



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

December 2020

Volume XXXIII, Number 10

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This week is Thanksgiving. With the pandemic in full swing in Michigan, we know that our Thanksgiving, as well as our Advent and Christmas celebrations, will be far different than in past years. Everyone in our country is dealing with loss experiences at some level this year; loss of jobs, security, our usual routines, opportunities to travel and spend time with family and friends. For those who are grieving the loss of your child or other close family members, the feelings of grief, isolation, sadness, and discouragement are compounded. When our grandson was hospitalized, desperately ill for months, I started, at the suggestion of my father, to daily keep track of things that were blessings. Intentionally giving thanks for things for which I was grateful was very useful in keeping my perspective during those hard days, but it did not take away the deep sorrow I felt at the impact of this illness on my grandchild and his family. The following thoughts on grief and gratitude are from author Bo Stern from her book *When Holidays Hurt*.

"I'm trying to be grateful," "I really am." I could hear the guilt crouching behind her words, and it frustrated me because I know her. I know she's not just trying to be grateful; she is grateful. She is thankful for her amazing children, the beautiful marriage she shared with her husband for thirty years, and for the way their core group of friends surrounded them throughout his illness. She was deeply, dearly grateful, and yet, in the season of Thanksgiving, she felt that she wasn't thankful enough. What gives?

Here's my theory: we tend to expect gratitude to act as a sort of emotional acid, absorbing all sorrow on contact. Because of this underlying idea, we can also project that idea on those around us, and that's what had happened to my friend. The people who really, truly love her had run out of encouraging things to say and really wanted to enjoy Thanksgiving themselves, and so they resorted to advice like, "Just be grateful for what you have." And she was trying. And
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I am trying. And you are trying. **But let's be clear: sorrow is not sin, and gratitude does not cancel out grief.** Adoring her children does not eradicate the deep pain of losing her husband, and she needed — as we all need — permission to experience both joy and sorrow. When we stop viewing grief and gratitude as mutually exclusive emotions, we are well on our way to a healthier holiday” Throughout this month's newsletters are thoughts and encouragement on ways reflect gratitude but also acknowledge and mourn your loss.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

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.**



If God Is Good, Why...?

Grief often brings with it theological questions. Why did God allow this or cause this to happen? Why now? Why to this person? Moral issues often arise out of the cauldron of emotions in grief. A sense of outrage is embedded in the grieving process, especially when children and good people die, sometimes creating an inner demand for justice.

Dr. Ray Pritchard says, “There are questions for which answers are hidden in the mind and heart of a loving God.

All we can say is this: God has so designed the moral universe that, as the Bible says, the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

We live in a fallen world, a world that’s distorted by sin, and ever since sin entered the human race in the

Garden of Eden there has been sin, sickness, pain, suffering, and death. So I don’t think anyone will be able to know why one child gets cancer, why one marriage breaks up, why one person loses his job and another one is promoted.

Sometimes we’ll come up with superficial answers, but truly I’ve discovered that the deeper and more heartrending the question, the harder it is to come up with an answer on a human level.”

While God does not always give answers to your questions, He always gives Himself. You can focus your attention instead on the faithfulness of God, His comfort, and His promise to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

From Through a Season of Grief
Bill Dunn and Kathy Leonard

RELATIONSHIPS

I treasure having friendships that have endured for many years from many different shared experiences: childhood, high school, college, work, neighbors, parenting, and so on.

Some of those relationships seem strained to me now. They feel difficult and challenging and painful to maintain when previously they were easy and natural. Some of them feel like a charade.

I know I can make new friends; TCF has certainly been helpful in that regard. But I also know I can’t make new old friends. I must figure out a way to preserve and protect those more seasoned relationships. But I must also figure out how to

differentiate between what relationships should be preserved and what relationships need to be allowed to fade. I don’t know how to do that very well.

I have always been an extrovert. Given my Southern roots, I am aware that I can “talk to a post.” I can talk to a post for a long time. There is also an intense “leadership” thing in my DNA. Some might—with justification I cannot deny—call it “bossy.”

