The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

October 2020

Volume XXXIII, Number 8

Dear Compassionate Friends,

Our parents were stalwart supporters in our grief journey. I don't think I realized at the time how much they were hurting as well. They were not only mourning for their granddaughter, but also feeling the pain for their beloved children and their grandson as they watched us grieve. For many years, as long as Carol's mother was able, she sent us a letter or card on Anna's birthday. In the years following her death, her dad gave an annual donation to Compassionate Friends in Anna's memory. Carol's mom spent hours "photoshopping" the only professional family photo we had, taken for a church directory just days before Anna's last hospitalization and subsequent death. The photo of Anna was truly terrible, but we had purchased prints at her mom's insistence shortly after we buried Anna. When they came, we determined to throw them away, but her mom took them home and spent hours finding just the right picture of Anna, trimming the edges, covering up the image on the professional print, having it re-photographed and prints made (it was 1984 after all). The picture as a whole was still not a great one, but we do have one photo of our family that includes Anna. Jerry's mom represented our family at the opening of the Ronald McDonald House in Iowa City (where Anna's memorial gifts were designated) when we could not attend.

So many times our parents listened, encouraged, and accepted us where we were as we stumbled along in those early years. Recently I saw a Facebook post from a young woman whose first child

Continued on page 2

Inside

Love Gifts	2
Forgive Me, My Daughter October is National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month	3
TCF's Facebook Page TCF National Newsletter About TCF	4
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
Suicide Grief	6
Suicide Grief continued	7
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings	8
The Feelings Bereaved Parents Share… Contact the Editors	9
Coping with the Loss of a Grandchild Grieving a Death During the Coronavirus Pandemic (an online course)	10
Postings	11

Continued from page 1
was stillborn. She thanked her parents for their love and support. Whether it is your parents or a sibling, another relative, or a really close friend, take the time to affirm their love for you and the ways they have encouraged you in these hard days. They are walking a path of grief as well. Their personal heartache over your (and their) loss may not show in obvious ways, but they are trying to love and care for you (possibly not perfectly) in a situation where there is no fixing, just moving haltingly toward healing, one day at a time. The poem, "Forgive Me, My Daughter" in this month's newsletter, is reflective of what a bereaved grandparent might be experiencing. We have also included an article, "Coping With the Death of a Grandchild." Sharing either of these resources with your family might spark some good conversation that would be useful to all of you as together you continue to process your grief.

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.

Thanks to:
William and Diane Stock, in memory of their granddaughter, Claire Glassford.
Bill and Laurie Steinhauser, in memory of their nephew, Patrick Henry Hagerty V.

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

Forgive Me, My Daughter

I want you to be the little girl who tore her many layered petticoats
on the parallel bars and even chipped a tooth.
I want you to be the child with bloody knees who had matching holes in her new leotards.
Or maybe the one who fell from a swing and needed half dozen stitches beneath her eye.
Oh I could hold you then; there was magic in my kisses that stemmed the pain
and a doctor nearby for more tangible aid.
But what I do know now is that you are a woman and your sorrows are so profound.
I stand immobile as your wan face leans over the broken turf
where your infant son, your only child, will soon be interred.
I clench my fists knowing there is no solace in my arms for agony of this magnitude.
You are deaf to my murmurings, you hear only the echoes of his laughter and his cries.
Of course, I am here when you need me. But I can only pretend I am a strong and wise grandmother
when in truth, I remain a mother, heart broken twice.

