



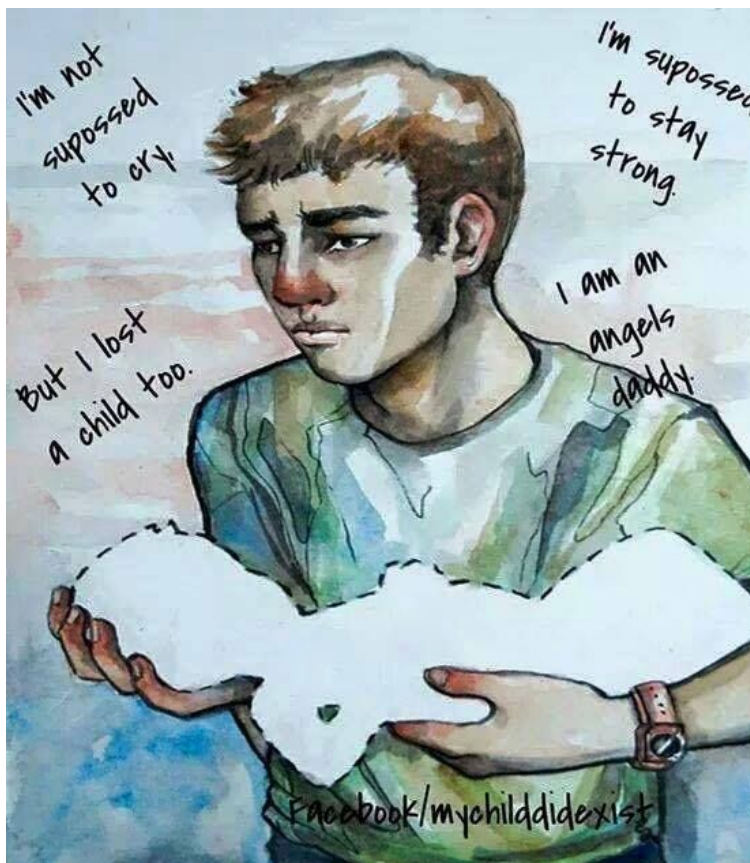
# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 179

AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2020



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 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](mailto:tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz)

I wanted to write down  
exactly what I felt  
but somehow  
the paper stayed empty  
  
and I could not have  
described it any better

-wtm

## Our Children ... Remembered with love

### Forever Young

### Forever Loved

### Forever Longed For

Brian Thomas Booth  
Sashi Coulter  
Michael Barry Duke  
Kirsten Jane Maydon  
Stefan David Maydon  
Trinity Lea Taylor  
Eddi Te Arihana Tutaki  
Peter Gregory Warren  
Dan Wells

Born 4/8/57  
Born 6/8/91  
Born 25/8/68  
Born 26/8/68  
Born 14/8/72  
Born 31/8/82  
Born 1/8/74  
Born 31/8/62  
Born 13/8/86

Brian Thomas Booth  
Jason Bradley Burford  
Christopher Burke  
Andrew Meldrum Cox  
Henare Wiremu Fielding  
Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton  
Hayden Ivan Pope  
Brendan James Vass  
Haydon Ross Whitaker

Died 26/8/58  
Died 25/8/13  
Died 22/8/00  
Died 15/8/68  
Died 2/8/02  
Died 29/8/01  
Died 11/8/08  
Died 8/8/05  
Died 19/8/04

Terry Barnfather  
Richard Craig Bell  
Jason Bradley Burford  
Christopher Burke  
Bevan Andrew Hookway  
Greg Holley  
Erica Kewish  
Hollie Jay Kirk  
Gordon Legge  
Pauline Anne Newall  
Cameron Smith  
Gary Brendon Thompson  
Ryan Ashley Thompson

