



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 177

APRIL MAY 2020

My son died suddenly almost six months ago from an as yet unexplained cardiac arrest. Marley was ten months, so happy, joyful and full of life. He and our daughter lit up our life. I wrote this poem because people's well meaning words keep hurting me. After sitting in tears from yet another message from a friend this weekend, I wrote down how I felt.

Please

Please don't tell me how to feel unless you've walked in my shoes
Please don't tell me what to do unless you've actually done this too
Please don't tell me to move on, it doesn't work like that
Please don't tell me to be grateful for what I have, part of me is missing
Please don't tell me you understand I can no longer hold his little hand
Please don't tell me you 'get it', I now wear my heart on the outside
Please don't say 'you are doing amazing', I have no choice in this
Please don't say you are so strong, I hide a lot inside
Please don't say you are lucky to have another child or a loving partner, our family is no longer whole

Just,

Please, listen
Please hold me
Please give me a tissue
Please mention his name
Please tell me your memories
Please embrace me in tears
Please just sit with me when it hurts too much to talk
Please hold me up when I'm falling down
Please be patient, I've never done this before and I hope you will never have to
Please help me, support me, don't hurt me with your words

Bex Oakes Compassion Spring TCF UK

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

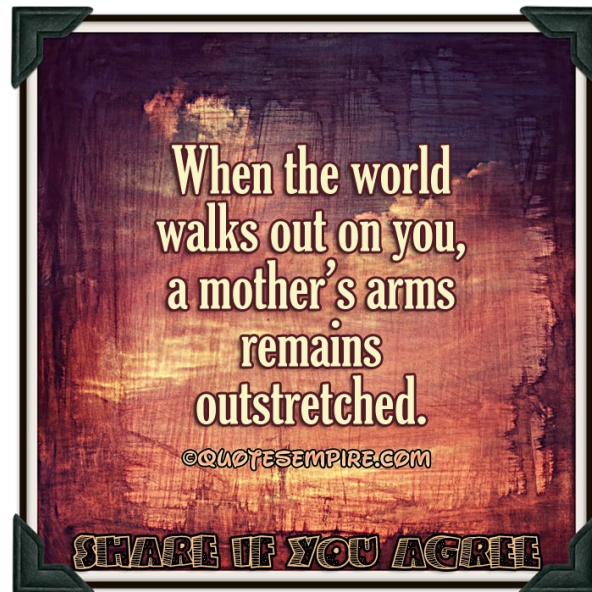
Children's names appear in this column if parents ask when they complete their annual donation form. You are also able to e-mail, write or phone me to have your child's name included.

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



Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Andrew Meldrum Cox	Born 16/4/68	Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold	Died 6/4/02
Jack Stephen Dyer	Born 24/4/07	Rebecca Clare Halkett	Died 20/4/03
Nicholas Ian O'Hara	Born 17/4/74	Greg Holley	Died 6/4/85
Caren Amanda Phillips	Born 16/4/81	Matthew David Hubber	Died 30/4/00
Alan Bruce Scorringe	Born 26/4/66	Sally Verone Kitto	Died 23/4/01
Anthony Mark Staite	Born 5/4/74	Robbie Knight	Died 18/4/96
Jonathon Upton	Born 15/4/68	Jake Lucas	Died 26/4/77
		Nikolaas Remmerswaal	Died 1/4/12
Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold	Born 9/5/1978	Gary Brendon Thompson	Died 9/4/96
Nicholas Evan Hood	Born 12/5/1985	Hayden Watson	Died 11/4/97
Vicky Knight	Born 21/5/1980		
Paul John Nicolaou	Born 21/5/1964	Paul Graham Albrecht	Died 19/5/2004
Cindy Parish	Born 25/5/1965	Michael Barry Duke	Died 20/5/2005
Liam Vettters	Born 1/5/2005	Ben Henderson	Died 15/5/2003
David Jason Eugene Walker	Born 7/5/1993	Erica Kewish	Died 14/5/2014
James Wing	Born 31/5/1980	Thomas Craig McDonald	Died 25/5/2008
		Maryann Gaye Pearce	Died 27/5/2000
		Wayne Edward Summers	Died 9/5/1999
		David Jason Eugene Walker	Died 13/5/ 2000
		Peter Gregory Warren	Died 17/5/1998
		Dan Wells	Died 13/5/2003
		Timothy James Williams	Died 29/5/2005

"Hope"

Hope is not an easy word for grievors — but we, more than others, need to understand what hope can mean for us.

Hope means finding the strength to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace the joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing with tenderness and pride our own life and the gifts left to us by those we have lost.

