



The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May 2022

Volume XXXV, Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Our grandson is facing an extensive orthopedic surgery. At 13 he finds the prospect daunting. While we were talking about it, I thought (in my head, but did not say), “At least you don’t have cancer.” At least you are not facing an amputation.” A friend with young children is dealing with challenges as her husband works 72+ hour weeks in April and May. Several people have said to her, “At least your husband has a job.” or “At least you have a husband.”

“At least” is one of those phrases well-meaning people often throw at bereaved parents – “At least you have other children.” “At least you are young and can have more children.” “At least your child is no longer suffering.” “At least you have grandchildren.” “At least you have many happy memories.” “At least he is in a better place.” At least... at least... at least. What unhelpful words these are. They negate the grief even when the person saying them thinks they are comforting. “At least” does not acknowledge the ongoing pain of grief. “At least” does not give the grieving person a safe place to share their feelings. At the very best, “at least” eases the discomfort of the person saying the words, because it is something to say when they don’t know what to say. “At least” admonishes grieving parents, telling us we have much to be grateful for even though our child has died. The majority of grieving parents would acknowledge they do have much to be grateful for in their lives, but let us create our own list of blessings, if we want, not be wounded by “at leasts” imposed on us by other people. It is so easy to think of and then say those “at leasts” when we are with someone who is hurting or afraid. Let’s eliminate the “at leasts” from our own vocabulary and consider gently and courageously saying, “That is not helpful. I just need you to listen” when someone “at leasts” us.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb



On Mother's Day I can think of no mother more deserving than a Mother who had to give one back.
Erma Bombeck

I held you close in my heart today. I felt complete. You may have died, but you are not gone. You'll always be a part of me.
unknown

And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in.
Haruki Murakami

Grief is a never-ending process of learning to live with loss, and it includes a range of emotions that can change from day to day, or even moment to moment.
Evelyn Fannell

Healing - It doesn't have to look magical or pretty. Real healing is hard, exhausting and draining. Let yourself go through it. Don't try to paint it as anything other than what it is. Be there for yourself with no judgment.
unknown

Nobody ever told me of the extraordinary extent of the Love I felt when my son was born. . . nobody ever told me of the extraordinary extent of the Grief I would feel when my son died. Nancy Pearson— Quad Cities/TCF



Comparing Grief and Why We Shouldn't Do It

Grief-friends – this is a simple article about comparing grief and why you shouldn't do it. The grief-comparison game is common among people who've experienced loss, and unfortunately, it's a competition everyone loses.

I'm worried this may come off as a lecture, so I want to say upfront that most people, us included, naturally get caught up in comparisons. We're accustomed to learning about life by watching the people around us. We use our family, friends, and community members as reference points to better understand and define ourselves.

So sure, when we experience a loss, many of us find ourselves comparing our grief to others' and our perception of their loss experiences. The problem is, you cannot compare grief and loss in the same way you might equate measurable facts like weight and height. Grief isn't objective or quantifiable, and one doesn't undergo specific amounts of suffering, depending on the type of loss they experience.

Grieving people generally have one thing in common; they've experienced loss. Beyond this, their experiences vary widely because grief is a subjective experience influenced by many factors. To focus on comparing grief only the basis of nature or type of loss, and ignore the many other significant factors related to the

grieving person and who or what they lost, is an error in reasoning.

There's danger in placing losses on a grief hierarchy because, ultimately, a person or group of people gets relegated to "less than" status. Sadly, in the context of grief, the "less than" label can come with a lot of baggage, like the implication that someone is less than deserving of support or less than justified in feeling and acknowledging their grief.

We all experience loss throughout our lives. Some losses are relatively easy to cope with and integrate, and some turn our lives inside out. Regardless of where the experience falls on the spectrum – loss is loss, and grief is grief. Loss and grief don't have to be severe enough to be acknowledged as such, and there's no threshold one has to meet to feel grief-like things.

All grief is important. All grief can exist.

Grief is a universal human experience, and yet, it's always different from person to person. So grief feels immensely significant and remarkable to the individual, but it's also no more or less important than anyone else's in the grander scheme. Ahhh...grief is such a paradoxical experience.

