



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



July-August, 2011—Volume XXIV.

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Dear Compassionate Friends,

On June 17th my mother died quietly in her sleep. Over the years we have published this newsletter, my mom and dad have been strong behind the scenes supporters and encouragers. My mother set an example for me of written communication, writing me a letter each week for 26 years. I deeply appreciate the example my parents have set of long term commitment to each other and the ability to learn to live with joy in the many life changes they faced over their almost 62 years of marriage. Part of working through grief is learning to build a life from the new normal that we have to create after our child dies.

I read an interesting book this spring called *The Forgotten Garden* by Kate Morton. Referring to a family who had not been able to move beyond the past and unattainable desires, she wrote, "Those that lived there were like the dead. All wanting things they shouldn't or couldn't have." Our grief is real and needs to be acknowledged and worked through, but there does come a time (although that time may be only after some years) that in order to live in a way that honors our dead child, we learn to live our lives as they are, without our child. But the legacy our child leaves behind for us will live on.

The following statement from the Albany/Saratoga newsletter sums up well what I am trying to say – "We can accept change and loss, but at our own pace and in our own way. And only we - and God - can determine that timing."

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.

Roses & Memories

Roses have thorns, but we learn to be wary of them. As we hold a rose, sometimes unexpectedly, a thorn pierces our flesh and tiny drops of blood appear, and we are wounded. But we learn to handle this flower gently, carefully, so as to avoid the sting of the thorns.

Warily, we clasp the rose stem as we bring the beautiful, fragrant blossom closer in order to scrutinize in detail this lovely creation and to inhale its fragrance.

So too it is with our memories. There are sad ones that we skirt gingerly, as we handle thorny roses. There are bad ones that prick our thoughts and make our hearts bleed anew. But as we learn to deal with these, just as we become used to handling our rose, we can bring memories of good times and days and years of past happiness more fully into our hearts. Thus, the most cherished moments of the past become like the beauty of the rose - something to fill us with a sense of wonder and feeling of thankfulness that God has given us some very precious days in our lives, just as He graced the stem of thorns with the radiant crown we call the rose.

Nancy Bellinger, TCF/Milwaukee, WI

To Honor You

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath
And start another day without you in it.
To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile
And the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.
To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love,
I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.
To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked,
And sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.
To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back,
Risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.
You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.
So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.
Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

For Men: Living a Regret-Free Life After Loss

Hands down, the strongest, most destructive part of grief is regret. That ever-present feeling that you could have done more. Regret can become so strong that everything else about life gets tossed aside. It is exactly what happened to me.

The night before I lost my 17-year old son, Michael, in an auto accident, he had come over from his mother's house to get something from my house. He was outside in the driveway playing basketball with my oldest son, Ronald. I looked down from the window upstairs and watched them for a few minutes. He didn't see me. I had a long day and had a few other things to do. So I didn't go downstairs. I simply figured I would catch up with him next time.

That was the last time I saw my son. For years after, I lived with this overwhelming regret and was stuck in this moment of time. It wouldn't have taken long. And, more importantly, I would have had that last chance to be with him. Why didn't I just go down?

Now, I knew that I couldn't change the fact that he died the next day. But then, over time, I started to realize that I could change how I felt about that last regret-filled night. Naturally, I didn't know it was his last night. So the point is this: Had Michael not died the next day, me not going down would have been just another ordinary thing. I would have seen him the next time — no big deal. I took for granted that Michael would be there. THIS was the real, true reason for the pain I felt about the last time I saw Michael.

This is where the loss of my son taught me something about living life. I wanted to begin living regret-free. So I knew that I needed to never take anything or anyone for granted again. Now, for men, showing gratitude is a tough thing to do anyway.

We tend to just go with it. We don't think that deep about the normal everyday things like coming down the stairs and going outside to play after a long day. We just take for granted it will be there tomorrow.

Now pair that up with dealing with loss. What happens is that the mind often traps the good emotions underneath all the pain. What we need to do is open the mind's vault and start to get some grief relief by letting out some of the positive emotions, like gratitude.

Try this — identify just one thing that you are currently taking for granted in your life. And then take one step toward showing your appreciation. It can be as simple as washing your car to show how important it is in your life. Once you become familiar with showing your thanks with the simple, it will become a bit more comfortable to show it for some of the more complicated.