Lovingly lifted from TCF/Johannesburg Newsletter

Dear Friends,

As the world copes with times like most of us have never seen in our lifetime, many people around the world are dealing with the death of a son, a daughter, a mother or father, a relative or a friend. What must make these deaths even more difficult is the fact that most of these recent deaths were unable to be remembered with rituals and gatherings which would normally happen. These rituals and gatherings offer people ways to express and process their grief and provide ways for friends and community to support the griever. With many countries in Lockdown, sharing the grief and supporting the bereaved has not been able to happen to the degree we are used to. For many people they have had to grieve in isolation without the comforting touch from a friend or family member and many people have also not been able to view their loved ones body. We in NZ have been luckier than most countries, with fewer deaths per capita at the time of writing, however, any death is of course one too many and our thoughts and prayers go out to all who have lost a loved one.

I read the following poem in Johannesburg chapter newsletter and googled the author, Laura Kelly Fanucci who has written books and columns. She also has some wonderful advice for Parents on how to support your other children after you have had a child die on her website motheringspirit.com—what to do for kids when their sibling dies. She wrote this poem to offer people hope and comfort during the Coronavirus outbreak.

“When this is over, may we never again take for granted:

- ***A Handshake With A Stranger***
- ***Full Shelves At The Store***
- ***Conversations With Neighbors***
- ***A Crowded Theatre***
- ***Friday Night Out***
- ***The Taste Of Communion***
- ***A Routine Checkup***
- ***The School Rush Each Morning***
- ***Coffee With A Friend***
- ***The Stadium Roaring***
- ***Each Deep Breath***
- ***A Boring Tuesday***
- ***Life Itself***

When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be, we were called to be, we hoped to be, and may we stay that way — better for each other because of that worst.”

I am sure this poem will resonate with a lot of bereaved parents who no longer take many things for granted since the death of our beloved child/children.

To all Mothers out there, I wish you a peaceful Mother’s Day filled with love and special memories.

Please take care of yourselves at this time and take care of your family and loved ones. Reach out to people who may be alone and above all Stay Safe.

Lesley Henderson.

Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora everyone,

Well, what can one say? Locked up! I could write a book about it, but will try not to!

Having little escape from your thoughts and disturbing dreams may be driving you crazy, or it might be that the opportunity to switch off from the outside world is giving you an opportunity to reflect and wallow in your misery. We watched a DVD at one of our meetings once that was called "It's Okay to Wallow." I've never forgotten it. It suited me fine because I love to wallow every now and again. But of course, it may not be everyone's "cup of tea." I'm not suggesting that you wallow all day long. Remember to get up for a cup of tea and something to eat sometimes! And give the cat or the dog a hug and if you are lucky enough, give a child a hug. We have a brand new grandson born in San Francisco during the lockdown. It breaks my heart to see him on Skype and to be so close yet so far. No cuddles waaaaaaah.....

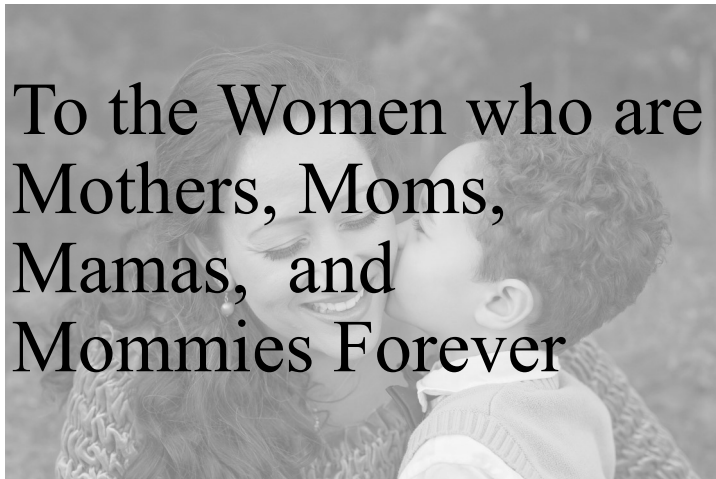
How strange, but the weather in Central Otago has been mostly glorious since the lockdown. Is it some divine force trying to make it easier for us to bear? The autumn colours are so pretty and most days we have blue skies. It is unreal. Like everything else at the moment, hard to fathom.

But we have been through something like this before haven't we? When our child/children died it was so unreal and beyond understanding. It is sad that we have been so well prepared for the situation that we are in today.

Anyway, that is enough from me.

Arohanui koutou katoa,

Louise



To the Women who are
Mothers, Moms,
Mamas, and
Mommies Forever

To the women whose children died before they breathed...To the women whose babies lived for just a precious handful of not-enough days...To the women whose children cancer or accidents or ailments claimed...To the women who lost teenagers just as they ventured toward adulthood...To the women who outlive their adult children...To the women who desperately want children but grapple with infertility...To the women who long to mother, but whose life circumstances have conspired to leave childless...