Born 3/9/1953  
Born 11/9/1987  
Born 25/9/1993  
Born 12/9/1998  
Born 9/9/1990  
Born 12/9/1978  
Born 11/9/1995  
Born 11/9/2012  
Born 22/9/1976  
Born 10/9/1962  
Born 25/9/1999  
Born 27/9/1968  
Born 30/9/1985

Greg Burns  
Sashi Coulter  
Michael David Cox  
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell  
Nicholas Evan Hood  
Hollie Jay Kirk  
Anthea Gail McDowell  
Logan Scott O'Hara  
Georgia Rose Poplawski  
Thomas John Poplawski  
David Massey Reid  
Cameron Smith  
James Wing

Died 21/9/2004  
Died 6/9/2006  
Died 20/9/1996  
Died 22/9/2004  
Died 23/9/2004  
Died 11/9/2012  
Died 2/9/1987  
Died 28/9/1999  
Died 2/9/2005  
Died 2/9/2005  
Died 13/9/2000  
Died 23/9/2015  
Died 6/9/2000

Dear Friends,

As I was preparing this newsletter yesterday, a wave of sadness came over me. This is not unusual even after all these years of doing this. It comes from reading through many articles filled with sadness (although there are also many articles showing hope and inspiration). It is a sadness all bereaved parents and siblings share. It is a sadness that is always there, just under the surface and reading and learning about other bereaved parents journeys often brings this sadness to the surface. It is a sadness that my partner Guy feels and my surviving son Toby, but this sadness is only there because of love. A love that I know we will always have for Ben and that I believe he will always have for us as he watches over us.

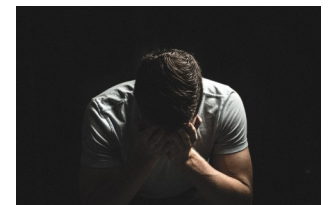
For all those Fathers who will be struggling with the sadness and pain of not having their beloved child/ children here on earth this Fathers Day, hold onto this love and I wish you peace and beautiful memories to hold dear and someone to share the memories and sadness with.

In this edition most of the articles have been written by bereaved fathers and I hope that mothers you can encourage fathers, who perhaps don't often read the newsletter, to have a look and hopefully realise that they are not alone and that it is not only OK for men to grieve and cry but also that unfortunately we need to grieve to move on in this hard, hard journey.

Take care and stay safe.  
With love and sadness,  
Lesley Henderson.

## MEN DO CRY

I heard quite often that "men don't cry"  
Though no one ever told me why.  
So when I fell and skinned a knee  
No one came to comfort me.  
And when some bully boy at school  
Would pull a prank so mean and cruel  
I'd quickly learn to turn and quip  
"It doesn't hurt" and bit my lip.  
So as I grew to reasoned years  
I learned to stifle all my tears.  
Though "Be a big boy" it began,  
Quite soon I learned to "be a man."  
And I could play that stoic role  
While storm and tempest wracked my soul  
Neither pain nor setback could there be  
To wrest one single tear from me.  
Then one night I stood nearby  
And hopelessly watched my child die.  
And quickly found (to my surprise)  
That all the "tearless talk" was lies.  
And I still cry and have no shame  
I cannot play that "big boy" game.  
And openly, without remorse,  
I let my sorrow take its course.  
So those of you who can't abide  
A man you've seen who's often cried,  
reach out to him with all your heart  
As one whose life's been torn apart.  
For men do cry when they can see  
Their loss of immortality.  
And tears will come in endless streams,  
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.



