



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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May 2011, Volume XXIV, Number 5

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

On March 30 our 2-year-old grandson suffered a major febrile seizure that led to a serious brain injury. He continues to be cared for in the hospital in Des Moines, receiving therapy until his medical issues are settled when he will enter a rehab program. This last month has been very hard for us as we grieve what has happened to our grandchild and as we have watched our son and daughter-in-law suffer through uncertainty, fear, grief, anger, and many other feelings. None of us can quite believe this has happened to our family. While we realize there is no answer to the question, I think each of us in some way has asked, "Why?" As I was looking for some information from a past newsletter, I came across the following article I wrote in 2008 that seems particularly appropriate.

Universally the question of "why?" and dealing with the "whys" of our child's death is something uppermost in the minds of many bereaved parents. I remember a time when "Why" consumed most of my waking thoughts. Our daughter died in late March. In September we found out we were expecting a baby, but a few days later I miscarried that child. I remember lying in my bed crying out, "Why?" overwhelmed by the seeming unfairness of our situation. By January, after my grandmother had died in October and my aunt in December, I said to my family (and anyone else who would listen), "When I get to heaven the first thing I am going to ask God is "Why?" I do not know when it happened, but as time passed I found myself much less consumed with the need to have an answer to my unanswerable question, "Why?" I think a positive step in measuring our progress through our grief journey is when we can focus our attention and energy on "What next?" more than we do on "Why?"

A wise friend wrote the following in an email to me when I expressed that sometimes the thought "Why us?" assailed me .

"We dodge the 'Why us?' question. It only leads me into feeling sorry for myself and into the temptation that God is not with us but against us. It is just the human condition, and fortunately, God walks with us through this messy life of ours. No answers; no solutions; just his love and that of each other to get us from one night to the next day."

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.

A part of learning to "accept the unacceptable" is to learn to make the effort to sort out the good memories and take them with us into a future that will be happy again.

TCF/Houston NW

Bittersweet

Bittersweet parents we are,
Loving and giving still.
We render what tears
Grief demands -
Until, out of grieving darkness,
We come to celebrate
Our children's lives
And our own.

To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart,
Mine flow down my cheeks.
Your anger lies with thoughts and movements.
Mine gallops forward for all to see.
Your despair shows in your now dull eyes,
Mine shows in line after written line.
You grieve over the death of your son,
I grieve over the death of my baby.
But we're still the same, still one,
Only we grieve at different times
Over different memories
And at different lengths.
Yet we both realize
The death of our child.

Pam Burden
TCF, Augusta, GA



"Job asked questions about God, but he did not need lessons in theology. He needed sympathy and compassion and the reassurance that he was a good person and a cherished friend."

Rabbi Harold Kushner

from *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

Every child changes the lives of his or her parents. Children show us new ways to love, new things to find joy in, and new ways to look at the world. A part of each child's legacy is that the changes he or she brings to a family continue after the child's death. The memories of joyful moments you spent with your child and the love you shared will live on and always be a part of you.

from *When a Parent is Grieving the Death of a Child*
- cancer.net

As the years pass, my hope for you is that you will find some sense of peace, some sense of knowledge that despite the worst pain that can befall a parent, or sibling, or grandparent, you will carry with you some hope. Hope that as the pain diminishes over the years, a sense of purpose will return to your life - an understanding that we cannot prevent the unpreventable - but that our actions can validate the love we gave so freely when our children were alive and by our side or in our arms or in a loving womb.

Pat Loder,
Executive Director, TCF

First Anniversary

I know the world
is still the same
and life goes on
The hours run
with ancient
speed
from day to day.
I know.



And mornings are
the same new wonder still
and music moves
the mind with secret hands
And flowers grow
And children sing.
I know.

But you are gone
and I am not the same
am only half -
And half of me
is gone away with you.
I know.
I know.



National TCF Conference *Shining Stars – Guiding Hope*

Minneapolis/St. Paul

July 15-17, 2011

For more information, see

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

WE MUST LET GO OF THE
LIFE WE HAVE PLANNED, SO AS
TO ACCEPT THE LIFE THAT IS
WAITING FOR US.

