



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 162

OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2017

“Within our hearts, the ones we love are never really gone – in spirit and in memory, their legacy lives on. The gift of time we cherish. The gift of life goes fast. The gift of love will never end as long as memories last. Love lives on forever in each memory and thought of those who shared our lives and all the happiness they brought. LOVE lives on forever – it will never fade away, for in our hearts, our loved ones are with us every day.”

Author Unknown Winnipeg Chapter News

YOU WILL NOT FEEL THE ‘ALONENESS’ OF YOUR GRIEF SO ISOLATING, IF YOU REACH OUT TO ANOTHER BEREAVED PARENT

RETURN ADDRESS
52 SUNRISE DRIVE,
SEAWARD BUSH,
INVERCARGILL
9812
NEW ZEALAND

TO

OUR CHILDREN

Children's names appear in this column if parents ask when they complete their annual donation form. You are also able to e-mail, write or phone me to have your child's name included.

This column includes names of those children whose anniversary or birthday occur in the months that the newsletter applies for.

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included.

Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs.

Please contact me on 03 4326004, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

If Only – One more time

To hear your voice loud and clear; to see your image as if you're here; to feel your warmth like you are near, if only, one more time. To hear you call, "Mom, I'm home," to keep me company when I'm alone; to watch you run and grab the phone, if only, one more time. To watch you sit quietly and read; to buy you things you say you need; to see you do a thoughtful deed, if only, one more time. To find a note written by you; to walk upstairs and trip over your shoe; to comfort you when you're feeling blue, if only, one more time. To feel your arms in a soft embrace; to see that smile upon your face; to understand when you needed space, if only, one more time.

Vicki Richey, TCF/Orange County Chapter, CA Reprinted from Winnipeg chapter news

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Tania Rose Baldock	Born 22/10/69	Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young	Died 17/10/2001
Kyle David Edwards	Born 15/10/1980	Mark Peter Enright	Died 31/10/1993
Henare Wiremu Fielding	Born 8/10/1983	Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Died 23/10/2005
Sally Verone Kitto	Born 3/10/1991	Yvonne Kay French-Wollen	Died 19/10/2001
Tara Louise MacPherson	Born 13/10/1987	Daniel Philip Innes	Died 9/10/1994
Hayden Ivan Pope	Born 18/10/90	Matthew David Innes	Died 9/10/1994
David Massey Reid	Born 6/10/1981	Steven Micheal Jack	Died 23/10/2003
Hayden Watson	Born 21/10/1981	Jessie Lineham	Died 23/10/2010
Ayla Rose Whitaker	Born 9/10/1989	Andrew John Manson	Died 14/10/1991
		Stefan David Maydon	Died 12/10/2001
Greg Burns	Born 27/11/89	Grant Mills	Died 6/10/1999
Michael David Cox	Born 19/11/64	Shane Parish	Died 7/10/1974
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Born 10/11/03	Callum Robertson	Died 24/10/2002
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Born 30/11/90	Alan Bruce Scorringe	Died 30/10/1999
Mark Peter Enright	Born 30/11/73		
Krysha Helen Hanson	Born 18/11/64	Nicholas James Cox	Died 18/11/03
Callum Warrick Langley	Born 4/11/96	Rick Daysh	Died 17/11/95
Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Born 3/11/58	Pauline Anne Newall	Died 12/11/98
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Born 5/11/74	Cindy Parish	Died 26/11/01
Grant Mills	Born 9/11/62	Marlene Joy Penny	Died 30/11/91
Marie Anne O'Neill	Born 18/11/61	Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Died 11/11/00
Peter John Oxley	Born 29/11/75		
Thomas John Poplawski	Born 25/11/97		

2017 Worldwide Candle Lighting

The 21st annual Worldwide Candle Lighting will take place on Sunday December the 10th at 7pm around the globe. Everyone, in every time zone around the world is invited to light a candle in honour of all children who have died, that their light may always shine. As candles go out in one time zone, they will be lit in the next, creating a wave of light that will encircle the globe.

Remember that New Zealand is the first country to reach this time, so let us all join in so the brightest light starts off this tribute of love and memories.



Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purist white

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who knew great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honour and remembrance
We light candles in the night

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
Aswe remember.

Candle-light Services of Love and Remembrance.

CENTRAL OTAGO/LAKES DISTRICT

Monday 11th December, 7pm.

Jordan Room, Alexandra Community Centre, Skird St Alexandra.

For further details please contact Louise, 027 6508986

Please bring a candle to light in memory of your loved one and a photo or memento if you wish.

SOUTHLAND

Tuesday 5th December 7.30pm

Hospice Southland

Please bring a photo of your child if you wish

For further details please contact Linda, 03 2164155

KAPITI COAST

Thursday 7th December starting at 7pm

In conjunction with Kapiti Coast Funeral Home Annual Remembrance Service

For further details please contact Anna, 04 2936349

WANGANUI

Saturday 2nd December, Remembrance Day at Aramoho Cemetery.

10th December at 7pm Cndlelighting

For details contact Keren 06 3443345

CHRISTCHURCH

Tues 5th December, in unit 4 Amuri Park, 25 Churchill St,
(near Bealey Ave and Barbados St.)



Central Otago Compassionate Friends:

We hope that with better weather, moods are lighter and that everyone is taking time to sit and breathe in and give themselves a break from the sorrow inflicted by the death of their loved ones.

We have been quieter than usual because Jan has been in hospital, being operated on and working on self care!!!! and I have been helping family with day to day challenges. But Jan will be up and running again soon, and I am back home now and should be around for awhile.

