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.

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,

Today the sun is shining, the thermometer registers well past 40 degrees, the ice is melting in the driveway, the smell of spring is in the air. Our daughter-in-law has shared several pieces of great news with us in the last two days, and I feel encouraged and hopeful. Grief is often personified with the seasons – the winter of our grief; the hope that spring brings. Our daughter died at the end of March just as a long cold winter was giving way to spring. As I held her weak little body I thought that if she could hold on until spring, all would be well. When spring did arrive we were completely unable to appreciate its warmth and beauty because our hearts were buried in suffocating sadness.

If this is the first spring or even the second since your child has died, the change of seasons may only be a painful reminder of the passage of time passing, of how long it has been since you held your child, or heard your child’s voice. The hope we associate with the change from winter to spring, new life burgeoning may seem meaningless or a mockery. As time passes, however, you will find that bits of hope creep back into your life bringing light and laughter with them just as a crocus hopefully pokes its head out through the snow even though it is likely the next day it will be buried by a new covering of snow or ice. I appreciate the insights Evelyn Billings shares in her article, *Spring is Coming*, she ends with these words. “The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature’s processes will continue, and that can offer us hope.”

One of my favorite hymns is *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. I believe the words – “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow” – and wish the same for you as you walk this journey of grief.

Sincerely, Jerry and Carol Webb

*The Compassionate Friends*

*Quad City Area Chapter*

*Supporting Family After a Child Dies*

*March 2015*

*Volume XXVIII, Number 3*
Spring Is Coming

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first" spring, you may be surprised at some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks.

We hear much about the beauty of spring - the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first" year I expected that spring would cheer me up and make me feel lots better.

How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days that life seems to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits." When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this lift your spirits and make you feel better?" I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day. That the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified. Gradually, I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope.

When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives all right again. Unfortunately, there is no magical event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and grief work we must all do before we can be healed.

The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's processes will continue, and that can offer us hope.

I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, the forsythia, the daffodils and the greening of the world.

Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

Evelyn Billings TCF/Spring field, MA

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.

C.S. Lewis (from A Grief Observed)

Who Am I?

Written by Clara Hinton | Nov 03, 2002

Following the death of a young child everything changes. Probably the most significant changes that occur come from within the heart of a grieving parent. A parent will often feel so strangely different that the question will be asked time and time again, "Who am I?"

Obvious changes take place in the home when a child dies. Where there were four dinner plates at the table, there are now three. When riding in the car to run errands, one seat remains quiet and empty. There aren't as many jeans and dirty socks piled up in the laundry each week.

Grocery shopping becomes painfully different. In fact, it is almost unbearable to walk down the aisles in the supermarket that contained all of the "favorites." Watching other parents with their children walking through the store choosing favorite snacks and school lunch foods becomes too painful to bear. No longer are the every day routines of life "routine." Even looking at the cereal boxes in the cupboard brings a flood of salty tears.

Losing a young child changes so much! Even the way we see things is so very different. We notice more details now than before our child died. We notice things like hair color and the hair length of other children. We notice the color of other children's eyes, and we remember how many teeth they are missing when they smile. We pay attention to the way a child talks, and we notice such things as whether or not there is a lisp. Before our child died, we were so busy that these little things passed by totally unnoticed. Now the big things don't seem to matter at all, and all of the small details in life become immensely important.

Grief changes a person in every way possible. Often, fathers who went about rushing to and from work hardly noticing anything else now stop and stare at a butterfly and find themselves openly weeping. Many mothers who never worried about anything, now find themselves to be overly protective, and they worry about every minute detail of the day. Grief places a different set of priorities on a parent's heart and it also creates an unexplainable fear.

Remember that eventually you will begin to enjoy life again. Little by little, the new you will begin to see joy in living. Your pain will not always remain so raw and open. Most of the time, grief brings about some very positive changes. You will have a different set of priorities, and many times the new you is more aware of what is really and truly important in this life.

Who am I? You are a person who has felt the pain of loss and who knows the joy of love. You are a person who has been forced into a place where you must make many difficult choices and changes. You are a person whose life is now governed by a heart that has felt immense pain and that makes you acutely more aware of the pain in the lives of others.

Most of all, you are a parent. Just because your child no longer walks this earth does not mean you are not still a parent. Who am I? You are a parent who will always love your child!
Please contact the editors, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242:

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, 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.

If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.

Our Newsletter is 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 your full name and your location and your reason for interest.
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:
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser who honor Anna Webb, daughter of Jerry and Carol Webb on the anniversary of her passing; and honor Isaiah, son of Rosa Maca, on the anniversary of his birth.

Love gifts are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue.

If you would like to send a love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to The Compassionate Friends. Your gifts are tax deductible.

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

What’s it all about?
The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit, 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

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.

Chapter website:
http://www.quadcitcfo.org

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 sharing with another experiencing a similar loss. Co-moderators, Cathy Seehuetter 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 Page as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

When grief is new you need not find a reason however good and brave — to temper your despair.
When grief is new the heart accepts no answer however wise and kind — to ease your mourning.
When grief is new your life can only know disintegration, overwhelming pain...
My friend, try to believe what other griever learned:
You will not always hurt as you hurt now...
Time will restore the soundness of your mind.
All other words are shadows on the wind when grief is new.