You ARE a beautiful mother. Believe it!

~ Beth Moray, TCF/St. Paul, MN Chapter

Lifted from Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

‘))))))))))))))))))))))))))=—————’/)))))))(The journey of my new life

To my dear Friends,

Sixteen years ago, after the death of my precious son Tory, I made my first phone call to TCF. I clearly remember how my emotions took hold of me and I could barely speak. I don't remember who I spoke to but I do remember the kind and comforting voice of the lady who knew exactly how I felt and assured me that I was not losing my mind and that it was normal for a mother who had lost her son to feel the unbearable pain, the despair and helplessness I was experiencing.


The journey of my new life had just begun. In my desperation I knew nothing would ever be the same. How could it be, when my whole world had been turned upside down and I was completely absorbed in my grief? All I wanted was to die.

One morning, I woke up and realized that there were two other people in my life who I loved dearly and who were suffering as much as I was: my husband Joe and my daughter Maria. They still needed me. The nightmare of the tragedy had blurred everything that surrounded my existence. My inconsolable and hopeless desperation deepened. I didn't know what to do. There are no classes in life that prepare you for this type of human disaster. My son meant the world to me. He was loving, kind, full of life and a very handsome young man.

Family and friends were supportive in the beginning but many soon distanced themselves when I didn't get over it and definitely couldn't move on with my life. How could I?

Fortunately, TCF was always there for me and I eventually realized that I wasn't alone. I anxiously awaited the newsletter and I always stopped what I was doing to read it over and over again. I have kept and treasured every edition. Only God knows how many tears I shed reading through all the experiences of other parents who had lost their dear children. Their stories were also mine and I was able to relate to them. They eventually helped me to realize that despite the tragedy, the overwhelming pain and sorrow, I could eventually find some kind of a meaningful life.

After sixteen years, the pain is still there and I still miss my darling Tory so much. My heart will always be broken and even though the pain and sadness are still at times unbearable, thankfully now I have learned to find peace in focusing on all the love and beautiful memories I have of him.

Thank you very much to all the dedicated and loving staff at TCF and to all the members for the lessons I have learned through articles in the newsletters,  touching messages in the anniversary card and the chats on the phone.

Keep up the wonderful work.

God bless you all.

Sincere Regards Elizabeth Pepe TCF/Victoria, AU

An Open Letter to Newly Bereaved Parents - Emily Graham

Dear Newly Bereaved,

I remember standing where you are. The world feels different. A vast emptiness closes in around your heart as you wrangle with the idea that your child is no longer a part of this world. Your world, broken. The last image of them burning in your mind because there will be no more. Don't focus too long on the idea that it's over. It will crush your soul and pull the breath from your lungs. Forever has new meaning. Torture.

How do I keep going? I can't imagine my life without them . Life is so unfair. You will realize that statement never held meaning until now. I don't want to do this! I hate this! There is so much anger! The situation feels impossible. There is not enough hate for the life you have been thrust into without a single say. Everything around you seems to be spiralling. As it turns out, control is only an illusion. We don't have any.

The mere mention of a death will always have the ability to transport you back to this moment. It will always be raw. These images haunt you right now. They replay over and over as your brain tries to make sense of it all. There is no sense to be made.

A heart cannot begin to process this level of pain. Very few people will be able to support you through this kind of pain. Believe me when I say it is not you! It's them. You will learn that unless someone has experienced deep loss like this, they cannot begin to understand what you now know. You may be surprised to find the best support comes from total strangers. The people you expected would always be there in your lowest moments seem to disappear or be unaware of what to do.

Know that you are not alone, though it will feel that way. Grief is a very solo journey. Everyone will experience it differently. What you feel is normal! It's important for you to know that. So please do not compare your grief to anyone else. You will question whether or not you are crazy. You are not. Just do whatever feels right to you in the moment.

The struggle to find yourself again is real. It's been 18 months and I am no closer. Be patient and kind with yourself. So much of your experience will define you. This grief journey is all about you. Find people that can support you in the ways you need. There will be casualties. Accept it.

It sucks being a member of this club. None of us ever expected to join. While every parent thinks about what it may feel like to lose a child, no one ever believes it can really happen. Unfortunately, it does. The reality of it never sinks in. What you do need to remember is your child is still with you. They are standing on the side-lines supporting you, cheering you on. They know how difficult this journey is for you. Keep going!

Lifted and reprinted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Chapter 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.

REMEMBER ME

REMEMBER ME-as the night fades and your flickering eyes meet the glow of a new day. Move past that first awakening moment when my loss stirs a weary mind and lays bare the fragile peace of sleep. As pain floods your Soul and reality urges you on; Remember Me.