Of course, most of us, on some level, want the depth of our pain to be validated or recognized because that is our truth. Loss can be a world-shattering experience, and some people find the notion that their life

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TCF's Facebook Page is a proven support area for bereaved family members to come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. **Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family.** Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. **Check out the Discussion Boards!** Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

A complimentary issue of the National Newsletter is sent to bereaved families who contact the office at The Compassionate Friends, Inc., 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808, Wixom, MI 48393, (877)969-0010.

email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Visit the **sibling resource** page at www.compassionatefriends.org. It is also available to read online without charge.



e-Newsletter Now Available!

An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains 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.

About The Compassionate Friends

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, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987 (<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>).

TCF National Office

48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808

Wixom, MI 48393

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 that 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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community	<p>TCF's 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 sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
TCF's Grief Related Resources	<p>There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/.</p>
TCF National Magazine	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to www.compassionatefriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. TCF e-Newsletter is also available from the National Office to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
Grief Materials	<p>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.</p>
Amazon.com	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
Previous Newsletter Editions	<p>Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.bethany-qc.org for copies of the last several years of the Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
Alive Alone	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at www.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net.</p>
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.</p>
Our Newsletter	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai at climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

What is Mother's Day Like for you?

What do you wish more people understood about what it's really like to be a grieving mom on Mother's Day?

I wish people understood that simply because I have a living child, does not mean the pain of losing my daughter is any less. People see my son, but they can't see the hole in my soul. **Ali**



The raw truth of what Mother's Day is really like for me: It is very hard to put on a fake smile for my family and get up and go to church and wait for them to ask all mothers to stand up. I am still a mother, but where do I fit in on this day? I wish people would understand that grief doesn't end just because it's been 19 months. I had him for 23 years. I will hold him in my heart until the day I die. I wish people would say his name, remember who he was and how loved he was and still is loved with every breath I take. He lives in me until we meet again. **Vicky**

Mother's Day is such a balance between joy and pain for me. I'm relieved to be staying in this year because honestly going out to a nice brunch would bring all of the innocent questions that I just don't want to deal with that day: "Is he your first?"

"Is he your only?" "How many children do you have?" **Christine**

On my first Mother's Day without my daughter, I went to church. The pastor asked all mothers to stand and be recognized. I only had one child. Was I a mother anymore? I didn't know what to do.

My dear friend whose daughter was my daughter's friend took my elbow and helped me up. All I



did was cry. Everyone in church knew why. They tried to comfort me, and they did the best they could. Some years I avoid going on Mother's Day unless my own mom is going, too. One of the nicest Mother's Day gifts came out of the blue that first year from a cousin. It was a bouquet of tulips with a card that said, "Once a mother, always a mother. Happy Mother's Day." **Sandy**

This is my first Mother's Day since Lily was stillborn in November. I have no other children and my Mom passed away 12 years ago. Honestly, I want to hide under a rock on Sunday. I wish other people knew and understood I am still a Mother and the day will be extremely hard, but it wouldn't be so hard if they would just mention Lily. I realize they may think mentioning it will upset me, but it is much more upsetting if they say nothing. I would appreciate their remembering and mentioning her

even though the situation makes me sad. **Lynne, Lily's Mom**

This is my second Mother's Day without my son, Will. I lost him to a heart defect at the age of 27 without warning. Mother's Day brings so many emotions. My mind plays cruel tricks on my heart. I find myself thinking he might call or give me a special sign from beyond this life. My head knows I will not see him, as I used to, but my heart searches for him in crowds or places he used to like to go. I never knew the human heart could hold this much pain and continue to beat. On Mother's Day I will go to Will's favorite place and pray he feels my love and I will allow my mind to remember all the Mother's Days of the past when he told me how he loved me, too. He will always be my son and I will always be his Mom. For that blessing, I will smile through my tears. **Lori, Will's Mom**



I lost my son, Marcus, two years ago this April. Marcus was my only child. He was 43 when he passed. It has been a merry go round for me. One day I am fine and then the next day I am a mess. One thing that is hard for me is to see other mothers with their children enjoying life with them. I don't know if this is normal, but I am very jealous of them. I will never be able to hug or kiss or physically tell Marcus, "I love



you.", again. Many people will not talk about Marcus because he has passed. They feel like it will bring bad memories. I want people to talk about him. I don't want him to be forgotten.

