



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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 COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
QUAD CITY AREA CHAPTER
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May 2012 — Volume XXV, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

By the time you receive this newsletter Mother's Day may have come and gone and Father's Day will be approaching. Both holidays can be tough times for grieving parents. This is my first Mother's Day without my own mom and I have already celebrated by giving a special gift to someone in her honor. I think she would have been pleased. The following article talks about some ways we can take care of ourselves on Mother's Day or Father's day as well as honor our child who has died and our surviving children.

"For all of us, childless mothers and motherless children alike, planning a way to remember our deeply cherished loved ones is very important. Make a plan that will honor your mother's life, your child's life. Acknowledge their presence in your life, your heart and your mind. Honor your love for them, as well as the pain you feel due to their absence. Create new traditions for this day, such as lighting a candle or saying a prayer, or wearing a flower. You might wish to donate to a charity in your child's or your mother's name, plan a visit to the burial site, plant a tree, create a work of art or start a scrapbook. Read your mom's favorite book, watch her favorite movies, listen to songs she loved. Name a star after your child, make his or her favorite food, plan a balloon release with notes to him or her written on the balloons. No matter what, you are always a mother. And no matter what, your mother is always your mother. We can remember them with love.

"I vividly recall the first Mother's Day after my son died. It was a very sad, painful day. The beauty of spring itself seemed to exist solely to mock my childless arms. On that day, my husband and I planted a tree in our backyard. I had originally planned to plant a tree for our son so that he could watch the tree grow as he grew. Instead, we planted the tree in his memory. The choosing of the tree, bringing it home, digging the hole, and the placement of the tree itself, were all acts that meant more than the simple planting of a tree. The act was elevated to ritual status and was very healing and comforting. I placed special stones around the tree, hung wind chimes and placed special ornaments in and around the tree. Caring for the tree has become a way of demonstrating our on-going love for him. Weeding, decorating the area, watering and fertilizing the tree have allowed for that loving memorial to continue. The tree is visible in our back yard from every window that looks out of the back of our house; kitchen, living room, bathroom, hallway, office. While nothing takes away the pain of missing my child, the ritual we created together to honor his memory made that first Mother's Day more bearable, and is a constant reminder of our love for him. Seeing the tree bloom each spring and watching it grow a little taller and stronger with each passing year underscore the tree's symbolic representation of our ever-present love for him and his presence in our family.

"Whatever your personal circumstances, spend some time making a plan for honoring, remembering and memorializing. Think about doing something to care for yourself as well. Self-care gifts such as massage, manicure, pedicure, can all help to alleviate stress. Ask for what you need. Taking time to be alone, to journal, to take a walk, spend time in nature, or simply to rest can be very helpful. If you need support, ask for it. If you worry that no one will do anything for you on Mother's Day, be pro-active and tell your loved ones what you would like to do to observe the day. Plan a lunch or dinner with supportive friends or family. Give yourself permission to do what you need to do to take care of yourself." **Karla Helbert**

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

Such a Beautiful Day... Why Am I crying?

This is a question that comes up every spring, particularly from the more newly bereaved. Spring is something we have always looked forward to, before tragedy hit. The cold, drab, bleak winter is finally over. Somehow, we thought that magical time would free us from our pain. Unfortunately, not so! It seems to have the opposite effect.

Perhaps it is because we see this beauty unfolding, and our child is not here to share it. The devastating knowledge that the “magic” of spring didn’t change our feelings. The fact that the world seems to go on, just as if nothing had happened, when our world seems to have stopped, seems impossible to comprehend. False expectations. What we tend to forget is that though the seasons change, where we are in our grief cycle is what controls our feelings. Just hold on to the fact that spring is a rebirth of what seems dead, as dead as you feel now. It is true, you will never stop missing your son or daughter; however, hold on to the hope and belief that your spring will come again, too. When it does, it will be different. Just as the trees and flowers aren’t the same, you won’t be either. But their beauty is still there, and as you start to come back to life again, you will find different joys in life again. We each run on a different calendar, so no time frame can be put on your spring. Just know that your feelings are perfectly normal. It may seem that you are back at square one, but look back, remember what it really was like at the beginning, and I think you will realize there has been progress, and there will be more.

Mary Ehman, TCF/Valley Forge, PA



TCF 2012 National/International Conference Costa Mesa, California July 20-22, 2012

You will be able to mail in a registration form or register online on TCF's national website at www.compassionatefriends.org.

For all the latest information and updates as they become available, and more information about the event keynote speakers, please visit the official TCF National Conference/International Gathering site at [TCF 2012 National/International Conference](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).

GRIEF RESOLUTION

In TCF literature they talk about “grief resolution” as the goal of constructive grief work. What does it mean to “resolve our grief?”