Joani Nelson Horchler and Robin Rice Morris
BPUSA Orange County

October is National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month

The National Lay Me Down to Sleep Foundation has published a calendar for the month highlighting ways to acknowledge, remember, and memorialize the life of your child. You can access the calendar at NILMDTS.com. Here are a few of their suggestions:

- ♥ Make a donation to a nonprofit in memory of your baby.
- ♥ Start a journal to help you through your journey.
- ♥ Do a random act of kindness in honor of your baby.
- ♥ Paint some river rocks with your baby's name an place them in your local park for someone to find.
- ♥ Make a blood donation or host a blood drive in your baby's name.
- ♥ Donate items to a children's shelter and enclose a card to explain why they are receiving the gifts.
- ♥ Thank a family member or a friend who has helped you on your journey.
- ♥ Plant a tree or perennial plant.
- ♥ Make a scrapbook.
- ♥ Start a photo album of any memories or meaningful symbols.
- ♥ Take cookies/flowers/etc., to the nurses/providers who helped you on your journey.
- ♥ Take photos of something in nature that helps you feel closer to your baby (i.e., light, butterflies, flowers)
- ♥ Make or buy a piece of jewelry as a keepsake in memory of your baby.

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.

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 Resources	There are resources on elements of grief with well-known experts in the field. To view the resources, go to https://www.opentohope.com/tv/.
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.
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.
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.
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 at climb@climb-support.org. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.

Suicide Grief

When a loved one dies by suicide, emotions can overwhelm you. Your grief might be heart wrenching. At the same time, you might be consumed by guilt — wondering if you could have done something to prevent your loved one's death. As you face life after a loved one's suicide, remember that you don't have to go through it alone.

Brace for Powerful Emotions

A loved one's suicide can trigger intense emotions. For example:

- **Shock.** Disbelief and emotional numbness might set in. You might think that your loved one's suicide couldn't possibly be real.
- **Anger.** You might be angry with your loved one for abandoning you or leaving you with a legacy of grief — or angry with yourself or others for missing clues about suicidal intentions.
- **Guilt.** You might replay "what if" and "if only" scenarios in your mind, blaming yourself for your loved one's death.
- **Despair.** You might be gripped by sadness, loneliness or helplessness. You might have a physical collapse or even consider suicide yourself.
- **Confusion.** Many people try to make some sense out of the death, or try to understand why their loved one took his or her life. But, you'll likely always have some unanswered questions.
- **Feelings of rejection.** You might wonder why your relationship wasn't enough to keep your loved one from dying by suicide.

You might continue to experience intense reactions during the weeks and months after your loved one's suicide — including nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, social withdrawal and loss of interest in usual activities — especially if you witnessed or discovered the suicide.

Dealing with Stigma

Many people have trouble discussing suicide, and might not reach out to you. This could leave you feeling isolated or abandoned if the support you expected to receive just isn't there. Additionally, some religions limit the rituals available to people who've died by suicide, which could also leave you feeling alone. You might also feel deprived of some of the usual tools you depended on in the past to help you cope.

Adopt Healthy Coping Strategies

The aftermath of a loved one's suicide can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As you work through your grief, be careful to protect your own well-being.

Keep in touch. Reach out to loved ones, friends and spiritual leaders for comfort, understanding and healing. Surround yourself with people who are willing to listen when you need to talk, as well as those who'll simply offer a

Continued on next page

Continued from page 6
shoulder to lean on when you'd rather be silent.

Grieve in your own way. Do what's right for you, not necessarily someone else. There is no single "right" way to grieve. If you find it too painful to visit your loved one's gravesite or share the details of your loved one's death, wait until you're ready.

Be prepared for painful reminders. Anniversaries, holidays and other special occasions can be painful reminders of your loved one's suicide. Don't chide yourself for being sad or mournful. Instead, consider changing or suspending family traditions that are too painful to

continue.

Don't rush yourself. Losing someone to suicide is a tremendous blow, and healing must occur at its own pace. Don't be hurried by anyone else's expectations that it's been "long enough."

Expect setbacks. Some days will be better than others, even years after the suicide — and that's OK. Healing doesn't often happen in a straight line.

Consider a support group for families affected by suicide. Sharing your story with others who are experiencing the same type of grief might help you find a sense of purpose or strength. However, if you find going to these groups keeps you ruminating on your loved one's death, seek out other methods of support.

