



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



April 2011, Volume XXIV, Number 4

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

About two weeks ago I began working on this month's newsletter and this was one of the first segments chosen. Tonight as I try to finish the work on the newsletter so that an April newsletter happens, I read this with new eyes. Last Wednesday, March 30, our 2 ½ year old grandson suffered a seizure that lasted over 70minutes. Since that time he has been in the Pediatric ICU first in Des Moines and now in Rochester MN. Many of you know first hand the kind of anguish we are going through as we face an uncertain future for him and thus for us. We are on a roller coaster of hope and despondence and the hopeful peaks are getting lower and lower. A former pastor taught us, "Do not doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light." We are trying to cling on to that and our belief that God is always with us, even in our darkest times.

God is Always With Us

"Have you ever had an experience that left you wondering where God was? Perhaps you are facing a crisis right now, such as unemployment, health problems, the breakup of your marriage, or rebellious teenage children. You may not feel His presence, but emotions can be misleading. No matter what you feel, God is still there. God's omnipresence means that we cannot go anywhere that He is not beside us. He walks with us, gives us strength, understands our pain and knows how to handle our problems. He will help us if we only ask Him, and are willing to do things His way and in His time." **Bill Bright - Worldwide Challenge - Jan/Feb 2000**

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

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.

Thank you to **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.



I Hope You Will Bear With Me

I feel good again this month. I remember a time, not very long ago, when someone who was optimistic and even relatively happy would really get on my nerves. How could they be so happy when I was absolutely miserable? How aggravating.

I'm enjoying the arrival of spring. I remember a time when I didn't want spring to come either. The rainy, dreary days of winter fit my mood much better. How could the world go on like nothing was wrong? My son is dead – how can the sun shine? How can the birds sing and flowers bloom? Who cares if it's a pretty day? My world ended. Don't you understand?

I've had another breakthrough, too. I looked at picture albums the other day and actually enjoyed it. A few months ago, those same albums evoked hysteria, crying, and deep depression. Now looking at Jesse's smiling face brings back good memories, the happy, fun times that we had. And it's wonderful!

I feel as if I'm alive again finally. It has been two years and almost nine months since Jesse died. It has been a long, hard struggle to get here, but I feel that I've finally started to heal some. I realize now that I shouldn't feel guilty when I smile. I don't have to hurt constantly. The love won't diminish if I feel good. I'll always love him and I'll always miss him; but I can enjoy my memories of him now. I know that I will always have sad times when I'll cry and be down; but now I'll have some good times, too.

Brenda Hobbs TCF/North Texas

Footprints in the Sand

There was a day of sunshine,
When you followed after me.
Bare feet in cool sand,
Small prints skipping
Through swirls of foam
Upon the shore.

Even as we danced and laughed,
The waves crashed against the rocks.
Yet when I looked behind us
Only smooth sand remained.
The sea had erased our marks.

People have ceased
To speak of you
And grow uncomfortable
When I do.
But I refuse to let them,
Like the sea,
Erase your memory.

**Karen Nelson
TCF/Box Elder County, UT**

In your eyes I saw the twinkle of light, now it is in the twinkle of light I see your eyes.

In your laughter I heard great love. Now it is in great love I still hear your laughter, In your cries my heart would break..

Now it is in my broken heart that I hear your cries.

In your life I saw faith and hope. Now it is in faith and hope that I live 'til I'm with you.

From the book, *Thin Ice*, by David Buthman

One Sided Dialogue

I'm tired. Too tired to dress. Too tired to bathe. Too tired to eat. Exhaustion is my middle name since you have left me here to live without you.

My own reserve of energy's not equal to the tasks of normal living. I use it up just trying not to cry, just trying to convince myself that life is good, that God still holds the world in his strong hands.

I'm filled with questions now for which I have no answers. I've not the energy to think! It seems that life's a sham – like an endurance test and nothing more.

I know my heart still pumps, my lungs still fill with air, my blood still circulates, my eyes and ears still funnel their impressions to my brain. Yet I am filled with pain, unshakeable and heavily compressed within my soul. But when I talk to you, a crazy and one-sided dialogue, I realize a miracle: and, even in the midst of grief, gratitude!

These two – unending love and gratitude – are harbingers of hope.

I pray these two sustain me until mourning ends, and I am once again re-energized with joy.

