



The Compassionate Friends

Quad City Area Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September 2020

Volume XXXIII, Number 7

Dear Compassionate Friends,

The year 1984 was one filled with loss for our family.

Our daughter died in late March. In September my grandmother died very unexpectedly and we lost a baby to miscarriage. Then in early December, my aunt, who had been a big part of my growing up years also died. These multiple griefs closely following our daughter's death interrupted our ability to deal with her loss. We moved into 1985, wounded, battered, numb from the combined losses that had rocked our world.

This morning when I was reading a blog post I was reminded of that year when it seemed like each time we pulled ourselves up we were knocked back down again by another painful loss with no opportunity to process each one on its own.

One of the most important things I've learned is that you can't shortcut grief. You have to walk through it. "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in the Bible, but I think it's one of the most powerful. Life on this earth has both joys and losses. If we shortcut the grief process it will leak out in a variety of ways: anger, anxiety, depression, irritability, and apathy, just to name a few. Grief happens not only with death or loss, but also with transition and unexpected circumstances. The last few months dealing with COVID-19 we have experienced both loss and transition. If you haven't recognized the need to grieve, you might take some time to process those losses, let the tears fall, so you can actually move forward. -Jill Savage

This year, grief from the death of our children has been complicated by the pandemic that has rocked the

Inside

| | |
|---|----|
| Love Gifts | 2 |
| The Back-to-School Pressure Cooker | 3 |
| Why is My Grief Different in the Second Year? | |
| TCF's Facebook Page | 4 |
| TCF National Newsletter | |
| About TCF | |
| Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings | 5 |
| Grieving During This Isolating Virus | 6 |
| The Myth of the Grief Time Line | 7 |
| Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings | 8 |
| Stillbirth | |
| Contact the Editors | 9 |
| Last Potential | |
| Ten Things We Need to Know about Grief | 10 |
| Postings | 11 |



Continued from page 1

entire world. Layered over the grief for our beloved children, we are also grieving the loss of jobs, resources, opportunities, routines, relationships. The uncertainty of our world has disrupted the grieving process, bombarding us with new losses, limiting helpful interactions with other people, and making support systems less available. Other friends and family, facing their own pandemic related losses, are distracted from being able to empathize or encourage us as we grieve the loss of our child. At



some point, the challenges of the pandemic will ease and our world will hopefully regain some sort of “normal.” But our grief work will still need to be addressed and we may find ourselves still needing to go through the pain to find healing and hope on the other side.

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:

Robert and Denise Bubbers, in memory of their son, Ryan.

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 *The Compassionate Friends*. **Your gifts are tax deductible.**

The Back-to-School Pressure Cooker

Labor Day can put siblings into their own back to school pressure cooker. Whether this is the first year, or later, our kids may be dealing with questions and comments from peers, teachers, and/or counselors about their brother or sister. Or perhaps no one is talking because no one knows what to say. Feelings of loneliness, being different, being “left out” can surface, and sibling rivalry? Remember if you will how intense it could get between all your children. What kind of competition existed between them during the school year, or what comparisons were made: athletics, grades, friendships, extra activities? That kind of emotion is often forgotten when a child dies. But as your children go back to the classroom, to the athletic field, they may see those reminders each day. When they bring home these feelings, positive and negative, they need a place to express them without being judged, or compared to their sibling. We want to remember good. But we have to remember that no child was always good! To forget that is to make a martyr of our dead child - possibly at the expense of our living children. Our surviving children need special support at this time of year, too. They need to be reassured that they are still lovable – that they can be forgiven for any anger or resentment they may feel toward their brother or sister...that perfection is not a requirement for loving. They need to be reassured that they are separate, unique individuals, not imperfect replacements for the child who died. They need a safe place to talk, to let out their own concerns and anxieties and fears. They too are grieving and need a lot of support, especially during this back to school rush.



Cindy Cooper – TCF/St. Louis, Missouri

Why is My Grief Different in the Second Year?

Why is my grief different in the second year?
Why do I feel so much more empty in the second year?
Why do I cry more, again, in the second year?
Is it because I am more alone and the world has moved on?
Has the world forgotten that you ever lived?
Is it because I realize “with my heart” that you are not coming back?
That forever is a long time?
Is it because all of the “firsts” are over and I must move on?
Why is my grief different in the second year?
Because, my child, you are still gone.

