

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 206

APRIL MAY 2025



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

RETURN ADDRESS
72 TOTARA STREET,
NEWFIELD,
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 021 2155279, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

I asked grief, how long she would stay?
For as many days as you love him,
she answered.
Then we will be sharing
my lifetime together, I said.

Central Indiana Chapter

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Andrew Meldrum Cox
Jack Stephen Dyer
Simon Blair Marsh
Nicholas Ian O'Hara
Caren Amanda Phillips
Alan Bruce Scoringe
Anthony Mark Staite
Jonathon Upton

Born 16/4/68
Born 24/4/07
Born 8/4/84
Born 17/4/74
Born 16/4/81
Born 26/4/66
Born 5/4/74
Born 15/4/68

Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold
Rebecca Clare Halkett
Greg Holley
Matthew David Hubber
Sally Verone Kitto
Robbie Knight
Jake Lucas
Nikolaas Remmerswaal
Gary Brendon Thompson
Hayden Watson

Died 6/4/02
Died 20/4/03
Died 6/4/85
Died 30/4/00
Died 23/4/01
Died 18/4/96
Died 26/4/77
Died 1/4/12
Died 9/4/96
Died 11/4/97

Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold
Nicholas Evan Hood
Vicky Knight
Paul John Nicolaou
Cindy Parish
Liam Vettors
David Jason Eugene Walker
James Wing

Born 9/5/1978
Born 12/5/1985
Born 21/5/1980
Born 21/5/1964
Born 25/5/1965
Born 1/5/2005
Born 7/5/1993
Born 31/5/1980

Paul Graham Albrecht
Michael Barry Duke
Ben Henderson
Erica Kewish
Thomas Craig McDonald
Maryann Gaye Pearce
Wayne Edward Summers
David Jason Eugene Walker
Peter Gregory Warren
Dan Wells
Timothy James Williams

Died 19/5/2004
Died 20/5/2005
Died 15/5/2003
Died 14/5/2014
Died 25/5/2008
Died 27/5/2000
Died 9/5/1999
Died 13/5/ 2000
Died 17/5/1998
Died 13/5/2003
Died 29/5/2005

Dear Friends,

Recently I was talking with a friend about flying. My friend revealed she was never really comfortable with flying whereas I said I loved it. I told her about the first time I went on a plane after Ben died. As the plane took off, for a fleeting moment I felt like we were flying straight up to Heaven and I would see Ben. I clearly remember the happiness and joy I felt at that time and know that I had the biggest smile on my face. I still remember that moment every time I take off in a plane and smile.

A couple of days later my friend sent me this poem.

On my way

My anticipation was immense.
It was like sitting on the edge of a seat at the movies,
only this time I was in an aircraft -
leaning forward, every cell in my body on-alert.
I was on the way to see Ben -
exxxciting!

No he doesn't live in my city of destination
he left such a while ago now
at a time I wasn't expecting it
whilst with my friends at a bach at Moeraki.
A rainbow had mesmerised me as I'd gazed across the ocean that afternoon -

that night they came to say
to tell me
that
my son had been run over,
my precious baby 14 years that January.
Ben was just being a teenager
running, doing, being.
A vehicle connected with him on the motorway.

And so today I'm not going to see him
but in a zone of my mind
momentarily
I believe that I am!
I'm flying up, up, up
to see Ben in heaven.

I'm not sad today
this is so exciting
as some part of me
is connecting with my baby.
He will always be my baby
my boy Ben!

I feel love
- such love and
- pure excitement

I'm so happy,
it's a beautiful feeling - remembering.
Rowena Hutton

Isn't it interesting how our mind works sometimes. Honestly for that split second I truly felt like I was going up to see Ben.

To all the Mothers out there, I wish you a moment like this and many happy memories to remember and share with loved ones this Mothers Day.

Page 3 TCF Otago August Sept 2016

Lesley Henderson.



The guilt - and bittersweet relief - of forgetting the anniversary of my teenage son's death.

*British author Dinah Jeffries opens up about dealing with grief over time.
From The Daily Mail, 25.5.23*

Clearing out a cupboard in my writing shed, I pulled out a shoebox filled with old photographs and began sifting through them. One — of my son, Jamie, aged about four having his face painted at a fair — stopped me in my tracks. But then pictures of him always do. Whenever I see my boy's beautiful face it triggers thoughts of the child I carry in my heart, but whom I've learnt not to allow to live in my head. Otherwise, I risk being paralysed by memories. Jamie died almost 38 years ago. But I've been journeying through the grief of that terrible loss ever since.

