



THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS



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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 Quad City Chapter



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September 2010, Volume XXIII, Number 8

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

This past month, a young boy from our church family lost his courageous battle with cancer. We are deeply saddened for his family and are reminded of why we continue to produce this newsletter each month and promote the Compassionate Friends organization. Grief work is long and hard and can be daunting. Compassionate Friends reach out with hope and healing and the reminder that we need not walk alone.

Sincerely,
Jerry and Carol Webb

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled a dreadful distance. You have come, seeking solace, understanding, hope, threads to patch what death has so cruelly undone

In this place you can relax and breathe... the coats of others' expectations taken off. Walk into these few hours as into an oasis, where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.

In this place all names can be spoken; In this place each one's story may be told. We will not be discouraged by your sorrow; In this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting; We do not count how many tears are shed. Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,

For the long and winding road we see ahead. And those we love are pleased we are together, Smile down on us, and bless this day, Glad for every tiny step we are taking As they send their light to guide us on our way.

Traveling with us as we journey onward, Sending strength for what the miles may bring, They are a part of everything we do that matters – In every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

Genesee Bourdeau Gentry
Written July 30, 2004
For those attending their first meeting of the Compassionate Friends

If you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

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, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

If you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

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 Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Thank you to **Maggie's Fund and Bethany for Children & Families** for printing this month's newsletter. If you would be willing to prepare the newsletter for the post office, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb (309) 654-2727.

Three Questions

Why? Why? Why? After months of asking this question, I still don't know why. I only know that asking why is normal and that even if I knew the reason why, I would still cry, I would still hurt, I still wouldn't like it. I have noticed lately that the question why is hardly ever running through my head (only on the very bad days).

I have a new word running through my mind . . . What? What? What? What do I do with my life now? I think that moving from the why question to the what question is part of the healing process (I hope). The what question occupies my mind often. It will take time to answer this one.

In the future, I imagine that a third question will need answering: How?
Sally Burnell, TCF/Des Moines, IA

GRIEF MATERIALS

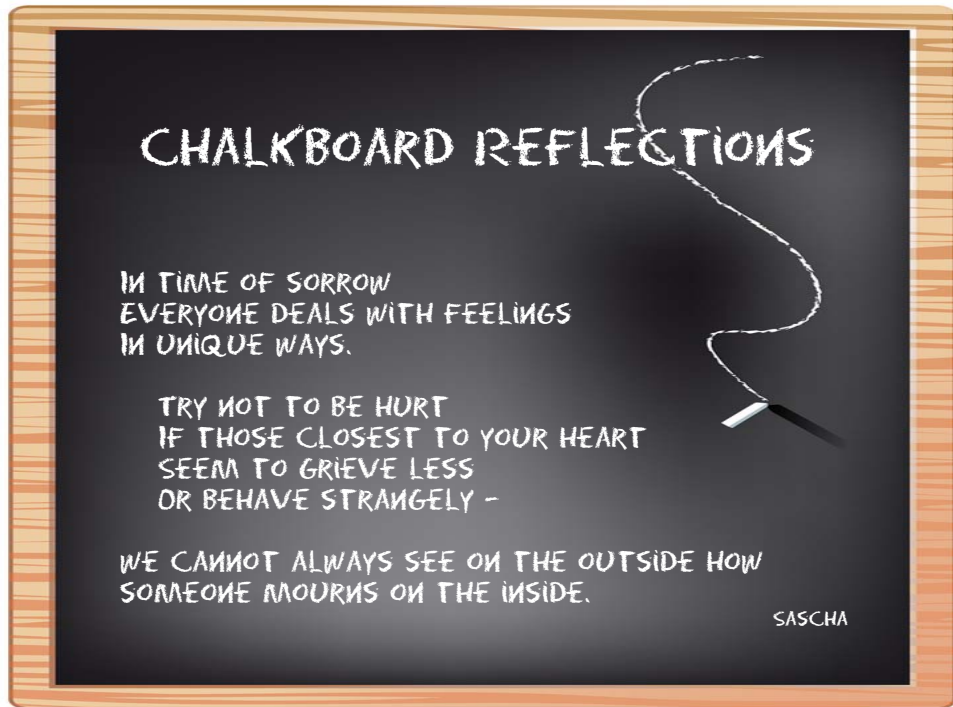
Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're 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 Web site at www.centering.org. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. 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.
Thanks to:

Steve and Mary Gibbs in memory of their daughter, Lindsay.