Our Christmas Candlelight Memorial Evening is organised. We will be holding it in the Jordan Room at the Alexandra Community Centre, Skird Street, Alexandra. The date is set for Monday 11 December. Start time 7.00pm. This is a chance to spend quiet time and reflection in memory of your loved child and a chance to gather in the company of other bereaved parents who will certainly understand your grief. If you have any queries about the Candlelight Evening, please contact me. Cell 027 650 8983 or email: louise.McKenzie@xtra.co.nz

I have decided that we have plenty of expertise and experience amongst our members, so I will not be organising a guest speaker for the Candlelight Evening. Instead, if you could bring a message of hope to share I would be very grateful. It may be a suggestion about healthy ways to express grief, or a ritual that is helpful for healing or anything else that you may think of. We can have a discussion based on the suggestions put forward by attendees.

And of course, bring a candle to light in memory of your loved one and a photo or memento (if you wish!)

Thanks everyone, hope to catch up one way or another.

Arohanui,
Louise McKenzie



Christchurch Bereaved Parents Group

Hi bereaved families/whanau,

We want to give you a warm welcome from sunny Christchurch. The Bereaved Parents Chch group has had an interesting year of fortnightly meetings: evening meetings alternating with café/ coffee catch ups. These two monthly meetings have proved useful for those of us who want to meet up more often. If anyone wants to know where these are, please find our latest fb post.

Our November night meeting was an encouraging night of sharing 'what helps'. In our near impossible task of living without our children we were able to discuss what has helped (even if it's only a little bit). Some of the ideas included taking time to plan ahead so that there is less stress in the month leading up to events such as Christmas, anniversaries and birthdays; taking measure of the progress we have made; and supporting each other in our individual struggles. It's such a privilege to belong to such a group that is committed in supporting each other in positive ways.

Our end of year candle light service will be held on Tues 5th December, in unit 4 Amuri Park, 25 Churchill St, near Bealey Ave and Barbados St. (The buildings looks like space ships or cut off pyramids!). All welcome. Please bring a plate, a candle and photo of your loved one. This is a special night of remembering our children and what our loss means.

Let us be there for each other in this 'season of celebration'.

Ka kite

Chch bereaved parents group (Chris and Claire)

Hello from Wanganui

How time has sped by this year. As we approach Christmas we all know the pain Christmas can bring with that empty chair/chairs at the table. However December is a month when we can remember our children in a very special way.

Each month we meet for Coffee Care and Chat at a local café. Always the first Saturday at 11am at The Yellow House – so if any of you happen to be passing through Wanganui at that time do call in. Also if anyone will be visiting our lovely city over the holidays please make contact. Phone me Keren 06 3443345

It is a warm and casual way of meeting and supporting one another. The table is set around a topic.

November's topic is What is grief?

In December we will meet for coffee and then drive to our local Aramoho cemetery



where we hang wind chimes or Christmas decorations in the glorious magnolia tree that shelters the children's part of the cemetery.

This is a peaceful and gentle way to remember children who have gone too soon, and a special way for us to remember our own children as Christmas approaches – a time we all find difficult.

All families are invited no matter where their child may be resting. If anyone would like to send us a decoration we would gladly hang it in your child's memory.

Recently a mother from Nelson sent a lovely heart which we hung there for her son.

Then, of course, there is the Worldwide Candle Lighting. Families and friends around the globe unite as they light candles for one hour in memory of their children who have died at any age from any cause. Candles are lit at 7pm local time, so New Zealand is always the first country to create this virtual 24 hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone.

It is now believed to be the largest mass candle-lighting in the world. This event founded by The Compassionate Friends is also remembered by allied bereavement organizations and groups. We in Wanganui will gather together at 7pm. 10th December and we invite other parents to join us to remember loved and lost children. Venue details will be noted on the website. www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

I am working on a feature on the site about the candlelighting so if you would like to send me details of what your group is doing it can be listed there.

At any time if you want information put on the site, e-mail it to me marshkandb@clear.net.nz

Or write to 90 Surrey Rd Wanganui 4501

I love this photo my sister took last year as she remembered our son Simon.



Light a candle, see it glow, watch it dance, when you feel low, think of me, think of light, I'll always be here, day or night, a candle flickers, out of sight, but in your heart, I still burn bright....

Source: Light A Candle, Missing You Poems <http://www.familyfriendpoems.com/family>

Take care and visit our website, Keren

Grandparents' Grief is unique

<https://rednosegriefandloss.com.au/support/article/grandparents-grief>

“My grief, unique to me, but oh how unfortunately common.

I used to think about the legacy I was leaving my grandchildren when I died, what would they remember about me? I never thought I would have to remember them.

The hopelessness, the frustration, the rage I felt, that not one but two of my grandchildren had died before I got to know them and just as important, before they got to know me. How unfair of life to cause my beloved daughter and son-in-law so much hurt after the expectation of so much joy, terminating in heartbreak. What could I do, what could I say, no words could heal the pain, but I needed to show somehow that I too grieved for and loved those my daughter and son-in-law had buried.

I have donated a plaque at our place of worship, I make an annual donation to the Treasured Babies' Program in the names of Jake and Jonathan, I have donated books in their names at my Bridge Club. Has this helped, no not really, but it's something.

Every year is another year I might get to see them again in a better place, this I have to believe.

Written by Margaret, bereaved Nanna of Jake and Jonathan. “

The death of a beloved grandchild is one of the hardest things a grandparent ever has to face. Your natural hopes and dreams for the future have been shattered and you have been faced with an almost unbearable tragedy. Grandparents expect that they will love and enjoy their grandchildren: the natural order is that they will die before their own children – and certainly before their grandchildren.

