



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



June 2011, Volume XXIV, Number 6

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

As I write this, my grandson is just across the room napping in his hospital bed. While he is medically stable, he continues as an inpatient, receiving therapy. He has a long way to go before he is restored to complete health, and we live with much uncertainty as to his future. While our grandson lives, for which we are very grateful, there is still a deep sense of loss as well as the necessity of creating a new normal in all of our lives. Our family, as would any family who is grieving a loss, has experienced a variety of emotions.

One of the key concepts taught on a Marriage Encounter Weekend is that *Feelings are Neither Right nor Wrong. They just are.* We do not need to justify our feelings to ourselves or to anyone else. From our years of Marriage Encounter work and our experience in Compassionate Friends, we do believe this to be true, but several times recently I have been guilty of trying to "encourage" my daughter-in-law out of her feelings. On several occasions when she has honestly shared her sadness, even depression, I have at first tried to explain why she may feel a certain way or remind her of the positive progress that has been made. Twice she has said to me, in essence, "I am just sad." And then I am reminded of how each of us needs the latitude from those who love us to allow us the freedom to be just sad, or mad, or depressed, or discouraged.

We continue to be hopeful that Logan will recover. We continue to trust God for the outcome, but sometimes we are sad – and that is okay. For those of you who face each day the greater loss of the life of your precious child, we encourage you to let others in your life know that your feelings are neither right nor wrong. They just are.

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.

The bond

among grieving parents is close. It is unfathomable. It cannot be entered into by outsiders, but it is known to each of us. A quick look, an acknowledgment, and we know immediately the agenda of suffering we have in common and that there is no fact of our lives more important than this: *I had a child who died.*

Over the months and years we will learn to say it more calmly. Yet each time we say it – and we must, it is a part of our learning our own terrible truth – the heart will jump, the stomach contract, the tempo of the body will shift in acknowledgment: *I had a child who died.*

Martha Whitmore Hickman

Grief work is like winding a ball of string. You start with an end and wind and wind, then the ball slips through your fingers and rolls across the floor. Some of the work is undone, but not all.

You pick it up and start over again, but never do you have to begin again at the end of the string. The ball never completely unwinds: you've made some progress.

TCF/Fort Smith, AR



Forgive Me, My Daughter (Especially for grandparents)

I want you to be the little girl, who tore her many-layered petticoats on the parallel bars or in school and once even chipped a tooth.

I want you, too, to be the child with bloody knees who had matching holes in her new leotards.

Or maybe the one who fell from a swing and needed a half dozen stitches beneath her eye.

Oh, I could hold you then. There was magic in my kisses that stemmed the pain and a doctor nearby for more tangible aid.

But what do I do now, now that you are a woman and your sorrows are commensurate with your age?

I stand immobile as your wan face leans over the broken turf where your infant son, your only child, will soon be interred.

I clench my fists, knowing there is no solace any longer in my arms for agony of this magnitude. You are deaf, too, to my

murmurings; you hear only the echoes of his laughter and his cries.

Of course, I am here when you need me.

But I can only pretend I am a strong and wise grandmother, when in truth,

I remain a mother, heart-broken twice.

SIDS Survival Guide





National TCF Conference Shining Stars – Guiding Hope

Minneapolis/St. Paul

July 15-17, 2011

For more information, see

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

WE CANNOT HIDE FROM THE PAIN. THE DEPTH OF OUR PAIN IS A MANIFESTATION OF OUR LOVE. I AM LEARNING NOT TO LOOK TO ALL THE DAYS AHEAD AND QUESTION MY VERY SURVIVAL; I DEAL WITH TODAY AND MEET WHATEVER PANGS OF SORROW I ENCOUNTER WITH RESOLVE. I HAVE LOST MY BELOVED CHILD, BUT OUR FAMILY WILL SHARE ETERNITY TOGETHER.

ELLA PRATER

REMEMBER, ANY CHILD OLD ENOUGH TO LOVE IS OLD ENOUGH TO MOURN.