As I remembered him that day, as pain and love jostled for position, I suddenly thought: 'What day is it?' Grabbing my phone, I saw that it was, unbelievably, the day after the anniversary of Jamie's death at 14. For the first time, I had forgotten it. I froze to the spot, shocked it was even possible I could have done that.

It isn't that I make a big thing of marking the day Jamie died, or make a point of remembering his birthday — it's just that I instinctively know when these dates come around and feel the inevitable pangs of sadness and loss. Hardly believing I could have missed this one, I thought back to the previous day. I'd gone out for coffee with some author friends, then returned home to write before listening to an audiobook in the afternoon. In other words, the day had gone by and it had been a good one. I went inside to make a cup of tea feeling disorientated, the same words going round in circles inside my head: 'Oh my goodness, that was yesterday, and I was out, and I didn't remember.' While the kettle boiled I went on Twitter, posting the picture of Jamie that had triggered my memory in the first place. Underneath it, I wrote: 'Yesterday — the anniversary of my 14-year-old son's death. Yesterday — the day I had coffee with writer friends. Yesterday — the first time I forgot what day it was. Is that good or bad?' That question was purely rhetorical. I wasn't looking for an answer. I just wanted to mark what had happened and, in the moment, posting my thoughts into cyberspace was all I could think to do. I certainly wasn't expecting the many kind comments I got back, including a suggestion that my forgetting could be seen as a gift from my son.

I went back to my shed comforted by that idea. Jamie was such a generous soul, so very loving, he would have hated the idea of me being dragged down by the anniversary of his death. Returning to the shoebox, some pieces of broken pottery caught my eye. They'd once been an ornament Jamie had made for me at school aged eight — a half-moon shaped out of clay with a man set into it. For years, both before and after Jamie died, this ornament had sat on a shelf wherever I lived, most recently in the home I now share with my second husband, Richard. But we were burgled while away on holiday in 2000. I found it smashed on the floor when we arrived home. I remember gathering up the pieces and weeping, utterly distraught. I didn't care about the cameras, CDs and various other bits of tech that had been taken — they were just 'things' that could be replaced. But that ornament had come from Jamie's hands. Bereft, I'd put it, broken as it was, inside that shoebox to keep it safe. But now here I was, 23 years later, looking at those pieces of pottery again and asking myself: 'Why are you keeping this, Dinah? Your son died. This ornament doesn't mean anything. It can't bring him back. It isn't him.' Finally, 37 years and a day after his death, I felt ready to consider letting that broken pot go.

Jamie died in a terrible accident on a sunny Saturday. Five days earlier, we had been celebrating my daughter's 11th birthday at an adventure park. Before, we were a normal enough and very happy family. I had separated from my first husband, Jon, a couple of years earlier. The split had been amicable and our children saw their father as often as possible. Jamie had met up with friends in the grounds of the local private school and got onto an older boy's motorbike. He'd never ridden one before; he lost control and smashed through a glass door, severing a carotid artery in his neck. He died at the scene. That same morning, I'd opened a letter saying Jamie had won a scholarship to the school where the accident happened. He'd been a pupil there until a few months earlier, but had to leave because I could no longer afford the fees. He was quietly doing his comprehensive school homework in bed as I read this letter out to him. I remember he flung his school books to the floor then picked up his guitar to play one of his favourite John Lennon songs. Jubilant, he hugged me and said: 'This is the happiest day of my life.' I drove Jamie to the school so he could celebrate with his friends.

I watched him go to them without the faintest idea it would be the last time I would see him alive. A turn of his head, a toothy grin, a little wave and my talented, clever boy was gone. All those years of loving and caring for him were over, and I didn't even know it yet. There was no chance to say a proper good-bye, or tell him how much I loved him. For months afterwards, I relived that last image of my beloved son, scrutinising it for non-existent clues that might hint at what lay ahead. It tormented me almost as much as the other wretched one I also now had of him — laid out in a hospital mortuary, his skin waxen and an unearthly white, not looking a bit like himself.