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.



Always remember that if you could have prevented your child's death you would have. There are a lot of reasons you weren't able to do so.

- ◆ You may have been too frightened to know what to do.
- ◆ You may not have known the difference between normal growing up behavior and serious depression
- ◆ You may have been labeled "over protective" if you did share your fears.
- ◆ You hoped it would pass, get better, work itself out.
- ◆ You wanted to give your child every benefit of the doubt and to trust your child.
- ◆ You didn't want to be an alarmist when maybe nothing was really wrong.
- ◆ You may have actually tried to get help and were ignored or turned away.
- ◆ You may have done everything possible and it still happened.

From *Suicide of a Child*,
Joy and Marvin Johnson
Adina Wroblewski

First Encounter - When grief first enters our life, it tends to invade us . . . completely and . . . relentlessly. We are without comfort; we do not feel pleasure; we find no joy. We ache in mind and body. We feel weak and numb. In the deepest core of our being, we are ready to accept that we will never know happiness again. What's more, we feel that this state is entirely appropriate, natural, and irreversible. Nothing can convince us that, given time, we will learn to live again. But we will.

Sascha

Grief is a series of ever widening circles. It starts with suddenness of the death of someone you love more than life itself. And the circles spread out. You are drawn down with the death, taken under the water, struggling for breath. You slowly rise back to the surface, starting to take in life again. But the circles catch you unaware at times, slamming you with the loss all over again, dragging you back to the very bottom. You never know when you might run into one of the circle's edges, or when they will pass right through you. The circles go out as far as you can possibly imagine . . . for the rest of your life here. You realize they will never end. Perhaps their strength diminishes, I'm not sure - but you know they will never end.

**Becky Price, Josh's Mom
TCF /Rochester Chapter**



As Fall Approaches... As I type this newsletter, there is a suggestion of fall in the air. If this is your first fall without your child, and you have been having a few "good" days, but now you seem to be slipping, know that it is normal. If this is your first seasonal change, this expected mood swing may seem frightening. Change of seasons can be very difficult; even before the tragedy, our bodies reacted to seasonal change. The psychiatrists call it "seasonal blues." Add grief, and it compounds it. If it is not your first, but you are still affected, don't be discouraged. That, too, is normal. It takes quite a few years before they can be handled better. In addition to how our body is affected, each season has its own set of memories with which we have to deal. With fall, there is the beginning of school. No matter what the age of our child, our thoughts can turn to the start of school. If they were very young, we may think about missing the fun of picking out clothes, lunch box, notebooks, etc. If they were still in school, a pattern is broken in mid-sentence. If they were older, and the school years were finished, the memory of those years are still there, and we are taken wistfully back to those days.

Fall also means the holidays are coming closer and it is easy to slip into anticipating them. Try your best not to. Take it one day at a time; don't look ahead, particularly if you are in your first year. **Today** is what you should try to handle at this time. The **tomorrows** you will handle when they get here.

Mary Ehmann, TCF/ Valley Forge, PA

TCF 2010 National Conference

It was a combination of factors that helped us to decide to go to TCF conference this year, six years after our son Brad's death. The conference was in Arlington, Virginia, and we could combine it with a vacation. My thinking was that we could always enjoy the area if it didn't work out, but we felt we were where we belonged right away. All present had had the worst possible loss happen and were on this journey to live out the rest of their lives without their child, grandchild or sibling.

After registration one of the first things we did was to choose a place on a very long "memory board" to place Brad's photo. As others arrived we were able to view many photos, poems, stories, mementoes, etc., of other bereaved parent's children.

In the workshop listings there were many we could attend over the next two days. At workshops we listened to bereaved parents chosen to share some aspect of their journey. I learned new ways to display Brad's things and ideas regarding his possessions. From an author I got ideas on how to write my story to help me to remember and to possibly share with others. Alan and I both thought we got the most out of Reverend Dennis Apple's transparent workshop on "Struggling to reclaim my faith." He is a bereaved father as well as a minister of a very large church in Kansas. We bought his book and were able to buy CDs of his workshop.

