



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 2013 — Volume XXVI, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

There has been a lot going on at the Webb house the past few weeks and I seem to be out of inspiration, so I went into the archives and am going to share with you some thoughts for May that I shared in the May 1993 newsletter.

May can be an especially hard month for grieving parents. The beauty of spring that other years brought great pleasure, may this year bring pain, because inside you still feel a winter chill. Facing graduations, weddings, family gatherings may also cause stress and pain. Then there's Mother's Day, a special day set aside to honor mothers, yet you cannot feel complete without the presence of your child who has died. Perhaps your only child has died and you judge that people don't really think of you as a "mother." We wish we could give you a magic formula to ease your pain. But there is none. We do share with you the following thoughts from other bereaved mothers that perhaps will give you hope and a reminder that you are not alone.

I don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my child, a love greater than any I had known before. So as Mother's Day approaches, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood, I too, want to be remembered as a mother. Ginny Smith, TCF/Charlottesville, Virginia

Would I have not accepted the gift if I had known the terrible loss I would feel by having it taken away from me? NO, I would still hold out my hands and accept such a precious gift, for to love and to cherish, even for a short while, is worth every tear. Vera Babb TCF, St. Louis, Missouri

... Life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things that we cannot keep, but which enrich, enoble, and endow our lives with a foretaste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and the beautiful. Mary Wildman, TCF, Moro, Illinois

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

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Loving Listeners

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):

Michelle Curtis
309-644-0486

Judy Delvechio
563-349-8895 or
delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com

Kay Miller
309-738-4915

Kirby White
563-271-5908 or
kombo100@msn.com

Michelle, Judy, Kirby, and Kay are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing

The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The friendly atmosphere encourages conversation among friends, friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions. These include "Pregnancy and Infant Loss," "Bereaved 2 Years and Under," "Bereaved 2 Years and Over," "No Surviving Children," "Survivors of Suicide." There are also sessions for surviving siblings.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.

Mother's Day

I remember vividly the first Mother's Day after my son died. Had there been a vote that year, I would have cast mine for the abolition of Mother's Day. I didn't want there to be such a day and I didn't want anybody to remind me that it did, indeed, exist. My response to those who were left who loved me was to pull away and isolate myself. I MADE A MISTAKE! Between the first and second Mother's Day I made a number of discoveries. Probably the most important one I made was that my surviving child needed to be allowed to show her love for me. She was and is as important as my son who died and has that right. I also learned that my salvation lay in the hands of those people who cared for me, and when I learned to let them help me, I helped myself. Help yourself this Mother's Day.

Mary Cleckley

(Grandmother, continued from page 7)

Shiny as the dew for a short moment.
Then all those colors fade
And all that is left is pale and gray.

In everyone's life there are days of sorrow and sadness
Far away is the appreciation and joy of even little things
Have then the courage to go on
And don't let your head hang down
You won't remain in that deep valley
Time will teach you that.

Maria Trinkle, Bedford, NY

About Being Strong

Many people are convinced that being strong and brave means trying to think and talk about "something else."

But we know that being strong and brave means thinking and talking about your dead love, until your grief begins to be bearable.

That is strength. That is courage. And only thus can "being strong and brave" help you heal.

Sascha Wagner

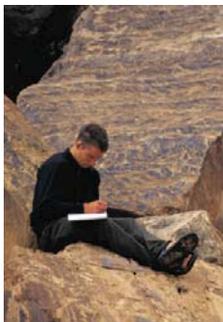
Compassionate Friends Offers Grief Related Webinar Series

The Compassionate Friends is expanding its outreach to bereaved families by offering a series of free online grief related seminars. The webinars, to be held once per month, are on various grief topics and guests are well-known experts in the field. Webinars have included such topics as "Handling Grief Through the Holidays," "Getting 'Stuck' and 'Unstuck,'" "Caring for Your Health While Grieving," and "Coping with Guilt During Bereavement." These webinars were recorded and are available to view on demand on TCF's national website.

To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.

TCF National Office Seeks Your Stories and Articles!

For many years, The Compassionate Friends National Office has provided on its Leadership Site stories and poems by TCF members that can be cut and pasted into chapter newsletters around the country. The National Office, in order to better serve its newsletter editors and members who receive support from chapter newsletters, has committed to doubling, over the next two years, the number of articles and poems available to the chapter newsletter editors. Currently, the Newsletter Editor Database has 500 stories and 150 poems. The National Office would like to include your personal grief related stories and poems.



Please submit your articles and poems to TCF's Public Awareness Coordinator, Wayne Loder, at wayne@compassionatefriends.org. Please include your name and chapter affiliation.

Morning Will Come

Brokenhearted...
How can I bear the pain?
So many plans...permanently interrupted.
So many dreams...shattered.
Hopes...dashed.
All gone.
Why?
Why this?
Why us? Why me?
Helplessness...hopelessness...
Life will never be the same again.
Is it even worth living?
Where are you, God?

I'm right here beside you, my child.
Even though you may not feel my presence,
I'm holding you close under the shadow of my wings.
I will walk with you through this dark night.