**Shirley C. Ottman
TCF/North Texas**



**National TCF Conference
Shining Stars – Guiding Hope**

Minneapolis/St. Paul
July 15-17, 2011

For more information, see

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

**Regional TCF Conference
On the Wings of Hope**

Crowne Plaza Hotel Omaha, Nebraska
April 1-2, 2011

For registration forms and more information, see:

www.thecompassionatefriends.org



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.

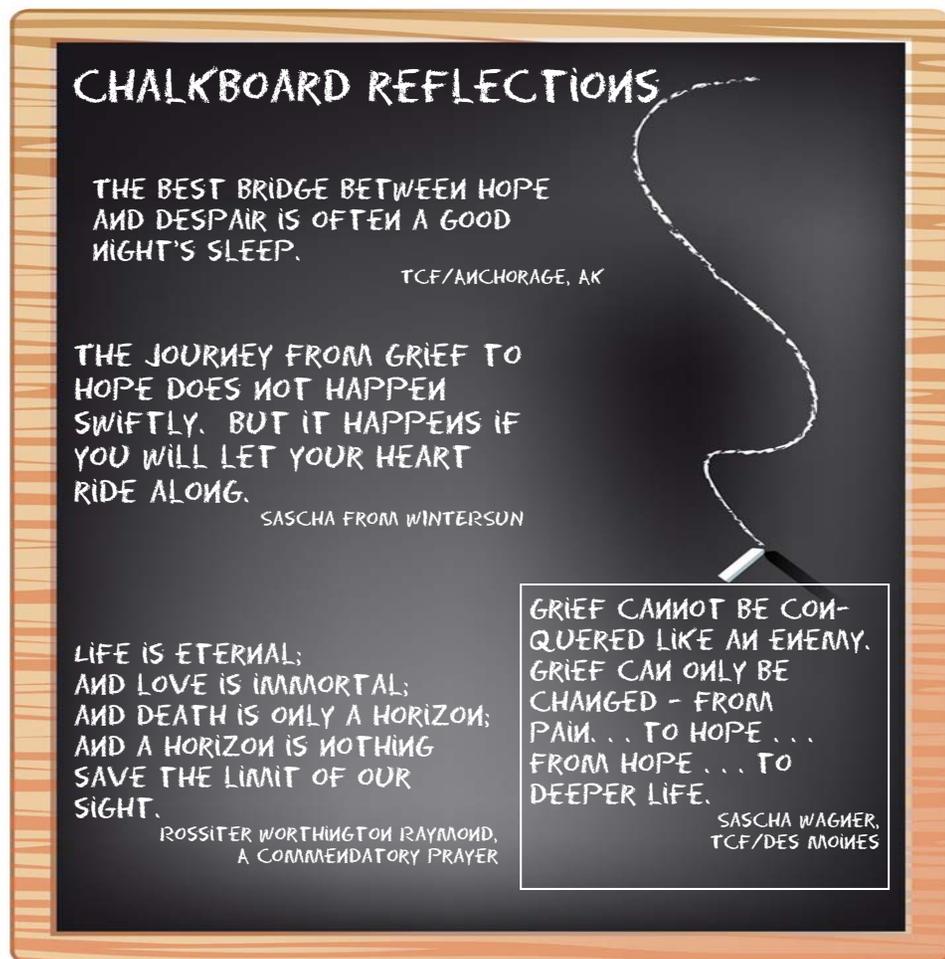
Love Gifts

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.

Thanks to:

Julie Boyce, in memory of her beloved nieces, Beth Hagerty and Maggie Steinhauser. Harold and Sandy Bowman, in memory of their daughter, Chris Bowman Victor, and her husband, Marty Victor.

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.



CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

THE BEST BRIDGE BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR IS OFTEN A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.

TCF/ANCHORAGE, AK

THE JOURNEY FROM GRIEF TO HOPE DOES NOT HAPPEN SWIFTLY. BUT IT HAPPENS IF YOU WILL LET YOUR HEART RIDE ALONG.

SASCHA FROM WINTERSUN

LIFE IS ETERNAL;
AND LOVE IS IMMORTAL;
AND DEATH IS ONLY A HORIZON;
AND A HORIZON IS NOTHING
SAVE THE LIMIT OF OUR
SIGHT.

ROSSITER WORTHINGTON RAYMOND,
A COMMENDATORY PRAYER

GRIEF CANNOT BE CONQUERED LIKE AN ENEMY. GRIEF CAN ONLY BE CHANGED - FROM PAIN... TO HOPE... FROM HOPE... TO DEEPER LIFE.