At first the grief of Jamie's death destroyed me. Pain cut through the shock of what had happened — of him being here one minute, gone the next. Everything hurt, physically and emotionally. I felt like I'd been through a war; like the stuffing had been knocked out of me. The sense of loss was profound. Happiness became a concept I couldn't grasp. I kept seeing Jamie as an incredibly detailed and moving image in my mind. His hands, the look on his face, the way his hair was, the colour of his eyes, his skin — it was almost as real as if he was standing before me. Except now he had gone.

Thankfully, I was mentally quite a strong person and still am. That doesn't mean my mental health wasn't affected — it was. I just have a level of bloody-mindedness and resilience that kept me going; that gave me the strength to limp through the early years, hollow, but living. But that's only because I had to. I still had my daughter, who needed me, because she'd lost the brother she deeply loved, too. I felt grateful that through it all I still had her warm body to hold.

Grief isn't linear and when people talk about the five stages — denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance — they oversimplify a process that is profoundly different for everyone who experiences it. For me, there was no denial. I saw Jamie's broken body after I got called to the school; I saw the blood. There was no bargaining to be done either. My boy had gone and no pleading would bring him back. But anger, well, there was plenty of that. A terrible rage burned inside of me. I railed against God, against the world, against the universe that took my child, who I loved more than I ever knew it was possible to love — and even then, that wasn't enough. I could still conjure up that agony of loss at any moment. And depression, too. There were dark days when I didn't want to go on. Sometimes, I think back to that time and I've no idea how I'm still here, breathing. Except I had my daughter and I had to go on for her. But I was destroyed — and that's an understatement.

Finally, there was acceptance — something I soon discovered you're forced to renew daily, starting the very first time you wake up after they've gone. Every morning, even years later, the first thing I did was remember what had happened and then I would have to accept that fact all over again before I could even get out of bed. Sometimes, even now, I go through the same process. In the end, though, I discovered that time passes and you learn to live with the grief of losing your child — that's it, that's the bottom line, your child has gone and somehow you just have to carry on.

That's not to say it stops hurting, it's just that the pain changes and becomes more manageable. At first, for me anyway, and for many months, it was just all so ghastly all of the time. I fought the pain, until I realised it's much better to let it happen because you cry, you feel bad for however long it takes and then you feel a little bit better. Over time, the pain remained excruciating, but it came and then it went. As the years passed, I found it eased a little, but I seemed to carry it with me all the time. Now, though, it's hardly ever painful at all. But it still can be: I could conjure up that agony of loss at any moment if I wanted to. But I don't want to, if it's going to damage the present — because, as forgetting Jamie's anniversary surely showed, that's where I've learnt to live. Years ago, I made a conscious decision that I didn't want to be pitied, seen forever as the woman whose son died and who never got over it. I can't say when that happened — grief turns the past into a blur. I just know that I didn't want to feel broken my whole life.

Writing — being creative, making something from the intangible ideas in my head — was the answer for me. At first I used it as a form of therapy, spewing out my feelings onto the page. Then, nearly 15 years ago, I took control and began writing fiction. Discovering the joy of creativity, losing myself in the process, I realised that was what I was meant to do. The experience of losing Jamie has inspired my writing ever since. Before he died I wasn't as compassionate; I had none of the sensitivity or awareness of human suffering that I do now. His death turned me into a better person.

My first novel, *The Separation*, was published in 2014, which gave me confidence in myself again. After all, my child had died — I was supposed to look after him and make sure he survived, and yet I didn't manage to do that so, in my eyes, I was a failure. My latest novel, *The*

Hidden Palace, an historical novel set in Malta during the Second World War, is my ninth.

Writing my books, connecting with my readers, has become something else to live for outside of my precious family — a final gift from Jamie.

I could, of course, have glued that ornament he made back together. Instead, I decided to let it go. Putting those broken pieces into a bin bag, knowing that I would never see them again, brought it home to me that nothing can change what happened to Jamie, but neither can anything take him away from me now. These years of grieving have given him back to me, because now he lives in my heart. He's in the bones of me and I can bring him to mind any time I choose.

That doesn't mean my journey through grief has ended. I expect I'll continue walking that path for the rest of my life. But right now I have reached a place of peace, which is the best place any grieving parent can ever hope to be.