Do not shrink from weeping.
I gave you tears for emotional release.
Don't try to hide your grief.
Let it become for you a source of healing,
A process of restoration,
For I have planned it so.
Those who mourn shall be blessed.
I'll be holding on to you,
Even when you feel you can't hold on to me.

Seek my face, child of mine.
Receive my promise, impossible as it may seem now,
That joy will come in the morning.
It may take much time,
But I will heal your broken heart.
I know the night seems endless,
But morning will come.
I have promised.

From the Muscatine, IA
TCF newsletter

TOO SOON

You were . . .
Too soon taken away.
One moment here-
The next, you'd gone,
How I wanted you to stay.

You were . . .
Too soon taken away.
My little one-
Could you have lingered,
Just one more day?

You were . . .
Too soon taken away.
A future planned-
Will never be,
Because you could not stay.

You were . . .
Too soon taken away.
One tender touch-
A forever love,
Is what I hold this day.

You were . . .
Too soon taken away.
Child of my heart-
Your precious memory,
Will never fade away.

Jackie Deems, August 1992

Love Gifts

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.

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 website at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last five years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are downloadable 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.



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.

Lindy Elizabeth

appeared to be a healthy, normal newborn; but when she was four months old, a rare, genetic form of spinal muscular atrophy caused her weakened respiratory system to fail, and on March 12, 1985, our personal journey through grief began.

By the following February, our family had endured almost a year of holidays including what would have been Lindy's first birthday (November 7), and a Christmas that was shadowed by memories of the only one she had shared with us. I knew that holidays are difficult, red-letter days -- days when you plan so many things that you don't have time to think, or days when you plan nothing because you can't help but think; but either way, there is an internal bracing against the memories associated with that date.

Consequently, it was with dread that I began to prepare for March 12, the first anniversary of her death. I fixed my mind on that ominous calendar square as if it were a giant, black, twister cloud headed in my direction. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, March 1 swooped in and just knocked the stuffing out of me. It took months of counseling before I was to understand the strange significance of March 1, instead of March 12.

Anniversary dates have long been acknowledged as part of the grieving process. They lurk like booby traps in what is already a landmine of unpredictable emotions. The impact of emotion on memory is most apparent on special times that were meaningfully shared with the loved one.

In the first year, especially, there may be an alarming return to the feelings experienced at the time of the death,

often producing anger, anxiety, apathy, or other chaotic symptoms of depression. The pain can be every bit as acute as it was in the beginning. Certain hours of the day can also be difficult during the early stages of bereavement. Waking up in the morning without the loved one, sitting down to meals or listening for the school bus are examples. Certain people, places, songs, smells and objects all can trigger an emotional reaction to the loss. These are NORMAL feelings, and TEMPORARY in good grief work.

Sometimes, because of the pain, we are reluctant to remember, and it is not unusual for some people to get stuck in denial and repress parts of their grief. The longer the grieving is avoided, the more severe the reaction can be. Many people say that they were so apprehensive of the "death day" anniversary that when it finally arrived, it was anti-climatic to their fear. They often realize that they have successfully navigated a year of setbacks and booby traps, and although the ache is ever-present, the intensity begins to be tempered by nostalgia and pleasant memories. According to researchers, this is an indication that the phases of mourning are reaching a conclusion.

The mystery of my extreme reaction to the "wrong" anniversary day was solved with the help of my counselor, Dr. Dale Sauer. With his help, I was able to discover that I had suppressed the emotional impact of March 1. It was the day we had learned that Lindy's disease would be fatal- the most devastating news imaginable! I can remember wandering for hours, disoriented, and feeling as if someone

Continued on page 9

A Year of Grief

It has been a year
Since you went away
Time goes by so slowly.
I never knew so much pain,
Along with fear and emptiness,
Could be felt by anyone.
Your death has sent me into
A darkness and void
Words can't describe.
I never knew I could cry
'Til there were no more tears,
But these came unannounced.
The price of loving a brother
As special as you
Will take me a lifetime to pay.
My pain hasn't been for me only,

For friends don't want to see
The cost of loving and losing.
They say get on with your life-
But they don't understand
How big a part of my life you were.
So I will take my pain,
Along with my special memories,
And live day by day,
These memories from happier days
Are all I have of you now,
So I will place them first in my heart.
If I was given a choice,
Knowing the pain and devastation
That I feel today
I would still want you
To be my big brother to love
For memories can't be taken away.
Greta Sharpe TCF/Andalusia, AL

Lindy Elizabeth, continued from page 4 feeling of nausea as I had when her prognosis was given.

had punched me in the stomach. That night, March 1, 1985, I screamed at God; I begged; I bargained. In the days that followed, I began a preliminary stage of mourning. I privately planned the funeral and burial and tried to prepare myself for my baby not living. When she died eleven days later, initially I was void of any real emotion. The event had occurred just as I had already lived it over and over in my mind.