Eleanor Oberle, TCF - in memory of her son, Dan Oberle

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

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| TCF Online Support Community | <p>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.</p> |
| TCF's Grief Related Resources | <p>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/.</p> |
| TCF National Magazine | <p><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.</p> |
| Grief Materials | <p>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.</p> |
| Amazon.com | <p>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.</p> |
| Previous Newsletter Editions | <p>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.</p> |
| Alive Alone | <p>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.</p> |
| Bereaved Parents' Magazine | <p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. https://bereavedparentsusa.org.</p> |
| Our Newsletter | <p>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.</p> |

Grieving During This Isolating Virus

I can say without reservation that the years spent grieving the loss of my daughter, daily missing her presence, created a loneliness harsher than anything I could ever have imagined. Now, throw in an isolating, disruptive virus floating through our cities and towns, large and small.

With 16 years of grieving experience on my “life resume,” my attention over the past few weeks has turned to moms and dads who are “new griever,” those trying to navigate fresh grief when everything in the country – even planning a funeral or memorial service – is out of working order. You have many concerns and worries. My prayers, carried deeply in my soul, are for your comfort.

Maybe you have other people physically in your presence, or like me, you are at home alone. I’m kind of tired of hearing people whine about how tough it is to be “stuck at home” with their kids, coming up with clever ideas and innovative activities to get through this terrible time of being at home with the family.

Now, I’m not minimizing the challenges of setting up school at home and feeding hungry people all day long, believe me. I just wish these people on TV and dancing happily across electronic screens doing chores in their kitchens and cooking in the backyard had any idea of how very fortunate they are. Many parents are living in agony and would give anything and everything to have had

more days, months, years with their precious children – even when they were aggravating the heck out of you. It’s impossible to communicate these feelings to anyone who has not lost a child, so I’m trusting you with my thoughts.

Right now you are dealing with the sorrow and isolation of today. Don’t look past today – today is enough. Take yourself outside for a while. If possible, take a short walk – it might turn into a longer walk when you realize walking helps to air out your feelings a little. This is a time to put yourself first when possible, as hard as that may be. Sit down with a book even if you can’t read more than a few pages. Eat something though you don’t feel hungry. (I had some popcorn and a bite of chocolate cake for breakfast, so who am I to be giving advice on nutrition?) Take a quick ride through a drive-through for a cold drink, some small treat to break up the day. Settle down with meditation or prayer though you feel as though you can’t focus. Try something for just a short time to calm your soul.

My motto through the years has been “make the bed.” What? To me that means to accomplish some small task, some little job that puts just a jolt of order and routine to my day. It helped me emotionally and psychologically to pull back the covers on the bed each night rather than toss around in a tangled mess. I would

Continued on page 10

The Myth of the Grief Time Line

How long does it take to fall in love? How many seconds pass before a parent loves their newborn child? How many arguments and rivalries can the bonds of siblinghood withstand? How many sleepovers and phone calls before you know a friend is true? These are silly questions, aren't they? They're like riddles with no answer. There's no scale to measure love or to quantify the bonds of friendship and family.

So why then do we often hear questions like these: "How long does grief last? When will it end? When will I be over it?" If grief is the result of losing someone we loved, cared for and/or connected with, then are these questions also just riddles with no answer? The idea of a grief time line is somewhat of a misnomer.

Anyone familiar with grief understands that associated feelings, setbacks, breakthroughs, roadblocks, triggers, and resolutions can occur at unexpected, unpredictable and inexplicable times and durations. Grief is not a race with a start and finish line, it's a labyrinth with twists and turns and dead ends. Grief is like trying to swim past the break in the ocean – you wade in but every once in a while a wave comes up and knocks you back a few feet. You're still deeper than when you started, but not as deep as you were before the wave hit.

How long will it take you to get past the break? It depends on your strength, the ocean, the tide and the

weather. Grief cannot be mapped on a time line, although "normal grief" should be negatively correlated with time. This means the more time that passes, the less extreme and agonizing grief feelings should be. There will still be bad days, but overall it's average intensity will diminish.

Feelings of grief will diminish, but not disappear. Grief is infinitas, which means "being without finish." Grief doesn't end, but with time it should look different – more peaceful, hopeful, constructive and positive. Here are a few small indicators you might be making progress in your grief. I find it important to note, you can take steps forward, yet still grieve your loved one. Just because you return to work, date, or decide to have a child does not mean you won't continue to grieve the person you lost. The capacity you have to be happy, enjoy life, and love others exists in addition to the love you feel for your deceased loved ones. Because love... love is infinitas.

You start to feel "normal." You have more good days than bad. You experience an increase in energy and motivation. You remember memories fondly as opposed to experiencing them as grief triggers. You can constructively think about the loss of your loved one and the impact it's had on your life. Your sleep patterns return to normal. You experience feelings of optimism about the future. You see

Continued on page 10

Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter Meeting

Thursday, September 24, 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, October 22, 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>

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| 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 shoearb4@gmail.com ♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 delvecchiojudy@hotmail.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. |

Stillbirth

Infant loss.