Dinah Jeffries

Lifted with thanks from TCF FOCUS NSW

Your absence is a weight I never imagined I'd have to bear.
 It's not just the loss of you but the shape of you in my life,
 the space you filled, your love in my life.
 This weight isn't something I can put down or set aside;
 it's a part of me now, woven into every breath and step.
 It's the heaviest thing I've ever carried,
 not because it overwhelms me every moment,
 but because it's constant— unchanging in its depth.
 And yet, somehow, I keep moving,
 learning to carry what I cannot leave behind.

- Louise Rees, TCF/Victoria

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.

Just One More Time

My thoughts are with all of you this weekend. Since Nina died, I have a renewed interest in Easter weekend. Funny that it was during the middle years of my life, after Nina died, that Easter began to hold extra special meaning; well, the true meaning, anyway.

Most of my Easters previous were just worrying about getting the house in order to cook a ham dinner for 25 people or more, buying things for the Easter baskets for my four children and wondering where to hide them, what to wear to church, etc. Not that those things aren't important, but that was before I lost my innocence.

In the early days of my grief, my anger at God far outweighed thoughts of anything else. Anything that had a God-like meaning connected to it I wanted nothing to do with. For the most part, I was shaking my fist at Him for taking my Nina away from me.

I think that my anger started to thaw somewhat after I read the book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Rabbi Harold Kushner. Rabbi Kushner had also lost a child to death. I believed after reading his book that God didn't point the finger at my daughter and say May 11, 1995. "Okay, time is up. You're coming with me!" like I had believed and despised Him for it. But rather that He was there sitting next to me, shedding tears along with me for the pain of my loss. That He was there to be a comfort to me. Anyway, that is what I got out of reading the book and it had so much validity to it coming from not only a Man of the Cloth, but one who also had suffered through the loss of a beloved child.

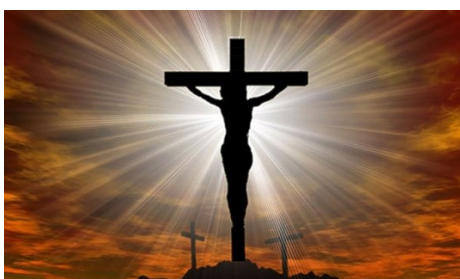
Almost a year later, the Easter after Nina died, I surprisingly found myself at church. The pastor of that church, Pastor Joel, had been so kind and comforting to our family after Nina died; sort of took our family under his wing after we felt abandoned by our former church. I remember really listening hard to the sermon given that day and found it interesting that at the ripe ol' age of 46 years old I suddenly found the true meaning of Easter and what it meant to us came through loud and clear! That Jesus had suffered and died, and risen from the cross that day so that we all might have eternal life. This was the promise given us that we would see our children again someday! This has now become a day of hope where I focus on seeing my Nina again, that we will ALL see our children again.

To those of you new in your grief, this is, for the most part, an impossible thing to think about. I will not say that I still don't have my moments of anger at God, even if they are misdirected. I think someone told me once that I could give it to God; that He has big shoulders and can take my anger.

What else do we have to cling to other than this hope...the hope that someday we will experience joy again, someday we will not feel the all encompassing sorrow, the kind that takes your breath away, for the rest of our lives? And, ultimately, the hope that we will wrap our children in our arms again and live together for eternity.

"Those who leave us in the springtime of their lives, will greet us again in a land where springtime is eternal."

Peace and Easter blessings to all my compassionate friends,
Cathy Seehuetter TCF/St. Paul, MN
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



Comfort through The Compassionate Friends

After a lot of hard work to deal with childhood trauma, life was amazing! I had all that I ever wanted – a family, a loving husband, Martin and four precious children who, at the time, ranged from my eldest son, Abe (19) through Elijah (16) and Leticia (14), to our youngest son Joshua (10). Life was good and I felt so very happy and blessed.

Valentine's Day 1997 was to change our world forever. I woke with a weird feeling but kept it to myself. We all went to school and work as normal. I worked in a bank. On this day, I received a call from Elijah, to say he'd heard that Abe had been involved in an accident. I told him not to worry, whilst feeling the blood drain away from me. I excused myself from work and made several calls to police and hospitals - I don't even recall finding all these phone numbers! None of them had any information. I then called the Coroners' office, gave my son's name to the man who took the call, saying he may have been in an accident. The man put me on hold and when he returned, he asked for the name again and, casually replied, "Yeah, he's here."

