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.

Dear Compassionate Friends,

This fall, I injured my shoulder and have been working to rehab it without much apparent progress. This week, as I reflected on the various nuances of how my shoulder feels, I was struck by the similarity to the emotional pain of grief, especially in the second and third years.

Sometimes I function pretty well. I know the injury is there, but it does not bother me too much. Sometimes I am troubled by a constant ache that distracts me from my chores or wakes me in the night making it impossible to go back to sleep. And sometimes pain shoots through me unexpectedly, in such a rush that it almost takes me to my knees, and I need a moment or two to recover.

Dealing with the ongoing pain saps my energy. The physical therapist tells me that shoulders take a long time to heal, and I need to be patient.

After the first or second pain-filled years after your child dies you may think the grieving should be done and you should be handling life much better. In many ways you will be. However, you have sustained a devastating injury, and it is going to take time, lots of time, before you no longer feel a constant nagging ache of loss or are blindsided by a sharp assault of pain. Continuing to talk with others about your child will help. Most bereaved parents cannot deal with their grief without some outside support whether it is a spiritual counselor, therapist, listening friends or a support group.

The new year might be the right time to attend a Compassionate Friends meeting. At a TCF meeting you will meet others who are dealing with the pain of the loss of their child - bereaved parents who are in all different stages of grief and who have a variety of ways of coping. The important thing is that they care, and their goal is for no grieving parent to walk alone.

Sincerely,

Carol and Jerry Webb

Vol. XXX Jan. 2017 No. 1
Chalkboard reflections

Now I Know
I never knew, when you lost your child,
What you were going through.
I just deserted you.
I didn’t know how to comfort you.
And then one day my child died.
You were the first one there.
You quietly stayed by my side,
Listened, and held me as I cried.
You didn’t leave, you didn’t go.
The lesson learned is... NOW I KNOW!

Alice Kerr
TCF/Lower Bucks, Pennsylvania

TO AN OUTSIDER, THE IDEA OF MEETING WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING DEATH, OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE DEATH OF OUR CHILDREN, THE "GRIEF PROCESS," ETC., MAY SEEM GRIM IF NOT ALTOGETHER MORBID. ALL OF US WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS HAVE RUN INTO SOMEONE WHO HAS ASKED, "WHY DO YOU DO THIS?" OR "WHY DON'T YOU JUST TRY TO LET IT GO?"

The idea of "dwelling on the loss" is always stated with negative connotations, yet dwelling on the death of a child is not something we can avoid. Indeed, "dwelling" is part of the healing process. It's how we come to grips with the questions. "Why, what if...?" that uncontrollably pop up in our minds, and it is how we learn to accept the unacceptable.

Certainly, there is a wealth of information in books dealing with death and dying. Our faith, our pastors, priests, and rabbis have much to contribute to our healing. Psychologists, psychiatrists and therapy may be necessary.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS ENCOURAGES GRIEVING PARENTS TO UTILIZE ANY OR ALL OF THE ABOVE TOOLS, BUT WE ALSO REALIZE THE VALUE OF LEARNING TO VERBALIZE OPENLY, PUBLICLY, THE GRIEF AND THE LOSS WE FEEL... NOT IN THE PRIVACY OF OUR DOCTOR OR MINISTER'S OFFICE, WHERE WE ARE SO SHELTERED, BUT OPENLY AMONG PEOPLE WHO KNOW FULL WELL HOW HARD IT IS TO SAY, "MY CHILD IS DEAD." WE DO NOT PUT ANY PRESSURE ON PEOPLE ATTENDING OUR MEETING TO SAY ANYTHING, BUT THE BEAUTIFUL PART OF THIS GROUP IS THAT IT ENABLES YOU TO SEE PEOPLE WHO ARE "DOWN THE LONG ROAD" A WAY FURTHER AND TO REALIZE THAT YOU WILL BE THERE IN TIME.

Are we dwelling on our loss? Absolutely. But we are learning to dwell on it constructively, to dwell on it without guilt and without the isolation we have all felt. We learn how to reach out (in time) to others with a compassion that brings healing to others as well as to ourselves.

Philip Barker—TCF/California

An Image of Grief

I am a tree, standing alone in the early winter.
I feel cold, empty, gray, and ugly.
The winds of grief have ripped away a branch and have left me unbalanced – with a great gaping hole. The sap of my innermost being rushes to the hole to provide a balm for the pain of the open wound. The icy cold rain of my weeping falls through the shaking of my boughs. I continue to sway in the harsh gales of reality, and the keening of the winds are the voice of my heartache. But...

