward healing as an act of disloyalty or giving up. Know that while the hurt may fade, the essence of what you had and whom you loved will have already transformed you and forever stay with you. If anything, once you are ready for the pain of your loss to subside, their memories can then live more fully within you. Remember, that healing is a part of the spiraling cycles of grief, and that in letting yourself feel restored again, you are surrendering to a natural movement that is part of the dance of life.

From the Daily OM
(reprinted in *We Need Not Walk Alone*, Summer 2009)

Chalkboard Reflections

Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don't understand. *C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed*

After my brother's funeral, someone told me that I was handling my grief well. "No," I responded, "I am not doing well at all. If I were, I would crumple up on the floor and let my grief flood this room. As it is, I am stoically holding it all in because there is no one here who could be comfortable if I let it out." *Doug Manning, Don't Take My Grief Away*

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it. *Helen Keller*

Sometimes a Man Needs to Cry

By Lewis Grizzard (the Atlanta constitution)

The man's friend, Jennifer, wrote me a letter and told me about his problem. These sorts of things make you sick, but they happen and then what is left to do is somehow find a way to cope. The man had two daughters. There were bright and they were beautiful. One was 16. The other was 18.

Last year the girls were in an auto accident. They were hit by a drunk driver.

The 18 year old died at the scene, in the arms of a young minister who was driving past the accident and stopped to see if he could help.

The 16 year old lingered for a week. Then doctors determined she was brain dead and she was disconnected from the life support system.

In a week the man had buried both his daughters.

"All his life," Jennifer wrote, "he had been the pillar of strength for his family, his church and his many friends.

"He had never weakened in his support for them when they needed him. I guess that's why he didn't show us the grief he knew that was inside him.

"I never even saw him cry. I guess he was just trying to hold on so we wouldn't see that big crumbling heart he was hiding."

You can't hide a heart like that for very long. In the year since his daughters' deaths, the man has had two heart attacks. Jennifer is convinced it is his grief that is causing his health to decline steadily.

In the letter, Jennifer also asked me to do something I don't normally like to do, and that is to use this column to give

somebody a message.

Some people write and want me to wish their mothers happy birthday in this space. Others want me to write something as a practical joke on some of their friends.

I would have to go out and find a real job if I resorted to things like that.

But I'm going to break my rule just this once. The letter almost pleaded with me.

"He reads your column," Jennifer wrote. "I know you're not Dear Abby but maybe there is something you can say to our friend."

"It's time for him to realize that grown men do cry, that it's OK to let grief and sorrow flow out like a river among family and friends."

"The doctors don't know what to do about him, but I think there are just some remedies that don't come from a bottle or an operating room."

Jennifer is right. I'm no Dear Abby, nor a counselor, not a minister, nor a psychiatrist. But if the man is reading this column – and he certainly would know he is the subject of it by this time – maybe I can make a few points.

It is obvious your friends love you, sir, and they care about you. By not sharing your grief with them, by not leaning on them in time of your greatest need, you are hurting them.

And it hurts them to see you unwilling to share your burden with them, it hurts them that you are depriving them of the ability to help you.

The heart is an amazing mechanism. Give it half a chance and it will mend itself, and the best place to start is to put your arms around somebody who loves you and cry.

Contrary to what a number of us dumb clucks think, tears often are a grown man's best friend.

What Helped Me Most

I realized that I could spend the rest of my life being angry and resentful that she had only lived for ten years and then had been cut down so prematurely, or I could spend the rest of my life being grateful that she had ever been given at all. I had the sense that night that the choice was a real one.

I knew many people who had taken the road of resentment and anger out of their grief, and it had only added to the burden of their sorrow. That night I made the clear choice that I was going to take the road of gratitude and choose to give thanks for the ten precious years that I had enjoyed rather than to focus on all the things that would never come to be. And I honestly believe that the road of gratitude is the way, not just into the Valley of the Shadow of Grief, but as the

Psalmist suggests, through that Valley to the light on the other side.

Let me be clear in stating that the sense of **life is gift** in no way diminishes the profound sorrow that always attends a great human loss. It is impossible to have loved someone and found great delight in their earthly presence and not be vastly wounded by their absence. Someone has said that the distance between “then” and “now” is an awesome one indeed and no gratitude for Laura Lue’s life can in any way lessen the sorrow I still feel that so much of her promise was never fulfilled in history. But what the sense of **life is gift** does do is to keep me from being angry and resentful as if some kind of theft has been perpetrated.

(excerpted from an article by John R. Claypool – *We Need Not Walk Alone* – Fall 1999)

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 downloadable in Adobe Acrobat format.

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.

One Week Young

Seven long and lonely days have passed
Since you were born.

It is the anniversary of the day

You lay on my lap

Breathless.

And in your quiet beauty

I shall always remember

How perfect you were

And those few treasured moments

Of joy and pride

In knowing

That you would always be my son

No matter what.

Bonnie Rabic, Jasper, GA

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.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: June 24, 2010, at 6:30 pm

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

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: July 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 .

Grief in a death-denying culture

Our death-denying, almost death-“free” society presents a problem for a bereaved person. Rapid changes in mourning practices and social support systems have led to increased concern about how best to help a grieving person to a healthy resolution of loss, and a new beginning.