SOMETIMES YOU'LL TAKE A
FEW STEPS BACKWARD. THAT'S
OKAY. SOMETIMES IT'S NECES-
SARY. SOMETIMES IT'S PART OF
MOVING FORWARD.

TCF NEWSLETTER/
ALBANY SARATOGA CHAPTER

WHEN WE FINALLY REALIZE THAT YOU
ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE SMILING
AND DANCING IN OUR HEARTS, THEN,
OUR PAIN SHALL TURN TO JOY.
BOB WALTERS, TCF/SOUTH LAKE TAHOE (CA)

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. Thank you to:

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Butz, in memory of their grandson.

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.

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.

Gender Differences in Grieving

Mothers and fathers may grieve in different ways. One parent may find talking helps, while the other may need quiet time to grieve alone. Cultural expectations and role differences also affect how men and women grieve. Men are often expected to control their emotions, to be strong, and to take charge of the family. Women may be expected to cry openly and to want to talk about their grief. A working father may become more involved in his job to escape the sadness and daily reminders at home. A stay-at-home mother may be surrounded by constant reminders and may feel devoid of purpose now that her job as caregiver has abruptly ended. This is especially true for a parent who spent months or even years caring for a child with cancer.

Differences in grieving can cause relationship difficulties at a time when parents need each other's support the most. One parent may believe that the other is not grieving properly or that a lack of open grief means he or she loved the child less. It is important for parents to talk openly about their grief and for each parent to understand and accept the other's coping style.

When a Parent is Grieving the Death of a Child – cancer.net

Wisdom Gained With Loss

There are no answers to reasons why.

Why some are pruned to the stalk, while others are barely tweezed.

There's no measurement to the pain, only the wisdom gained.

I was told by a sage once that this was Grace.

My life is full, I have more than I need in comparison to most I pass.

Although I have had opportunity to be pruned beyond all measure, my limbs
Are growing back. Even though the arms that ache will no longer hold what was
They eagerly embrace what will be. There are many I speak to now who are in the
Throes of these yawning spaces. You will walk through this fire as I have and
The many before me. You are not alone and with the wisdom gained you will
Know to ask for help when needed. That gift alone provides for the whole and
Not the isolated wound. Love and care for those that struggle as we are all
God's children and the struggle is human and makes us the meek who inherit
Great things.

I wish Peace and love, you who have given me grace.

Susan Peck – Seattle WA
We Need Not Walk Alone

Is It Easing?

I heard your name today and
my heart did not skip a beat,
nor was my mind
flooded with the emotion of
losing you.

I heard your name today and it
did not bring back the terrible
hurt feelings of when you first
left me.

I heard you name today with a
calmness that surprised me.
Many another
child carries your name and it
had been torture hearing it and
seeing the
smiling face on those little girls.

But today I knew - I found out -
what others in my footsteps
found out and tried to tell me...

The hurt will ease; but the
memories, the love, the good
time will never go away.

Phoebe C. Redman , TCF /Bradenton, FL



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, May 26, 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: June 23, 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

Grief and Marriage

When our daughter was born with some obvious orthopedic handicaps, the pediatrician on call said to my husband and me, "You realize that having a handicapped child could destroy your marriage." Years later our marriage is still very much intact although having lived through the pain of Anna's many health problems and finally her death, we understand a little more where this abrupt doctor was coming from. Grief does not automatically tear your marriage apart nor does pain necessarily draw you closer to one another. The stress of grief as well as the individual ways we each grieve places a big burden on a marriage relationship. Marriage takes daily work and when you are grieving there is not much energy left over for "we" when "I" requires all your energy just to make it through the day. The stress can be intensified when the child who dies is from a blended family where only one parent is the child's biological parent. Communication was the key for us. The more we talked to one another, the more we were able to share our feelings, both similar ones as well as unique ones. Being patient with one another and accepting the fact that we both grieved, but that we could not express that grief in the same way, also helped. Now, many years later I think we are uniquely bonded to one another because we alone share the experience of having loved Anna in the special way only parents can love.

Carol Webb, TCF/Quad Cities, IL



The name of your dead child is a magic word, Did you know? At any given moment – whether busy or still – Stop, And think or say that name:

Something will happen And whatever that something is, Let it happen--- Even if it be tears.