REMEMBER ME-as longing arms and searching eyes greet the emptiness and a tired Spirit replaces the mask that conceals your destroyed life. Listen as the first echoes of my love infiltrate your memory seeking to banish the shadows. As courage and strength seep into your senses; Remember Me.

REMEMBER ME - when you ache with the choking anguish of suppressed tears. Feel the enveloping warmth of my smile feeding hope into a world where just one word can render you defenceless. Seek the infinite legacy of my love to protect you. As you take each faltering step; Remember Me.

REMEMBER ME -let me into your life. When you lose your tenuous hold on scarred emotions and seek to hide from a world of fear and pain, I am here. Stand tall and face those who minimize your loss. As you carry your intolerable burden; Remember Me.

REMEMBER ME - I was your life and I still am. Do not fear the endless years you see ahead of you, embrace them in my name and live them for me. The bond between a mother and her child can never be broken and I will always love you. As you face that knowledge; Remember Me.

Sue White, Lovingly lifted from TCF/UK

Jack My son was killed in an RTC in January 2018 and in an instant it felt like my life was over. He was 22 years old and considered himself "a man of his own rules" I have struggled in one way or another almost every day since.

The biggest trouble I have right now is forgiveness. The lad driving the car that Jack was in was driving twice the speed limit, nearly twice over the alcohol limit and with drugs in his system. He is in prison now for a whole 18 months (it all gets reduced depending upon plea).

So here is who I need to forgive:

The driver: He took my sons life through his very reckless (although not intentional) actions.

The front seat passenger: He got in the front and not the back. He was severely injured and the PTSD is so obvious and I seriously worry about his long term mental health.

Jack: He got in the back and not the front. He didn't wear a seatbelt and he knew the driver had been drinking.

Myself: I couldn't save him. It's my job as his mum to look after him and I didn't. I didn't save him.

I am learning, well trying to learn, to forgive. I have spent a lot of time thinking about the driver. He has never apologised and while I shouldn't need his apology to give my forgiveness, I know it would help. Also, if the tables were turned and Jack was the driver, I would like to think that there would be people willing to forgive him too. I think I am a good person. But forgiveness is very hard, especially of myself.

It's taken me a long time to realise that the anger and resentment I feel for almost everyone around me is just deflection for the anger I feel towards myself for not being able to save my precious boy. Now I know that bit, I am trying to make positive steps to letting go of this anger towards myself. I know I want to live a positive life in Jack's name but there are days where every breath is a struggle and I can't imagine the rest of my life without him. That said, there are now, some days, where I see small chinks of light. A memory, a photo, an old letter, a chat with one of his friends. In those small slithers of hope, I remember what a beautiful soul Jack was and the huge impact he has made on this world and how the people that knew him and loved him will keep him close always. I think there will always be more bad days than good. I can admit now that I am very broken and that I can't be fixed but I hope that in some way I can rebuild a future where I can learn to forgive myself.

Lea Watson, Jack's Mum

mum mama mommy
 BEAUTIFUL
 unconditional love
 creative UNSELFISH
 LOVE U LOVE U LOVE U
 BELIEVES
 life patient GENTLE
 compassionate
 NURTURING
 strength DEVOTED

HAPPY ☀️
 MOTHER'S
 DAY! 🌸



ED: With Mothering Sunday coming up I found this blog in the form of a letter made up of many different Mothers words that I wanted to share some of it with you. I read some words spoken by the mother of Emiliano Sala, the footballer who was killed when his plane went down in the English Channel last year. She said she feels "dead while living". I thought of those words when I read this letter.

Part of "A Mother's Chorus: Grieving a Child on Mother's Day"

I miss my child every day. This grief of mine will never leave me, and honestly, why should it? I love my child more than I ever could have imagined, and yes, I do mean present tense "love". It is excruciating knowing that my child will never return to my arms. However, a mother's love for her child doesn't require physical presence; this can be proven by the fact that most mothers love their children well before they are even born. I will love my child forever, and therefore, I will grieve my child forever. This is just how it goes.

This day will forever be hard for me. I live with an emptiness that no one can fill; so I may be sad, I may be unsociable, and I may need to take a break to be by myself in a quiet place. Whatever shape my grief takes on this day, please allow me to feel the way I feel and please follow my lead.

Beyond that, acknowledge me as a mother. It makes me feel forgotten and as though my child has been forgotten when people act as though my child never existed. Also, I can sense that people feel uncomfortable talking about my child and I constantly feel like the elephant in the room, but it doesn't have to be this way. Honestly, I find it really comforting when someone talks about my child. I love hearing their name spoken out loud! I love hearing stories about them. Maybe you know a story I've never heard, or maybe I've heard it a hundred times before, but it really doesn't matter to me. Your acknowledgment alone is one of the greatest Mother's Day gifts you could give me.