Before the 1920's mortality rates were high, life expectancy was at best an average of 40 years. There was, too, greater emphasis on family, shared homesteads, and religion in small and close-knit communities.

A death frequently represented a serious loss to the community's identity and continuity. The bereavement and mourning practices were highly ritualized often with black armbands and Gold Stars in windows. Funeral ceremonies lasted weeks, sometimes months, with the entire community participating.

The once-familiar mourning practices are now less apparent when people live in large urban communities, in relative isolation from extended families. This lack of social prescriptions concerning mourning and bereavement is resulting in serious adjustment and recovery problems for the recently bereaved.

A bereaved person may, for instance, be unsure about how long and how much to grieve because grief is no longer shared and ritualized by the community. More and more we see people experiencing “fast food grief” with predictable unpleasant and unhealthy results.

One easily observed problem area is time off from work following the death of a family member. Employers,

through leave policies, define the acute mourning period when people can be relieved of their work responsibilities, without penalty. Such policies, which are usually restrictive, may inadvertently do a disservice to the bereaved who expect themselves to be able to perform adequately after only a few days, but who find they are unable to concentrate and function well.

The brief time allowed off from work without penalty in our country is but one example of an expectation that grief is short in intensity and duration. Research now shows that for many, the most intense period of grief may come four to seven months after the death. At a time when support and consideration are needed most, friends and employers may offer little support or consolation.

What we need to do is look hard and long at the normal and natural responses to death we experience, and then surround ourselves with a support system that provides healing and growth. We need to abandon the death-denying practices of our present culture and become again honest with our understanding of life and death.

There is also a theological reason for honesty. Death gives meaning to life. The writer of Psalm 90 had that in mind as he wrote of the fleeting nature of life, describing it as being like a brief dream, or like weeds that sprout in the morning but dry up at night. And then he prayed, “Teach us how short our life is so we may become wise.”

Ron Troyer – a licensed funeral director in Baldwin, WI, who has started support groups for bereaved parents and spouses

Be Good to Yourself This Summer

Even if you're not grieving it is wise to get away and "recreate" yourself. When you are grieving it is even more important to relax and take time to be good to yourself, for grief work takes an amazing amount of physical, emotional, and spiritual energy. Following are some random thoughts from HOPE's staff, which we hope you will find helpful.

Get outside as often as possible, even if only into the back yard. The warmth of the sun, soft breezes against your skin, the scent of grass and flowers and chirping of birds all fill your senses and help to make you feel better, more alive. Exercise helps to work off anger, frustration, and depression. Search out local parks, nature trails, country roads – even walk around your own block. Brisk walking, bike riding, swimming are all great ways of reducing tension. Be sure to observe safety and go with a friend, family member, or another grieving person.

Try to visit places where there is water. Watching water and hearing it lap against the shore is soothing. As the waves recede, try to envision your grief receding: as the waves return, think of them as bringing peace and comfort.

Read the type of book you enjoy. Light reading might help to take your mind off your grief – like finding an island or a desert oasis – for a while; escape into another world through a good mystery or spy novel.

Sometimes we need to plan for some time just to be alone. You may want to go for a drive and sit quietly and reflect, or roll up the windows and yell and scream and vent your anger.

Don't push your grief down. Get it out into the open so you can deal with it and control it, or it will control you. Find a good listener, someone who cares with whom you can talk freely. Consider having a simple potluck picnic with family, friends, or other bereaved persons. An away vacation, camping, or a retreat may be helpful and give you a respite from your grief work. Make it a restful, peaceful time and don't try to do too much. BUT don't be surprised that the grief is waiting for you when you return! Some find that keeping a journal and writing down their thoughts and feelings is very helpful. Because grief work is so demanding it is important to eat balanced meals and to get adequate rest. Attend a group support meeting. You will gain helpful ideas on coping and meet those bereaved longer who have survived their losses. The meetings can give you hope and the knowledge that you are not alone in your grief work! Above all, hold on to HOPE!



**The HOPE Line,
Hope for
Bereaved,
Buffalo, NY**

Father's Day

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem-solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong – must not cry.

But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem-solving and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside, we must ask ourselves about our failure – and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father, it is a poignant reminder of bitter-sweetness, sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost, child and bitter for the death and pain and recognition of our inability to have stopped what happened.

Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Oftentimes, they are unable to do so (a remnant of childhood learning about the strength and stoicism of "big boys"). A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife – and the wife who pushes her husband to talk may be pushing him too hard!

Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug. (He needs one, he's hurting!) Help with the chores and mostly, let him know how important and needed and loved he is. He has lost some of the support with the death of a child. And, Like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to one Sunday in June – it can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally, **BUT THEY DO HURT!!!**

Grant Hunt, TCF/White River Junction, VT

Perhaps

Perhaps . . .

Your tears of sorrow today
Will water the seeds
Of tomorrow's garden
Of spiritual growth,
Of worthy priorities,
Of loving relationships,
And genuine understanding and
compassion.

My sad friend,

Your weeping is not fruitless.

Nancy Williams, TCF/Central Jersey
Chapter, NJ

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.