“When a baby or child dies it has an impact on the whole family. There is often a lot of attention on the grieving parents, who are the primary grievers and grandparents may find themselves forgotten at times.”

“Not only could I not take away my daughter's pain at the death of her 2 year old daughter, but I was also devastated by my own grief at the loss of my precious granddaughter.”

Experiencing your own grief whilst simultaneously aiding your bereaved adult child characterises grandparents' grief. Living with your own feelings whilst having to witness the torment and intense sorrow your own son or daughter are enduring -can be overwhelming.

Grandparents' Grief: a Multi-layered Blow When a grandchild dies, grandparents experience a dual sorrow. They cry for their lost grandchild and they also cry for the terrible grief they see their own child having to bear. This pain is something you cannot take away. This can be difficult to accept because as a parent you expect (and desperately want) to be able to take away your child's pain.

A grandparent's grief is like a fork in the road, going in two different directions. One road represents the loss of your grandchild and the other represents the pain of seeing your child suffer. Therefore, you have two tasks. The first is to work through your own grief and the other is to feel helpful to your bereaved child. There may be two parts, but you actually deal with them at the same time. You grieve for your grandchild, you grieve for your adult child and you grieve for yourself. You may feel a loss or challenge to your own identity: at a time of life where there is an expectation of settling into a grandparent role, suddenly you are faced with the inimitable task of being a parent wanting to support and protect your grieving adult child as the whole family navigates this upheaval that impacts all generations”..

The one thing that would help your child feel better – to have their child back – is impossible. It is natural for you to feel useless, ineffective and hopeless. As a mother and grandmother, there is nothing worse than watching your daughter carrying a casket containing a child that she grew inside of her. I was aware she had no strength to complete the task, and, as she stumbled repeatedly, I knew there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that could be done to help her pain.

Mother of Marion and grandmother of Steve II, Marion & Steve's stillborn son. Marilyn's twin grandchild, conceived by IVF, died at 36 weeks gestation. She speaks of the simultaneous experience of grieving the death of one child while celebrating the birth of another and how the mixed emotions were overwhelming and confusing. With the whole family in acute grief, Marilyn recounted: “I couldn't do anything. I felt useless and helpless. I didn't know how to comfort my daughter and felt I couldn't say what she wanted or needed. My heart was breaking because I couldn't do anything. I'd go home and cry. I couldn't stop her crying and I was crying. I realized I needed support too. I was lost. I was going in a daze, then I was connected to the SIDS and Kids Support group and we all shared that the hardest part was not being able to help our children and feeling useless.”

Lovingly reprinted from Johannesburg Chapter News

Grandparent Grief

Grandparents are often in a very difficult position when faced with the death of their grandchild. They are mourning the loss of their grandchild, but also dealing with the pain of seeing their own child face such a loss. Grandparents will have their own grief reactions but will also want to support their child. It is important that, as a grandparent, you balance your need to help and support your child with time to grieve yourself.

The death of a child is an almost unbearable tragedy. You have not only lost a grandchild, but also the hopes and dreams you had planned for the future. You may have already planned the things you wanted to teach your grandchild and the activities you wanted to do with them. The loss of these plans adds to the feelings of grief after a grandchild dies.

Finding the balance between helping your grieving child and their family and not intruding may be difficult. Talking with your child and their partner about what would be helpful to them is a good way to avoid intruding. Practical help may include making meals, looking after siblings or taking them to after-school activities. Providing a listening ear and comfort can be invaluable. But it is important to check in with your child about what support they need.

As with each parent, the way in which grandparents grieve may be different. It is important to give yourselves time and space to grieve in your individual styles, but also taking time to nurture your relationship as well.

We know it is not normal for a child to die before his or her parents, and it may feel like a grandchild dying before their grandparent is totally unnatural. Grandparents tell us they sometimes feel guilty that they have lived a life and experienced everything they want to experience yet their grandchild, who has their whole life ahead of them, has died. This is a normal feeling, and with time and support from friends and family, it will slowly fade away.

The death of your grandchild may bring back feelings from other experiences of grief in your past. You may feel you are reliving that past grief, as well as mourning for your grandchild in the present. It can be helpful to know what helps you relax in these situations, and use them. For example, if you feel overwhelmed by grief, taking some time to do some breathing exercises, go for a walk or talk to a friend can help to reduce some of the emotional overload.

- NSW Paediatric Palliative Care
Queensland Newsletter



VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

Margaret and Sandie have given us 100 copies of VOICES to sell

with all proceeds to go to TCF.

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

C/- Lesley Henderson,
76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D.,
Windsor
Oamaru

I have personally found that many of my friends and family have appreciated reading this book as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

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Getting Back to Work

Getting back to work is a tough transition for many parents following the death of their child. Worried about feeling strong enough, being able to concentrate, controlling crying, talking to people, leaving the safe haven of home, along with not wanting to lose their job or a paycheck, are all weighty factors these heartbroken parents must consider as they decide when to return to work, which involves re-entering an accustomed social environment as a changed person. Some of us have the option of taking an extended leave of absence and others are required to return to work right away. Some moms and dads are protected by human resource regulations, doctors' letters, short-term disability policies, understanding employers, or colleagues who can fill the gap. Some who need that regular paycheck or need to insure job security do not have a choice. Some choose to go back to work, ready or not, just to escape the sadness and desolation in their homes.

