



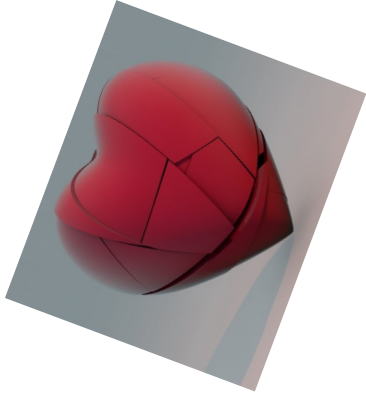
The Compassionate Friends
Quad City Area Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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for Children & Families
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To those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

You are not alone in your grief.



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

February 2015

Volume XXVIII, Number 2

Dear Compassionate Friends,

As I was choosing articles for this month's newsletter I began to read the following article that emphasizes how we as bereaved parents learn to choose life even in the struggling day to day grief of our child's death. For those who have never attended a meeting I wanted you to know what it is really all about. Then consider attending a meeting and getting to know other bereaved parents who are willing to share life with you.

Sincerely, Jerry and Carol Webb

"It's About Life"

I happened to meet one of Marc's friends the other day and I asked him what he was doing. "Medical school," he said. "I'm going to apply." I was surprised. He had always had the instincts of an artist. But he had carried the casket of his two best friends and he was only twenty-four. He asked me what I was doing. "Compassionate Friends," I said. "I'm the chapter leader now." "Why?" he asked, "It's so morbid. Aren't you tired of talking about death?"

"It's not about death," I thought. "It's about life. It's about surviving, at first minute by minute, then day by day, month by month. It's not about death, it's really about life." As I reflect on that conversation I think about how best to explain to people who haven't been or do not come back to our meetings. The Compassionate Friends is an organization that embraces life. It is not a group or people sitting around talking about death, but talking about ways to go on living for the other people in their lives – their spouses, children, relatives, and mostly for themselves.

I tried to think how to explain to this twenty-four year old that our meetings are not morbid but hopeful and how our meetings are caring and nurturing places where people can talk about problems no one else can understand or care to listen to. Our meetings are places where we can talk about our children in a totally comfortable and relaxed way surrounded by friends who understand and care.

No, The Compassionate Friends is not a morbid organization at all. It is helpful, hopeful and loving. We can share our children and our feelings about them as we can in no other place.

So I turned to Marc's friend and said, "No, Jeff, it's not morbid at all. It's uplifting and a relief to be able to talk and laugh about Marc with these people who truly understand."

And then I remembered something my husband read in a magazine. It said that "Time heals a broken heart but people heal a broken spirit." I knew what he had read was why I go to Compassionate Friends...to allow the time to go by to mend my broken heart. But more importantly, to be with people who will help mend my broken spirit.

Toby Eisenberg – TCF/San Diego

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CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

GRIEF IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER - AT A RECENT TCF EVENT I WAS SITTING WITH A GROUP OF FOLKS FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. EACH OF US KNEW ABOUT THE OTHERS' CHILDREN WHO DIED AND COULD RECITE THE OTHERS' STORY. WHAT WAS AMAZING WAS THAT AMONG THAT GROUP THERE WAS A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE BUSINESS OWNER, A TAXI DRIVER, AN AIRLINE PILOT, A SCHOOL TEACHER, AN UNEMPLOYED SOFTWARE ENGINEER, AN EX-CONVICT, AND A METHODIST MINISTER. WHERE ELSE BUT IN TCF WOULD YOU FIND SUCH A DIVERSE GROUP SHARING STORIES, TEARS, HUGS AND LAUGHTER? NOBODY IN THAT GROUP CARED HOW MUCH MONEY THE OTHER MADE, WHAT TYPE OF HOUSE THEY OWNED, OR WHAT CAR THEY DROVE. WE INTERACTED AS A FAMILY WHOSE PRIMARY BOND WAS THE LOVE WE SHARE FOR OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND SIBLINGS.

ALAN PEDERSEN - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TCF

It has been said that time heals all wounds...I do not agree. The wounds remain. Over time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers it with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but never goes away.

Rose Kennedy

"Your brain goes every direction. You are so sure that if you know the answers it is going to be better. But it isn't. There's no answer and it doesn't matter, because your child is gone."

Comment by an anonymous bereaved parent

"Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish; earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal." Thomas Moore (1779-1852) songwriter, singer and poet whose personal life was troubled by repeated heartaches, including the death of all five of his children during his lifetime.

A New Paradigm for Grieving: It is Your Journey

Numerous times after our sister's death, we were told that grief was just part of the "grief process." In fact, days after Shannon's death, we tried to figure out what stage we were in - so we could get through the "process" as soon as possible. However, we soon realized that it was very difficult to apply a defined process to our grief.

We began to research the "grief process" and discovered that it was developed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss-born psychiatrist, and author of *On Death and Dying* and the Kubler-Ross model. Dr. Ross categorized feelings associated with death and dying into a five-step process that included denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. This same theory was applied in defining feelings associated with grief after a death. Ultimately, the theory turned into a norm in American society and is now accepted as the standard way to grieve.

We developed a very different opinion about the "grief process" after learning to live our life without our sister. From our research and personal experience, we view death as a transition in a person's life. It is a personal journey where one begins to define a new identity, usually not by their own choice - especially if the death is unexpected. The journey may be simple or complex, and sometimes leads to personal or spiritual growth.

Our philosophy also says that there is no

defined end to grief after a loss. Yes, there is truth to the saying "It will get easier with time." However, this fact still remains: a loved one is gone. Thus, **learning to live without a loved one can be challenging and may take an entire lifetime because each individual has their own perspective of the relationship they felt they had with the person who died.** In addition, every grief experience is uniquely its own and belongs to the person experiencing it and no one else. Ultimately, there is no right or wrong way to grieve.