I guess while I'm offering my two cents, I also have something to say to my fellow bereaved mothers. No one has it all figured out, but I've learned a few lessons along the way. If you're worried about Mother's Day, you're not alone. Try not to get overwhelmed or wrapped up in anxiety. You may actually find that the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. You may want to plan a whole day of activities just to stay busy, or you may feel like doing nothing at all. There is no "right" way to handle Mother's Day – but do try to plan ahead a little. You may want to reach out to others who are struggling with the day and, if you can, it always helps to face the day with people who love and support you.

Whatever you do, believe you will make it through the day. With time, the grief storms will grow smaller and less frequent and you will find a little more balance and room to breathe. Believe you will be okay and have hope that in the future you will find yourself in a place where you can grieve and celebrate on Mother's Day all at the same time.

Let's take care of each other.

Lifted with love from Newsletter For Childless Parents TCF UK

MOTHERS DAY

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's Day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness at cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".

Always we struggle with the eternal questions - how does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain on that day? Where is the fairness and justice in such barter? The answer comes back again and again - life does not always bargain fairly.

We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a fore taste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love? No, we cannot.

But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving, and in the tissue-wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

Mary Wildman, TCF Moro,

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

In My Mother's Arms—A note from Heaven

Love that has no measure,
Shelter from the harms
I could live forever
In my Mother's arms

Ever understanding,
Sharing all her charms
I know my safe haven
Is in my Mother's arms

If I could say what she means to me
I'm sure it would take an eternity
She showed me how to be all that I can be
And weather all the storms

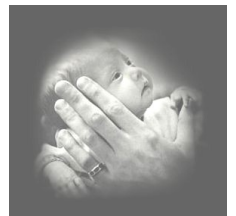
She's always there, she's my best friend
Taught me how to stand and when to bend
I could stay forever,
In my Mother's arms

Her gentle caring eases my pain
Mysteries of life she can explain
Gave me wisdom to come in out of the rain
How my heart she warms

And I'll be grateful eternally
For the life and breath she gave to me
I will forever be
in my Mother's arms

Happy Mother's Day

Lee and Pami Durley
Lovingly lifted from TCF/Okanagan Valley, BC



Mother's Day Manifesto

This is my path. It was not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully with intention. It is a journey through grief that takes time. Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me. Say nothing. Do not offer a cure. Or a pill, or a word, or a potion. Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me. Please be gentle with me. Please, self, be gentle with me, too. I will not ever "get over it" so please don't urge me down that path. Even if it seems like I am having a good day, maybe I am even able to smile for a moment, the pain is just beneath the surface of my skin. Some days, I feel paralyzed. My chest has a nearly constant sinking pain and sometimes I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

This is affecting me as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Remember that grief is as personal to each individual as a fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be doing it or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me. Surviving this means seeing life's meaning change and evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more - hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child or by an elderly person struggling with the door.

So many things I struggle to understand. Don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes seem far too easy to slip from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers - and fathers - and grandparents-and siblings won't wake up one day with everything 'okay' and life back to normal. I have a new normal now.

Oh, perhaps as time passes, I will discover new meanings and insights about what my child's death means to me. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of her absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder.

Upper and Lower Cape Cod Chapters

On the 30th of January, it'll be 3 years since my son Dylan died. At that time he was living temporarily at home, but he had been living in Dunedin, New Zealand, for about 6 years. We'd Skype most Sundays, texted, and emailed regularly. Dylan's life was full of activity and I loved to hear his stories. Another way of staying in touch was I would send him parcels, 'goodie bags', just because. I really miss that. I wrote this simple poem at the TCF 50th Anniversary, in an excellent writing workshop run by Cathy Sosnowsky, from Canada.

Sometimes
I still cut out articles
and pictures from the newspapers
for you.
Sometimes
I reach for chocolate and treats
to wrap up in a goodie bag
to send to you.

You would tease me
And we'd laugh together
But I know you loved them.
Your WhatsApp photo
On the beach,
Holding a chocolate
Is a precious gift you sent me.
Now, the unsent articles and pictures
Lie forlorn piling up.
And I wish you could see them.
'Sometimes'

Maggie, Dylan's Ma x

POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

THESE ARE MY FOOTPRINTS

These are my footprints,
so perfect and so small.
These tiny footprints,
never touched the ground at all.
Not one tiny footprint,
for now I have my wings.
These tiny footprints
were meant for other things...
You will hear my tiny footprints,
in the patter of the rain.
Gentle drops like angels tears,
of joy and not from pain.
You will see my tiny footprints,
in each butterflies' lazy dance.
I'll let you know I'm with you,
if you give me just a chance.
You will see my tiny footprints,
in the rustle of the leaves.
I will whisper names into the wind,
and call each one that grieves.
Most of all, these tiny footprints,
are found in mummy's heart,
Cause even though I'm gone now,
we'll never truly part.