At a panel of siblings that was meant for parents, we learned to not expect our surviving son to discuss his grief with us. All four siblings were in agreement on this. I even talked to one of the older siblings after the workshop to clarify this point and he remained firm.

We would encourage everyone to attend next year since it will be in Minneapolis.

Alan and Rosemary Shoemaker
TCF/Quad Cities

Looking for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to www.Bethany-qc.org for copies of the last four years of The Quad City Chapter of The Compassionate Friends Newsletter. They are downloadable in Adobe Acrobat format.

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 The Compassionate Friends national website, and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

Vine and Dine

Wine Pairings Dinner and Silent Auction

Friday, November 5, 2009 –
6:30p.m.

Davenport Country Club
Fundraiser for the Iowa SIDS
Foundation

For more information, call
(563) 332-6265 or visit
www.iowasids.org

The Iowa SIDS Foundation provides support to families touched by SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), educates professionals and the public of ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and funds research into the causes of SIDS.



What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

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 (TCF) is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child at any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

The Quad City Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends meets on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

e-newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happening of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, September 23, 2010, 6:30 pm –8:30 pm

Bethel Assembly of God Church, 3535 38th Ave., Rock Island, IL

For information and directions, call

Rosemary Shoemaker (309-441-5586) or Michelle Cauwels (309-644-0486).

From John Deere Road – follow the signs to Rock Island, turn right at 38th St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38th Ave. The church will be on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38th St.; the church is on the west side of the road.) Next month: October 28, 2010.

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)263-2737 for directions or information.
Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group	Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. For more information, contact Kirby White at (563)271-5908.
Mom's Group meets in Aledo	A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at 12:30 on the third Saturday of the month at the Happy Joe's in Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.
Rick's House of Hope	Located at 4867 Forest Grove Drive in Bettendorf is a community resource is for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call (563)324-9580 or (563)421-7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web: www.genesishealth.com — keywords "children and grief."
Quad City SHARE	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday of each month at Grace Lutheran Church, 1140 East High Street, Davenport, Iowa. For more information, call Chalyn Fornero-Green at (309)496-2568.
Survivors of Suicide Support Group, Fulton	Location: Second Reformed Church, 703 14th Ave., Fulton, Illinois. This support group meets the second Monday of each month and is open to anyone who has lost a loved one through suicide. It's a safe place where survivors share their experiences and support each other. The group is completely free and light refreshments are served. For more information, call 589-3425.
Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group, Moline	For those who have lost someone to suicide, this group, facilitated by a peer survivor and a professional, meets the third Monday of the month in the Moline Library, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)235-7174 or gcsos@yahoo.com .

Set-Backs

Set-backs and detours in healing are caused by internal as well as external events.

Anniversaries, things people say, a touch of the flu, bad luck in traffic, a child at Halloween, his favorite food at the supermarket, a friend moving to another city – the list goes on.

As life goes on in its ordinary fashion, it cannot fail but to present us with reminders of our own loss and tragedy. Relatively minor things, such as changes, thoughtlessness or neglect can overwhelm us too completely for too long.

When the first onslaught of pain begins to fade, we should try to accept the fact that healing from grief rarely happens in a quick and unbroken line of progress.

Grievers and their friends do well to remember that grief will take us all on a journey of set-backs and detours. Healing work requires patience.

And when grief threatens the fiber of our life, we need to remind ourselves over and over again that patience IS the exercise of hope.

Sascha – TCF/Aurora, CO

COMMUNICATION

If you're fortunate enough to have surviving children, when was the last time you:

Told them how important they are to you?

Thanked them for their patience with you during these dark hours?

Assured them had it been one of them who died, it would have been just the same?

Told them the reason you struggle so hard to survive is because you want to enjoy life with them again?

Reassure them there will be joy and some happiness in your family's life again when you all have had the necessary time to create your new life?

If you haven't told them lately – even if you have – tell them again. Both you and they need that reassurance.

Mary Cleckley – TCF/Atlanta, GA



Coping Conflicts

When a child dies, there is no quick cure and no way to fix what hurts. The best we can do is to learn to cope with it. Each individual has his or her own way of coping with stress, and, unfortunately, these differences among us may create great conflict within the family. At a time when we wish we could pull together, our individuality may prohibit that from happening.