Under the ground there is life. Each root of love, friendship, care, family, and faith is feeding into the trunk, and I know for a certainty that surely spring will come again! The bark of time will cover the rending wound. The scar will always be there, but the drain on my heart will be over. The leaves will burst forth and gently surround the sound with breezes of living memories and promises of life to come. My boughs will be heavy with the wonder of living. Nestled near the scarred trunk, secure in the knowledge that God is my refuge and strength, the sweet bird of happiness will sing again.

Anitee King
TCF/Hagerstown, Maryland
**Five Myths about Grief**

1. **Time heals all wounds.**
   *False:* Time by itself is only the passing of days. Time — plus permission to grieve. Plus the willingness to face and process feelings, to reminisce, to express your pain — these together over time will heal your wounds.

2. **If you just move on with life, your grief will eventually go away.**
   *False:* Repressing your feelings is like not doing your homework. You think you're getting away with something but in fact, you're only hurting yourself. You'll pay when it comes time for the test. Likewise, not facing your grief is cheating yourself. You'll pay for it with a range of potential problems: health issues, depression, anxiety, bitterness, etc. True healing comes when feelings are accepted, expressed, and processed.

3. **If you grieve properly, you will achieve closure.**
   *False:* Even if you allow yourself to experience your feelings head on, there is no such thing as “closure.” The human heart never closes because love itself can never die. Just because a person has died does not mean that the relationship is over. Therefore, you will continue to feel pangs of loss over the years; it comes hand in hand with the love you feel in your heart. Closure is not the goal of healing.

4. **You will never feel joy again after a major loss.**
   *False:* Love and joy are abundant and will fill your life again one day if you let them. Though you may feel despair during the darkest days of grief, you won’t feel that way forever. The very same love that makes your loss feel so hard now will one day be the source of an inner wellspring of joy in your life.

5. **At some point, you just need to “get over it.”**
   *False:* You will not get over grief the way you get over the flu. You will learn to live with loss and integrate it into your life. At some point you will have to decide whether or not to let grief expand you to a life of compassion or shrivel you to a life of bitterness. But initially, all you need to do is allow grief into your life.

Ashley Davis Bush, LISCW

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Letters to My Son, Andrew

You introduce yourself to me, the solitary stranger in the cafeteria. You’re just being friendly. In the course of conversation, you ask, “How many children do you have?” And you are slightly disconcerted when I hesitate. Don’t I know how many children I have?

The answer, when it comes, is a shock. “I have three children, two living and one deceased.” And now, what do you say? This is your unspoken question; I hear it in your uncomfortable shifting in your seat and the disappearance of your smile.

My 8-year-old son, Andrew, was hit by an SUV and killed in May of 1988. And the not-so-subtle message from our society to those of us who are grieving is, “Just get over it. It doesn’t do any good to dwell on the past. I wish you could live in the present.”

But we are changed forever by those we love in life and equally by their passing. And so, it has not, in fact, been a long time since Andrew died. The experience of that day 28 years ago lives timelessly in my heart. From then on, I was left to try to make sense of what defied reason, to accept what was unacceptable. Part of me knew that Andrew was gone, and yet another part reeled in disbelief — and still does. I often feel that I stand with one foot in each of two worlds, this living reality and the unknown beyond, mourning for two: Andrew and myself.

To avoid total emotional isolation, I sought companionship from trusted friends and group support from others who suffered losses. I learned that shared tears are far less salty than solitary ones and that open expression lessens the pain of grief. In telling our stories, we learned that we have more in common than we have differences. And, perhaps, most of all, we learned that we are not alone. I listened to others’ stories, and I learned to care again — to

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And, gratefully, I will say, "Thank you."

Robert Goor (dearandrew@robertgoor.com) has been writing for over 20 years and has been a father for over 40. Dear Andrew is his first literary publication. He is an active member of the Bethesda Writer’s Center and of The Compassionate Friends.
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.

Thank you to:
Glen and Sylvia Just, in memory of Shawn L. Just.
Bob and Jo Reade, in memory of their daughter, Robin Reade.
Pam and Jeff Shoultz, in memory of their son, Jacob Shoultz (1994).
Brad and Sheri Hilligoss, in memory of their daughter, Tyler Bradley Hilligoss.
Suzanne and Harry Schafer, in memory of their daughter, Sherry Lee Schafer, and grandsons, Gerald Pool and Joshua Schafer.
Kirby and Kim White, in memory of their daughter, Elizabeth White. Mark and Deb Knobloch, in memory of Samuel Knobloch.