There was an animal in the room, who made a hideous and loud roaring howl. That animal was me and I felt like I had electricity going through my whole body. The bank manager called the police who drove me home – to face what was left of my family. What greeted me was one hysterical son asking me to confirm that it wasn't true. Another son was bewildered and frightened. Surely, I must have landed on another planet! This isn't real. It must be a mistake.

In those early days, weeks, and months, I didn't want to sleep, as I didn't want to wake up to my new hideous world. It seemed the rest of the world around me was surreal, I felt like an alien on another. I know my children struggled also but I could barely be there for them, other than to go through the motions, on auto. I couldn't be the wife I was to my dear husband either. I hated the world, God, life, and everyone who had all their children. I struggled to find a purpose for living. Whilst that sounds selfish, my pain was so great. I was frightened that my life was going to remain like this forever and I couldn't bear it!

About six months later, I found a bereaved parent organisation, The Compassionate Friends Victoria. I was trembling when making that first call, but immediately felt 'connected' to the lady who took the call and gently welcomed me to an organisation that no one wants to be a member of. This gentle woman explained that all who work there are themselves bereaved parents or siblings. She told me that my feelings were normal and that eventually, with time, the pain would ease. This was such a relief and my fears of remaining in that surreal and very dark space, were alleviated. They became my lifeline to my new world!

After about five years and focusing on family and work, I became a volunteer at the centre. I took grief calls and spoke publicly about my experience on behalf of the organisation. I actually started to live again - rather than just being alive. Through speaking, supporting, and giving other bereaved parents hope, I had found a new purpose, other than my remaining precious children and amazing husband. I continue to volunteer in honour and memory of my cherished son.

I can finally feel that whilst life gives you tragic events, you have the opportunity to use them in a positive way- eventually. I believe if I didn't have the resilience to survive my early years, I may not have been able to be in the positive place I am today. My life is very precious and I use it to be the best person I can be, for myself, my family and for those also struggling though this tragic nightmare. It also gives purpose to my life and gives honour to my son, for the life he never got to complete. This has always been my belief, to try to find a positive in the negative. It is usually there, but only when we come through the other side of our pain, do we see it.

I still miss and think of my precious Abe, every single day, but with a loving warmth, not pain. I am who and where I am today, because of where I've been.

Sue Brown TCF Victoria



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

Lovingly lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



September

The morning sun kissed her face. September flowers smiled.
By afternoon the clouds rolled in. Her heart still beat, yet died.

In the blink of an eye. The expel of one breath.
The torture entered her domain. The meagre shell of a woman.
A bewildered Mother.

Was all that would remain. "It can't be!" "It's not true!"
"Do not utter such a lie!"
"You've got it wrong!" "That's not MY life!" "MY daughter does not die!"

She hears the words that paralyse. Her mind just can't process.
A moment later, reality hits. The woman is a mess.

HOPES. DREAMS. BEAUTY. FAITH. Stripped from her naked soul.
Her earthly body lets her down and dissolves what once was whole.

She rose each day after that. And never felt that sun.
The flowers seemed to mock her now. "There goes nobody's Mum!"

The hours became days, days became weeks and subsequently years.
That empty house and empty life were filled with all her tears.

There IS one thing that held her tight. It's been a stoic friend.
It cannot die. It will not flee. It doesn't have an end.

That thing is LOVE.

A constant pal. It's never left her heart.
It's waiting there patiently. They've never been apart.



She loved the child that grew in her. The child that she gave birth.
The child that blossomed for her eyes. Then left this place called earth.

And if there is an afterlife. If her beliefs have any hold.
She thinks she can see-out this life. And maybe she'll grow old.

And once again that sun will kiss. And September flowers smile.
And she'll see her daughter walked each step. And was with her all the while.



Written by Bernadette Lowden Mum of 'BRIANNA EVE' 24
Reprinted with love from TCF Victoria

OLIVIA'S CANDLE

My husband and I lost our baby, Olivia, during pregnancy and, having no funeral or other traditional means of finding a place for our feelings of loss and love for this cherished person, a person many believe never lived at all, we settled on burning a candle for 24 hours every time the death date passes. Beside the candle is this poem.

"To our beloved Olivia, whose life-light burned so briefly:
You are forever a part of us as we remember and relive
The joy with which we discovered you and
The sadness with which we accepted your departure.
The light and the love you lit in us burns on..."