Lifted with thanks from TCF/Okanagan Valley
Winnipeg



Together We'll Walk the Stepping Stones

Come, take my hand, the road is long.
We must travel by stepping stones.
No, you're not alone, I'll go with you.
I know the road well, I've been there.

Don't fear the darkness, I'll be there with you.
We must take one step at a time.
But remember we may have to stop awhile.
It is a long way to the other side, and there may be obstacles.

We have many stones to cross, some are bigger than others,
Shock, denial, and anger to start.
Then comes guilt, despair and loneliness.
It's a hard road to travel, but it must be done.
It's the only way to reach the other side.

Come, slip your hand in mine.
What? Oh, yes, it's strong, I've held so many hands like yours.
Yes, mine was one time small and weak like yours.
Once, you see, I had to take someone's hand
in order to take the first step.

Oops! You've stumbled; go ahead and cry.
Don't be ashamed; I understand.
Let's wait here awhile and get your breath.
When you're stronger we'll go on, one step at a time.
There's no need to hurry.

Say, it's nice to hear you laugh.
Yes, I agree, the memories you shared are good.
Look, we're halfway there now; I can see the other side.
It looks so warm and sunny.

Oh, have you noticed, we're nearing the last stone
and you're standing alone?
We've reached the other side.

But wait, look back, someone is standing there.
They are alone and want to cross the stepping stones.
I'd better go, they need my help.
What? Are you sure?
Why, yes, go ahead, I'll wait,
you know the way, you've been there.

Yes, I agree, it's your turn, my friend —
To help someone else cross the stepping stones.

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Barb Williams, TCF/Fort Wayne, IN
Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

Loneliness and Solitude in Grief : <https://www.griefhealingblog.com/2012/02/loneliness-and-solitude-in-grief.html>

Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word solitude to express the glory of being alone. ~ Paul Tillich

If you are among those traveling the winding path of grief, you're probably quite familiar with both these sides of being alone: loneliness and solitude. With an overwhelming sense of missing the one you love comes the crushing awareness of all that you have lost. You'd give anything to be together again, if only long enough to be relieved of your loneliness and to be reassured that your loved one is still a part of your life. At other times you may feel a need for solitude. You'll want to be by yourself, to get away from other people and withdraw temporarily from the pressures and decisions of daily life. This need to turn inward, to reflect on your loss, to get in touch with your innermost feelings is common and not to be feared. In fact it can be a helpful time for you to find your tears and figure out where you are going from here.

Isolation from Others: Our culture isn't comfortable with the subject of death, and few of us know how to cope with the pain of loss and grief. We don't permit or encourage the free expression of sorrow. Instead we learn to control our feelings and hide our pain so we won't disturb other people. As a child you may have learned that grief is a taboo subject, that feelings should be buried, and that grieving should be done alone. As an adult you may equate grieving with self indulgence or self-pity. You may be too embarrassed or ashamed to let your emotions show in front of others. You may feel isolated, different and apart from everyone else, convinced that no one understands and you must grieve alone. You may feel stunned at the normalcy of life around you as people go about their business, totally unaware that your world has stopped and your entire life has been turned upside down. You may be reluctant to turn to others, either because you haven't learned to accept or ask for help, or because you're afraid others won't know what to do with your feelings. If they're unfamiliar with the intensity and duration of grief or uncomfortable with the expression of strong emotions, they may offer only meaningless platitudes or clichés, change the subject or avoid you altogether. And there may be times when you will feel hurt by thoughtless, trivializing comments such as: It was God's will; I know how you feel; Life must go on; Count your blessings; You must be strong for your children; It could be worse; or At least s/he had a good life. Some people you know may be done with your grieving long before you are, expecting you to be "over it by now" or worrying that you're somehow "hanging on" to your grief. Uncomfortable with your strong feelings, they may change the subject or avoid any mention of your loved one's name.

Suggestions for Coping with Loneliness and Isolation: Think about who is supportive to you in your environment and what gives your life purpose and direction (family members, pets, relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, teachers, colleagues, clubs, athletic activities, groups, church groups, support groups, bereavement counselor). With whom are you most comfortable, and who is the most comfortable (accepting and caring) with your grief? Look for those who will listen without judging you, or for those who have suffered a similar loss. Find time with others to talk, to touch, to receive support. Be honest with others about what you're feeling. Allow yourself to express your sadness rather than masking it. Don't expect others to guess what you need. When you want to be touched, held, hugged, listened to or pampered, say so. If all you want from others is help with simple errands, tasks, and repairs, say so. Let others (especially children) know if and when you need to be alone, so they won't feel rejected. Go somewhere and have a good, long cry— and do it as often as you wish. You have every right to miss the person who has died. Accept your feelings as normal. Find time alone to process what's happened: to remember, to dream, and to think. Identify your loneliest times, and think of how you can alter your routines and environment (for example, rearrange the furniture in a room; plan your weekends ahead of time; use your microwave for quick, easy meals).