These differences in coping styles are often noted between the parents when a child dies, and if they do exist they can and do lead to conflicts between husband and wife and within the entire family unit. If a gregarious, outgoing woman is married to quiet, sensitive man and the child of that union dies, the coping techniques may be so different that it seems as if two children have died – the mother’s child and the father’s child.

If the wife wants to talk about the child twenty-four hours a day and the husband throws himself into work and outside activities as an escape, conflict often arises and both parents may, not understanding these differences, react with anger toward each other. If the husband needs to see friends and have some recreation and the wife needs to go to the cemetery, hostility can result. If the wife needs to pretend that her child’s birthday isn’t coming next week and the husband needs to acknowledge the day in some special way, sparks may fly.

In each of these situations, the parent is coping with the loss of a precious child in the only way he or she knows how. We do not automatically receive new coping mechanisms when our child dies; we rely on how we have coped with problems prior to this tragedy.

Think back to other hard times in your life. Certainly these times pale in comparison to the ultimate tragedy of losing a child, but what did you do then? Did you cry a lot or keep a “stiff upper lip”? Did you talk to anyone who would listen or withdraw from people? Did you throw yourself into your job and work long, unnecessary hours, or did you find yourself disorganized and unable to concentrate? Did you find sleep a viable escape or were you unable to sleep? Did you share your pain with your children or try to protect them? We cannot change our way of coping when we are right in the middle of a crisis. It is impossible to change our psychological make-up when we are fighting for mere survival. The recognition of our own coping mechanisms, as well as those of other members of our family is often the first step in successfully living the life of a bereaved parent, and is necessary to the survival of a marriage. For, you see, there is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve, there are just different ways, and we must try to give each other permission to cope with our loss in any way we can.

Elaine Greer, TCF/Atlanta, GA

Be still, my heart,
when jeans and sneakers pass by me.
Be still, my tears, which come so easily;
Be still, my longing to hear his voice
and see his smile –
Oh, how I miss his smile.

Be still, the memories which race
around in my brain and ease the pain.
And be still, the pain which is ever there –
at first sharp but now more dull.

Be still, my sorrows, for he is at peace – so
much more than I.
Be still, more loneliness for him,
to touch him again, gangling and thin;
Be still, the wish for others
to cry with me as they did at first,
So I would know they still miss him
as much as I;
But life goes on, they say. And so must I.

Be very still, the need yet to ask,
“Why did he have to die?”
Be still, the anger when they say
someone else wanted him;
No one could want him more than I.

Be still my heart so you can remember
that you still have life and love around you.
That only one small part is gone:
Be still my grieving for that one small part.
Yet grieve I must; for the books say
I must go through it and not around it.

Be still, the bargains I made
and the games I played
(to have him back and pretend it was a mistake),
as they are dangerous and to no avail.

Be happy, heart, that we had him for awhile.
Be strong, pride, that I am slowly healing
and loving and feelings.

He died on the first day of summer.
Summer’s heat came and went,
Fall’s colors came and went,
Winter’s snow came and went,
And now spring has come again;
It seems the world is going on.
And so should I.

I am lucky to have borne you;
I am richer for having shared your dreams.
I am sadder but stronger for having lost you.
I’ll always love you, Jimmy – Good-bye.

Claire Moore TCF/Parma, OH

Be Still My Heart



On Picking up the Pieces

A few months after my son died someone said to me she was glad to see I was “picking up the pieces and going on.” Well, I was picking up the pieces all right, but what she didn’t know was they were almost a whole set of new pieces. I haven’t been able to go on as though nothing about me has changed since my child died. I’m a different me now and I am still learning how the new me reacts to old situations. I have found the new set of pieces doesn’t exactly fit together all nice and neat like a jigsaw puzzle because some of the old pieces are hanging in there and they don’t quite mesh with the newer ones. I am and have been in the process of grinding off the edges, hoping for a better fit; one I could live with more comfortably. Time, patience and hard work are helping me accomplish this.

How are the rough edges on your new pieces coming along?

Mary Cleckley