



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

June 2012—Volume XXV, Number 6

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

Jerry and I have been presenting Marriage Encounter weekends around the world since 1983. We have met many couples and told our “marriage story” many times. We have seen God use our words to make a difference in the lives of many couples. Just over a year ago our then 2 year old grandson suffered an unexplained, life-threatening seizure that left him with a serious brain injury. While he has made significant progress in recovering lost abilities, he still has a long way to go. Throughout our marriage, our family has leaned on our faith in God, trusting that He has a plan in all circumstances to bring Him honor and glory. On our most recent Marriage Encounter weekend there was a couple who shared with us that they had come to the weekend as a last ditch effort to save their failing marriage. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in their relationship was unresolved grief over the loss of a child and broken communication because they were both grieving this loss in different ways. Because the loss of our daughter is a big part of our marriage journey, we share about our individual responses to our grief in some of our talks. This sharing opened doors of communication for this couple and was a catalyst for deeper understanding and growth in their marriage as they began to process their individual and couple grief in a new way. As they shared with us, tears came to my eyes and I realized again how God allows our experience with grief to have an impact on other couples who share a similar loss, even now, 28 years after our child died. We were reminded that God is also at work in the life of our grandson and his family, and perhaps someday their experiences and the courage with which they have faced their challenges will make a difference to someone else who is struggling with sorrow, anger, disappointment, or despair.

While we will never be grateful our child died or that our grandson is having to fight to recover from a devastating injury, we are deeply grateful that we know God can transform our pain and use it to make a difference in the lives of other people.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

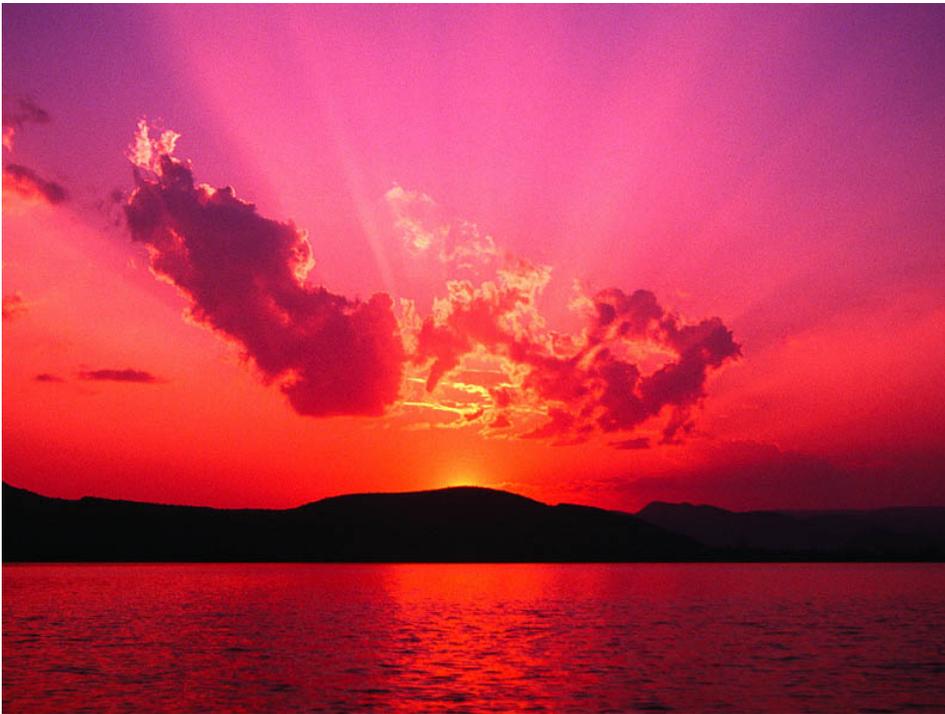
When your heart feels heavy from the burden of grief, it is good to seek out reminders that the gift of hope is alive within us. One of the best reminders of hope is the season of spring.

When you are weary from grief, take a rest outside by a babbling brook, or sit for a while under the starry sky. Spend a few moments watching the butterflies at play as they flit to and fro enjoying the gifts of nature. Listen to the sounds of the birds in the far off distance singing their songs of cheer as they glide through the early morning sky.

Take a close look at the blade of grass as it is pushing its way through the soil and be reminded that following every winter there is a spring. With spring comes the freshness of a new season. There are colorful bursts of flowers, sunrises that will take your breath away, and magical moments of serenity that will fill your soul with peace that can only come from our heavenly Father.

Grief continually presents us with all kinds of reasons to be lonely and afraid. But spring presents us with gifts of hope to carry us through our pain and fear. Embrace every moment of springtime and be filled with hope!

Clara Hinton



**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.

Was Your Child Perfect?

When I first started writing about our son Eric, I found it awfully easy to remember the good things he did and forget about the bad.

Now Eric was a neat kid who made both Dave and me very proud to be his parents, but even I have to admit he had a few faults – not so many of course, but one or two.

I could cover those up, but my readers wouldn't appreciate his humanness if I drew a one-sided picture of him.

