



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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FRIENDS

March 2011, Volume XXIV, Number 3

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

I have been having trouble coming up with an idea this month so decided to reach back in the archives and recycle something written for a previous TCF March newsletter.

“Recently I was listening to a radio call-in program related to grief. One caller was a woman whose brother died when they were both in high school. She shared how the way her parents had handled their grief – perhaps trying to protect her and her siblings – had a lifelong impact on her. After her brother died, her parents removed all of his pictures and never spoke his name in front of her again. Traces of his existence were removed from the home as much as possible. There was no grief dialogue between the family members, and this teenager internalized her parents’ reaction to mean that they must not have loved the son who died very much. She wondered if she were to die if they would erase her existence as well. Her security in their love was deeply shaken and now many years later she was still trying to process her grief – set aside for so long.”

Because every family is different, each will process their grief differently. Every family member has different needs, wants, desires, and ways of coping. As difficult as it is for parents to shift the focus from their own pain and loss, we need to be sensitive toward our other children who are also grieving. The following quote is from a newsletter for bereaved siblings written after the author attended a gathering of bereaved siblings.

I never appreciated just how often siblings’ grief is overlooked and how hard it is for us to appreciate that we also have a right to reach out for help. I never before quite understood the depth or complexity of the guilt which siblings feel. Sure, I knew all about regretting mean behavior when they were alive, and about irrational (but nonetheless painful) guilt for surviving their death. But I never quite appreciated the burden of life-long responsibility many feel for the well-being of their bereaved parents, or the loneliness of their struggle to be understood.”

Even in the midst of our own grief, we need to remember we do not want our other children to become casualties or forgotten grievers. (Quad City TCF Newsletter – March 1998)

Sincerely, Jerry and Carol Webb

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.

Thank you to **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.

Is It Almost Over

It's March and winter has still got us in its grip, just like grief, it seems relentless. Will spring ever come; will I ever feel better? We ask ourselves that question but we never seem to get an answer.

Like winter, grief is long and wears on us. How can we battle the storms that seem to come out of nowhere and cover us with a blanket of despair?

Seasons do change and so do we. Winter is hard work, like our grief but we do finally see an end in sight. Do we really want to see spring? Will it truly be better? For each and every one of us our spring will come at different times. Not one of us can tell each other when that will be. But I can promise you this, if you battle each new storm as it comes at you, each storm will be less and you will be stronger to be ready for the next one. You will start looking forward to the gentle breezes and the fragrant air. No matter where you are in your winter, please know that we are there to help you survive your storms and in helping you, we help ourselves battle our own.

Margaret and Vicki

"Job asked questions about God, but he did not need lessons in theology. He needed sympathy and compassion and the reassurance that he was a good person and a cherished friend."

Rabbi Harold Kushner - *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

A Mother's Touch

My husband Jeff grew up in a family of hugging, kissing, foot-rubbing, back scratchers. Affectionate folks! In my family, on the other hand, we only scratched mosquito bites, and certainly not each other's. Although we loved one another fiercely, we weren't very demonstrative. A wink, a squeeze, a peck on the cheek, a poke in the ribs- that was mushy stuff for us. Touching another person was not something that came easily to me; that is, until my first child was born.

When the nurse placed that chubby cherub in my arms, the floodgates of my heart opened, and a torrent of overwhelming love poured out. I couldn't keep my hands off the little dumpling! I learned first-hand what it means to "smother with kisses." Caressing my precious baby came as naturally as breathing.

Other children came along, and I was reborn a certified, card-carrying cuddler. I learned how many of a mother's day-to-day interactions with her children require her touch. Touching became a way of life for me as I fed, bathed, dressed, tamed cowlicks, and kissed ouchies.

It's funny, but one of the things I missed most after my son Blake died was tying his shoes. When he was alive, that chore was the bane of my existence. Blake's shoes were perpetually untied or hopelessly tangled in knots that would have defied Houdini himself. I rejoiced when the shoe designers came up with Velcro closures, seeing an end to my nemesis. But would Blake wear those simple, convenient shoes? No way! Big boys wore shoes with laces, and most of all, he wanted to be like the big boys. So I gritted my teeth and kept tying and bending every fork in the house de-knotting. After Blake died, how my fingers ached to tie those little shoes one more time!