While some folks really are thoughtless and don't think before they speak, bear in mind that many well meaning individuals have yet to experience a significant loss, so they really don't know what grief feels like, or how to respond, or what to say. They aren't deliberately trying to hurt you. You can choose to bear with such people, you can enlighten them about what you know of grief, or you can look to others who are more understanding to find the support you need. Realize that no one can totally understand the relationship you had with your loved one. Ask people to remember, talk about and share stories about your loved one with you. Become more aware of how your own usage of words affects other people. Rather than saying something hurtful, admit that you don't know what to say. Consider getting a companion animal (which can be a wonderful source of unconditional love), but only after you've investigated what kind of pet would suit you and your lifestyle.

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg newsletter

Shuddering

In Roger Rosenblatt's Kayak Morning: Reflections on Love, Grief and Small Boats, he writes, "Ginny tells me that I sigh a lot. I was not aware of it. I don't know what it means." Dennis Apple noticed the sighs of his wife. His book Life after the Death of My Son describes it this way: "from the other side of the bed, I would hear a sad sigh, like a weary mountain climber picking up her heavy backpack and preparing to climb Mount Everest after a sleepless night."

I don't sigh. I shudder. I looked it up. It means "to tremble with a sudden convulsive movement, as from horror, fear, or cold." Yes, that's it. I glimpse a photograph out of the corner of my eye, or notice the circle of tall holly trees in the front yard that my son used to call his "fort," or I'm attacked by an intrusive thought of the circumstances of his death. And I shudder. It's as though my body is trying to shake off the reality. It just can't be; it just can't be. My body is railing against this awful truth; this unspeakable, still somehow new, truth. My son is gone. I shudder to think of it.

Peggi Johnson, TCF/Arlington, VA

Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Post Traumatic Stress—My experience

I can't say when the word 'disorder' should be added to this term. This is a job for specialists. I just want to collect some thoughts on this aspect of bereavement, about which I received insufficient acknowledgement or explanation. It is 5 years since my darling girl was killed. I feel I have come out of the fog enough to reflect on the journey so far.

Receiving the news of her death, I felt as if I had instantly turned to ice. I could not get warm no matter what I did. I'm not sure how long it took for my body to return to a normal temperature, but I know that to be warm I needed more clothes than others for some months at least. Pain in my hips became more troublesome around 2 years after Hannah's death, though X-rays did not reveal anything of note. Now, 5 years and several X-rays later, I have progressed from 'mild' to 'moderate' osteo-arthritic degeneration. I even feel her loss in my bones, it seems.

Probably the worst PTS symptom of all is the loss of resilience. I am plunged into a state-like depression when the inevitable setbacks of life occur. I have recovered somewhat from computer phobia - in the first couple of years I used to burst into tears regularly, whenever those little, normal irritating glitches happened. I still have to force myself to use the computer, as I do also to learn to use any new appliance - my new printer sat in its box for months, as did my new overlocker. Someone inattentive ran into the back of my car recently. Negotiations about this set off stress symptoms like a fast heart rate. I sometimes experience palpitations when under relatively minor stress.

I expected the effects on mental functioning to wear off, but they haven't completely, yet. I still have a peculiar kind of dyslexia, especially under extra stress, in which I start writing words with the second letter. I make mistakes such as reading 12 for 21. I have trouble recalling recent incidents, and especially names of things and people I know well. I thought I might have been experiencing early Alzheimer's symptoms (maybe I am) until someone explained the effects of post-traumatic stress. It's been helpful to set all this down rather than trying to push it to the back of my mind. But most of all, my aim in writing has been to try to encourage all who are recently bereaved to go easy on themselves, and to seek whatever help they can.

It's all normal; you are not going mad or senile!

M. Barry, Gratefully lifted from TCF/Victoria, Australia



Sibling Page



Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discounted grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling. My personal "favorite" line said to siblings is, "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me, I knew I couldn't.

The grief of siblings may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend. While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with the death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of sibling are also often discounted when decisions are being made on things ranging from a funeral plan to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased. Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things, such as favorite clothes or music, can serve two purposes when planning funeral or memorial services. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this, so people will know. Jane Machado TCF Tulare, CA
Lifted with thanks from Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

In Memory Of My Sister

My sister's last day upon this earth was a glorious one. The sun shone strongly enough that her cheeks were rosy, and the breeze was just enough to ruffle a few of her curls, and yet I cannot remember any conversation or special words.