I realize I’m not everyone’s cup of tea. I have a “strong personality.” I don’t work to be that way. It is what it



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

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (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.

TCF National Office

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696
Toll Free (877)969-0010
TCF National Web site –
www.compassionatefriends.org
<http://www.quadcitytcf.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.

BLESSINGS INSIDE SORROW

There are blessings inside sorrow, or so I have been told. I am not sure I always agree. At times I can see the gifts I have been given. Love...without measure...fills my heart when I think of you. But I loved you then too, when you were in my arms, not in my heart. And I miss you now. The emptiness you left can never be filled, not by any blessings I might receive from sorrow.

And yet, still, I wonder. Are there blessings? Would I have known how much I cared for you...for your brothers, for your Dad, were it not for your coming, and so suddenly, softly, leaving, without a good-bye? Would I treasure the life I have remaining if it weren't for your loss? Certainly I loved and treasured before you left, but hasn't my sorrow caused me to express that love and to treasure more highly those around me? I KNOW I can't take for granted that they will always be.

In the aftermath of losing you, when life lay crumbled around me...still was there not a glimmer of hope? That life would go on, and, somehow, we would survive and build on the ashes of our

broken hearts. Building somehow in spite of our pain. Mixing the cement of our love with tears, we bound ourselves together even more tightly than ever before. And our love grows stronger. And we have not forgotten.

What a bitter lesson! And still, the emptiness will never be filled. There yet remains a hole in my heart...and in all our hearts. Dear son, we will never forget you. The blessings inside our sorrow will never fill the hole you left in the fabric of our lives. It remains open, a testament that you mattered, and that your coming and soft going made a difference. And in that difference lies the blessing inside our sorrow.

We were blessed to have held you for a time, even though you could not stay. And even through our tears, we smile at the memories. And we know that you are not completely alone. You shadow our lives, affecting them in big ways and small. And though I would trade these blessings in a minute just to have you back in my arms, I am indeed grateful for the blessings inside sorrow.

Lisa Sculley,

TCF, Jacksonville Orange Park Chapter

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, Michigan 49022

or email CarolynPWebb@gmail.com.



Thoughts for Dealing with the Holidays

BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF. Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to hide. We are always in a hurry. We want things to be better now. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.

BE REALISTIC. It will hurt, especially if there is an empty chair at the table. Don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues (a roll of toilet paper is more efficient). Anticipation is often far worse than reality. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go. Leave the word ought out of this holiday.

PLAN AHEAD. Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important. (Breathing and potty time rank right up there!)

REDEFINE EXPECTATIONS of self and others. Be honest in what you expect to be able to do. We live in a world of OUGHTS and SHOULDs and suffer from guilt because we cannot meet our own expectations. Be kind and gentle to yourself. Figure out what you should do, balance it against what you are capable of doing and then compromise. Forgive yourself for living when your loved one died.

LISTEN TO YOURSELF. Find the quiet space within where all the answers live. As you become aware of your needs, tell family members and friends.

KEEP SOME TRADITIONS. Choose which ones. Don't toss out everything this year. You can always try changing a routine. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always scrap it if it doesn't work.

TAKE CARE OF SELF PHYSICALLY. Eat right (toss some chocolate chips into the oat bran; gift wrap some broccoli; ban lowfat for 1 glorious meal)! Exercise (or at least watch someone else). Jog your memory! **HOLD ON TO YOUR POCKET BOOK & CHARGE CARDS.** You can't buy away grief, although you might be tempted to try. **SCREEN ALL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES:** Will it be the holidays without it? Why do you do this activity? — Tradition, habit, obligation? Do YOU have to do this, or can others do it for you? Do you like doing it? How could this activity be done differently?

GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF EMOTIONS. Put the motion back into the emotions. Toss a Nerf brick when you're angry or pound a pillow. Go outside and yell while you shovel snow. Find a way to express the intensity of your feelings in a personally nondestructive way.

BUY A GIFT FOR YOUR LOVED ONE. Give it away to someone who would otherwise not have a gift. It is the giving, the exchanging of love that we miss the most. When you share love, it grows.