For most bereaved mothers I know, not being able to touch, to hold, to embrace our child is the most painful reality we have to face. The emptiness of our arms, the indescribable longing to have those arms filled again with our precious child, are almost more than we can bear.

At first, when our grief is fresh, it may be hard for us to touch anyone. We may close ourselves off emotionally, not willing to touch or be touched, or to run the risk of being hurt so badly again. But mothers are touchers. With time, when the pain isn't so intense, we may want to reach out once more.

None of us ever outgrows the need to be touched, not matter how old we are. And what can be so comforting as a mother's touch? Today, if you can, touch someone. Do it in the memory of your beloved child.

Patricia Dyson TCF/Beaumont, TX



National TCF Conference *Shining Stars – Guiding Hope*

Minneapolis/St. Paul

July 15-17, 2011

For more information, see

www.thecompassionatefriends.org

Regional TCF Conference

On the Wings of Hope

Crowne Plaza Hotel Omaha, Nebraska

April 1-2, 2011

For registration forms and more information, see:

www.thecompassionatefriends.org



CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

TELLING ONE'S SORROW OFTEN BRINGS COMFORT.
PIERRE CORNEILLE (CIRCA 1640)

WITH THEIR LAST BREATH
THOSE WE HAVE GREATLY LOVED
DO NOT SAY GOOD-BY -
FOR LOVE IS TIMELESS.

INSTEAD, THEY LEAVE US WITH A
SOLENN PROMISE - WHEN THEY ARE
AT REST IN GOD, THEY WILL CONTI-
NUE TO BE PRESENT TO US WHEN-
EVER THEY ARE CALLED UPON.

LET US NOT GRIEVE
-BEYOND LETTING GO-
FOR IN THE TREE OF LIFE
OUR ROOTS
ARE FOREVER INTERTWINED.
FR. ED HAYS ADAPTED FROM *PRAYERS
FOR A PLANETARY PILGRIM*

TIME DOES NOT REAL-
LY HEAL A BROKEN
HEART; IT ONLY
TEACHES A PERSON
HOW TO LIVE WITH IT.
TCF/HAROLD E. MITCHELL/
ALBANY, SARATOGA AND S. GLENS
FALLS NY

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:

Harold and Sandra Bowman.

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.

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.

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 download-able in Adobe Acrobat format.

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.

A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain – it's called "Longing."

I long for what was, and what might have been.

I long for his touch and smell of sweat; I long to hold him one more time.

I long to look on his beautiful face and impress it upon my memories and heart.

I long to return to the day before and protect him from his death.

I long to take his place, so he may live and have sons too.

I long for time to pass much faster, so my longing and pain will lessen.

Will they?

June Williams-Muecke
TCF/Houston West Chapter

The Heart Remembers

Even if the mind sometimes forgets details and colors, or dates and places...the heart has an unfailing memory. So, it is safe to go on thinking about other things, to let your mind have thoughts which do not include your dead child. Though life does go on, and the time comes when your world spins for hours and days without the grieving memory, your love is safe, because the heart remembers always. **Sascha**

The Open to Hope Show

Drs. Gloria and Heidi Horsley now have a new radio show called The Open to Hope Show which replaces their popular show, Healing the Grieving Heart. Featuring experts who discuss the many aspects of grief, with a main focus on the death of a child and its effects on the family, the new show can be heard Thursdays at noon ET (9 a.m. PST) by going to www.opentohope.com. All archives of shows can be heard at www.opentohope.com and www.thegriefblog.com. Archived shows of Healing the Grieving Heart will continue to be archived on www.voiceamerica.com.

The Compassionate Friends recommends The Open to Hope Show as a grief/loss resource for families going through the natural grieving process after the death of a child. The ongoing series is dedicated to Dr. Gloria Horsley's and Dr. Heidi Horsley's son and brother, Scott Preston Horsley. It keys on issues of importance to families that have experienced the death of a child. Hosts of The Open to Hope Show are: Dr. Gloria Horsley, bereaved parent with 23 years in family therapy; and Dr. Heidi Horsley, bereaved sibling and an adjunct professor teaching graduate courses at Columbia University's School of Social Work, including Intervention for Grief, Loss, and Bereavement.