When my two oldest children, 21-year-old Denis and 19-year-old Peggy died suddenly in an August car accident, I chose to go back to work three weeks later when school opened for the new academic year. Being an elementary school teacher, I knew for that to be "my class," I had to be there to set down my rules and goals, and imprint my style of teaching on them, or that class would never be "mine" when I eventually returned. Had my children died in any other month, I honestly don't know how long I would have decided to stay home nursing my grief. So we can understand that different factors do influence people's decisions. Some inconsolable parents cannot even entertain thoughts of returning to work. Maybe because my colleagues were used to nurturing children, they were more open, considerate and caring to me, than other work places might have been when I returned. And maybe the magic ingredient that carried me through this life challenge was the way I was brought up to first get my job done and then relax or collapse. Others claimed it was my faith, that praying got me through these traumatic days.

I didn't make any speeches telling people what I needed because I really didn't have a clue, but everybody, including my principal, teachers, staff, students and their parents, seemed ready to help in any way they could. I was touched when a bicycle safety movie was being shown at a full school assembly when a fellow teacher suggested I take a break and she would watch my class so I would be spared viewing the car accident scene with responding police and ambulances, reminding me of my children's horrific accident. Parents helped me address 1,600 acknowledgement cards and my students drew pictures and offered sweet words about Peggy and Denis which kept the elephant out of the room. My heart smiled when my class of third graders shouted, "We love Denis," when I gave no homework on his birthday. I learned that simple little things can mean a lot. Like some other bereaved parents, I also found that returning to my job helped me, giving me a sense of routine and normalcy in my otherwise shattered life. It got me up in the morning, out of the house, filled my day with 8 hours of distractions, but, to be honest, took every bit of energy I possessed to make it through the day.

Other grieving parents felt fortunate to have their bosses call asking what they could do to help, like alerting fellow workers of the death, asking if it was okay for co-workers to attend the funeral or if they preferred to keep their work life and personal life separate, cancelling appointments, extending deadlines, and noting that short-term disability benefits might cover a couple of months of work if they had those policies. Some even designated a company person to arrange a food chain of dinners to be delivered for a period of time. In my case, my husband's office computerized all the names in "ABC" both funerals, taken from the funeral home guest books, mass cards, flowers and food delivered, errands done, and personal cards and notes written, so we had a ready list with names and addresses to thank all the people who gave us loving support.

Others mentioned that their supervisors called about a week before the actual return to work date discussing how to make the transition back to work as smooth as possible. Asking such questions: "Would you prefer people to check in with you about your loss or not bring it up at all in the office?" "Is it all right if I send an email to everyone letting them know when you are returning and how best to help you?" All were grateful to be able to offer their fragile input. Most were okay with co-workers checking in with them, but preferably not throughout the day, suggesting at the end of the day it was helpful to chat for a few minutes. For many people, work is an escape from grief, and being asked about their loss throughout the work day might be too disruptive. Some might even ask coworkers not to mention their child, needing more time to be able to talk about the death, especially if murder, suicide, or drugs were involved, another added dimension to their grief. The first days back to work can be awkward and strained because most of us are feeling our way and don't even know yet what will work best for us, as we learn by trial and error. We soon discover there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Sometimes, it's hard to predict what will help and what might hurt. But knowing someone cares by asking what they can do for us, helps our grieving heart.

Knowing what to say to someone who is grieving is hard. When it's someone you have a professional relationship with, it's even harder. But as long as you send a message that you care, your efforts can be instrumental in helping us cope with our loss. There are no words to erase our pain, but many parents suffer the sting of insensitive remarks and clichés which were actually offered in support. We learn quickly to whisper to ourselves, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Idiots, Amen"- and we feel much better.

Another way to keep coworkers from avoiding us or tiptoeing around us when we return to work was suggested by one of our TCF dads who recently lost a beautiful 19 year old daughter. Going back to work 15 days later, he simply wrote an open letter to his partners, colleagues and staff. Giving us permission to use his letter, he generously stated, "If my words can help anyone in the group they are welcome to them." (He also mentioned that his son used part of the letter to announce his return to school which he felt made his son feel more comfortable and also the friends he would encounter on his return). His message to colleagues:

Dear All: In all probability I will be returning to the office on Monday, ___/___/___, I do not think it will be especially difficult for me as work will be cathartic. For all of you that I saw at my daughter's wake showing your unending support, I thank you. Obviously, things were moving fast so I cannot remember if I saw everyone although it was pretty close. Likewise, for those of you who attended the funeral, you have my sincerest gratitude. I cannot remember any individual that I encountered as I was somewhat mentally and physically exhausted at its conclusion. If there is anyone who was not able to attend either the wake or the funeral for some reason do not let your hearts be troubled. I know that I have the support of all of you and therefore, if that did occur, please do not apologize. No apology is necessary.

In terms of how you may approach me, I can understand that there might be some level of trepidation. I can assure you that I am the same, yet different. If you wish to offer condolences again, and give me a hug it will be welcomed. If you do not, that is absolutely fine as well. Many people have said to me "there are no words," and that is obviously true. But any words that I have received in consolation were mightily welcomed—even if there were "no words." The memory of my daughter will last, for me, until my last day. But her passing does not have to be acknowledged every day by everyone that I encounter, and I will not feel in any way slighted if you feel it is appropriate to refrain from doing so.

We will persevere; we will carry on, because that is what we must do. In closing, I will be happy to see everyone soon.