By Ken Falk

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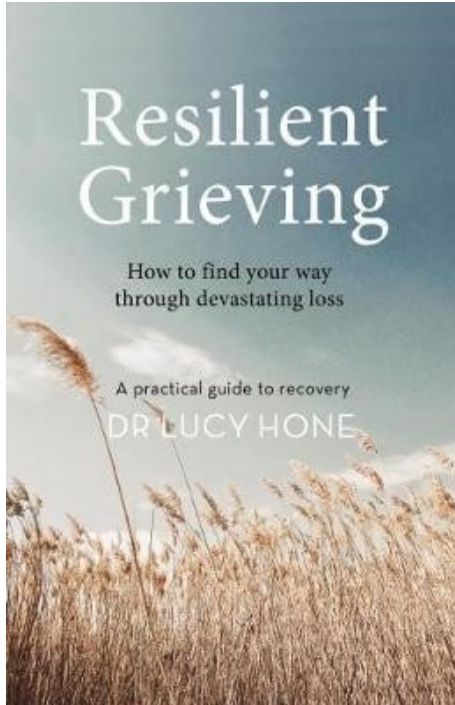
Lovingly reprinted from Queensland TCF Newsletter

Dear Friends,

It's a funny old world This COVID 19

Yesterday I was sent to have a COVID test as I have been coughing for a while. I sat in the car in the sun for 2 hours reading/ skimming a book I had picked up at the Library.

“Resilient grieving” by Dr. Lucy Hone. Published 2017 Allen & Unwin 9781760296995



I thought I recognised the excellent material and read that it was formerly published under the title “What Abi taught us”

We have that book in our TCF Library and I think I probably reviewed it some years ago but here I go again. Based on a lot of research and may be a wee bit heavy for some but it has some real gems that made me think a lot, plus some activities I plan to do personally and will share with our group.

Dr Hone, a research academic (in the field of resilience and wellbeing psychology at Auckland AUT) lives in Christchurch and knows what we all know. Her beautiful 12 year old daughter Abi died in a car accident in 2014.

A practical guide to recovery : How to find your way through devastating loss – the cover says.

As we all know, we deal with death differently, we grieve differently and have our own coping mechanisms but I would recommend a skim through this title.

Interestingly, she writes about TCF USA. She was on an online chat group for a while but it wasn't the right thing for her. Again we are all mindful of that.

One chapter, Secondary Losses made me think rather sadly - these are the dreams, hopes, ambitions that have vanished with your child. Last week we had an arborist in pruning some trees and I suddenly thought today that the Simon branch of our family tree has been harshly pruned.

We in Whanganui have been locked down since March but restarted our Coffee in July with 11 attending. They were so pleased to be back. In August 13 came along. We celebrated Mother's Day as we had missed it. Our September Coffee will be honouring Dads

Oh the good news – The doctor has just rung to say I am COVID free and need some antibiotics !

Keren Marsh The Compassionate Friends Whanganui August 2020

## The Empty Space

It is five years since he died. I had guessed that this experience would not differ from other violent emotional traumas: First shock, then a blank after-shock. Then busyness - displacement activity, then perhaps a relapsing into grief. And after that, and over many years a slow but steady process of what sensitive people might call 'healing' and the rest of us would call 'getting over it'.

The waters had closed over his head and the ripples subsided. I missed him terribly - surely as the months passed I would miss him less. "Time heals all wounds" they say. So now, I thought, begins this healing process. I thought wrong. At least a year had passed - I continued waking up at night - fleeting thoughts all over the place. Questions, questions, never ending questions.

It took me perhaps a couple of years to understand, with an intensity that grew, that the world had changed when he died: that there was still a gap where he had been; and that it was not closing over.

And now five years later, I see clearly that it never will. Now never a week passes - hardly a day -when I do not remember and think and wonder what. Not only in the night, but during the day, even at busy times, he enters my imagination, a welcome guest.

Quite simply; he has left a space that will never be filled; therefore he is paradoxically still here because the space is still here. And I can feel it all the time. The gap he left is not a vacuum, a void, a soft area of low pressure to be filled.

The gap is hard edged, chiseled by him into my life, measured by his worth, and ineradicable. How foolish then is this talk of "getting over"!

Mathew Parris TCF/Johannesburg Chapter

## A Man

When I look in the mirror I see a middle-aged man. His hair is thinning on top and beginning to turn grey on the sides. Lines and creases are starting to form at the corner of his eyes. It seems that his age may be starting to show.