Know when to seek professional help. If you experience intense or unrelenting anguish or physical problems, ask your doctor or mental health provider for help. Seeking professional help is especially important if you think you might be depressed or you have recurring thoughts of suicide. Unresolved grief can turn into complicated grief, where painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that you have trouble resuming your own life.

Depending on the circumstances, you might benefit from individual or family therapy — either to get you through the worst of the crisis or to help you adjust to life after suicide. Short-term medication can be helpful in some cases, too.

Face the future with a sense of peace. In the aftermath of a loved one's suicide, you might feel like you can't go on or that you'll never enjoy life again.

In truth, you might always wonder why it happened — and reminders might trigger painful feelings even years later. Eventually, however, the raw intensity of your grief will fade. Understanding the complicated legacy of suicide and how to cope with palpable grief can help you heal, while still honoring the memory of your loved one.

Mayo Clinic Staff, www.mayoclinic.org

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting
Thursday, October 22, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.

1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois

Social distancing seating and face masks will be required.

The next month's meeting will be held on

Thursday, November 19, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.

The meetings will be held in person as long as the shelter-in-place order has been lifted. Social distancing seating will still be required.

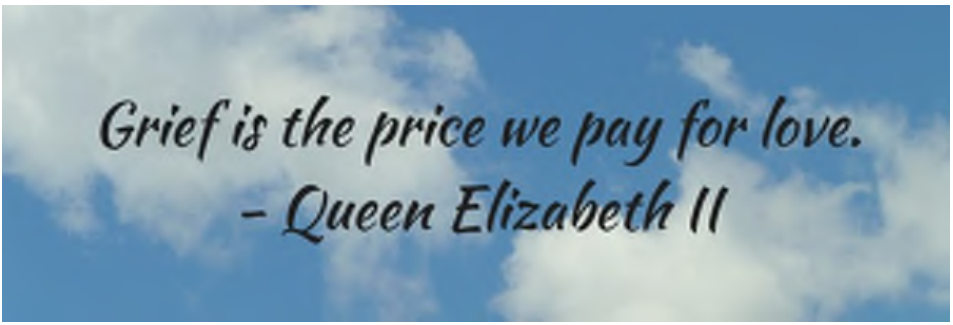
TCF website: http://www.quadcitytcf.org

The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine	Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittch-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com.
Rick's House of Hope	Rick's House of Hope serves children, ages 3-18, and family members from the Quad Cities and nearby counties. We serve those with grief, loss, or trauma issues. Death of a loved one and divorce are common; however, any sort of traumatic event or family change would fit our criteria, such as: bullying, teen dating victimization/harassment, crime victims, and other needs. 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.
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): ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoeartb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvechio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotamil.com 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.

The Feelings Bereaved Parents Share Have Not Changed Over the Centuries

A month after he lost his daughter, Tullia, in February of 45 B.C., Cicero wrote to his friend, Atticus:

"It is like you to want me to recover from my grief, but you are my witness that I have not been remiss on my own behalf. Nothing has been written by any author on the alleviation of grief which I did not read....But my sorrow is stronger than any consolation. I have even done something which I imagine no one has ever done before, consoled myself in a literary composition. I can assure you there is no consolation as effective as this. I write all day long, not that I do myself any real good, but just for the time being it distracts me—not indeed enough, for grief is powerful and importunate; still it brings a respite. And I try all I know to bring my face if not my heart back to composure...you will not be able to feel towards me as in the past. The things you liked in me are gone for good."



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.

Coping with the Loss of a Grandchild

While the death of anyone you are close to will be difficult, for grandparents coping with the loss of a grandchild, navigating the dark and unique road of grief may be decidedly more complex. Grandparents who are grieving the death of a grandchild are often "neglected mourners" taking a back seat to the primary mourners – the parents and siblings of the child who died. When it comes to offering empathy and support, grandparents are often forgotten or are too focused on "staying strong" for their loved ones to process their own feelings.