Very truly yours,

So "Getting Back to Work" can be handled in a variety of ways, using help from bosses, co-workers, friends, or just depending on ourselves to make the job re-entry easier for us and those around us. Striking a balance between managing everyday life, protecting ourselves from emotional injury, and being true to ourselves can be challenging. Remember, there are no mistakes, only lessons. Love yourself, trust your choices, and everything is possible. As you navigate your new world, let Jojo Moyes' words bring a smile to your face, "Grieving is like adapting around a hole. You become a doughnut instead of a bun."

Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S. Grief Digest, Volume 3, Issue #4 Winnipeg Chapter news

The Grave No One Tended The day was lovely as I strolled along peering at stones on the way, And that's when I saw it, that pitiful cross that looked splintered and faded away. With flowers in hand to tend Father's grave, I knew I must hurry along. But I couldn't help but linger awhile at that cross that just didn't belong. The date on the front confirmed my suspicious of what I already knew. A child lay beneath that horrible cross and its faded colour of blue. What selfish parents they must have been to bury their child all alone, Without flowers or candles to light the night and not even a simple headstone. I looked even closer at that awful cross that was nearly splintered away, And there on the back, I read the words that changed me forever that day. "This cross isn't grand, but it was carved by my hands so you'll know, son, how much I care. It's the colour of blue to remind me of you and how painful it is I'm not there. That it's you who is gone and it's me living on while your young life has come to an end. And I'm left here alone, never again with a home and a grave that's too painful to tend." Tears stung my eyes as I looked all around at the monuments that ragged cross put to shame. And I shared with those parents their horrible loss that brought them such terrible pain. And all the tombstones, some even taller than me suddenly seemed small in a way, Next to that little handmade cross, carved with such love and the flowers I planted that day.

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[Cheryl L Costello-Forshey from the 4th Course of Chicken Soup for the Soul]
Johannesburg Chapter News

NOT a Matter of Choice

Our son Keith was 29 years old when he decided to end his life by suicide in 1999. Suicide is a frightening word, and it is not only ignorance, but fear and stigma that keep people from understanding why someone would take their own life. In a way, it is easier to think that a person made a "choice," freeing us from knowing the truth.

The word "choice" continues to perpetuate the stigma of suicide. The definition of "choice" is "the freedom in choosing, both in the way one chooses and in the number of possibilities from which to choose." In a pre-suicidal state, an individual is overwhelmed in a given situation. They suffer from extreme mental anguish and a painful sense of hopelessness. Their sense of judgment is distorted, and they do not have the ability to make "choices" or options.

They usually want to kill the pain rather than themselves. Suicidal people may be unable to restrain themselves from acting on feelings or impulses. This strong impulse to end the pain is often due to the depletion of the chemical called serotonin. Serotonin is a chemical within the brain that helps restrain impulsive behaviour.

"There is no suffering greater than that which drives people to suicide. Suicide defines the moment in which mental pain exceeds the human capacity to bear it. It represents the abandonment of hope," says John T. Malsberger, M.D., past president of the American Association of Suicidology, practicing psychiatrist and instructor at Harvard Medical School.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the USA and the second leading cause of death for those ages 25-34. About 30,000 of the 650,000 Americans who attempt suicide each year die. Suicide is almost always the result of depression, an illness of the brain.

We can only imagine the horrible mental torture our son Keith endured. Depression is one of the most terrible and pervasive illnesses of our day. In 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States listed suicide as a national public crisis. Having accurate information about depression is critical.

We live in a world where people hang onto old stereotypes. In order to stop future loss of lives by suicide, we must make certain to take advantage of any opportunity to encourage greater awareness. In that goal, we can make great strides to ensure that these stereotypes cease to persist.

Carol Loehner, Heart of Florida Chapter, BP/USA

Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

What I Wanted to Say By Sue Costello

Today I wrote a note to the mom of a 22 year old girl who died.

I wanted to say don't believe those other cards. The ones that say "time heals" and "God only takes the best" and "may your sorrows be lessened." You'll only be disappointed.

I wanted to say this is the most heart-wrenching, chest crushing, breath stealing tragedy on earth.

I wanted to tell her there will be days she wants to die, and friends who will not understand some of the things she does or says.

I wanted to tell her she will still feel her daughter's presence at times, sometimes so strongly that it is as if she is dancing just at the edge of whatever activity is going on. And other times she might not feel her presence at all.

I wanted to tell her that her life will not go back, that she will never be the same, because a piece of her left with her daughter.

And that even though the pain does not go away, somehow her soul will eventually make enough room so she can hold it all— the grief, the pain, the joy and the love.

I wanted to tell her... but I didn't.

Instead, I wrote— I'm sending love, for words are pointless right now.

And that is the truth.

Gratefully reprinted from Queensland Chapter Newsletter

POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

You are all invited to submit poem's, in memory of your child/children. These may be original poems or one that you have read which means something to you and your loved ones. Please remember to add the authors name if known.

Only Forever

I only weep for you now and then,
I cry till dry
All day, then sleep with tears
Never far away.
And wake and cry, now and yesterday.
Now and then.

I only ache for you all the time,
In the here and now
In yesterday.
And knowing it will be
The same tomorrow.
Only all the time.

I only long for you sometimes
Like when I breathe
Or when I sleep.
Or remembering
Or looking forward.
Sometimes, all times.

I will only miss you all my life,
What's left, shattered, broken,
Incomplete and lonely.
I only miss you in my heart
Now and then
Here and now and all of my tomorrows.

I only love you
When I see you in my mind
And in your photos.
When I hear your voice
Deep and compelling
Echoing across the veil.
When I recall your skin
And your hair
And the way it kicks up at the back of
your neck.
When I smell your clothes, and rock,
Clutching Calvin Klein pants.
When I think of you and know
That I cannot touch you.