HANG THE STOCKINGS. PLACE A WREATH ON THE GRAVE. Do whatever feels right for you and your
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family. **SHARE YOUR HOLIDAYS** with someone—anyone. Ride the ferry, visit a soup kitchen or nursing home, spend an evening at the bus station. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring.

WORK AT LIFTING DEPRESSION. Take responsibility for self. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat. (ONE cookie will NOT cause mounds of fat to be deposited on your hips—a dozen, however, might!)

UNDERSTAND THAT HEARTACHES WILL BE UNPACKED as you sift through the decorations, but so too are the warm, loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

ASK FOR HELP. Make a help-on-a-stick sign and stand on the porch, waving it. Someone will notice, but may not stop. (Just because you ask for help does not guarantee you will get some, but if you never ask, no one will ever know how much you might need a hug.)

LEARN TO LOOK FOR JOY IN THE MOMENT. Learn to celebrate what you do have instead of making mental lists of what you're missing. Change the way you look at things.

LIGHT A SPECIAL CANDLE—not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared! Never forget that once someone loved us and we loved back. No one can deny that gift exchange! Live through the hurt so joy can return to warm your life.



Darcie Sims

Grieving, longing, waiting, and all the unfulfilledness that plagues us in the broken world feels even more poignant at Christmastime when the carols and decorations whisper to us that everything should be perfect, sparkling, and cheery... but it's not. Today, let's be reminded that our disappointments and heartbreaks are very real, but our very real Hope is on the way! His promises are true! And He's coming again.

Shauna Niequist from *Savor*

At your holiday gathering

Don't expect anyone to mention your child by name. *Believe it or not*, that's your job. People will look to you to determine whether or not it's safe to talk about the person that died. A few subtle ways to do that:

Serve/bring your child's favorite dish to the holiday get-together – talk about it!

Bring a favorite picture – pass it around. Work it into the dining table centerpiece.

Bring a favorite memento – a book, a poem, a toy, a video, an article of clothing - share it after dinner.

Have your child's favorite music playing in the background – tell the story!

Or Plan a special evening for close family and friends when you REMEMBER. Ask everyone to bring a favorite photo and write down a special memory. Set time aside to sit in a circle and share the photos and memories.

Tom Zuba

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
December 6, 2020 at 6:30 pm: Annual Candle Light Ceremony
At Moline Public Cemetery (see page 11 for details)

Next month's meeting is Thursday,
January 28, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting held by Zoom due to COVID-19 and the Illinois Governor's restrictions on in-person meetings.

<p>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Rick's House of Hope</p>	<p>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. At this time, Rick's has a Holiday Healing group for children experiencing loss on Tuesday nights 5:30-7:00 until the Christmas holiday. 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.</p>
<p>SHARE</p>	<p>A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, 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.</p>
<p>Loving Listeners</p>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearthb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com <p>Doug, 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.</p>

Relationships, continued from page 3 is. Like Popeye, the Sailor Man, said, "I am what I am."

I have been fortunate to have friends (and a sister) who have stuck with me through thick and thin. Friends who emphasize my strengths more than my faults. Friends who listen, friends who are present. Friends who make me feel as though they realize I am doing the best I can.

But I also have friends who are impatient with me or who make me feel they disapprove of how I am handling this "bereaved parent" role. I could be doing it better, or quicker, or with Jesus. Or, certainly, I could be more dignified. When I insist on keeping my grief and share that my faith has evaporated, and when I behave in ways that are far from dignified, they are upset with me. I am not doing it "right."

So, as they are old friends,



shouldn't I be patient? Tolerant? Shouldn't I calmly continue my efforts to explain? Well, so far, I have not found the resources to be that person. I'm more the "squeal like a stuck pig" person. It is far from dignified and far from calm.

Since I lost my son, I find myself more involved in quarrels and disputes. I don't set out to offend or

annoy. But more and more, I gather that I do. Apparently, I offend and annoy. I alienate. It doesn't matter that I strive to avoid doing so.

Is it that I am less socially adept because I am so wounded? I truly don't know.