To be truthful, this moment in my life haunts me to this day. It is why I am so passionate about never, ever, taking anything in my life for granted again. It is just one of the legacies left behind by my son, Michael. Start today by choosing to do one thing new for something or someone in your life. I guarantee you will feel a great smile all around you.

Ron Villano, M.S., is a leading expert in working through change. As a father who lost his 17-year old son, Michael, in an auto accident, he always speaks from the heart. As a licensed psychotherapist and life coach, he counsels others on how to work through difficult times. As a national speaker and author of The Zing, Ron has appeared before sold-out audiences across the country and hosts his own radio show. This article was copied from The Open to Hope Foundation.

CHALKBOARD REFLECTIONS

"YOU ARE SO STRONG"

EMPTY WORDS

THAT DON'T TOUCH THE REALITY

THAT MY LIFE HAS BECOME.

WALKING THROUGH FOG

INCREDIBLE PAIN

SEARCHING FOR THE BELOVED FACE

I CRAVE TO SEE

THE VOICE THAT I STRAIN TO HEAR OVER THE NOISES

OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO IDEA

OF WHAT THE WORLD HAS LOST.

CHARISSE SMITH, TCF/TYLER, TX

I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE THE BEST OF GRIEF
AND AM JUST BEGINNING TO LEARN TO ALLOW IT
TO MAKE THE BEST OF ME.

BARBARA LAZEAR ASCHER

A GREATER LOVE COMES
FROM YOUR DEEPEST
PAIN

AND THERE'S POWER IN
THAT LOVE TO HELP YOU
RISE AGAIN.

FROM "A LITTLE FARTHER DOWN
THE ROAD" BY ALAN PEDERSEN

THERE ARE THINGS THAT WE DON'T WANT TO HAPPEN,
BUT HAVE TO ACCEPT,

THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO KNOW BUT HAVE TO LEARN,

AND PEOPLE WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT BUT HAVE TO LET GO.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

MANY PEOPLE ARE CONVINCED THAT BEING STRONG AND BRAVE
MEANS TRYING TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
BUT WE KNOW THAT BEING STRONG AND BRAVE MEANS
THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT YOUR DEAD LOVE, UNTIL YOUR
GRIEF BEGINS TO BE BEARABLE. THAT IS STRENGTH. THAT IS
COURAGE. AND ONLY THIS KIND OF BEING STRONG AND BRAVE
WILL HELP YOU HEAL.

FROM *THE SORROW AND THE LIGHT* - SASCHA WAGNER

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.

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.



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 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.

“The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.”

Simon Stephens,
founder of **The Compassionate Friends**

THIS THOUGHT

A sibling may become an only child; a younger child may become the oldest or the only child; the middle child may no longer have that title; or the parents may never be able to, or perhaps may chose not to have another child. Nonetheless, the birth order of the child who died is fixed permanently in the minds and hearts of the parents. Nothing can change the fact that this child is considered a part of the family forever, and the void in the family constellation created by the child's death also remains forever.

Healing from the death of your child is much like wisdom; it can't be forced; yet it comes upon you if you let it.

Dr. Tom Frantz,
TCF/Buffalo, NY

In idle conversation
you ask me about
my children.
You are an acquaintance
I do not know you well
and so I don a masque,
I speak happily of joys,
Lightheartedly of mischief,
But I do not speak
of death.