Patti Williams, TCF/NE GA

Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter



POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

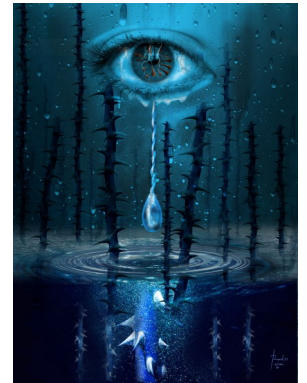
You are all invited to submit poem's, in memory of your child/children. These may be original poems or one that you have read which means something to you and your loved ones. Please remember to add the authors name if known.

Not Really Me

You look at me and think I'm like you
 Or you know me and comment to friends
 on how well I'm doing
 And yes, I am doing well, whatever that means
 Or at least a lot better
 than I was eighteen months ago
 I can smile at the store clerk who says
 "have a nice day" and say "you too"
 We even celebrated Christmas this year-
 Last year we couldn't and didn't



But, this isn't really me anymore
 I don't know who I am now
 And you who have known me for years
 don't know me anymore
 You only think I'm the same person
 But I'm not
 I'm like an actress playing someone else's role
 because I can't believe this new life is mine to live
 To fill in the endless days and possibly years without you
 To forget all the dreams I had for the future



How does one live without dreams and hope
 How can I manage when nothing
 I or anyone else can do
 will "fix" today or tomorrow
 It is said that time heals and I'm sure that's true
 And yes,
 I know there will be moments of happiness
 But without you to share those moments they'll be diminished
 Without your joy for all of life
 It will be so much less
 For you were my future
 And this world is so empty without you -

Lois Hoggan, TCF Vancouver Reflections From the Heart

Lisa K. Boehm

Child Loss, Grief & Secondary Loss after a Child Dies

The ripple effect of child loss...

As if the death of a child wasn't enough, parents who have lost a child have to deal with a life-time of losses, or secondary losses. Loss of a child is the primary loss and everything after that, or the ripples, is secondary loss.

These are the reminders that there will be no happily-ever-after for us, or our kids. No one can prepare us for this because it's a gradual unfolding as we live our lives. We realize we have to endure the loss of more than just our child. Everything changes after our child dies. Secondary losses are part of the reason why grief lasts a lifetime. Not only are we faced to live a life that isn't the one we intended to live, but the reality is that we will face secondary loss for the rest of our days. I think this is an important thing for our supporters, friends, and family to know as well. This collateral damage generally unfolds over time and is often unanticipated. You don't think about it until you have to face it. Some things may seem obvious, such as living through all the annual events that our kids should be here for. Examples are birthdays, Christmas, and family holidays.

But the secondary losses go way beyond those times. Here is a list of some of the secondary losses you might face on your grief journey:

1. Loss of identity. No matter how many children you have, losing a child changes your identity. I am now seen as a mom of one (even though I always say I am the mom of two). I'm also 'labelled' as the mom whose child died. Maybe you are too. I'm sure no one means any harm by that, but sometimes I feel like that's what I am most known for.
2. Loss of friends/changed relationships. Death makes people weird and awkward. Sometimes people avoid us because they don't know what to say or do. We are any parent's worst nightmare and we make child loss a reality that no one wants to think about. If it can happen to us, it can happen to anyone. If people avoid us, they avoid acknowledging that they could lose a child too. And some people.... well, they just get tired of hearing about our loss. Personally, I don't have the time or energy for that, so those relationships fizzle.
3. Loss of sense of safety. If my daughter could die in a car accident on dry roads, in the absence of alcohol and drugs, and without cell phone use or distracted driving, certainly anyone could die any time. My sense of reality changed the night my daughter Katie died. There are no guarantees. When the front door closes behind someone, it could be the last time I see them. I don't like living in fear, but this is a by-product of loss.
4. Loss of family structure. In my heart, we will always be a family of four, but on the outside we are a family of three now. There is a huge, gaping hole in my family, in my house, and even at my kitchen table. Coping with the question "how many children do you have?" nearly brings me to my knees some days. At restaurants, I have caught myself answering 'four' when the hostess asks "for how many?".
5. Loss of my child's future...and mine. Not only are the birthdays, Christmases, and family holidays mourned, but so is the wedding my daughter will never have, the family she will never get to begin, and all the milestones that every parent looks forward to. Graduation season continues to be a struggle for me. Katie was an academic and a fashionista. She was looking forward to graduating grade 12 with so much anticipation. I am reminded every year that she will never get past grade 12. I will never get to be the mother of the bride and help Katie with her wedding and I will not get to hold her children. When other people share updates about their children, there is nothing to update about Katie. There are no photos and no new memories with her.
6. Loss of mental wellbeing. Gone are the days that I could live carefree and gone are the days where mental health struggles belong to someone else. Every single day involves self-care - mentally, physically, and spiritually. Every day, I check in with myself and do the work. I keep my head above the water, but I'd rather not contend with the challenges of managing anxiety, depression, and the suicidal thoughts that once plagued me.