I remember a feeling of security, of bonding, and of admiration for this witty, spirited eighteen-year-old who was 361 days my elder sister. I felt happy to be with my sister who radiated her love for me constantly. As best friends but also as sisters, there was not only familial love and blood between us, but also an intense liking for each other. I say this because I hold a different feeling above and beyond love for Rachel. She was essential to my life and my happiness. I feel very lucky to have had such an intimate relationship with a person I hold in such great esteem.

Rachel was my role model, and many times I longed not to be myself, but to be her instead. I admired her determination for success, her enthusiasm for life, and the genuine nature of her affection. At age 18, she was a whole person, with so much to give to her parents, her friends, and her sister. She expected in return only an open ear willing to listen to her funny, exaggerated stories. Few people possess the zeal with which my sister lived and touched others.

Throughout the past few years, I have followed a path parallel to the path she blazed and struggled to clear for herself. I grieve for the loss of a person I respected, a sister I loved, a best friend I cherished. My consolation is found in the part of Rachel which lives inside me and the seventeen years of my life which were spent with her. I shall grieve, as others will, but I will stop. I will live my life purposefully. I will be me, a person who is actually a combination of my sister and myself. I feel that I will always have Rachel looking down upon me, guiding me toward happiness and peace.

[Laura Wexler, TCF, Penn-MD Line, MD]

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Memories of my brother

Why is it so very hard
Accepting you are gone;
I guess the thought is unbearable
And I am not that strong.

I am too afraid to face the truth
And scared to feel the pain,
Of never seeing your sweet face
Or hearing your voice again.

Sometimes I see you in my dreams
And picture you still here,
Till I awaken dreadfully
To watch you disappear.

You were always happy and carefree,
And I don't understand
How you can seem so real to me,
As your grasp slips from my hand.

The sixteen years of life you had
Somehow do not compare,
To the tragic, senseless death you
faced
And the cross you had to bear.

I try to think of pleasant times
And the childhood memories,
But guilt and sorrow haunt my soul
And I cannot break free.

I am sorry for the times we fought
And for treating you so badly.
I am sorry for ignoring you
And wasting the time we had.

You were and are my brother still.
When you took your last breath,
A part of me went on with you
And I shall mourn your death.

Jennifer, TCF/Ellicott City, MD
Lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter
Newsletter

Suicide Bereavement: A Lonely Journey

Being bereaved through suicide can feel very confusing. An insect and even a blade of grass fight for survival. The want to end one's life is clearly an unnatural finish that is incomprehensible for those left behind. Why? Why did they do it? Why couldn't I stop it? So many questions and so few answers, we try to search for some kind of peace and understanding to make sense of what has happened. Sometimes we have been left with notes, letters, and like in my case, we knew our loved one was terribly unwell. Sometimes there aren't any obvious signs, no goodbyes. Is it recklessness? Is it impulsivity? Risk-taking behaviour? What can lead someone to end their life?

I agonised over what to write here. I've written about suicide so many times. It shattered my life and I've had to rebuild it piece by piece. One of the heartbreaking issues we face as siblings and suicide survivors is the fact that not only are we the 'forgotten mourners' of the family, but we are not allowed to publicly grieve in the way others are. People are scared of suicide. It makes them feel uncomfortable. There is a long standing myth that talking about it makes it more likely to happen. Cancer - that can be made sense of. Not the reasons for it, but the reason a person died. They didn't want to go. But they were medically and terminally ill. Illness of the mind is impossible to make sense of. It isn't tangible. There is no physical treatment like surgery or chemotherapy. There may be pills but their effect is still relatively unknown.

I didn't feel that I could tell people how my sister died for a long time. I felt like it was too much, for them to handle and for me to handle if they didn't react in a way that was kind and compassionate (sometimes through no fault of their own). I found a book called *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One*. There are countless stories in their of people's experiences of bereavement through suicide. Reading these made me feel a little less alone. Forums and Facebook pages have made me feel a little less alone. This book talks about letting go of the silence. While I would like to review this book in greater detail, I will say that on a personal level, letting go of the silence is a breakthrough for me. I remember my father holding a suicide bereavement group a number of years ago. People told their stories. I told mine & said "for the first time in my life I can say, 'I had a sister, and she died by suicide.'" I broke down in tears but felt the most free I had since the day we lost her. So I encourage you to speak up.

You know what kind of impact it can have: on you and on those around you.

Written by Alexandra
Lifted from TCF Victoria April-May 2015
Reprinted from TCF Queensland Newsletter



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 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

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