When I look in the mirror at this man I see much more. I see a lonely man that is hurting and angry inside. He's trying to grieve over the loss of someone very dear and special to him. Someone taken away by death with no warning, his life taken by his own hand. It has left a big emptiness inside him. He sometimes wears a mask to hide the tears from the pain and anguish that he feels. Sometimes he's afraid to let others know exactly how he feels, afraid of what they'll say to him, afraid of their reaction to him. He just wishes things were different. He wishes it would all go away. He wishes he could wake up in the morning and realize it has been a bad dream. When he's out in public he hopes it doesn't show. He hopes the tears don't come to his eyes. He hopes his anger doesn't come out. So he tries as hard as he can to hold back the tears. After all a real man is not suppose to cry.

So he hides behind his mask. He manages to suppress his anger. He saves it for when he's alone, then he finds ways to release it to keep from hurting others and to keep from lashing out at them for no reason.

So if you see me out and about and you manage to see a tear in my eye, don't criticize me, judge me or stereotype me. Real men do cry and sometimes it is difficult not to. Don't tell me things like "enough is enough", or that "it's time to get on with your life." Don't tell me "it's been long enough, that I should be over it." It just doesn't work that way. Life will never be the same again, and you never get over it. Listen to me but don't condemn me. Don't feel sorry for me, feel with me. Don't shy away from me, but help me carry this load. Be there for me when I need someone to talk to. Tell me I don't need to hide behind my mask. Tell me it's ok to feel the way I feel. Tell me it's ok for me to cry. Tell me it's ok to feel the anger. Most of all tell me you'll help me through this nightmare of life.

# The bittersweet balm of Father's Day as a bereaved dad, and how you can help

By **Jayson Greene**

This weekend will be Father's Day. As a bereaved parent, I both dread the day and quietly long for the recognition it brings. I am a father, after all, to one child still here and one who is not, and to receive acknowledgment for that is a balm. It is, of course, a torment of sorts.

For those who have lost children, these holidays can be particularly trying times — their social media feeds will be flooded with picture-perfect representations of families and their children. Many turn their phones off on these days, unable to expose themselves to the drip-feed of other people's happiness. As Mother's Day is for mothers of children who are gone, these holidays often find us succumbing to our darker feelings — simmering anger, envy, self-pity, depression.

Four years ago, my daughter Greta was killed by a falling brick on the Upper West Side. The accident was freakish, a perfect storm of negligence and timing. She had been such a powerful little person, a force to be reckoned with even at 10 months old. Whether it was putting on socks, walking up stairs, or brushing her teeth — which consisted only of wetting a toothbrush and sucking off the water, over and over, until I gently pried it from the iron grip of her toddler fingers — Greta radiated unconquerable certainty. She was sure of herself, of who "Greta" was, and this world seemed to exist for her benevolent conquest. I still cannot imagine that energy, so happily invincible, being snuffed out so quickly and unceremoniously. It is the part of the loss that still leaves me gasping, years later.

Ever since that freak accident, I have become acutely aware of what it means to feel expelled from the society of parents, one that I felt I had worked so hard to join. In the weeks and months after Greta's death, I felt an awful need to walk up to parents — complete strangers — and inform them that I, too, had once been a parent. I resisted, but the words burned in me as if I had shouted them. Children's laughter, once the happiest sound in the world, became oddly mocking, even cruel, in my ears. I would walk past a young girl, maybe 7 or 8, attempting a barefoot cartwheel in the grass and watch her flop over, laughing, and feel nothing but bitterness. Everywhere I went I saw parents with daughters slightly older than Greta — they were either reminders of what I missed or visions of what I missed out on.