My ability to navigate relationships has been compromised since I became a bereaved parent. It must be like trying to hug a porcupine. I am not charitable when I feel misunderstood or mistreated. I am enraged. I am unreasonable. And I am disappointed. Deeply, deeply disappointed. It is more heartbreak for an already broken heart.

One of my bereaved parent friends commented, "How did I ever even like these people?" Good question. I strive to resist a temptation to isolate. A temptation to close ranks, to have contact with only those I consider safe. Sometimes it seems it

would be easier to just cease trying to engage with the world. The hermit lifestyle beckons alluringly. I think of those people who live in remote parts of Alaska and get supplies from airplane

drops. But I can't do that. I don't have the survival skills to do that.

I am thankful I have a dog. She accepts my wounded, damaged self. I just wish more humans could accept my wounded, damaged self.

Peggi Johnson
TCF, Piedmont Virginia

Saying ‘No’ to Holiday Traditions is OK

For many of us, for much of the time, it is hard to say “no.” Even when we’re busy, even when we’re tired, even when it’s something we really don’t want to do. It’s especially hard when it’s something that we’ve done before, when it’s been our routine, our habit, or our tradition. We get into patterns and they’re hard to change. One of our patterns and traditions can be saying “yes” when asked, especially by friends, family, and those we respect. No time of year has more expectations and shoulds, both within and without, than holiday seasons. We get messages all around about how they are supposed to go. The foods to prepare and eat. Decorations that are required. Smiling family gatherings. Holidays which were intended to be meaningful times of remembrance and celebration can become gauntlets of expectations and activities. Holidays don’t have to be that way. They can be times where we pick and choose what is meaningful and worth doing. Where we look those voices of expectation in the eye and politely say, “No thank you, not this year. I only have so much time and so much energy, and I am guarding both like a soldier.” **Greg Adamson**

The Christmas Box

Angel Statue or the Angel of Hope as it is sometimes referred to, was introduced to the world in the book *The Christmas Box*, a worldwide bestseller and hit

television movie by author Richard Paul Evans. In the book, a woman mourns the loss of her child at the base of an angel monument.

Though the story is mostly fiction, the angel monument once existed, but was lost in the 1984 Salt Lake City flood. A new bronze statue was commissioned by the author in response to reports that grieving parents were seeking out the angel as a place to grieve and heal. The first angel monument was dedicated in Salt Lake City, Utah, on December 6, 1994.



Since this time, more than 120 other angel monuments have been dedicated across the country. With the face of a child, upturned palms and outstretched wings, the Angel of Hope offers solace to the grieving. The angel stands as a symbol of hope and healing for parents and families who have experienced the death of a loved one. Look closely at the angel’s right wing and see the word “Hope.”

On December 6th at 6:30p.m the Quad City Chapter of the Compassionate Friends will host a candlelight vigil at the Angel of Hope Memorial in Moline Memorial Park. Those who have lost a loved one are encouraged to join with others who will be meeting at Angel of Hope statues throughout the United States.

ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE

**Sunday, December 6, 2020
at 6:30 p.m.
Angel of Hope
Memorial Garden**

The Chapter's Annual Candle Light Memorial Service is for every bereaved parent who would like to have his or her child(ren) remembered.

**The service will be held
alongside the
Memorial Garden
which is located at
Moline Memorial Park
Cemetery
5001 34th Avenue,
Moline, Illinois.**

Please get in line with your vehicle in the lane west of the memorial garden. Please stay in your vehicle until it is your turn to go up separately to the angel with your own candle which you can place before the angel (If you need a candle provided, please tell one of the volunteers before it is your turn to approach the angel. You may also want to bring a white flower to lay down in front of the angel. There's no need to bring a photo this year.



If you cannot attend and would like a candle lit in your child's memory, please complete and return this form to Lisa Rains, 2341 7 ½ Street, East Moline, Illinois 61244, or email Lisa at AngelOfHope@gmail.com.

Child's Name: _____

Parents' Names: _____



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



1830 6th Avenue
Moline, Illinois 61265

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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.