It's having to say the sweetest hello and the hardest goodbye at the same time.

It's labor with no reward.

It's leaving the hospital with a box of tokens, instead of with your baby in a carrier.

Empty belly. Empty arms. Broken heart.

It's an empty crib and an empty gown.

It's a furnished nursery but an empty house...

It's looking at pictures every day because that's all you have.

It's lonely.

It's 1 in 160.

It's something people are too afraid to talk about.

It's me and it's my baby.

Whitley, Grace's Mom

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.



Lost Potential

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind.

He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But if you ask a

bereaved parent to describe her deceased child she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or "She would be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

Chris Anderson, TCF Walla Walla, WA

Ten Things We Need to Know about Grief

1. **Grief hurts** – There is real pain.
2. **Grief is normal** – The pain, anger, depression, numbness, guilt, mental confusion, etc., is all NORMAL. You are not going crazy if you experience these.
3. **Grief endures** – It takes years for healing to occur.
4. **People grieve differently** – Everyone is an individual and does his/her grief work differently. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.
5. **Physical reactions** –
 - A. Loss of appetite or overeating;
 - B. Insomnia - sleeplessness;
 - C. Sleeping all the time - depression?
 - D. Sexual difficulties - not wanting/deserving pleasure;
 - E. Loss of energy - takes all you have to get out of bed;
 - F. Difficulty concentrating;
 - G. Physical ailments.
6. **Grief brings tears** – Crying is healthy. Men should cry, too!
7. **Holidays, anniversaries, special days are stressful** – Holidays are "family time" and are difficult when a child is absent.
8. **Grief causes one to examine his/her philosophy of life** – We now question many religious principles we have always accepted in the past. Questioning God and His role in the loss is normal and okay. Being angry at God is okay. You can't be angry at someone you don't believe in! God hurts when we hurt.
9. **Grief Changes you!** – When your child dies, you will never be the person you were before! Don't be frightened by the changes taking place inside of you. You will eventually find your "resting place" as healing takes place.
10. **Recovery and healing is possible!** – You will never "get over" the death of a child, but you won't always hurt like you do initially. All attempts to avoid grief will only postpone it. IT DOES GET BETTER!

Chuck Prestwood, TCF/Jackson, Mississippi

Continued from page 6

think – I've made it through a day – now I can leave it behind and see what happens tomorrow.

You may feel like you are doing better in isolation. I have those times too. But, as you have already likely learned, time can turn on you in an instant, compounding your grief, isolation and loneliness. Reach out through Compassionate Friends to the other moms and dads who are struggling and who know your walk. Listen to what they are living. And, here's something you may not have thought about – you are helping someone else when you have honest conversation with another grieving parent. When you become able to soothe someone else's pain, you will recognize that your own healing has begun. It's a privilege to share your pain.

Carol Thompson, TCF/Tyler, Texas, mother of Sarah Kathryn Thompson, who died in a 2005 pedestrian hit-and-run.

Continued from page 7

improvement in performance at work. You're able to focus on personal health and well-being. You feel ready to date again, have more children, and/or make new friends. Your relationships feel more functional and healthy. You feel as though you are "rejoining the human race." You feel ready to get out of the house. You experience an increase in desire for emotional and physical intimacy.

<http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/myth-grief-time line>

When a child dies, it is natural to be afraid of any further pain. For a while we may just want to crawl into a hole and lick our wounds. But then we need to have the courage to say to ourselves, "I'm still here—I can fulfill some of the dreams and give the love my child would have given—I can make that life count." And in that sense of purpose and the good we do, we remain forever in touch with the child we thought we had lost.

Eda Le Shan – Long Island, NY
After a Child Dies

As far as I can see, grief will never truly end in this lifetime. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does—forever. It's simply the way the physical absence of your loved one manifests in your heart—a deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love. Some days, the heavy fog may return, and the next day, it may recede once again. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.

Lexi Behrnt

Grieving is like having broken ribs. On the outside, you look fine, but with every breath, it hurts.

Anonymous

There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.

Beverly Sills

There's this place in me where your fingerprints still rest, your kisses still linger, and your whispers softly echo. It's the place where a part of you will forever be a part of me.

Gretchen Kemp

Postings

Months into the most significant personal grief I have experienced, I've found myself looking around and thinking, this journey is too long and too hard. Where are the shortcuts?"

Of course, there are no shortcuts to healing in grief. It takes a great deal of time and lots of effort. It takes embracing and expressing all the thoughts and feelings as they come along. It takes work. The only way out is through. But reconciliation of our grief is indeed a destination worth working toward. Healing allows us to live and love fully again.

Grief One Day at a Time by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

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

C.S. Lewis



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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.