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.

We recently entertained our California niece and her family for several days. One evening we invited mutual friends to join us for dinner. As we were chatting, one friend commented that our niece was the only granddaughter in the Page family. Ouch. Even after all these years there is a pang when our daughter’s life seems forgotten even in a casual conversation.

And the question, “How many children do you have?” is asked more commonly than one might think. These days it is much easier to answer, “Two,” than to go into details of the child who died. And yet, saying those words, “Two,” when in reality it is three, is done with a slight hesitation. I feel uncomfortable, judging that I have betrayed my much loved daughter who will always be part of our family.

I think the crux of the matter is that we long for our child to be remembered; for their life to have lasting significance beyond ourselves. We will never forget the child who died, but it is hard when it seems that the world has moved on and our child’s being has been erased from this world completely except in our hearts. But we also want to avoid the uncomfortable awkwardness that often follows us informing or reminding people that one of our children has died.

In the article “How Many Children Do you Have,” the author presents the idea that our children are not a casual conversation. Especially when we are further along in our grief, bereaved parents may choose the quick and simple answer, as I do when I say “two” even though there were really “three.” This does not mean I am a bad parent. In my heart, where she lives on, I know I am Anna’s mom.... And that’s what really counts.

Sincerely,
Carol and Jerry Webb
Children view celebration of special days as evidence that their happiness is still important to their parents, that they are loved, and with hope that their family stability will return. Birthdays and holidays are significant occasions for children which bring heightened expectations that their family will demonstrate their love for them.

Grieving children need to know they are valued and special. Many feel they are not as valued as the one who died since their sibling’s absence has caused the parents so much sadness and pain. Because grief can cause parents to be emotionally out of focus towards remaining children, sometimes the only feeling conveyed is pain, so the remaining child(ren) may feel abandoned or rejected. Be sure to spend time with them assuring them through words and actions of your love. Rather than buy extravagant gifts for children, give them extra time and attention since nothing purchased can replace the loss in their lives. You might want to create a special card for your living child, listing why they are so special and reassuring them of your love, maybe include some special reminiscing. Explain that your grief doesn’t lessen your love for them. For your family’s sake, take care of yourself: eat properly, exercise, nurture your marriage and work through your grief.

http://carlymarieprojectheal.com
Dads - Grief & Loss

You never know how strong you are, until being strong is the only choice you have.

Losing a child at birth (or at any time) is one of the most painful and devastating experiences that someone can go through.

Sadly, so many men, once excited at the prospect of being a dad (many for the first time), never get to experience a “normal” childbirth. Some also never get to experience a “normal” fatherhood at all.

These men are part of a club that swells by over 3,000 new members each year through stillbirth, neonatal or infant loss alone.

Modern society has conditioned men to conceal their emotions as a sign of strength, but a grieving father feels the loss of a child just as keenly as the mother. Although men don’t express themselves like women do, it does not mean that we grieve any less.

Whilst the grieving process may be different for men and women, this is often based on individuality rather than gender. However there is a significant feeling that fathers are often forgotten in the grieving process.

During the pregnancy and birth of a child, a father’s role is predominantly to support his partner emotionally and physically. A father is expected to be the pillar of support (strength) for the mother, extended family and friends. He is also the communication channel to the outside world and on many occasions, if he has other children, he becomes their chief caretaker while his partner recovers from surgery and the birth. Although of course he did not carry the child, there is still a deep bond that reaches a whole new dimension once the child is outside the womb.

During the period immediately after loss, there is little time for dads to do something for themselves or get support. They feel the need to provide it to everyone else (particularly their partners) to ensure that everything continues in some sense of “normality.”

Many men take on the protector role in the family, supporting their wives or partners and not allowing time for their own grief. Even in today’s society, some men find it difficult to express their emotions and feelings can get locked up. Many men need time and space to grieve and this may happen many weeks, months or even years later.

For some fathers, sadly, our role is to support our child’s memory rather than supporting them through life. A child’s passing changes your world forever. However fatherhood, once reached, is timeless.

Coping with the loss of your child at any time is both emotionally heartbreaking and physically devastating. It is a pain that endures. You never know the moment when your next “down day” will come, no matter how long ago you lost your child.

Being in this situation you will find that friends and family always offer support or to do something for you but there really isn’t anything they can do to help you with your grief and the guilt of not being able to do anything to fix things. Fathers tend to take on the role of practicalities and keep themselves busy. Men also often find that other people ask about how their partner is coping without seeming to realize that they are grieving too. Men may feel helpless when they see their partner so distressed.

However, it is important to recognize that although men may not show symptoms of grief, they are grieving and need support too.