Therefore, I find myself working very hard to avoid a common trap bereaved parents sometimes fall into, that of deifying our dead children.

How easy it is to make saints out of them in our mind and forget the naughty, thoughtless things they sometimes did just because they were kids.

And how unfair it is to them not

to "tell it like it is."

I also know from discussion with bereaved siblings what a devastating effect that rose-tinting can have on them.

I couldn't match up to a brother or sister who is perfect. Could you?

I'd like to challenge you to listen to the comments you make about your child and listen to your thoughts.

If all of them make you cry, try to remember the things that make you laugh or shake your head in wonderment instead.

And don't forget the reasons why that kid was sometimes in the "doghouse."

Cherish those memories too, for they were as much a part of your child's personality as the extra-special things he or she did.

Judy Osgood, TCF/Sunriver, OR

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

Will there ever be a day when I will be able to go to a graduation, an engagement party, a wedding, cut a birthday cake, see a nephew, a niece, or a grandchild, toast a new year, hide an Easter egg, hang a Christmas stocking, or enjoy a lazy Sunday afternoon without remembering and wondering what might have been? And if that day ever comes, will I feel better or worse?

Ken Faulk, TCF/Scranton, PA

When is it my turn to cry? I'm not sure society or my upbringing will allow me a time to really cry, unafraid of the reaction and repercussion that might follow. I must be strong. I must support my wife because I am a man. I must be the cornerstone of our family because society says so, my family says so, and, until I can reverse my learned nature, I say so.

A FATHER, IN DEFRAINET, AL, 1991

STANDING

People say "Oh you are doing so well, you are so strong, you are an inspiration!:

We do not feel strong.

We feel shaken to the core, Saddened beyond belief, Pain beyond comprehension, Forever changed.

What do they see that we cannot see? That a horrible storm, unexpectedly ripped through our lives and we are still standing

They are amazed.

We are paralyzed.

Julie Short, TCF/Southeastern Illinois Chapter-In Memory of Kyra

In too many instances, fathers' responses to infant loss tend to coincide with how they believe they should act as men, rather than how they need to act to confront and resolve their own grief.

CORDELL AND THOMAS 1990, 112,

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.

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: alvealone@bright.net
Website: www.alvealone.org

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

A STEPPARENT'S THOUGHTS

I am a bereaved stepparent – *Stepfather* to be exact. Robin Ann Craney, my stepdaughter, was killed at the hands of a drunk driver on June 8, 2001. She was 17 years old.

I have a son named Greg. His mom remarried so I saw him on weekends, did the trips, and long summer visits as many divorced parents do. I did not get the chance to be a part of his life and see him every day. I got to hear about his activities and accomplishments *all* after the fact. When you marry someone with kids, you get another chance.

After several months of dating my (now) wife Cindy, I finally met her kids, Chris and Robin. Robin was almost 7 years old at the time. I remember that first meeting clearly because she wasn't feeling so good. She ended up getting sick and had to go home. What a first meeting that was!

After that, I became totally involved in the lives and activities of both of the children. I remember one of those nights well! Cindy and I attended parent-teacher conferences for both kids, a Cub Scout Pack Meeting and a Girl Scout Brownie Meeting...not bad for a single guy, who had been unmarried for 13 years!

Over the years, I got to know Robin's likes, dislikes, and all of her friends – *and she had a lot of friends!* I attended and participated in all of Robin's activities, supporting her in her many endeavors – including gymnastics (her favorite). I was there when she had migraine headaches, running her to the doctor when her Mother couldn't, encouraging her, supporting her – all the things Dads do for their kids.

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Fathers and Grief

Mothers and fathers grieve differently. Traditionally, fathers are expected to be strong and to carry on. They are usually expected to attend to the practical but not the emotional aspects of their child's death. Fathers tend to feel that they must handle all the decisions at this time, but these decisions can have lasting effects on the family, so it is important for parents to make them together.

Each father grieves in his own way. Some may express their emotions openly; others may process their feelings internally. Each father must be allowed to process his grief in a way that is natural for him. Fathers often fear that if they release their emotions, they will erupt like volcanoes; for many men, anger is the predominant emotional reaction to the death of their child. Ignoring, denying, or running from anger and other intense feelings will not make them go away. Channeling the energy of overwhelming emotions through physical activity or other healthy activities can help ease the tension.

The loss of a child can also place tremendous stress on parents' relationship with each other. Grieving parents often feel alone, disconnected, and alienated. Parents can try to reach across the emptiness by asking how their partner is doing and by listening. It's helpful to set aside time every day to talk, share closeness and comfort, and express needs and feelings when partners are ready. This becomes even more important as parents return to work. If possible, parents should avoid becoming overly busy or exhausted with too many commitments; "grief work" is real work, and it takes time and energy.



www.sidscenter.org

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, June 28, 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: July 26, 2012, at 6:30 pm.

Quad City Chapter Website: <http://www.orgsites.com/il/tcfquadcityareachapter/index.html>

Previous editions of this newsletter are found at: <http://www.bethany-qc.org/docs>

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 Waggnor Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, (563)843-3655, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org



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.