Shows cover such topics as: A Child Dies--What to Expect and How Long Does it Take?; Grief in the Workplace; Where Does Sadness End and Depression Begin After the Death of a Child?; Faith, Brokenness, and Healing After the Death of a Child. These hour-long shows, broadcast live at 9 a.m. Pacific time (noon Eastern time) on Thursdays, feature experts in the bereavement field and your phone calls and questions are welcome during the live broadcasts. For more information and to listen to the live broadcasts, visit www.health.voiceamerica.com. Each show is rebroadcast 12 hours later. You can receive a schedule of shows regarding the death of a child each month in TCF's free e-newsletter.

Continued from page 7

automatically become more empathetic to others in similar pain and can help relieve theirs. Hey, now I even cry at Hallmark Card commercials. I can't help it.

People tell us to find closure, move on, or not to dwell on it. We can, but not in the way they think we should. We find closure in what will never be, we let go of the what-ifs, the shoulda-woulda-couldas, and we move on with the knowledge that our children are forever by our sides, only in a new relationship. We live in one sphere of existence, our loved ones who have died in another, but with faith, undying love, and the desire to connect at the seam where our two worlds meet. Love never dies.

In America we are allowed a few weeks to "get over it" and get back on track. The dead are wrapped up neatly, so to speak, put away, and their names are rarely spoken. I find this totally unacceptable. It has been almost 16 years and I still talk about Kelly every day and always will. We will always be bereaved parents, but we will not always be experiencing the pangs of grief. Like arthritis, we learn to live with our losses the rest of our lives, and also realize that we'll still have flare-ups of pain and discomfort as we move on through the years.

Mitch Carmody from *We Need Not Walk Alone* – Winter 2003-2004

LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS ... IT'S ABOUT LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE RAIN.



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, March 24, 2011 6:30 pm to 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 is 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: April 28, 2011 at 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
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. Please call ahead to verify the meeting location. 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 403 SW 10th Avenue, 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, this 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, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm, in the Wallen Room at the Larson Center next to Illini Hospital, 855 Illini Drive, Silvis, IL, and 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
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 odd numbered months in the Moline Library, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)235-7174 or qcsos@yahoo.com .

Journaling

In October 1996, my world fell apart. All things felt and believed were shattered. My emotions and feelings were swirling inside my head and heart at such a rate I could not deal with it. All the words I needed to say to my daughter on a daily basis, all the words I had to share with her, all the words I needed to tell her of the future were stuck. They were lodged in my mouth with nowhere to go. There were words of sorrow over my loss of something so precious and dear to me, words of fear, longing, love, joy, anger, hate and any number of other words that you can imagine. What to do with these words? I talked to as many as would listen, but still the words were there, still are in lots of ways. A friend, yes—another bereaved parent who knew, sent me a journal with words of encouragement to use it. I was frightened at first. What do I put in this book? If I wrote the words, would I feel better or worse? How to start? I thought about it for a few days, and then I just sat down and wrote. Oh how I wrote! Pages and pages of words, sprinkled with tears, yet containing my sanity. I wrote poems, letters and holiday greetings. I wrote of my love, my loss, my

longing. I wrote for days, I wrote at odd times, unusual places. I carried my little book, still do, and felt like it was a link to her in some way. I do not use it as much now. I guess time has robbed me of that need to say those words. I think they are still there; I just have become used to it. Maybe in a way, holding on to those words now keeps her closer somehow. You know time has a way of dimming things for us no matter how hard we try to hold on. I think I have started holding on more to the words to keep her more alive and near me, if that makes any sense. Does to me anyway. I guess I am still afraid, more than I like to admit, more than others would like for me to be I should say. Journaling is good, if you can do it. Some can, some can't. It was a help to me. I try to go back sometimes and read some of it. Some of the pages are so blurred because of the tears they are hard to read. Some of it is too painful for me even though I wrote them. I weep for myself when I read them. Some of them I could share most of them I couldn't. It would be like opening up my heart and soul and letting people see inside. I think someday I will toss them away, but not yet. Not just yet....

Barbara Sockwell, Snellville, GA (In memory of Ashley 1/31/78-10/22/96)

How the TCF Logo Came Into Being

John Fisher, Devon, England

The TCF logo used around the world today started out in Harlow, Essex, in 1975, a few months after we lost our daughter, Clare, in a road accident. I was already working for the National Committee of the Friends (as we called ourselves in those days) and had suggested a logo. Because I had a picture of it close at hand, I based a first quick sketch on the hands of Adam and God, reaching for each other in Michelangelo's painted ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. But it wasn't right.