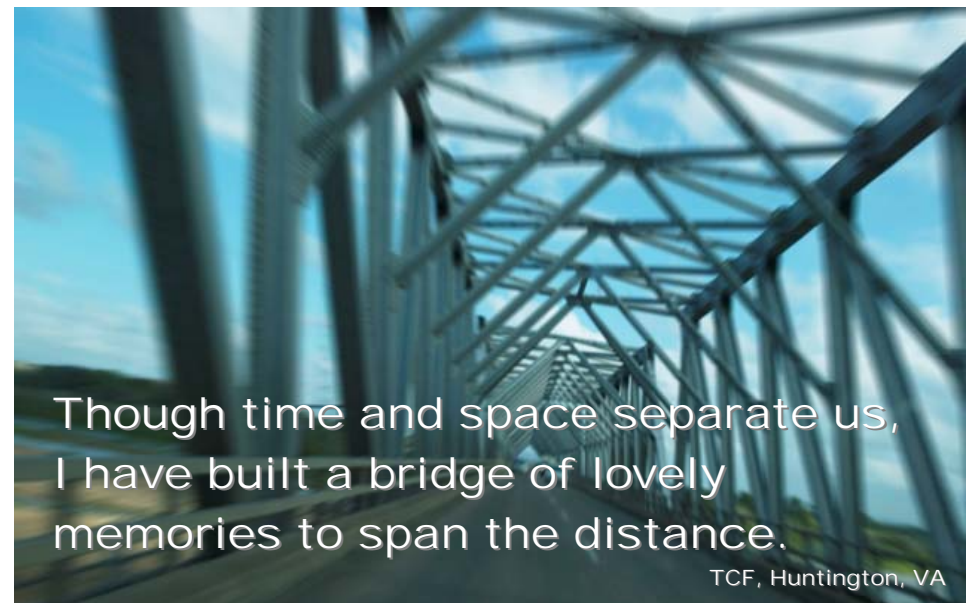


I do not want to see
the shadow of uncertainty
pass your face.
And feel the
awkward silence that falls
like a curtain between us.
I do not want to say,
“It's okay, that was a long time ago.”
It will never be quite “okay”
and sometimes it seems
like yesterday.

And so I take my masque
along with me through life
like a perpetual Halloween night,
to hide just a bit from people
and to preserve my strength.
For mourning is tiring
and each time I recount
that day of death,
I am a little wearied.
I would much rather speak of the
joys of his life
than the sorrows of his death,
to strangers
who absently ask
of children.

Yet tragedy is more universal
than ever I had known
before it touched my life.
And so at times I wonder
who else looks out from behind a
masque.
**Karen Nelson, TCF/Box Elder County
Chapter**

**M
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Though time and space separate us,
I have built a bridge of lovely
memories to span the distance.

TCF, Huntington, VA

Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Monthly Meeting: Thursday, July 28, 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: August 25, 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	This is a community resource 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 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
MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support	A peer group for suicide grief support that 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, there.is.hope@hotmail.com — http://www.mjlfoundation.org

BECAUSE MY SON DIED

Dear Friend,

Because my son died – I know the emptiness, the awful aloneness that follows those unforgettable words, "He's gone."

Because my son died – I can feel a searing empathy with all other mothers and fathers who have lost a child.

Because my son died – I find myself agonizing with the parents of those children, young men and women whose deaths are reported with frightening regularity on our television news: from murder, suicide, and auto accidents. Because my son died – I follow with a sense of dread the reports that we are sending young men and women to fight a war on the other side of the world. I hurt with those mothers and fathers who watch them go, wondering whether they will see them again.

Because my son died – I have had to rearrange my priorities. Things that once seemed important no longer matter; I look with different eyes at the scenes around me. When I see a sunset, I wonder if John sees it too. When I look out to sea, I remember that is where John is buried. Because he loved nature, nature brings him closer to me. Because my son died – I have had to learn that a nice neat sense of order that says that children will survive their parents is a myth, not reality.

Because my son died – I must live with memories – funny moments, tender moments, special times when we were very happy or very close, and yes, times when we had our differences.

Because my son died – I am one of the Compassionate Friends, and, while I would rather not be eligible to belong, I have found here love, true sympathy and understanding. I am not alone in my grief.

Fran MacArthur TCF, Southern MD

What Does Time Have to Do with It?

Everything. Just consider how, in “normal life,” our lives are run by the clock and the calendar. Some of us have a clock in every room so we can keep close track of the time. Few of us have the courage to live without wearing a watch because we’re afraid we might be late for something. Time is precious to us. We live in a society that reminds us that every moment counts, and some of us are masters at cramming as much activity as possible into every moment. And when we are grieving our experience still has much to do about time.

Time stands still.

When we are grieving we may feel like the rest of the world is going on as usual while our lives have stopped. Just last week, after my friend died, I passed a neighbor who was watering his lawn. He seemed totally unaffected by (and most likely unaware of) Sarah’s death. How could that be? He only lives a block away. Didn’t he feel the same shift in the universe that I felt when she died? Doesn’t he realize someone really special is missing?

Time’s up.