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. Please contact Rosemary Shoemaker (309.441.5586) for more information.

Fathers - The Forgotten Grievors

The death of a child is probably the most traumatic and devastating experience a couple can face. Although both mothers and fathers grieve deeply when such a tragedy occurs, they grieve differently, and it is most important that each partner give the other permission to grieve as he/she needs. This may be the greatest gift each can give the other.

Parental grief is strongly influenced by the nature of the bond between child and parent. Bereavement specialists actually speak of "incongruent grieving" patterns in mothers and fathers and of differences in the timing and intensity of the parental bond for mothers and fathers.

For the mother, the bond is usually more immediate and demonstrable, more intense at the beginning of life, more emotionally and physically intimate. The mother's bond with the baby is usually tightly forged from the moment of conception and continues through the pregnancy, the birth, and the nursing process. The maternal bond involves the present and the baby's immediate needs, while the father's bond with the baby more often concerns the future and dreams and expectations for the child. Today, however, many fathers are forging earlier and more intense prenatal bonds with their babies. Fathers also are often present in the delivery room for the birth. Some fathers become direct caregivers of the newborn, developing early and close bonds with their infants. Yet, still in many cases, "the father's emotional investment in parenting tends to occur later and less intensely than the mother's. This has implications for the way parents grieve." (Cordell and Thomas 1990, 75.)

In spite of the trend towards earlier bonding between fathers and babies, the influence of cultural expectations about men and grief persists and is powerful. Typically, the societal view of parental loss is not the same for the father as the mother. Most of the literature on parental bereavement still tends to focus on the mother's grief. Often, men are not acknowledged as experiencing grief; or more importantly, men are not taught that it's necessary to grieve and are discouraged from demonstrating signs of grief openly. Bereaved fathers frequently feel that they are the forgotten mourners and are often referred to as "second class grievors" (Horchler and Morris 1994, 72.)

Fathers are expected to be strong for their partners, to be the "rock" in the family. All too often fathers are considered to be the ones who should attend to the practical but not the emotional aspects surrounding the death; they are expected to be the ones who should not let emotions show or tears fall outwardly, the ones who will not and should not fall apart. Men are often asked how their wives are doing, but not asked how they are doing.

Such expectations place an unmanageable burden on men and deprive them of their rightful and urgent need to grieve. This need will surface eventually if it is not expressed. It is not unusual for grieving fathers to feel overwhelmed, ignored, isolated, and abandoned as they try to continue to be caregivers and breadwinners for their families while their hearts are breaking. "Fathers' feelings [often] stay hidden under layers of responsibility and grim determination." (Staudacher 1991, 124.)

Stepparent

Continued from page 4

I want to tell you in no uncertain terms, being a stepparent is so much harder. You get the responsibility and, often times it seems, none of the respect. "Mom said I could, so I don't have to listen to you" or "You can't tell me what to do, you are not my dad" and so forth. I tolerated and dealt with her emotional outbursts when she became incensed at anything (sometimes it seemed everything) during the teen years. All *dads* know how trying those times can be!

Now I am a bereaved stepparent...the one in a kind of "no man's land." I am not biologically connected to Robin; I sometimes feel like an outsider around people who were *once* a family - Mother, Father, Son, and Daughter. Many of our friends have worried about Cindy and Chris. They often ask me "How is Cindy doing?" or "Is Chris Ok?" Although I knew and lived with Robin for 10 years, very few ask, "How are *you* doing?" I am only the *stepparent*. The idea that this tragedy cannot be as devastating to me as it is to Robin's "real family" is incomprehensible.

One definition for the word father is "father figure: one often of particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father." This is what I was for Robin. She loved to push my buttons – but that was part of our relationship – as frustrating as it could be. Robin is the only daughter I will ever have. I was every bit a *father* to her. I love her and I miss her.

We, the stepparents of children who

have died, grieve for our children too. *Only* society puts the "Step" in the name. *Parent* is still the biggest part of who we are. We hurt because they were our children too - often without the support and understanding that is demonstrated towards the biologically connected parents. These beautiful children with whom we developed emotional bonds are now gone out of our lives; and we, too, endure the same feelings of loss and sadness.

Tony Cinocco - TCF/Denver, CO
In memory of Robin Ann Craney

Fathers — The Forgotten Grievors

Continued from page 6

Bereaved fathers often say that such strong emotions are very difficult to contain after their child's death. Fathers often fear that they will erupt like volcanoes if they allow themselves to release these feelings and so, too often, fathers try to bury their pain with the child who died.

It is most important that a father's grief be verbalized and understood by his partner, other family members, professionals, coworkers, friends, and by anyone who will listen. Fathers need to try to free themselves of stereotypes and societal expectations about men and grief; they must be able to tell others that their grief is all they have from their child's brief life. Fathers repeatedly say that for their own peace of mind, they (and those who care about them) need to move away from this mind set and allow them to grieve as they are entitled.

www.athealth.com/consumer/disorders/parentalgrief.html