While this post may seem rather dark and not my usual style of blog, I think it's important that we talk about and validate secondary losses. Sometimes just knowing that other people struggle with these things can bring a level of acceptance to our lives. Acknowledging secondary losses and the pain they leave is the first step to managing them. Then make sure to build your tool box of coping skills and use them regularly. I do this daily. And make sure to reach out to other mothers who are on this path. Only they can truly appreciate what you are going through. All of this takes time and buckets of patience. There is no replacement for the grieving process. It's something we have to figure out and live with. There's no short cut.

Walking beside you, Lisa

Lovingly lifted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

Support for Bereaved mothers on Mothers Day and all days.

In response to the survey result, The Comfort Company has issued a list of ten simple ways to reach out to a grieving mother on this difficult holiday.

- ◆ Recognize that they are a mother. Offer a hug and a “Happy Mother’s Day.”
- ◆ Send a card to let them know you remember they are a mother even though their child is not with them physically.
- ◆ Acknowledge they have had a loss. Express the message, “I know this might be a difficult day for you. I want to know that I am thinking you.”
- ◆ Use their child’s name in conversation. One mother responded, “People rarely speak his name anymore, but when they do it’s like music to my ears.”
- ◆ Visit the grave site. Many a mother felt it was extremely thoughtful when others visited their child’s grave site and left flowers or a small pebble near the headstone.
- ◆ Light a candle. Let the mother know you will light a candle in memory of her child on Mother’s Day.
- ◆ Share a memory of a picture of the child. Give the gift of a memory. One mother wrote that the “greatest gift you can give is a heartfelt letter about my child and a favourite memory with them.
- ◆ Send a gift of remembrance. Many mothers felt a small gift would be comforting. Suggestions included an angel statue, jewellery, a picture frame or a library book donated in the child’s name.
- ◆ Don’t try to minimize the loss. Avoid using any clichés that attempt to explain the death of a child (“God needed another angel.”) Secondly, don’t try to find anything positive about the loss (“You still have two other healthy children”)
- ◆ Encourage self-care. Self-care is an important aspect of the “healing the mind and spirit effort” according to several mothers. Encourage a grieving mother to take care of herself. Give her gift certificate to a day spa or any place where she can be pampered.

—Renee Wood Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg chapter Newsletter

*You should be here.
You shouldn't be missing all this.
My hope is that you have the best view of it all.
And that someday we will get to talk about it.*

Keepsake lane—facebook

Mother & Son

Briefly, you were taller than I,
tall enough that when we hugged my head rested
against your chest,
your body lean from growing so fast.
My body remembers how new it felt when you
gathered me in long, slender arms
the way I had once cradled you.
It is not the same to be held by your absence,
no warmth, no scent.
Still, I let myself be held by what is here—
No heartbeat but my own,
but oh, the love still growing.

-Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg





Sibling Page



10 Things Everyone Should Know About Siblings & Grief

<http://www.drchristinahibbert.com/dealing-with-grief/siblings-grief-10-things-everyone-should-know/> Dr Christina Hibbert

There are many things people need to learn about siblings and grief. Here are ten I would like everyone to know.

1) Sibling grief is often misunderstood—by parents, families, friends, and counsellors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?

2) Sibling grief “has been almost entirely overlooked in the literature on bereavement.” It’s no wonder, therefore, that even mental health providers misunderstand sibling grief. How are families supposed to know how to help siblings through grief if even the research on the subject is lacking?

3) Common emotions siblings may feel when a brother or sister dies include:

- Guilt
- Abandonment
- Loss of Innocence
- Fallout from the Family
- Somatic Symptoms
- Fears and Anxiety

4) Siblings may feel “trumped” by the grief of other family members. I sure felt this way, and it’s common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling’s own loss.