SASCHA WAGNER,
TCF/DES MOINES

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.

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.

Amazon.com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

Bittersweet Memories

One of the most precious things to a parent who has lost a child is the memories. Without them, it would be as if their child never was. With them, it is so bittersweet that it can make a parent laugh and cry, rejoice and anguish, touch the sweetness to the lips and taste the salt from the tears.

Memories keep the heart from crushing under the weight of sorrow. They give a parent the chance to be with their child again. They can walk through their memories like they were a movie. When the memories are so vivid, you can almost feel them, touch them, hug them, and kiss them. It is so bittersweet when the reality comes and you realize it is just a memory, a thought, and you are reminded of what you have lost.

If you asked a parent if they would give up the memories so they did not have to feel the pain of knowing their child is gone, they would tell you no. As painful as it may be, not having the memories or feeling their presence is just as unbearable as losing them.

There is no happy place to go to, but there is a place to be with your child. You know before you step into that realm that it will be painful, but you know that it will be joyful too.

So as we let the memories take us to a time that our child was safe with us, just rest a while until it is time to go and the next time try not to think of what is gone but what is still in your heart and will always be.

Vickie Van Antwerp – TCF/Brevard, NC - *We Need Not Walk Alone*

We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

No Comparison

To compare the depth of our grief by comparing circumstances with another bereaved parent is wrong. When we do this we negate their feelings, as well as our own. If we think that the circumstances surrounding their grief is greater than our own, we are telling ourselves that we shouldn't be grieving as deeply as we are. If we think their circumstances are less, we are implying they should not hurt as much as they do. This is unfair.

To compare is to imply judgment, and there is no place for judgment among Compassionate Friends. The secret to survival and to quicker healing is the sharing of a common bond, empathy, and understanding, not comparison and judgment.

Time is the passing of moments lived one at a time. Our recovery depends on what we do with each moment. We cannot sit back and say, "Time will heal me." Time is simply the movement of the clock. Our successful return to comfortable living depends upon what we do while that clock is moving.

Margaret Gerner
TCF/St. Louis, MO



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: Thursday, April 28, 2011 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL
For information and directions, call

Rosemary Shoemaker (309-441-5586) or Michelle Cauwels (309-644-0486).

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church is 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.) Next month: May 26, 2011 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)260-3626 for directions or information or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com
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. Please call ahead to verify the meeting location. 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 403 SW 10th Avenue, 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, this 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 first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room # 1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at (309)373-2568 or chalyn@shareqc.com or www.shareqc.com
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support that meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Wagnor Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

Resolution vs. Reconciliation The Importance of Semantics

In many grief models, the final dimension of bereavement is referred to as resolution. Other paradigms use the terms recovery, re-establishment or reorganization. The problem with this dimension as defined in these ways is that people do not "get over" grief. My personal and professional experience tells me that a total return to "normalcy" after the death of someone loved is not possible; everyone is changed by the experience of grief. Recovery, as it is often understood by mourners and caregivers, is erroneously seen as an absolute, a perfect state of re-establishment.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as the bereaved person works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who has died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death, and a capacity to become reinvested in the activities of living. There is also an acknowledgment that pain and grief are difficult, yet necessary parts of life.

As the experience of reconciliation unfolds, the mourner recognizes that life will be different without the

presence of the person who died. There is also a realization that reconciliation is a process, not an event. Redirecting one's energy and initiative toward the future often takes longer and involves more hard work than most people are aware. We, as human beings, never resolve our grief, but instead become reconciled to it.

Reconciliation is the grief dimension in which the full reality of the death becomes part of the mourner. Beyond an intellectual working through of the death, there is also an emotional and spiritual working through. What had been understood at the "head" level is now understood at the "heart" level: the person who was loved is dead.

In reconciliation, the sharp ever-present pain of grief gives rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. The feeling of loss does not completely disappear, yet softens, and the intense pangs of grief become less frequent. Hope for a continued life emerges as the griever is able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the dead person will never be forgotten, yet knowing that one's own life can and will move forward.

Alan Wofelt, Ph.D.

In your life I saw faith and hope.
Now it is in faith and hope that I live 'til I'm with you.

From the book, *Thin Ice* by David Buthman

Grief's Rollercoaster Ride

Do you ever feel you are on a rollercoaster ride in your grief over the death of your brother or sister? There are lots of ups and downs. Sometimes the pain is so overwhelming that your heart aches and grief rushes over you. At other times, the grief subsides and you go on living your life.