The important thing is to respect and support each family member when they are dealing with their loss. Acknowledge the father and ask how he is doing – although it may seem small it will go a long way. Acknowledge him and acknowledge his child and recognize his loss, no matter when it occurred. It’s a loss that never goes away. Affirm his role as dad.

http://pillarsofstrength.com.au

The Holiday of Love
—Art Rogers, Hinsdale IL Chapter of BP/USA

Valentine’s Day is a day of remembering our loved ones with small gifts and great feelings. When your child was living, did you often remember him/her on Valentine’s Day with a card or a balloon, perhaps a gift of candy or something special that was wanted? So, why stop that tradition?

Remember your child with love on this special day:

♥ a single rose left at a grave
♥ a special holiday balloon to float around the house, reminding you each time you look
♥ a special photo in a nice frame to sit on the mantle.

These are ideas in an article from an old Bereavement Magazine. It seems like a pretty good idea too! What a better way to celebrate the Holiday of Love than by enjoying fond memories of your child:

♥ try making his/her favorite dinner and treating the family
♥ use special photos scattered around to talk about some fun facts about him/ her
♥ It’s important to show the others in the family how much they are also loved so don’t forget some small Valentine’s gifts for them too!

Just because our hearts are broken, we don’t need to ignore “The Holiday of Love.”

A note to the newly bereaved (and a reminder to the rest of us)

The first months and years after bereavement can be terrifying. It seems as if the pain stays at a monotonous peak; it seems as if one’s mind will be lost at any moment. And although most of us “get better” after the first terror, we usually do not realize that until we look back, years later. When we think about it, this state of affairs is almost “reasonable”. After such an overwhelmingly traumatic experience, we can fall – as it were – to the end of the world. Coming back from there is bound to be slow beyond our imagination and fraught with reversals. So far, no one has found a method to avoid this painful journey back. But perhaps it will help to know you have already begun to travel. You will find it is a long journey and desperately hard and you may almost want to stay where you are. But you will realize later that the wind of tomorrow is already stretching your sails and life waits for you across the sea. If you only know...

Sascha Wagner
Coping with Grief: Winter Blues

When the weather gets colder and days get shorter, we often find ourselves feeling low. Some people call this the Winter Blues. When you are grieving, those blues can feel overwhelming. Grief itself is hard to cope with and the cold winds and longer nights can make those feelings seem more intense. Here are a few ideas that may help you cope with the Winter Blues:

- Winter only lasts a few months. Use this time to reflect on your relationship with the person who died. Sometimes in our efforts to deny our loss, we rob ourselves of precious memories.
- Reach out to friends or family when you can. Often our isolation is worse because we do not allow ourselves time with others. You are not alone. There are many other people going through a similar experience. Although your relationship with your loved one is special, other people can understand. Take the risk to ask someone over for coffee or tea. Share with them.
- Take time to look through picture albums. Gather family to share stories. Make a new tradition during the dreary months of winter for family to gather for an evening of remembering. The holidays are over and the pressure is off. Maybe other people are feeling the same way and are afraid to talk about it.
- Try a grief support group. Sometimes all we need is to know other people hear us and understand. A group can help you to know you are normal.
- Read...favorite stories, comedies, novels, or information about grief to understand your own reactions better. Somehow reading about such topics helps us know we are not alone. You can look for grief materials in your local library, church, or local TCF chapter.
- Take good care of yourself. Eat right, rest and pamper your body. This goes for any season. Your body is under a tremendous amount of stress in adjusting to your loss.
- Since grief affects us physically, paying attention to our bodies is important. Whether you prefer to do things alone or with others, physical activity helps. Taking a walk, doing simple aerobics, indoor swimming, playing racquetball or other activities can help keep you body ready for the continued adjustment to loss. Feeling better physically can make a difference.
- If you feel sad and need to cry, know that is a normal reaction.
- Write a letter to your loved one. Sometimes we need to communicate with them. Going to the cemetery is okay and normal. If the weather prevents that, a letter can be very helpful.

Remember that you will survive this loss. The pain and ache can seem like it will last forever. The intensity will lessen in time, although you will always remember your loved one. Time does not necessarily “heal” all wounds, but it can help us adjust to the change. Take it minute by minute...then day by day.

from TCF Newsletter. Pittsburg, PA

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: Naionaloffice@compassionatefriends.org Web site: www.compassionatefriends.org Visit the sibling resource page at www.compassionatefriends.org

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 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.
The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

Monthly Meeting, Thursday, February 23, 2017 at 6:30 pm at Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline
Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.
Next month’s meeting: March 23, 2017, at 6:30 pm

Inclement Weather: the winter season is upon us now with unpredictable weather. If the weather is severe the night of our meetings, please use good judgment before venturing out. Listen to local TV and radio stations or check cancelations online. If most school activities and other events are cancelled, we will not meet. You can check the website or call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) to double check if the meeting has been cancelled.

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 linnmac67@machlink.com.

Rick’s House of Hope

This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with 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, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director, at 563.324.9580, or egordon@rhoh.org or go to www.rhoh.org.