My wife, Maggie, who was in those days what TCF called the "grid rep" for Essex, asked me wisely how much such a symbol might relate to a Hindu, an agnostic, or an atheist who had lost a child. So it went back to the drawing board before I took the version you see today to our next meeting.

The original artwork was in black on a white board, and I propped it up at the end of the table we sat around.

What I had forgotten was that one of the people sitting there was blind. He asked me to describe what was intended to speak for itself. Taken by surprise, I blathered on about the four essential elements in the design as I saw them. First, I said, it was circular, symbolizing wholeness or completion. I tried to describe the lines and the "vanishing point" they created.

At this point, I explained there was a figure, representing a child, standing

some way off at the top center of the design, in the "road" created by the converging lines and moving away toward the horizon. In the front foreground, I concluded, "reaching for each other in the darkness," were two hands, about to touch.

There was a silence of perhaps five seconds. "You see this child receding down this road?" he asked quietly. Obviously I hadn't made myself clear. "That's right," I said. "Has it occurred to you, John, that the child might actually be coming closer toward you?"

His words took my breath away. In those dark days before I took a conscious decision to set out on what others have called "the long search," I believed that we had lost our daughter forever. He had listened to my words but read my heart.This was our gift to TCF, and although we know that nothing is forever, we hope it may continue to serve as a reminder of what this extraordinary international fellowship of compassionate friends is all about.

from *We Need Not Walk Alone*
Winter 2003-2004



Fathers in Grief

A Paradox for Today's Male

The loss of a child can be crippling and leaves deep scars. It changes who we are, how we look at life, and how we relate to the world. Five or six years out is still early in the spectrum of child loss but close to the point where positive rebuilding can begin.

I have discovered that compassion for others is a great help in pulling oneself out of the canyon of despair, for it is in giving that we receive and in healing that we are healed.

In the first few years it is hard to even help ourselves, much less anyone else. We bereaved fathers mechanically maintain, weep a lot, and lick our wounds. We cling desperately to everything that belonged to or reminds us of our children, and in secret we wish to join them. We rejoin the real world in our own time and when it is right for us. Everyone's journey is different, but what remains the same is the huge void that is left in our lives. How we fill it is up to us. My experience is that it is especially helpful to fill it with something positive for others that creates a legacy of good in our children's names. With that focus, we become their legacies, and we substantiate our children's lives by the way we live our own.

In our "modern-day" society, it is especially difficult for fathers to grieve openly, caught in a catch-22 of how to express the deep pain we are experiencing. The spoken or unspoken message is often that men don't cry, men do not emote, men do not hug (maybe at the funeral), men don't go to support groups, men don't call in sick because they are screaming inside – each of us is "the many of the family." Fathers are the fix-it guys, the protectors, the strength and the rock that our families

need for support. More times than not people will ask a father, "How is your wife doing? This must be extremely hard for her."

The modern male is now starting to feel the freedom to show emotions, to cry, scream, hug, and express his deepest emotions and fears – to let it out. The irony of this is that if a family has never seen their "man" express emotion, it can be taken as a sign of weakness. His spouse and other family members may feel they have lost their safety net, their rock of support, and feel even more helpless and rudderless on this journey of pain. If this happens, he may again "clam up" to help his family, deciding that he will deal with his own pain later. He can feel that "letting it out" is an axiom of sophistry, and in actually doing so, he is letting his family down. This is indeed a paradox for the wanna-be sensitive dad.

Most men cry alone in their cars on the way to work, and they explain that the red eyes are due to allergies or a late night. When my father died, I was 14 years old. My mom told me I was now the man of the family. I did not cry; I did not grieve. It was not until years later when my losses became overwhelming that I was finally able to let out and express my emotions over the loss of my father.

It has been 16 years now since our son Kelly died and I still cry with my wife when we feel our loss together or even when I hear a special song like "Wind Beneath my Wings," regardless of who is present. If we love hard, you grieve hard, and it is supposed to hurt. When we recognize our own pain and express it, we

Continued on page 9