Donations and 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 donation or love gift, please send it using the enclosed envelope or to our treasurer, Michelle Curtis, 18163 241 Avenue, Bettendorf, Iowa 52722. Checks can be made out to The Compassionate Friends. Your gifts are tax deductible.

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 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.

A DEATH HAS OCCURRED
A death has occurred, and everything is changed by this event. We are painfully aware that life can never be the same, that yesterday is over, that relationships once rich have ended. But there is another way to look upon this truth.
If life went on the same without the presence of the one who died, we could only conclude that the life we here remember made no contribution, filled no space, meant nothing.
The fact that this person left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to this individual. Life can be the same after a trinket has been lost, but never the same after the loss of a treasure.

Paul Iron
The Compassionate Friends
Savannah, Georgia

We Need Not Walk Alone
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
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.

National TCF has a new Facebook page, TCF - Loss to Suicide. This page is open to parents, grandparents, and siblings who have lost loved ones to suicide. There is no good way to lose a loved one; different causes create specific pain that can be eased by sharing with another experiencing a similar loss. Co-moderators, Cathy Seehueter and Donna Adams, welcome you to this special closed page.

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 concerns 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.

TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes
TCF - Loss to Suicide
TCF - Loss to Homicide
TCF - Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver
TCF - Loss to Cancer
TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss
TCF – Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth
TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes
TCF - Sounds of the Siblings (for bereaved siblings)
TCF – Loss of a Grandchild
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter
Monthly Meeting, Thursday, January 26, 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: February 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
Meetings Meet the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 pm 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@mchlink.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.

MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)
Survivors of Suicide Grief Support Meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Wagnnor Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 52742. Contact Betsy Loehr, 563.843.3655 or at there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org.

MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)
Survivors of Suicide Grief Support 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 dougs@mchsi.com
Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoeartb3@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.
Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, “Wait, I’m not ready yet!”

The death of our child changed the course of our life: nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today. And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We’re living the same life, and those in our lives, is longer important. Appreciation for profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for the uniqueness that we each call “me”—uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child’s presence in the life we choose to live.

Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call “me”—uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child’s presence in the life we choose to live.

Paula Staisiunas Schultz
In memory of Melissa and Jeff
Author biography, 2002: Paula and her husband Bob live in Chicago, Illinois, where Paula serves as co-editor of the South Suburban Chapter newsletter. Their son, Jeff Schultz, is currently a student at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Their daughter, Melissa Schultz Cleaves, and her husband, Jeff Cleaves, had been married seven weeks when they died in a car accident on Thanksgiving weekend 1999.

Frost

On a cold winter’s day, frost etches a beautiful artistry on everything it touches, every blade of grass. It glitters and sparkles, and for moments before the sun comes out and the master piece evaporates before our eyes, we stand memorized cherishing the wondrous sight.

Like frost, our children were only here for a brief moment. But, while they were here, whether it was moments in the womb, days, months, or many years, they etched their beautiful artistry of love on our hearts and lives and all of those they touched. Unlike frost, what they etched is forever, it is something that we can cherish and hold onto always.

We stand here tonight lighting a candle to remember children we will never forget. Their light, their spirits, their artistry lives on, and like the flame of the candle, gives warmth on a cold winter’s night and light in the darkness. The love our children gave us still remains. It keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow. It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness that we feel, and it gives us hope!

Julie Short, 2007
Southeastern/TCF Candle Lighting Ceremony
In Memory of Kyra

Time Rolls On

Whether we see time going by or not, whether we are aware if it is winter or spring, May or June, day or night—time keeps rolling on.

I remember back in those early days of grief, when time seemed to stand still. I remember looking at the clock, realizing that it was 3:00 a.m. and being surprised that it was nighttime. I remember not knowing or caring whether it was a Sunday or a Tuesday...

But I did know when it was a Wednesday. I knew it was a Wednesday each week because Wednesday was the day our daughter died.

Everything from that moment on was measured by a different standard of time. At first we marked the hours, then the days, then the weeks. All time was measured by how long it had been since she had passed on from our world.

Days became weeks, weeks became months, and now—months have been years. For us, the marking of time has evolved.

Our family history will forever be divided into “before…” and “after…” but we have gradually become aware of time again. We keep a calendar, we make appointments, and we schedule ourselves into events and commitments.

Once again, time is rolling on.

Jane Ono
TCF/Coquitlam, British Columbia