A grief is defined as the reaction to loss and to “resolve” something means to change or transform it. Therefore, grief resolution means to change or transform our reaction to the loss of our child. This definition says nothing about forgetting our child, not missing her or not wishing he were still with us many years after the death. It says we will think and feel differently about having lost him or her.

It's been 20 years since my son, Arthur, was killed. I don't hurt any more when I think of him. I am always aware that my family is incomplete and frequently I experience a feeling of regret for “what might have been.” But, I no longer think of Arthur every day or feel the searing pain of loss that I felt for so long.

I can remember what a beautiful child he was. I can remember cute things he did. I can remember the not so cute things he did also. I remember many

precious things about him, but remembering does not hurt anymore.

Of course, not hurting does no mean that I don't care that Arthur is dead, or that his short six years haven't affected my life even today. It says I have changed how I react to his death.

That's what “resolving your grief” means. It means you can go through a day or a week without intense pain and longing. It means that you can think of the years you had your child and smile. It means that you can enjoy yourself again without feeling guilty. It means that you can live and invest in new interests, even though they don't include your child. It means you can think of him without hurting. It means that your reaction to your child's death is changed. As one mother put it, “Now I can think of his life more than his death.” For me, that's resolution.

Margaret Gerner
TCF/St. Louis MO

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS



In remembering our children,
In sharing with each other,
In supporting each other,
We ease our pain.
We share each step,
We help smooth the road,
And we serve as witnesses to
The fact that we can make it
Beyond grief...

Roy F. Peterson, TCF/Lexington, KY

The reality is that we don't forget, move on, and have closure, but rather we honor, we remember, and incorporate our deceased children and siblings into our lives in a new way. In fact keeping memories of your loved one alive in your mind and heart is an important part of your healing journey.

Harriet Schiff, *The Bereaved Parent*

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.

Permission to Backslide

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because we are humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death at once. So we let it in a little at a time.

from *How to Go on Living*
Peppers and Knapp

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.

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 and Maggie's Fund** 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.

Alive Alone provides bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. This is a self-help network and publications including a bi-monthly newsletter to promote communication and healing.

Email: alivealone@bright.net
Website: www.alivealone.org

Alive Alone, Inc.
11115 Dull Robinson Road
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Mother's Day/Father's Day

Mother's Day and Father's Day can be both heart wrenching and heart warming for bereaved parents.

Surviving children recognize their parent's loss and their own losses and, in their effort to regain a kind of normalcy, they often try to make these special days as festive and as full of love as they possibly can. Most parents recognize the efforts of their surviving children and try to respond with enthusiasm, however difficult it may be at the time.

As much as bereaved parents love and appreciate their living children, no bereaved parent can forget the child (or children) now missing from the family circle. Fractured families are never quite the same as they once were. Parents whose only child has died, or whose children have all died, can be especially saddened when Mother's Day and Father's Day are touted in every department store and gift shop. Yet even these parents (for parenthood does not die with children) may find that memories ease the stress of these special days when time has permitted their own working through the grieving process.

Shirley Ottman,
The Slender Thread

When grief is new
you need not find a reason
however good and brave
to temper your despair.

When grief is new
the heart accepts no answer
however wise and kind
to ease your mourning.

When grief is new
your life can only know
disintegration,
overwhelming pain...

My friend, try to believe
what other griever learned:
you will not always hurt
as you hurt now;
time will restore
the soundness of your mind.

(All other words
are shadow on the wind
when grief is new.)

Sascha



Sign up for National Monthly e-newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its more than 625 chapters.

Published once a month (as well as occasional special editions), the e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

Each e-newsletter also includes a story specially selected from a past edition of *We Need Not Walk Alone*, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. For the siblings, the e-newsletter features a past question and answer column by Dr. Mary Paulson.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on e-newsletter at the top of the Home page.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, May 24, 2012, 6:30 pm

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

Call Rosemary Shoemaker (309.441.5586) or Michelle Curtis (309.644.0486) for information and directions.

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 meeting: June 28, 2012, at 6:30 pm.

Quad City Chapter TCF Website:

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 of each month at 6:00 pm in HomeRidge Inn Suites in Bettendorf east of the Bennigan's Restaurant. Please check at the front desk for room location. Please contact Kirby White ahead of time to verify the meeting location: kombo100@msn.com or (563)271-5908.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms whose child(ren) have died 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	This is a community resource 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. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. For more information call Emily Gordon, program director, by phone (563-324-9580) or email (egordon@rhoh.org) Or go to 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

Angel of Hope

Lisa Ornelis, an East Moline bereaved mother of two children, is earnestly pursuing the creation of a local memorial garden that will include the Angel of Hope statue. The Angel of Hope, an exact replica of the Christmas Box Angel statue located in Salt Lake City, Utah, stands as a symbol of hope for all parents who have experienced the death of a child. Right now the nearest statues are in Rockford, Iowa City, Iowa, and Coal City, Illinois. Peoria is in the early stages of obtaining a statue.