It's only now and then
Here and now.
All the time.
It's only forever.

I wrote this poem, Only Forever, very soon after my son's death. I have no recollection of writing it. My memory deserted me in the very early months after.

My son, who was in treatment, was taken off methadone as he continued to drink alcohol. He decided to go to Thailand and wean himself off opiates by taking over the counter Tramadol. He died alone in a hotel room in Bangkok. I was not allowed to see him as he was not found for 24 hours. We flew to Bangkok and cremated him there at a Buddhist ceremony. The trauma was huge.

Christine Evans TCF/UK, Spring & Autumn

Sorrow

She rises out of nowhere,
like a wave from the sea.
Slowly at first, silently,
then crests and peaks.
Still I have a choice,
I can turn away,
go to work, watch a movie, play a game...
But I know sorrow well.
Though I turn away,
she will wait,
Perfectly patient,
Until I am still,
Then crush me
with all of her accumulated power.

Once I had angry walls to shut her out,
But her incessant pounding tore them down.

So now,
when she rises,
I turn to her and say
Here I am,
I know you, sorrow.
She crashes on my shoreline,
And sorrow and I are one
Until,
trailing frothy whitecaps,
She sweeps away.
P.G. White Ph.D.

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

GRIEF AND CONCENTRATION: 8 tips for coping with an inability to focus

Source: What's Your Grief? (<https://whatsyourgrief.com>) Authors: Eleanor & Litsa; article link: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-and-concentration/>

You're sitting at your desk at work and suddenly realize you have been staring at the wall, lost in thought or memories or pain, for the last hour and you're late for a meeting. You're driving home when you drive right through a stop sign that you pass and stop at every day. You put dinner in the oven and almost 2 hours later, when you smell something burning, you realize you forgot to pull it out. You come home one day to find a notice on your door: you forgot to pay your rent for the last two months. You had the money, you just forgot to pay! You get up and walk into another room to do something or get something and by the time you get there you have no idea what it was. And on and on and on . . . any of these sound familiar?

One common question we get here is how to manage the complete inability to focus that can come with grief. After a death, constant and overwhelming distraction is one of the most common pieces of "evidence" people cite when explaining that they think they are going totally crazy! So, before we go any further, let's clear one thing up: grief and concentration don't mix well. That is not a sign that you are losing it. I promise. Struggling to concentrate is very normal soon after a loss. It is simply a sign that your brain is completely consumed by something painful, overwhelming, and life-changing.

That said, if inability to focus keeps up for an extended period of time or is interfering with your life in an unmanageable way (for example, you are at risk of losing your job or you can't care for your children) you should seek professional help from a therapist right away. Otherwise, some basic tips and tools will probably be enough to help you over the hurdle. Though we certainly don't believe time heals all wounds, we do know that time helps a lot with this grief and concentration thing. It takes time for your brain to adjust to a new reality and the completely different world that exists after your loss. There are emotions you are processing, fears and anxieties, secondary losses, and countless other things your brain is trying to manage, but that does get easier with time. In the meantime, we have some tips and suggestions for coping with grief and concentration. We hope you'll add your own to the comments to keep this conversation going.

#1 Stop beating yourself up! Seriously. We know it is hard when you have always been a focused, fabulous, functional person. But grief is the worst and it really messes with your brain. You aren't a failure for being distracted. You're a normal, wonderful, griever who is just doing your best to cope. So in those moments when you have lost all focus, try to give yourself some permission and space to know it's okay. You are still a fabulous person and it might just take some time and a little work to get that focus back.

#2 Journal Journaling may sound like a weird tip for managing grief and concentration, but sometimes the problem is that you have so many thoughts swimming in your head. You just can't possibly keep them all in there and hope to focus. Getting some of those thoughts out in a journal can (at least temporarily) clear some space to let you focus for a while. A regular journaling practice is great, but even just writing out some of the things consuming you when you are feeling unfocused can provide a temporary reprieve.

#3 Visualization and Meditation Learning to meditate has countless physical and psychological benefits, one of which is getting more control over your thoughts and your relationship with your thoughts. When you are feeling constantly unfocused and distracted, it is a tool that can help you move the needle. Visualization is a technique that can also be helpful in setting your consuming thoughts aside for a while. Now, that might sound like avoidance and we don't usually advocate avoidance! But in some cases, you need to compartmentalize in order to take care of the practicalities of life. When consuming thoughts are distracting you, take a minute to notice what you're being consumed by and visualize yourself putting the thoughts in a box or a room. You can shut the lid or the door, telling yourself you will come back to attend to those thoughts later, in a time and space you allow. If you journal, you may do the same when you close the journal, deliberately keeping your thoughts contained to the pages until you can revisit them in a space that doesn't have such a negative impact.

#4 Write everything down This is a basic, 101 tip, but it is an especially important one when you're grieving. If, before the loss, you were able to keep your life organized in your head it can be hard to accept that isn't possible anymore. Your head is now consumed with a zillion other thoughts and anxieties, so it can be a big help to write things down to help you keep track of even the basic things. You may not have to create endless to-do lists forever, but in the short term it can help!

#5 Sleep and eat One of the challenges in grief is that symptoms stack up on each other and can impact one another. Early in grief your sleep and appetite can get out of whack – insomnia can become an unwelcome guest and you may lose all interest in eating. When it comes to focus and concentration, lack of sleep and food are an issue even without grief.