IN THREE WORDS I CAN SUM UP EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT LIFE - IT GOES ON. ROBERT FROST

HOPE MEANS FINDING THE STRENGTH TO LIVE WITH GRIEF. SASCHA

IF YOUR MOTHER DIES, PEOPLE DON'T SAY, "YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE ANOTHER MOTHER." THEN WHY IS IT ALL RIGHT TO SAY YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE ANOTHER BABY IF YOUR BABY DIES?

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.

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.



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 happenings 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.

A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer.

How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near?

Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you everyday and feel you in my heart always.

Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness.

I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holeman TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

The Child That's Not There

The child that's not there
Takes up every piece of me.
The child that's not there
Consumes my every thought.
The child that's not there
Makes me feel like I failed.
The child that's not there
Took away a main reason for being.

But
The children that are there
Still somehow bring me joy.
The children that are there
Still need my love.
The children that are there
Don't need any more grief.
The children that are there
Force me to go on.

*Tricia PalmerIn
In memory of my son, Gabriel Boyer
TCF/Tidewater, VA*

Missing You

I just can't believe it...
The sun still rises and sets,
The moon and stars still shine,
The flowers still bloom,
The birds still sing.
I expected a change in everything.
I just can't believe it...
It still gets dark and light,
The ocean still has waves,
The rain still rains,
The wind still blows,
Is it because they do not know?
I just can't believe it...
I thought the world would stop
When in my house I found
an empty chair, a missing smile.
I thought it would stop
For just a while.
I just can't believe it...

*Gretta Viney
TCF/Yakima, WA*

Please Don't

Please don't ask me how I'm doing unless you really want me to answer you truthfully. I can see how uncomfortable it makes you feel if I tell the truth, so just tell me you are thinking about me and leave it at that.

Please don't tell me she's in a better place and isn't sick or suffering anymore. My head knows she's at home in heaven, but my heart is broken and hurting, and my grief is still too fresh. So please don't tell me how I should feel.

Please don't tell me I'm so lucky to still have other children. I thank God every day for my children, but there is still an emptiness left by her that can't ever be filled. Each child has their own part of my heart and now a piece of mine is changed forever. I am lucky to have other children, but was blessed by her also.

Please don't tell me how worse my loss could have been – she might have had a terrible accident or have suffered much more. The fact is she is my child and now she is no longer with me here and that is tragic enough for me. So please don't tell me how much worse it could be.

Please don't tell me it's been a year and it's time to pick up the pieces and get on with my life. My life is forever changed and I'm still learning how to work through my grief everyday. It's a painful struggle and hard enough without being rushed through the process.

I will come to terms and learn how to readjust my life in a new way without her here physically, but forever in my heart, so don't put a time limit on my grief or minimize my loss.

Pam Clopp, BP/USA, Springfield, IL

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, June 23, 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: July 28, 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 Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org



I sat down regularly to read the many newsletters I received from the chapters around the country. Most of the time there were articles in them that made me cry a little.

I read about children who are dead and parents who were hurting but never did I come away from these reading sessions depressed.

I came away with hope – hope that the searing torment does lessen and eventually gives way to warm loving memories of our child.

When we are in the deepest throes of our grief, when our beloved child has just recently been snatched from life by a tragic accident or succumbed to a fatal illness or died in some other way, can we believe we can ever be happy again? When to simply get up in the morning is a major accomplishment, can we believe that we will ever again be able to function with enthusiasm and purpose?

When every thought of our

children brings excruciating pain, can we believe that we will someday be able to think of him/her and smile? I know it is hard to believe that this will ever happen, but it will.

Words used in defining HOPE are “expect, trust, anticipate, wish, desire, and confident.” These are the key words.

If we expect, trust, and anticipate feeling better, we will in time.

If we wish it, and are confident, the day will come when we will feel better. Of course, it doesn't just happen. It takes long, hard, grief work. It takes many painful hours of allowing ourselves to go through our grief.

It takes patience and it takes time. But know you will come to the light at the end of the tunnel.

Know that there is hope. Know that many, many bereaved parents who have been in the same painful place that you are now have found life meaningful again.

Know that you will too.

Margaret Gerner
Bereaved Parents USA
St. Louis, MO

Father's Day

I just finished watching another miserable cologne commercial on TV. For some reason these are the first signs of the upcoming holiday, commercials that are only shown at Christmas and Father's Day to give wives and kids some idea of what to get Dad to celebrate a gift-oriented holiday.