She welcomes any help or input at this time and would like to have a committee to work towards this common goal.



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.

Thoughts about Grief

With the death of someone central to our lives – a parent, a spouse, a child, a sibling, a friend – we find ourselves in new territory. We may not like it at all. We may feel as if we don't even know who we are any more. We may wonder if we'll ever be happy again, if life will ever again feel full and rich.

With the death of a loved one, we hang suspended between the familiar that has ended and the new that can't be imagined. In specific ways, large and small, our whole life has been changed. We no longer can or need to do certain things we had to do or always did. Now we have to do things we never had to do before. People who used to be around a lot may not come or call much anymore. We have time we don't know what to do with. Even when we think of things to do, we're unsure who to do them with. We sometimes feel a longing to be with someone, and at other times we shrink from the company of others. We're assaulted with unpredictable feelings. Perhaps we even wonder who cares about us any more, or who or what we can count on including ourselves. Woven through all is the empty knowledge that our loved one isn't here anymore.

Sometimes getting support from others is not easy. It takes real effort to notice what we need and decide who might be able to help with one need or another. It takes honesty and humility to ask another to do something with us or for us. It's sometimes hard to admit that we have needs. We may feel mad that we have to ask. It was so much easier when our loved one was here to

do what we needed!

"I just want to know when this is going to be over. I want my life back. I want things to be normal." We may feel cheated, robbed. We feel unsettled, off-balance, unprotected. We just want relief.

What do we do? Should we just wait out the storm, wait until the sun returns, and we can peek out? Or, to the contrary, do we wrestle with grief and try to beat it down? Do we keep busy, run as fast as we can and hope grief will be left behind in the dust? Do we hibernate and wait for it to pass like winter? Do we ignore grief, pretend it isn't there, or boldly whistle in the dark until it goes away?

If we do these things, we are treating grief like the enemy. It is not the enemy. It is neither destructive nor deadly itself. On the contrary, grief is a lifeforce. It works on our behalf. When someone or something precious is lost to us, grief rises up within us. It is a mighty force that honors the importance of all we have lost. It comes to trumpet our wounds, to soothe our broken hearts. Grief equips us to face an encroaching awareness of all the implications of our loss, large and small.

Grief is not something we "get over." Rather, it is something we "get through." We can pace ourselves; take time out from grief. If we have the courage to welcome grief as a friend, we can be confident we're moving toward a "new normal."

Maureen Kramlinger

Shared Thoughts on Sibling Grief

We often call bereaved siblings the forgotten mourners. Frequently friends and family treat them as secondary grievers, and the approach is "How are your parents doing?" therefore, giving siblings the impression their grief is not as significant as parental grief. Often we hear the ridiculous suggestion that siblings should be strong and take care of their parents. When siblings cannot reduce the parental grief, they feel they have failed, which adds to their low self-esteem.

Our longest lifetime relationship is usually with our siblings. We count on them to always be there for us. We share with them our innermost secrets, as both children and adults. We even expect them to be there for our unborn children, as well as for support when our parents are aged. They are our confidant, our best friend, our idol, our advisor; sometimes they are younger, and we are the same things to them.

When our sibling dies, we no longer feel so invincible, we worry who will be next, and quickly learn how final death is. Our family is disrupted, our sibling position changes, we may now be the oldest, the youngest, or the only child. We cannot avoid the pain of grief, our parents are different now, and they are so consumed with their own grief, that they cannot be the parents that we want them to be for us; this lessens our security. Everyone's personality has changed. We not only have to adjust to the new person we have be-

come, but also to the difference that the whole family has undergone. Sometimes it is very difficult to be in the home when it is so filled with pain, and so much of the laughter has turned to tears. Frequently friends are easier to talk to than our family. The fear of losing another family member makes the parents so overprotective that they take away the carefree feeling of life, which adds to the stress of sibling grief.

When our loss is at an early age, it is not uncommon to later grieve as an adult for that person. I was 12 years old when I lost my first sibling. My brother was 30. I later went through an entirely different grief cycle as an adult. At the age of 12, I felt my brother was much older. As I got nearer and surpassed the age of 30, I then realized how young he was. This stirred up new emotions.

The hurting and healing causes us to redefine our priorities in life. Grief frequently causes us to have more compassion for hurting people. We learn to appreciate people more than things, and frequently a life-long commitment is made to make the world a better place. It is our choice to decide what we will do with the experience we have so painfully endured.

God Bless.

Marie Hofmocker,
TCF/Valley Forge, PA