5) Young siblings lose innocence when a brother or sister dies, which may lead to fears and anxiety; “Survivor guilt” is also common. Experiencing death as a child becomes a lifelong experience of processing and understanding the loss. Children grow up with grief, understanding more as they get older. Fear of death or dying is common. Anxiety or worry about getting sick may become prevalent. In young siblings, guilt for provocative behaviour or for unacceptable feelings (jealousy) is common. Young children may think, before the death, “I wish my brother were dead!” then believe they somehow caused it to happen. Older siblings may wonder, “Why them and not me?” Because siblings are usually similar in age, it can bring up many questions about the sibling’s own life and death, and guilt along with it.

6) Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents’, siblings’, or other family members’ mistakes, emotional blowups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren’t so lucky.

At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a “parent” figure over the years, but the separation from my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly influenced my life. It profoundly changed our family.

7) Siblings may manifest somatic symptoms of grief, including symptoms that mimic the deceased sibling's symptoms. Especially in young children, symptoms like stomach aches, headaches, nightmares, body pain, digestive symptoms, and trouble sleeping are common. These should be seen as symptoms of grief, and hopefully, an adult in the family can help siblings work through their feelings and show them how to grieve.

8) Having someone explain the loss to younger siblings, to be there for them and help them grieve, is ideal. Little children don't comprehend death in the same way adults do. It is therefore important to have somebody who can walk them through the loss and the grief process, to explain it wasn't their fault, to validate what they feel. If parents aren't able to do so, another family member or friend may, and hopefully will, step in.

9) Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn't less simply because you're older. In fact, in many ways, it's harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven't developed abstract thinking and understanding, will. Grieve your loss.

10) My best advice for siblings in grief: feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be "over it by now." They don't know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It's not about "getting over" the loss of a sibling. You don't get over it. You create your life and move on, when you're ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life.

Feeling Better: The Sibling Perspective

I wish American society better acknowledged grief in general and that everyone inhabiting this Earth is on their own grief journey.

In April, I turned 40 and it was my second milestone birthday without my beloved big brother and only sibling, Chris. Family, old friends and new friends came to celebrate but there was still someone missing...and there always will be.

No one prepared me for the rollercoaster of emotions that I just couldn't seem to stop on my own. So, I did this difficult and scary thing, I asked for help.

Help comes in many different forms. I participated in weekly and monthly local grief coalitions. I had grief-induced health problems which prompted me to work with a functional medicine doctor. Bloodwork was drawn to determine hormone and vitamin levels which needed adjustments. I had to alter my diet to gluten-free and dairy-free. It was not easy but, WOW, I felt better. After a couple of failed tries, I found a good therapist who specialized in PTSD, EDMR, and brain spotting. We worked together for 2.5 years. After every session, I felt drained and needed time to not feel so depleted. After rest and enjoyable activities, WOW, I felt better.

I also found the Minneapolis Chapter of The Compassionate Friends 15 months after Chris died. I was welcomed with open arms from the predominately parent group. They encouraged me to attend my first TCF national conference and, WOW, I finally found "my people" --other bereaved sibs--and there were over 500 of them all in one place!

Educating myself was another big reason I started to feel better, and, for me, education and advocacy went hand in hand. I want people to know that the death of a loved one doesn't have to be a debilitating life sentence. Of course, there will be hurt, sadness, and grief to name a few, and we will miss them for the rest of our lives. BUT the raw pain we felt early on doesn't have to last forever.

Feeling better after the death of my brother has been the hardest work I've done in my life, but completely worth it. I can now often reflect on lots of different memories without them turning painful or filling me with overwhelming sadness.

My hope is that you too can find ways that make you keep feeling better.

Maggie Bauer, Christopher's Sister (In honor of Christopher Daniel Bauer, who died by suicide August 22nd, 2012)

Maggie Bauer is Chris' little sister, who died by suicide in August of 2012. He was a loving brother and dearly missed. Along the grief and healing journey, Maggie became a certified grief recovery specialist and grief educator. She has been the sibling loss facilitator for the Minneapolis Chapter of Compassionate Friends for 8 years. We Need Not Walk Alone
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipege Chapter News



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	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental) janpessione@xtra.co.nz (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	03-4487800
CENTRAL OTAGO	Pauline Trotter (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611
INVERCARGILL	Josie Dyer Vanessa Young (Jaylene 6yrs chemical poisoning) Southland Coordinators	0276321742 0273562271
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	021 688504 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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