Most people will allow us about a one-month grace period where we are permitted to talk about and even to cry openly about our loss. During this time, our friends will probably seem to be attentive to our needs. But when the month is up they may be thinking, if not actually telling us, that it’s time to move on, and that we need to get over “it.” They want us to get back to normal. We may be surprised how many of our friends (and relatives too) will become uncomfortable with our need to dwell on our sorrow. They may not appreciate that it takes time to readjust our lives to the loss. Maybe what they are really saying is, “Time’s up for me to be able to

be present to you in your grieving time.” Because of this we may need to redefine what is normal for us, and choose some new best friends – friends who are willing and able to walk alongside us on our personal journey of grief, and who will allow us to determine when our “time’s up.”

Doing time.

Grief may make us feel imprisoned in our own version of hell. We won’t like who we are. We won’t like it that our loved one has gone. We won’t like it that our friends can’t make us feel better. We just want out of here, and we’re not sure we want to do the work that grief requires in order to be set free from this bondage. Some of us will remain in this uncomfortable place for a short time, while others of us may feel like we have been given a longer sentence.

Wasting time.

Though in real life, I pride myself in being a master at multi-tasking, in the land of grief I’m much less sure of myself. I find it hard to make decisions, because, in my new situation, I don’t trust myself to make the right choice. I want someone else to be responsible if something goes wrong. Sometimes my wasting time is about not having the energy to get started. I am physically exhausted, and my body refuses to make an effort to reclaim my former self. I admit, quite frankly, that I’m not sure I even care enough about anything to make the effort. What’s the use, since it seems like everything I love sooner or later gets taken away from me.

Looking back in time.

When we grieve, we spend most of our time, at least at first, looking back. It seems safer that way. That’s where our missing loved ones are. If we were to look forward, that would mean we would have to imagine our lives without those

we have lost. And that’s what we aren’t ready to accept – not yet. So we spend a lot of time thinking how we should have been able to prevent their dying, or wondering if we used our time with them well, as we remember the good times, bad times, silly and sad times. We think we have to keep those memories in front of us, or surely we will forget those whom we have lost.

First times.

It is natural for us to gauge our lives after a loss as we anticipate and then go through the first times – the first day, the first week, the first month, the first time we venture out in public, the first time we went back to school, or church, or work, the first summer, the first Christmas, the first vacation, the time we laughed. These first times are like benchmarks, notches in our belt that prove we are surviving when we weren’t sure we wanted to, or didn’t know we could.

Dinnertime.

There’s an empty chair at the table. There’s the conversation that seems to be just noise, having little to do with the absent one about whom we are all thinking but not daring to speak. We still prepare more food than we now need because we haven’t yet figured out how to cook for one less person. Sometimes the food seems to have no taste and is not able to do what we want it to do – to fill that huge hole within us.

Time out.

Sometimes what we need to do is to take a time-out from our regular activities to reflect on what has happened to our personal world, as we knew it before our great loss. To do so is not to run away from life but simply to realize that to act as if nothing has happened doesn’t work. This loss is too big to allow us to pretend that it hasn’t had a big impact on us. It’s in the quiet time, when we shut off our thinking, and empty out the chatter in our heads that the healing begins. Others will have to

be okay with our need to bow out for a while. Remember that during grief our job is to take care of us, not to take care of our friends. When it’s time to re-enter a normal routine, it’s our choice what we will reinstate and what we decide to lay aside. Loss tends to redefine our priorities. What used to be important may not be as important now. And that’s not necessarily a bad thing.

Time heals what reason cannot.

In the end, time will change things. The intensity we experience when grief is new, where we can see nothing but our loss, and where every moment is filled with thoughts of the one who died will gradually diminish and become softer. Time forces the big picture of life back into our vision whether we like it or not. This happens in our lives all the time. Remember how when we first fell in love with someone, we were totally preoccupied with only that other person, until gradually a more balanced existence was restored. Or when we did what we thought was some terrible thing, and we were sure everybody would never let us forget it, we came to find out a few months down the road that most people had forgotten the incident.

In the months (maybe years) following a loss, life will eventually start to re-emerge, and life on this planet will once again seem possible. This will not happen because we come to understand the death more clearly, but because with the passage of time, the unanswered questions will become easier to live with.

Time will not remove grief entirely. The scars of grief will remain, and we may find ourselves ambushed by a fresh wave of grief at any time. But needing to know the answers to the “why” questions won’t seem quite as important as it once was.

Time is a gift that we have taken for granted. We’ve been given our lives one moment at a time. This is good.