Linda

This is my first Mother's Day without my beloved son. Right now I am struggling with everything. I try to be strong for those around me but the pain is truly unimaginable. **Donna**

This will be my first Mother's Day as a mother and without my first and only baby. She died three days after birth due to avoidable labor complications. People do not understand this type of loss and



it's with deep sadness I'm learning to keep it to myself. Mother's Day in particular I'm guessing will be a day where happy sunshine moms don't want to be reminded of the worse realities some of us have to bear. Those blank faces, empty reassurances, or words of denial are not needed on an already tough day. Or worse the mothers who talk about what a hard job being a mother is. Sure. I'm guessing being a mother is a hard job. But being a completely childless mother is the most difficult job in all the world! **Angela**

abedformyheart.com

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Upcoming meeting on

Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Our meeting is held in-person at 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois, on the second floor. Masks and social distancing are required.

The next meeting of the chapter is on June 23, 2022.

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-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.
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. The continuous groups are Family Together for all members of the family on Wednesday nights 5:00-7:00 pm and a Teen Night on Thursdays 5:00-7:30 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806 and are free. Rick's House of Hope also does individual counseling/therapy. For more information, contact Lynne Miller, Program Manager, at millerl@verafrenchmhc.org or go to www.rhoh.org .
SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. via ZOOM MEETING during the pandemic and in "normal time" 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 .
Phone Support	If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given): <ul style="list-style-type: none">♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041, dns0826@gmail.com♥ Kay Miller, 309.738.4915♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738, shoearthb4@gmail.com♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895, delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com Doug, Kay, Rosemary, and Judy 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.

Coping Strategies for Mother's Day Grief

Treat Yourself with Kindness -

Grieving is hard and ongoing. Things will not get better overnight, and parents will often grieve in some way for the rest of their lives. When navigating the most difficult parts of grief, including on days like Mother's Day, take care of your basic needs, including:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthy foods and drinking enough water
- Spending time outside and in nature
- Moving your body and getting some exercise
- Limiting alcohol

Give Kindness to Others - When we're hurting, we can forget the powerful impact that helping others can have.

Doing something meaningful for others, like helping or uplifting the women in your life on Mother's Day can bring calmness and peace to an otherwise very difficult day. Even small acts like writing a letter of gratitude can help.

Plan the Day Intentionally - Mother's Day is going to be difficult for grieving mothers, but it doesn't have to be all bad. Plan how you want to spend the day, and do things that will bring joy. Here are some things to try:

- **Focus on your loved ones:** Spend time with the people in your life

and celebrate who they are and your relationship with them.

- **Don't plan too many distractions:** Instead, plan one or two things that bring you happiness. Know that you will likely experience many feelings and that each one is OK. Try to experience and process them.
- **Honor yourself as a mother:** Do something to celebrate yourself and all you have endured. This could be something small, like a relaxing bath.
- **Reflect on your experiences from becoming a mother through losing a child:** Try to think about happy moments with your child, taking some time to honor your child's memory.
- **Ask for help if you need it:** If you are worried about being alone on Mother's Day, ask someone you trust to spend time with you.

For many people, Mother's Day is a day of celebration, warmth, and happiness. Yet, for those who are grieving the death of their mother, mother figure, or child, Mother's Day can be a painful and difficult holiday to navigate. By allowing yourself to feel and process emotions, intentionally planning meaningful ways to spend the day and honor lost loved ones, and being kind and gentle to yourself and others, you can begin to heal and find new ways toward meaning and growth that incorporates lost loved ones into your life.

Verywell.com

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altering experience could be placed in the same category, and maybe even share some similarities, with losses they deem as being “small” feels almost offensive.