We also believe that after a death, there's no "getting over it." Instead, it's about rebuilding, centering, grounding, exploring, creating, crying, questioning, relaxing and anything else someone determines they need to redefine their life while embracing the journey they are experiencing. And, it is very important to take care of yourself. We strongly encourage individuals to seek professional psychological counseling to discuss the lifelong transition one may experience after a loved one's death.

www.lunaslight.com

(Luna's Light Sympathy Gift Boutique was founded in 2005 by Michele & Kelly McBride in remembrance of their youngest sister, Shannon.)

It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace and healing.

Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again.

With gentle thoughts in Memory of my daughter, Nina,. Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN



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.



Finding Spring Again

It is the end of February, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the foot-long icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we all will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had overtaken my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Nina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How could I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put, it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step.

However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken.

It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac-scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my sweet daughter Nina's life would end.



I wondered if my thoughts about spring would ever be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it contained the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look to the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know that anyone who has lost a loved one to death, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of "my early grief," I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first two years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again doesn't mean I am dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered and presented to me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime! I will always feel tenseness, apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring.

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, lovingly remembering their daughter, Maggie, on the 10th anniversary of her death.

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.quadcitytcf.org>

Am I Not

Am I not supposed to grieve out loud?

I'm supposed to grieve quietly, alone and by myself.

Am I not supposed to talk about my daughter?

It makes people uncomfortable.

Am I not supposed to grieve when people forget about my daughter?

For other people are done grieving over her.

Am I not supposed to grieve on birthdays and holidays?

Those are just for the living.

Am I not supposed to grieve on the day my daughter died?

Am I not supposed to not grieve at all?

Doug Scott - Quad Cities/TCF

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 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.

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.



Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday, February 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.

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

The next meeting is March 26, 2015, 6:30 pm.

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 linmac67@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 .
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, DeWitt, 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): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Kay Miller 309.738.4915 ♥ Kirby White 563.271.5908 kombio100@msn.com ♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 doug.scott@mchsi.com ♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 shoeartb3@mchsi.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com ♥ Michelle Curtis 309.644.0486 <p>Kay, Kirby, Doug, Rosemary, Judy, and Michelle are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.</p>

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.
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 one. 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.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	<i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> 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, 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 .
Bereaved Parents' Magazine	Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm .

Will I Grieve Or Will I Mourn?

"We need to acknowledge that this experience of grief and mourning is part of the soul's life."

-Thomas Moore

There is no love without loss. And there is not integration of loss without the experience of *mourning*. In other words...**Your capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn.**

To deny the significance of mourning would be to believe that there is something wrong about loving. Yet, I truly believe our greatest gift from God is our capacity to give and receive love. Likewise, it is a great gift that we can openly mourn our life losses.

You may have noticed that people tend to use the words "grieving" and "mourning" interchangeably. There is a critical distinction, however. We as humans move toward integrating loss into our lives not just by grieving, but by mourning. You will move toward "reconciliation" not just by grieving, but through active and intentional mourning. So, what is the distinction?

Grief is the constellation of internal thoughts and feelings we have when someone we love dies.

Think of grief as the container. It holds your thoughts, feelings, and images of your experience when someone you love dies. In other words, grief is the internal meaning given to the experience of loss.

Mourning is when you take the grief you have on the inside and express it outside of yourself.

Another way of defining mourning is "grief

gone public" or "the outward expression of grief." There is no one right or only way to mourn. Talking about the person who died, crying, expressing your thoughts and feelings through art or music, journaling, praying, and celebrating special anniversary dates that held meaning for the person who died are just a few examples of mourning.

Bereavement: originates from the word "reave," meaning "to be dispossessed" or "to be robbed." It also means "to be torn apart" and "to have special needs." When you experience the death of someone loved, you are dispossessed of something very precious to you. Bereavement initiates grief, and grief tries to instinctively convert to mourning. The experiences of grief and mourning alert compassionate people around you that you have special needs that call for support and comfort.

Making the choice to not just grieve but authentically mourn provides you the courage and confidence to integrate the death of someone loved into your life. I have come to believe that to heal your grief, you must mourn it. To go on to ultimately "live well," you must "mourn well." By mourning well, I mean openly and honestly expressing your thoughts and feelings from the inside to the outside—no pretense, no repression, no inhibitions. Somewhere in the collision between the heart, which searches for permanency and connection, and the brain, which acknowledges separation and loss, there is a need for all of us to authentically mourn.

Authentic mourning means being consciously aware of the painful emotions of grief and feeling safe to express them. This may seem odd because your initial response following loss is instinctive and

Continued, next page

Will I grieve or Will I Mourn

Continued from the previous page

organic. The loss has taken place, and you naturally feel core feelings such as helplessness, anxiety, fear, despair, protest, and sadness.

Herein lies the paradox— a wide range of instinctive responses occur, but you get to decide as your grief unfolds into mourning if you will truly experience these responses or instead inhibit, suppress, or deny them.

Actually, befriending such emotions is what makes it possible to experience, eventually, a sense of renewed meaning and purpose in your life. Yet the emotions you sometimes most want to avoid are the ones you most need to attend to.

Dr. Alan Wofelt – Grief Counselor

A Letter To My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer. How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near? Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always. Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness. I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon, Tuscaloosa, AL/TCF

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 is the voice of my heart-ache. But...

Under the grounds there is life. Each root of love, friendship, care, family, and faith is feeding into the trunk, and I know for 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 wound 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.

Anita King TCF, Hagerstown, MD