The name of your child is a magic word To heal your heart.

Sascha

How Will We Be Changed?

No one chooses most of the events that happen in life. No one chooses to be born at a certain time. When I graduated from high school, the economic conditions and employment possibilities were far different from those faced by this year's graduates. No one can choose their parents, and few choose to be bereaved parents. In some things, the only choice we have is in how we will respond. Our child is dead; there is no way that fact can be changed. But we are alive – ours is the life for which we are responsible - responsible to God, to ourselves, and to the child who is dead.

Every event changes us. The question is, "How will we be changed?" The death of our child changed and is changing us. The question is how.

When we think about how we change, some interesting direction words are useful. How about "growing" or "shrinking?" Does the death of our child make us grow and become more human and more what we hope to be, or does it make us pull back inside ourselves, afraid to reach out to new experiences, because we are too afraid to hurt?

How about "deeper" and "shallower?" Does the death of our child deepen our understanding of the possibilities of human life and love, or make us retreat to the safe shallows of well lighted and known waters?

How about "open" and "closed?" Does the death of our child open us to another tragedy and give us compassion for those who hurt as we do, or does it close us in on grief, so that it starts to eat away at our insides?

TCF says that it merely offers friendship and support to bereaved parents, but it seems to me that it is more than that. TCF is a group of bereaved parents who have chosen a direction, which I describe as "growing, deepening, and open." To be sure, we are in different stages; and it is we as individuals who determine our direction.

Perhaps we need to learn to speak more directly to others who seem to be changing in other directions. There are those who are afraid to grow for fear that they will move away from the place where their child was. Others are afraid to be open because they don't know that when they let others' pain in, they also let their own pain out.

Maybe that's what the line in TCF's statement of purpose is about – "positive resolution of their grief." How can grief be resolved positively? The answer is in the positive ways we change. Our child did not die for us to die too. Our child was a growing being, so we can grow. Our child was moving to deeper and deeper understandings – can we do less? Our child was being opened every day to new experiences and different people. Why not continue that in us?

We did not choose the event, but we choose the direction. One of the central verses in the Old Testament is, "I have set before you this day life and death; therefore, choose life." It seems to me, that in facing death, The Compassionate Friends have chosen life.

Dennis Klass
TCF/St. Louis, MO

Death of a Child

The pain I feel now
I would not have felt
If you had never been.
The ache in my heart is a heavy load,
Carried but never seen.

In quiet moments or busy times,
Alone, or in a crowd,
The hurt creeps in and fills my soul
'Til I feel I must cry aloud.

If I could turn the time-clocks back
To the day when you were born,
Still gladly I'd bear the pains again,
And, oh! How I'd treasure that morn.

For then I'd know how short the days
Of your stay with us would be...
I'd show you love in a thousand ways,
And keep you close to me.

Yet I know you were part of His plan.
You will never really be lost.
For the love you were given,
And the love that you gave,
Far outweigh the pain you cost!!

Julie Wilkie,
Brisbane, Australia



A Newly Bereaved Parent Speaks

I remember so well when I was very young, riding my bicycle – down the street – up the street – fast as I could. Wind in my face, as close to complete happiness as could be. Riding too fast, losing control and slamming into the curb. Flying over the handlebars and hitting the ground, hard! I can still remember so well after all these years, lying there on the ground feeling hurt all over but most of all the breath knocked out of me, wondering if I would live. But in seconds I was on my knees, gasping in air, and in minutes back on the bike, back on the street. I've had much worse physical hurt since then, but I've never forgotten that fall.

When my daughter died, a giant force threw me to the ground and knocked the life right out of me. This fall is worse than anything I could ever imagine. The bruises go all the way to my heart and soul and I can't get past it. What am I doing wrong? Am I not trying hard enough – too hard? Anytime I feel I might be getting to my knees, a song, a word, some little nothing thing brings me down again. The sadness comes over me and trying to push it away is like pushing smoke. Will I ever be better? I have no control, no power over my own emotions and more often than not, I just don't care.

Trying to rebuild my life without her in it is the hardest thing I have ever done or ever will do. I will never forget this fall, either.

Rachel Mercer, TCF/Atlanta