But grief doesn’t need to be any worse than anyone else’s for it to be valid, significant, special, or important. Someone’s grief over losing a job, dream, relationship, or pet may seem different or more manageable than your own – but their loss doesn’t cease to exist simply because it could be worse. Further, the existence of someone else’s loss has no bearing on your own suffering. It’s just something someone else is feeling. There’s enough room in the world for all the love and all the pain.

Comparing grief only seems to draw unnecessary boundaries between people who are otherwise in a position to empathize and support one another. No, you can’t know what anyone else is going through, but you can understand what it is like to feel that kind of suffering because you’ve felt it too.

If there’s any benefit we can take from grief being a universal experience, it should be that we’re able to have compassion and empathy towards what others are going through. And we know the value of honoring and respecting the significance of each other’s losses.

Eleanor Haley – whatsyourgrief.com

Contact the Editors

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it...

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, send his/her/their name and address.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email...

Please contact:

Jerry and Carol Webb

390 Arbor Ridge, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.

Love Gifts

As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from this newsletter, they often wish to make a **Love Gift** to help with the work of our chapter. This is a way to remember a beloved child and to help other parents who mourn the loss of their child.

Donations 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 donation or love gift, please send it or to our Chapter Treasurer, Doug Scott, 6550 Madison Street, Davenport, Iowa 52806. Checks should be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**

A Mother's Touch

My husband, Jeff, grew up in a family of hugging, kissing, foot-rubbing, back scratchers. Affectionate folks!

In my family, on the other hand, we only scratched mosquito bites, and certainly not each other's. Although we loved one another fiercely, we weren't very demonstrative. A wink, a squeeze, a peck on the cheek, a poke in the ribs – that was mushy stuff for us. Touching another person was not something that came easily to me; that is, until my first child was born.

When the nurse placed that chubby cherub in my arms, the floodgates of my heart opened, and a torrent of overwhelming love poured out. I couldn't keep my hands off the little dumpling! I learned first-hand what it means to "smother with kisses." Caressing my precious baby came as naturally as breathing. Other children came along, and I was reborn a certified, card-carrying cuddler. I learned how many of a mother's day-to-day interactions with her children require her touch. Touching became a way of life for me as I fed, bathed, dressed, tamed cowlicks, and kissed ouchies.

It's funny, but one of the things I missed most after my son Blake died was tying his shoes. When he was alive, that chore was the bane of my existence. Blake's shoes were perpetually untied or hopelessly tangled in knots that would have defied Houdini himself. I rejoiced

when the shoe designers came up with Velcro closures, seeing an end to my nemesis. But would Blake wear those simple, convenient shoes? No way! Big boys wore shoes with laces, and most of all, he wanted to be like the big boys. So, I armed my teeth, and kept tying and bending every fork in the house deknottng. After Blake died, how my fingers ached to tie those little shoes one more time!



For most bereaved mothers I know, not being able to touch, to hold, to embrace our child is the most painful reality we have to face. The emptiness of our arms, the indescribable longing to have those arms filled again with our precious child, are almost more than we can bear.

At first, when our grief is fresh, it may be hard, for us to touch anyone. We may close ourselves off emotionally, unwilling to touch or be touched, or to run the risk of being hurt so badly again. But mothers are touchers. With time, when the pain isn't so intense, we may want to reach out once more.

None of us ever outgrows the need to be touched, no matter how old we are. And what can be so comforting as a mother's touch! Today, if you can, touch someone. Do it in the memory of your beloved child.

Patricia Dyson

TCF/Beaumont, in memory of Blake.



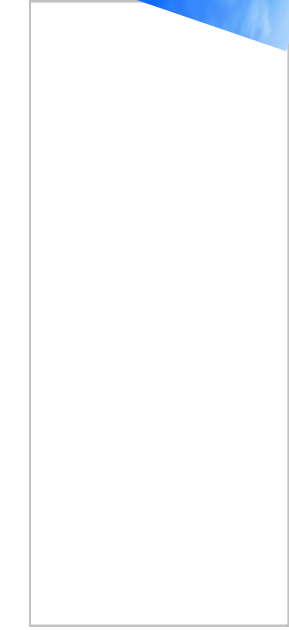
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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time 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.