Layer grief on top of that and it can be a mind meltdown. If you are looking for tips, check out this post on grief and getting a good night's sleep. Make sure you are meeting your basic caloric and vitamin/mineral needs, even if you aren't excited about eating. Yes, this can mean forcing yourself to eat and make healthy food choices.

#6 Just do it Sometimes focus and concentration are the issues when a task is already underway, but it can also come in to play when deciding whether and when to do something. Sometimes we say to ourselves, "oh, I'm too distracted or unfocused to do anything now, I'll start later or tomorrow". By the time you get to it you are so close to the deadline that you are feeling even more overwhelmed and stressed, which can make it even harder to focus. It is a vicious cycle. It can be best to just start, even if there is some distraction involved. Those messages telling you not to try come from a little thing we like to call grief-brain, and if you just ignore it sometimes you'll surprise yourself!

#7 Take breaks and use alarms There are a ton of productivity techniques and apps with all sorts of different philosophies and systems. We don't endorse a particular one for helping with time and focus, but many share one thing in common—they encourage setting time to work and time for breaks. Some use alarms to help you stay on task with your work time, then let you get some space. Scheduling time this way helps some grievors balance the emotions and distractions by creating a space for them. These alarms can also help if you have gotten off track and distracted to get you back on track.

#8 Solicit support If you realize your inability to concentrate is interfering with your day to day life, get some help. This may be help from friends, family, and co-workers, it could be professional help from a therapist, or ideally a combination of both. If you realize your work is being significantly impacted, talk to your supervisor and HR. If you are a student and you see your schoolwork suffering, talk with your teachers/professors and school counselors right away to look for support and solutions.

Gratefully lifted from Victoria TCF Grieve Health Grow

Seasoned Griever

Ten years. I'm what is considered a "seasoned griever." I guess I would agree with that term. When Lily died I made a concerted effort to grieve. I went to grief groups and retreats, I read countless books on child loss and grief, I spoke and wrote of my daughter's life and death, and I cried, and cried, and cried. I did this all very methodically because it is my firm belief that you cannot escape grief. You can postpone it, you can deny it, but you eventually must grieve, or you will never be able to move forward.

I think I made the right choice about all of this and is the advice I would give anyone who has suffered a loss. The one thing that all of these efforts will not do, however, is end grief, especially that of a child. I had lost before Lily. I knew the death of a very close friend when he took his own life. I knew the loss of my beloved grandparents, who, when I was little, I prayed would die on the same day as I did so we didn't have to miss each other. But these losses, however significant, are so different from losing a child.

Grief of a child lessens over the years; it is not the gut-wrenching pain that it once was, but it is a dull ache that never goes away. It becomes normal for a parent to have this pain just below the surface. It does not mean that we don't laugh and know joy and experience incredible happiness. It does not mean we are thinking of our loss every minute of our lives. It does mean that we are always aware of what we are missing without our child in our life.

I am so grateful this week for everyone who has remembered Lily to me. It is one of the worst thoughts of a grieving parent: that people will forget. Because that, to us, is unimaginable.

Leah Cameron TCF Minneapolis, MN Reprinted from Minneapolis Newsletter



Sibling Page



My Angel

When you died, sister, my world crashed around me. My other half was ripped away from me. Suddenly there was a gaping hole in my heart. My days were dark without the light of your presence.

But you proved me wrong, for you are with me. You show me your presence in many ways. When I cry and ache for your presence, You visit me in dreams, giving me a taste of Heaven.

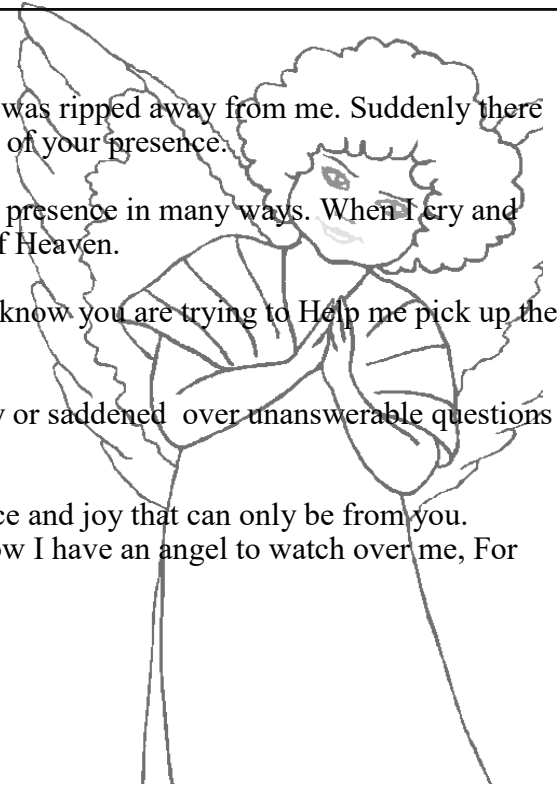
You heal my broken heart with your smiles. Through my dreams, I know you are trying to Help me pick up the pieces of my life. Your presence is felt in other ways.

The scent of your perfume, an echo of your voice. When I am angry or saddened over unanswerable questions I receive an answer from the wisdom of a friend.

When I am alone and my heart is still, I am filled with an inner peace and joy that can only be from you. Though you're physically gone, you live with me in my heart. I know I have an angel to watch over me, For that angel is you.

Colleen Burgess, TCF/Austin, TX

Gratefully reprinted from Winnipeg Chapter News



THE UNIVERSE OF GRIEF

About ten months after my only sister died, I began to feel things other than grief and shock. It was as when a long fever breaks: You feel neither good nor strong but you wake up and have your mind back. I knew then I could return to my work as a filmmaker with some ability to focus and reason.