To stem the feeling of loss of control, I rationalized that since most children with her illness suffocate, we were fortunate that she hadn't suffered any more than she had. I stifled my urge to fall apart. I postponed my grief.

Therefore, a year later the impact of the news we had received on March 1 caught up with me and hit me full force. One year later, to the day, standing in a room last associated with Lindy's funeral, I suddenly snapped. I felt the same disorientation and

A series of the most erratic behaviors of my life followed, and I attributed my months of confusing emotions to other causes. Only counseling help me see that I had experienced a one-year delay in my mourning. Once the real grieving started, I passed through the other stages in recognizable succession. Though it was an "emotional rollercoaster" (according to Dr. Sauer) for almost another year, I feel I've finally accomplished my grief work.

Yes, holidays still hurt, but not overwhelmingly. Friends' children, born at the same time as Lindy, evoke bittersweet fascination as their birthdays roll by. Always, there will be stabs of pain associated with the various anniversaries of her life, but I'm now able to pull from them sweet remembrances. They are slowly becoming celebrations for the precious months that Lindy gave us.

Debby Burns from
Bereavement Magazine

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities

Monthly Meeting: Thursday, May 23, 2013 at 6:30 pm

Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois, 61265

Call Rosemary Shoemaker (309.945.6738) or Bill Steinhauer 309.736.6601 for information and directions. Directions to Bethany are: from the I-74: exit at 7th Avenue and go west to 18th Street. Turn right at 18th Street and enter the parking lot on the right, immediately north of the alleyway.

Next meeting: June 27, 2013, at 6:30 pm at Bethany for Children & Families.

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

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	We are a support group for people who have suffered a tragic loss of life whether a child, sibling, or other. We are great at listening and offer tender shoulders when you contact us. We are flexible to meet any time of day or night. Death needs no appointment and neither do you. We are not professional counselors, but we do have a degree in life experiences. Please contact Kirby White, 563-271-5908 or kombo100@msn.com
Rick's House of Hope	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. 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. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director, by phone (563-324-9580) or email (egordon@rhoh.org) or go to www.rhoh.org .
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support 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 .
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	Survivors of Suicide Support Group Meets on second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252 from 7:00pm - 9:00pm. Contact: Laura Wessels, 815-589-3425 or laura@secondreformedchurch.net
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets 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 .
Alive Alone	Alive Alone is for 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 .



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. Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 650 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 Quad City Area Chapter is when a child dies at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

The Quad City Area Chapter of The

Compassionate Friends meets on the fourth Thursday of the month in Moline, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242
<http://www.orgsites.com/il/tcfquadcityearchapter/index.html>

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 Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

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.



Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me, Sunday, May 10, 1998, is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of this century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering - seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day,

Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother -- a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background, and my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge.

The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well that from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year - Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death - is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

Barbara Atwood, in memory of Jacob

A Tribute to a Grandmother

My mother, and the grandmother of my children, was an extremely special person and she touched many lives. Without her, I don't think I would be able to do what everyone should do no matter what has happened to them and that is: "to make the very best of what you have."

I left my home in the Netherlands in 1973 to marry my American husband, Mike, leaving my whole family behind. My mom, who has seven children and lots of "adopted" ones, always had time to write, send little packages, light candles for me, etc. I knew I was always on her mind.

Whatever positive thing that happened to me, she would be very proud of me and she'd be with me in thoughts if anything negative happened. She would write telling me how happy Mike and I are to have each other and to make sure we'd do something special for each other, even if it were just holding hands.

In 1978 we had a son, Steven, who is terrific. On October 11, 1982, I gave birth to a little girl, whom we named Elizabeth, after my mother. How I wish I could go back to that night. After that our lives changed drastically and without my mother's support and having my husband and Steven, I would have thrown in the towel a long time ago. Elisabeth died of SIDS on December 1, 1982. She was 50 days old.

Our worlds just crashed. All of a sudden we felt so vulnerable, we learned that we are not in control of our lives at all . . . anything can happen and noth-

ing is guaranteed. Through all this, I felt so sad for my mother, our families and friends, because I knew they hurt so much because they wanted to do something and change things, but wouldn't.

My husband, my son, and I went on and did like my mom taught me: "make the best of things." On November 10, 1983, Daniel was born. He was on a monitor that checked his heartbeat and breathing pattern so that maybe we could stop him from dying of SIDS. We did stop SIDS. But he died anyway, on August 5, 1984 after a car crash on August 4th 1984. I was in the hospital and I remember my Mom (who had come with Dad from the Netherlands to be with us) sitting next to me just holding my hand.

My Mom died in November 1988. She was 71. She had had lots of health problems but never complained. Her eyes always seemed to have stars into them, or a glittering light, full of mischievousness, and compassion. I miss her very much. When I think of her I always hear her say, "Be a good person, accept things and people the way they are and make the best of it. You never know how much time you have left so enjoy every minute your have."

My mom (the grandmother of my children) wrote this poem. I share it with you in tribute to her.

In everyone's life
There are moments of joy
A soap bubble filled with colors
Which all of a sudden burst
Into a thousand drops.

(Continued page 11)