Anyone who has lost a child has a complicated relationship to the notion of "luck," but I am deeply aware that in many respects my wife and I are impossibly fortunate. We have a son, Harrison, born 15 months after his sister died. Therefore, Father's Day is very different for me than it is for other bereaved parents, for whom the choice to have another child is often not even an option. But even for us, it is a balancing act — despite visible evidence, I remain a father of two.

There is an absence in my life that is ever-present, and she is named Greta. On days when other families post selfies of their clamoring children and their quarreling siblings, her absence becomes more vivid to me than ever before.

So what to do, and, most importantly, what to say? I have been asked this question, by too many well-meaning and kind souls to count. What do you say to a friend or loved one suffering from grief over a lost child, particularly on days such as Father's Day? I am no grief expert, so I will quote one: "Above all, grief must be witnessed." These are the words of David Kessler, an author and public speaker on grief who runs workshops across the country. I was lucky enough to meet David early on in our grief journey, and in following his lead and in meeting many other bereaved parents I have learned some truths.

First of all: No matter the intensity of the pain a grieving parent may feel, the pain of invisibility is worse. When grieving a child, you learn early to live within the vast cognitive dissonance that is your life. You become an expert at distinguishing between kinds of pain. There is good pain, and there is bad pain, and the only good kind of pain comes from acknowledging your child's existence. Do not be afraid to speak the name of a deceased child for fear of causing the parent pain. Their name was given to them in love, it was spoken in love, and to speak it is to strike that joyful note

name was given to them in love, it was spoken in love, and to speak it is to strike that joyful note again. There is nothing that parents love to talk about more than their children. That never changes, even when the child is no longer here. The worst and loneliest thing a grieving parent can feel is the suspicion the world has forgotten their child. Speak the child's name; you may bring tears to that parent's eyes, but they will be at least partly of gratitude.

Individual parents grieve in individual ways, of course. Just as with love, each of us has our unique way of expressing ourselves. But while the names we give the feelings inside vary from person to person, the feelings themselves do not, at least not much. Every grieving parent you know is probably a little sadder than usual on Mother's Day, or Father's Day. Or Christmas, Hanukkah, or Halloween. Their wounds feel a little rawer, their grief a little more palpable. Do not be afraid of them, or their grief. Do not worry that you are going to hurt them further by acknowledging them; they are already in pain. Tell them that you see them. Tell them that you love their children.

Perhaps you do not need to wish them a "happy" Father's Day. But perhaps, if you feel moved to do so, you could wish them a peaceful one.

*Jayson Greene is author of the memoir "Once More We Saw Stars."  
Reprinted from The Washington Post*

Father's Day is the hardest day of the year for me. Harder than my wife's expected due dates that pass by with aching empty arms. Harder than the anniversaries of the long awaited positive pregnancy test. Harder than the anniversary of finally getting to hear a heartbeat. Harder even than the anniversaries of the loss dates.

All of the other dates are private, our own grief, our own remembrances. Rarely does anyone else remember and acknowledge those dates, which does carry its own pain. But Father's Day is so very public. There are all those saccharine sweet commercials everywhere in the weeks leading up. You can't escape the countdown to the dreaded day on the TV, radio, in the stores and in conversations at work.

And the societal bias against public grief is immense. We, the Still Fathers, are often told by words or attitude, that we aren't "real" fathers who should be acknowledged on Father's Day. We are told to swallow our pain and celebrate those who are more worthy than us, those who have their children with them. And don't you dare bring up your deceased child and bring down the mood of anyone else!

*But society is so very very wrong.*

My fellow fathers, this day **is** about you. You **are** still a father. I know it may not feel like that but you are; death doesn't stop your love for your child and it doesn't end your fatherhood.

And you **do** deserve to be acknowledged on this, and every day. Sadly, too many of us have families who will not acknowledge us. So please re-frame your thinking to give yourself permission to honor your own fatherhood, however that will look for you.