When a grandparent experiences the death of a grandchild, they are faced with a unique grieving process, mourning the death on many levels.

When a grandchild dies, grandparents grieve twice. They mourn the loss of the child, and they feel the pain of their own child's suffering.

Grandparents are in the extraordinary position of playing two roles: that of mourner and protector. A parent's love for a child is perhaps the strongest of all human bonds. For the parents of the child who died, the pain of grief may seem intolerable. For the grandparents, watching their own child suffer and feeling powerless to take away the hurt can feel almost as intolerable.

Grandparents who live at a distance and did not have close or frequent contact with their grandchild might also experience additional feelings of guilt and regret, or mourn the loss of a relationship they never had the opportunity to embrace.

For people coping with the death of a loved one, the search to find meaning in such a tragedy is a normal and necessary part of the grieving process. This is no different for grandparents who have lost a grandchild. Grandparents – many of whom have already lived long, rich lives – may struggle with feelings of guilt. It is not uncommon for grandparents to consider questions such as "Why couldn't it have been me, instead?" or "How could God let this happen?"

Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Grieving a Death During the Coronavirus Pandemic (an online course)

If you have lost a loved one during these months of COVID and social distancing, it can be especially complicated. Whether the loss was sudden or you saw it coming, whether it was a death to COVID or to something else, it is likely that experiencing the death during this especially difficult time has had an impact on your grief.

In this course, we help you think through how these many different factors may be impacting your grief and your connection with the person you've lost. We provide information, coping tools, and ideas for support moving forward, all in a self-paced course that you can start, stop, and work on whenever you like. Big thanks to the Funeral Service Foundation for providing a grant that allows this course to be free to anyone who needs it! https://school.whatsyourgrief.com/p/grief-isolation-covid

For three excruciating weeks last spring, our entire world was reduced to a single hospital room. In a sense the world ceased to exist as we all fought to bring Norah back out of that room. It seems an impossible task to fully enter back into the wide world with all its possibilities, with all the pain and joy it contains. Our lives will never be the same. For every happy moment we experience there will be a ready thought of deep sadness and regret. We think of what she is missing. We think of what she would have become. We think of all that Norah and the world had to offer each other.

Eric Brubaker

True Words

"You will not always hurt like this." These words are true. If they do not reach your heart today, do not reject them: keep them in your mind. One morning - not tomorrow perhaps, but the day after tomorrow, or the month after next month... One morning the dawn will wake you with the inconceivable surprise: Your grief will have lost one small amount of its force. Be ready for the time when you can feel for yourself that these words are true: "You will not always hurt like this."

Sascha Wagner

About Being Strong — Many people are convinced that being strong and brave means trying to think and talk about "something else." But we know that being strong and brave means thinking and talking about your dead love, until your grief begins to be bearable. That is strength. That is courage. And only thus can "being strong and brave" help you to heal.

Sascha Wagner

Postings

We speak their names because they are a part of everything that we do. Everything that we are. We speak their names because they are still and always will be a part of us. We talk about them, not because we are stuck or haven't moved on.

We talk about them because we are theirs and they are ours. Death does not change that.

Anonymous

Individual parents grieve in individual ways, of course. Just as with love, each of us has our unique way of expressing ourselves. But while the names we give the feelings inside vary from person to person, the feelings themselves do not, at least not much. Every grieving parent you know is probably a little sadder than usual on Mother's Day, or Father's Day. Or Christmas, Hanukkah, or Halloween. Their wounds feel a little rawer, their grief a little more palpable. Do not be afraid of them, or their grief. Do not worry that you are going to hurt them further by acknowledging them; they are already in pain. Tell them that you see them. Tell them that you love their children.

Jayson Greene, Once More We Saw Stars

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

Bethany for Children & Families

1830 6th Avenue
Moline, Illinois 61265

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Return Service Requested

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.