MJJ Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)

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 Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 52742. Contact Betsy Loehr, 563.843.3655 or at there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjjfoundation.org.

MJJ Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)

Survivors of Suicide Support Group
Meets on the second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm. Contact Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425, or laura@secondreformedchurch.net.

SHARE

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.

Loving Listeners

If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):
♥ Kay Miller 309.738.4915
♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com
♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoearthb3@mchsi.com
♥ Judy DelVecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com

Kay, 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.

Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

TCF Online Support Community

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.

TCF’s Grief Related Webinars

Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. 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 Magazine

We Need Not Walk Alone 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.

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.

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, Alaska 99509.

Amazon.com

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.

Previous Newsletter Editions

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.

Alive Alone

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.alivealones.org or alivealone@bright.net.

Bereaved Parents’ Magazine


Our Newsletter

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, climb@climb-support.org. Include
Five Common Questions Grievers Ask

1. Am I crazy?
If you’re crying frequently, if you cannot concentrate, if you lose your keys, if you forget words, if you feel depressed, if you feel paralyzed or stuck, if you have trouble sleeping, you have no appetite, if you feel much, if you don’t wish to see anyone, if you cannot stop crying, if you feel anxious, if you feel lonely, if you feel sad, if you miss your loved one, if you are afraid of the dark – all of these are common symptoms of grief. So no, you’re not crazy. However, if your symptoms feel particularly acute, unbearable, or overwhelming, and/or if they don’t seem to be lessening even after the year anniversary, you might find talking to a counselor helpful.

2. Should we talk about him or her?
Yes! Don’t be afraid to mention your loved one. Feel free to reminisce, share memories, share feelings, share your grief. A common fear is that talking about your deceased loved one will upset others. However, they’re most likely already thinking about him or her and are feeling upset anyway. In fact, some people get more upset if no one mentions the loved one, as if everyone has forgotten him already. Give someone the opportunity to talk and share. Remembering is a gift. Feeling upset together is also a gift and offers a much needed opportunity to process the grief.

3. When will I be myself again?
The truth is that you will never be quite the same old self again. You are changed by a major loss and you are changed irrevocably. That can feel like bad news or good news, depending on your perspective. The world will never be the same old self again. You are changed by a major loss and you are changed irrevocably. That can feel like bad news or good news, depending on your perspective. The world will never be the same old self again.

4. When will it be over?
The first year of grief is often the most painful time for many people. The first cycle of holidays, birthdays, and seasonal changes can feel quite sensitive. On the other hand, for some people the second year of grief is actually even more painful as the reality of the loss deepens. Depending on the nature of the death and the nature of the relationship, it can take even several years for acute grief to begin to recede. Grieving is often described as like the ebb and flow of the ocean’s tide. Feelings will come on strongly and then abate. Acute grief will begin to recede as more and more energy begins to focus on life again. However, it is normal for periods of grief to arise throughout the years as you remember your loss. Fortunately, the essence of your loved one resides forever in your heart and in your spirit. Just as you will continue to live with the impact of loss, you will always live with the impression of their love.

5. How do I move on?
Gradually as you face your loss, experience your feelings, and express your grief, you will begin to heal. Your focus will naturally start to shift toward life again. At some point, you will need to make a conscious choice to reinvest your energy into life. By strengthening your spirituality, reaching out to others, allowing your attitude to change, and choosing to reinvest in living you will begin to transcend your loss. Amazing growth is possible as a result of this journey.

Ashley Davis Bush, LICSW

If Only They Knew...

If only they knew that when I sometimes weep quietly, it’s not in self-pity for what I have lost; I weep for what he has lost, for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being, . . . for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that, he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness, the dull pain, the endlessness of death, if only they understood the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: “Time heals . . . you’ll get over it,” “it was for the best . . . God takes only the best,” and realized that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more. If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we try to stand in the shoes of others. If only they knew that we will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately, and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with hearts as well as minds.

If only they knew that when I speak of him, I am not being morbid. I am not denying his death, I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For 26 years, he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded, and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief. If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self-pitying. I am still grieving, I am still sad, I am still looking for the life I lost, the life I loved. The new me is growing out of the old me. At times, it’s difficult to find words to express my feelings, to put my thoughts into sentences. The new me embraces the old me. The new me offers the old me a new beginning. The new me is developing out of the old me. The new me is embracing the old me.

If only they knew that I sometimes weep quietly, that I am still grieving, that I will never forget the life I lost, the life I loved. If only they knew that I am learning to live with my grief, to find words to express my feelings, to put my thoughts into sentences. If only they knew that I will never forget the life I lost, the life I loved.

Jan McNess,
TCF – Victoria, Australia

Contact the Editors
Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, 309.654.2727.
If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it: you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, send us your new address.

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.