It was obvious to me before I even began what has now become "the Secret Map of Surviving Loss" what my subject would be: The subject would be grief. Grief, in its many faces, had been the unparalleled master of decades of my life. My sister as well as my father had been ill on and off since before I finished high school. My mother is legally blind so much of keeping the family glued together depended on me. The needs of their illnesses often intensified at the same time. A quarter of a century after their original diagnoses, Dad died and then Michelle three years later.

During those years, I came to intimately know the face of anticipatory grief, how it hovers around during the downward cycle of diagnosis, decline, crisis, repeat, and how it tests one's endurance. I knew the lightning-like face of grief that reveals in instants the true character of everyone around you. I knew grief's venom and the way it paralyzes and numbs. I knew its relentlessness. I knew its irrationality. I knew the physical nature of grief.

What I did not know was grief's purpose. I did not know that grief, like swelling after an injury or the fever of infection, was part of a mechanism and process of coping, adjustment, and restoring balance. Ironically, I could not understand this because I was in grief.

Looking for some understanding and comfort as well as some direction, I did what so many people do. I sought out a bereavement group for the people I thought were exactly like me; I sought out a group for sibling loss. That is what we do, especially when we are shattered. We look for ourselves in the faces of other people. We begin to rebuild with the little bit we still know about ourselves. We identify with what we have lost. Widows seek spousal loss groups. Adult children seek out parent loss groups. Parents who have lost children seek out child loss groups.

Hospices and grief support organizations encourage this self-seeking sameness by creating counselling groups along these divides.

Unfortunately for me, it did not work out. I could not find myself in people exactly like me. There were no sibling loss groups available at our local hospice at the time. Instead, I had to broaden my mirror. I had to find myself among losses of all kinds. I found a general loss drop-in group at another hospice. I went for a year. Over the course of my time, there was a woman grieving her son, quite a few people grieving spouses and partners, and another handful grieving their mothers. Poor deceased dads in my group did not get too much play. Although our losses defined us quite a bit, it made no difference who each of us had lost. We bonded all the same as we shared too many things; we shared grief.

This meant we were all in shock. We all had secondary losses. We all had moments which triggered intense grief. We all suffered with haunting images and guilt. We all dreaded the holidays and special days. We all spoke of signs or dreams of our loved ones or wondered if we would have them. This was an enormous comfort to me. Sharing grief in grieving company kept me moored to the shores of the human world.

I could not tie on elsewhere. The death that had forever ended communications with my sister had also ended communications with people I had known for years. Those people, family, friends, and acquaintances, went on as I once did, with a level of intensity on the entertainments and gossip of the day which now seemed strange to me. They had little curiosity or interest in how death had touched and shaped me. I had nothing to say to them and they in turn said nothing that did not seem irrelevant and shallow to me.

I had been changed and there was no going back to my previous innocence. This is one of the many things that grief after death does. It initiates one into an order of humans that share heavy knowledge: The absolute certainty that all will be lost. Part of the experience of grief is digesting this knowledge. All grievers slog through a valley of nihilism at some point with thoughts ranging from “Why get out of bed?” to “Why ever do anything ever?”

As I emerged from the intensity of grief, I realized its great deception. As chaotic, meaningless and drifts as one’s suffering feels, something very orderly is going on the whole time. Like the tribal initiations unfold in which the young are borne away from the village and abandoned somewhere out in nature with the task of finding their way home, so are we. First we are disconnected from our loved one who has died, then from our familiar circle and finally (for at least a moment) from all sense of our previous purpose. We are taken against our will to a strange and scary place. We are required to develop perseverance and survival skills. We are required to traverse a world beyond all that is previously known and to develop a new maturity and be changed.

This happens whether you have lost a child, a wife, a sister, brother, husband or mother. Whether it is your best friend or most difficult relationship that is gone, you will be initiated. After just a few months in my group, I felt gratitude and good fortune that I did not get what it was that I thought that I wanted, that I did not find that sibling loss group for people exactly like me. I am in the comfort and the company of all good grievers now as we each learn the lay of the land every day and our paths forward in it. As anyone who has been in grief can tell you, no one can give you the map of the place. One can only be told the list of creatures that live there: strange signs, secondary losses, guilt, triggers, shock, and more. There is no predicting how you will meet them. It is up to you. What you can be assured of, however, is that you are taking part in an ancient ritual and that the grief that flows through you and the person next to you in the group is the same as the sun that on better days shines on you both.

Maryann Manelski Grief Digest, Volume 13, Issue #4

She is a writer and producer/director of the Grief Monomyth and the Secret Map of Surviving Loss, documentaries to help grievers through their loss.

Gratefully taken from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

**Bereavement is a darkness impenetrable
to the imagination of the unbereaved.**

~ Iris Mudoch



MISSION STATEMENT

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organisation offering friend-ship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief experienced upon death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers and professionals to be supportive.



Do you need to talk? Our telephone friends are willing to listen.. **Telephone Friends**

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
QUEENSTOWN	Arlette Irwin	03 4510108
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
CENTRAL OTAGO	Louise McKenzie (David, 14yr, accident) Central Otago Co-ordinator	03 4486094 louise.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz
INVERCARGILL	Linda Thompson. (Ryan, 16yrs, Cardiac Failure. Dec 2001) Southland Co-ordinator*	03-2164155 027 390 9666
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	04 9387212 lorrained@paradise.net.nz
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
WANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yo, car accident)	06 3443345 wanganui@thecompassionatefriends.org.nz
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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