Like the other fathers who read this newsletter, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen. My son's life. An opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are the age my son should be now. A chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called and wished my father a happy day the night before, and go to the florist for the flowers I will place on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time, then return home to my wife and our infant son. This year will have a greater measure of peace due to young Dan's arrival, but I shall always have that Alex-sized hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I too die.

Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt the lack of understanding of the non-bereaved on how a father should mourn his child's death, and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such belief in the strength of maternal love, and do such a good job of ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at Alex's memorial service was on how my wife was dealing with this

tragedy, to the long-time friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark Card commercial last year, the majority of people around us seem to have difficulty with the thought that a father may need to grieve for his deceased child just as much as a mother might.

So that is where some support and love is needed, and needed badly. Of course we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. In a recent newsletter there was a note from a bereaved mother from New Jersey asking fathers and siblings to be understanding of a grieving mother's needs on Mother's Day. I agree, but I would also hope that you ladies will not forget your husbands this Father's Day as well. It is frequently said that we males don't often talk of our emotional needs, and are reluctant to show our pain, but we need love and "warm fuzzies" when we hurt also.

Please remember us on June 19, and please remember also that those cute little sentimental commercials that hurt you in May take their toll on us in June. There are definitely times when I can do without Old Spice, McDonalds, Hallmark, and AT&T.

Brothers, I wish you peace, comfort, and love.

Doug Hughes TCF/Cincinnati, Ohio



The trick question:

After my baby died, there were many seemingly innocuous questions that suddenly became so personal and difficult to answer. Simple questions like, "How many children do you have?" were so very painful. A friend once put it rather poignantly when she said, "It isn't supposed to be a trick question." If I mentioned my son who died, people would become uncomfortable. But if I failed to mention him, I felt I was betraying his memory. Either way I was always left feeling uneasy.

Often in the early weeks and months after a baby dies, the need to tell everyone is especially acute. Parents may feel compelled to tell even people they barely know about their baby's life and death. As time goes on this becomes more difficult. People around them are less willing to listen, and the opportunities to talk about their beloved baby become less frequent. They may find themselves being urged to "let go." This can be especially difficult for parents whose only child has died. They are



parents, yet there are no children there for them to parent. The need to be recognized as parents can be especially acute. One woman I met in a support group who had no living children once told me, "I come to these meetings because this is the only place I feel like a mother."

The choice on how to answer these questions is an individual one. Some parents will choose to tell anyone who asks about their child who died. Others may simply respond by saying something like, "I have two living children." Some people base their decision of how much to tell someone by what type of relationship they will have. If it is someone who is part of their everyday lives, they may choose to share it. If it is a casual question asked by a stranger in the grocery store, it may warrant a more casual response. The most important thing to remember is there are no wrong answers.

It has been 14 years since Justin died and the mention of his name is not so jolting. The need to tell everybody about him is less acute. If someone asks me today how many children I have I will probably answer, "three." But a little voice in the back of my head will whisper, "four." And I will think of him and smile.

*Linda Raydo, RN, Hudson
Mohawk Affiliate of the SIDS Alliance*

How many children do you have?

I don't think of it as a trick question. It is an innocent question that parents usually ask of each other. In the days, months, and first years following my daughter's death, I was ambivalent in how to answer, partly because I did not want to lose what little control I had over the overwhelming grief I felt inside. The mere mention of her name or having to tell another person that she had died suddenly in her sixth year would release a flow of tears and emotions.

I tried answering "three boys" once in a while, which usually brought the response of, "No little girl to grace your house?" And then my memories would race through the years she was with us and how she had transformed in short order the home of her three older brothers into one filled with beanie babies, horses, Barbie dolls, pink girlie-things, and an invasive array of all her "stuff." It took me a long time to be comfortable parenting a strong-willed, self-determined, hot-tempered, and very focused little girl. "Three boys," was not the right answer for me. I will forever be the father of four, three of whom live with me still; one who has gone on, but of whom I think daily and is ever present to me. "Four" is my answer, every one of them a gift, each one treasured.

Bill Steinhauser, TCF/Quad Cities