Sascha

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Dallas, Texas, will be the site of the 38th TCF National Conference on July 10-12, 2015. "Hope Shines Bright ... Deep in the Heart" is the theme of this year’s event, which promises more of last year’s great National Conference experience. The 2015 Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Dallas. Details can be found on the national website as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook Page as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.
The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter
Upcoming Meetings:
Thursday, March 26, 2015, at 6:30 pm at Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois
Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.
The next meeting is April 23, 2015, 6:30 pm.

### The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine
Meet 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
This is a community resource for children andadolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday andTuesday 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)
A peer group for suicide grief support meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggnor Library, 505 10th Street, De Witt, Iowa 54742. 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 Support Group
Meets on second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm - 9:00 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
- Kirby White 563.271.5908 kombo100@msn.com
- 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
- Michelle Curtis 309.644.0486

Kay, Kirby, Doug, Rosemary, Judy, and Michelle are willing to take calls frombereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don’t feel alone.

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### 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.compassionatetfriends.org and click “Online Support” in the “Resources” column. |
| Understanding Suicide | ASAP (Awareness, Support, Action, Prevention): A confidential group that meets biweekly to serve individuals who have contemplated or attempted suicide and those coping with the suicide of a loved ones. Christian Care, 2209 3rd Avenue, Rock Island – first and third Wednesdays, 4:00-5:30 pm. |
| 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.compassionatetfriends.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.compassionatetfriends.org and review the options at the top of the page. |
| TCF e-newsletter | 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, AK 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.alivealone.org or alivealone@bright.net. |
Choosing Life - “It will never be the same. Never.” As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief’s profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life - until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then you may say “...never the same.”

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens (TCF’s Founder) calls “The Valley of the Shadow.” It is the very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. Between. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the death of your child to life with re-investment of discovery. Life is never the same – choose life! Marcia F. Alig, TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little, you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever “the same.” Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery. Life is never the same – choose life! Marcia F. Alig, TCF, Mercer Area, NJ

In a world of the well-meaning “I know how you feel” (how could you know?) or “It will get better (no, it will get different, not better), we may feel angry at inept greeting card expressions of grief. We must not forget that there is no common language for grief in our culture, no shared set of ways of acting and speaking that address the need to reach out to others in this time of crisis. People do the best that they can and we must accept the awkwardness and hesitation as simple acts of compassion.

John McDonald
TCF North Shore/Boston

What You Need to Know About the Grief Process!
Losing a loved one is never easy. After a death, you may experience many different feelings and find yourself emotionally, physically and spiritually fatigue.

The “grief process” has been coined in our society to encourage you to move on, get over it, and accept this life change – sometimes before you are ready. This process, as defined by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, is a useful tool and resource, but the problem lies in the misunderstanding of the process itself. Typically, you may sway from one stage to another, back and forth, until the final phase – acceptance – is reached. Our society expects you to reach the final stage of acceptance in a timely manner and show the results of your progress.

You may feel trapped by these false time limits and become embarrassed to show your grief. As time passes from the day of your loved one’s death, you may ask yourself, “Why am I not over this yet? It has been ___ years. Why am I not accepting this? When will this process be over?” The answers are simple, yet hard to see when enveloped in grief and guided by a misunderstood process.

Answers to Some Tough Questions
Why am I not over this yet? Because you have lost someone you love and care about. This may be something you will never be “over.” As long as you are continuing to make progress and feel a slight, positive difference from the day your loved one died, you are doing fine. If not, please make an appointment with a professional counselor who specializes in grief and loss.

Why am I not accepting this? You probably have – just not in the way you were expecting. The acceptance phase, where you expect to be “over it,” creates a false ending to the pain and hurt. Instead, give yourself permission to focus on what you are experiencing right now. Explore your feelings and emotions. Find a professional counselor who specializes in grief and loss and talk about your grief in a safe place.

Healing has no time limit. Don’t pressure yourself to accept your loss. Release your desire to “get to the end” and begin a slow integration into the present moment. Remember to love yourself and honor your feelings as they happen.

When will this process be over? A process is defined as a systematic series of actions directed to some end. To counselors and psychologists, the grief process allows them to easily diagnose the state you are in to assure there is some type of movement with your feelings and emotions. It also allows you to see that you are experiencing many emotions and feelings and can confirm that you are on the right path. However, reaching the “end” is a false belief. What is real is that you have lost someone you love. You now need a way to figure out how to continue living this life without them in it. That is all. Pure and simple. The grief process many guide you. It may help you proceed to a peaceful place again, but it is not the only way to grieve. Grieving is personal and different for everyone, so have the courage to make it your own. www.lunaslight.com

There for me
Yes my daughter is dying.
Are you there for me?
It has been two long weeks and she’s still with us.
Are you there for me?
She is near the end.
Are you there for me?
She died this morning.
Are you there for me?
I’m in terrible pain and completely lost. Are you there for me?
It’s been two months and I can barely get out of bed. Are you there for me?
It’s been six months and I can’t stop crying. Where did you go?
Doug Scott, TCF /Quad Cities