For siblings, the roller-coaster ride can last for many years after the death of a brother or sister. That's because at every significant milestone or event in our lives, the grief rises to the surface and we once again confront the death of our brother or sister. For our parents, difficult times may be important events that would have occurred in our brother's or sister's life: at a certain age, they would have gone to kindergarten, graduated from high school, got a job, got married, had children, and so forth. While mourning the death of their son or daughter, our parents grieve the absence of significant milestones in the life of their child, as well as the absence of the event from the parent's life.

While we, as bereaved siblings, may also grieve these events that our brother or sister will no longer experience, what is different for us is that these events are actually occurring in our lives. We must live each event without our brother or sister. And this occurs over and over throughout our lives, as we progress through childhood and adulthood, through the happy times and the sad times.

I have seen this occur in my life during the years since my brother, Jerry, died. As time has passed, my grief has changed. I don't cry as often; I don't

visit his grave as often. In that sense, my grief does not weigh as heavy on my heart as it did at first. However, as I have become older and passed through various stages of my life, my grief has resurfaced many times. My brother was 21 when he died. I was 22. Although he was at my college graduation and he saw me get my first "real" job, he wasn't there to give me his opinion when I was trying to decide whether to quit my job and go back to school. He wasn't there when I graduated from law school and passed the bar exam. When I got married a year ago, he wasn't there standing at the front of the church with me. If my husband and I decide to have children, he won't be there as an uncle to celebrate the child's birth. When my parents grow old and decisions have to be made about their health, he won't be there to help me.

As these events have occurred in my life, it is as though I am on a rollercoaster ride, approaching a hill. I feel my grief coming on again, with the same intensity of those first weeks and months after he died. I am scared and uncertain as the roller coaster struggles to the top of the hill. The roller coaster reaches the top and then rushes down the hill to the bottom on its way to another hill. When you eventually come down on the other side of each of these hills, it is with a great sense of relief that you made it.

When I married, it was the climbing of the hill that was the tough part. The two months before the wedding were the worst. In addition to all the headaches of planning a wedding, I cried a lot, realizing that my brother was not going to

Continued, next page

be there for one of the happiest days of my life. I thought about how handsome he would look in his tuxedo, and how proud he would be of his big sister, and what a great friendship he would have with my husband, his brother-in-law. While I still think about these things, they took much more of an emotional toll on me in the months before the wedding. When I reached the hill - the wedding day - I did not feel as overcome with grief as I had expected. While I was sad and very much wished he was there with me, I had worked through this hill of grief and was already coming down on the other side.

The way that I made it through my wedding and have been able to face other "hills" in the rollercoaster ride of my grief is to include him in these events, just as if he were here. For example, when I have



to make a tough decision, I ask myself what advice Jerry would have given me. When I graduated from law school, I took a framed picture of him with me to the graduation. One of my favorite pictures from that day is a photo of me in my graduation gown, standing in front of the stage holding his picture. When I look at that picture today, I realize what an inspiration he was in my decision to pursue a new career. When I got married, I carried my bouquet in his memory and printed a message about that in the ceremony program, along with a thought about him. In addition to the many family pictures taken that day are the ones of

me holding Jerry's picture. At the wedding reception, I had the disc jockey play a song in his memory.

Although Jerry isn't here anymore and all I have of him are memories of years past, including him in my life today creates new memories. It has become so important to include him in these events that not doing something special would seem odd. I look forward to the challenge of thinking of unique ways to include him in my life. And I don't care what other people may think about me doing special things in his memory.

However, the reaction from people has been positive. When others become aware of what you are doing, they often share their own losses with you. After a friend attended my wedding and saw the special ways that I had included my brother, I learned for the first time that he had a sister who died. This created a new bond with a friend. If significant events in your life include holidays, there are many possibilities. Create a special gift for your parents in memory of your brother or sister. Write down favorite memories of your sibling and have everyone read them. Or share one thing that your brother or sister gave you or that you learned from him or her, whether it is an article of clothing or a toy of a personal trait such as your sense of humor or your fighting spirit.

Our brothers and sisters existed. Recognizing their lives as milestones in our own lives can help us in our rollercoaster ride of grief. It can help keep the memories of our brothers and sisters alive, even if they aren't.

Dawn Morville Johnson
We Need Not Walk Alone
Winter/Spring 2009