For some of us, that means going out to eat on Sunday and saying yes when the waitress asks if you are a father, or standing in church when the pastor asks all the fathers to stand. For some of us, that means practicing some self-care by avoiding unnecessary triggers and spending the day avoiding the world and pretending it is any other day.

Whatever you decide, please be gentle with your broken father's heart.

<https://www.stillmothers.com/2017/06/18/fathers-day/>

## Blueprints Of Father's Day

Spring comes with its warming breezes gently nudging Mother Nature to wake from her dormancy and renew a once bleak landscape. It is a magic time, where jackets donned in the morning are slung over shoulders by 10am. April showers bring May flowers, and then almost as if spring were just a dream, summer is upon us and we find ourselves either in shorts, tee-shirts and sandals, or darting from air conditioned cars to air conditioned homes. June seems to be a transition month, of sorts. While we are beyond the threats of freak spring snowfalls, and our attire is down to just a single layer, we are not quite into the full bore of summer where we will spend our lives searching for water. If we cannot find it at the beach, a backyard pool or at the local water park, we will go as far as to carry it around with us in little plastic bottles. It makes sense. If one were to look at the blueprints of the human body, it is commonly known that we are made up mostly of that wonderful wet stuff. Water is unquestionable an instinctual need for us all.

June also brings Father's Day, which is another transition point for me, and for many other fathers who have experienced the traumatic loss of a child. This year, Father's Day will fall on Sunday, June 18th. In the year 2013, Father's Day came just 3 days after I lost my sixteen-year-old son and only child when his precious heart failed during a "relatively" simple surgery. To me, June and Father's Day will always be a trigger to remind me of the "New Normal" of my life now.

Like every parent who has lost a child, I mourned for my son Jonathan. I was anguished greatly for his short life, and the adult life he would never experience. Although I could look back over his sixteen years and take solace in the fact that he had an incredibly happy childhood, there was so much more of the magic of life he had yet to encounter, and he will not get the chance. Without question, the majority of my great remorse was for my lost child.

Yet, while it is not often discussed, I also had to face the fact that there is a great deal of mourning to be done for myself, as well. Yes, while many men may think of this quietly, we do not often speak it aloud; lest we fear being thought of as insensitive and self-centered. However, we must openly admit that while we feel immense sorrow for what was denied our child, something incredible, something anticipated, something natural, normal and "instinctual" was taken against our will. Not only against our will, but against our presupposed blueprint of a man's life.

Whether one believes that we walked from the Garden of Eden or crawled from the primordial ooze, the strongest instinct for man, and mankind, is to procreate. It is a commonly accepted finding in psychology that the greatest emotional achievement of a man is to father a child. Like our other DNA infused traits of being systemizers, organizers, hunters, and builders, there is an undeniable instinct to create offspring to grow the legacy of our tribe beyond our own mortality. If we have done that, we will live forever.

We know we will never completely heal from our loss, but to continue on our journey towards healing, we must look inward and recognize that part of losing a child is "Our Loss" too. Deep inside, even at that place where the unconditional love of our child resides, we must be able to come to terms with the fact that something has been taken from us. We had a "Blueprint" for our lives that mentor that child until they could stand on their own, only to leave this world ourselves, content that our legacy continues. Such is the blueprint of life since the dawn of humans.

As a father and author of this article, I chose to use Father's Day as a platform. Yet, bereaved mothers certainly experience the very same avoidance of recognizing their own deep remorse. It just does not seem right to think of ourselves, be us father or mother, when a child has been taken from our arms. Yet, in order to heal and get beyond any unresolved grief, all pains must be given attention, even if it seems selfish to even consider.

Like so many areas of the grieving process, emotions which are avoided and stuffed back inside will eventually find a way to get out. If one will not consciously face and express painful grief feelings, they will eventually find a home within the subconscious of the mind. The subconscious is that area of the mind that acts on our behalf without any conscious effort. It is that area that causes a heart to beat 100,000 times a day, and lungs to take in air without a single thought from the conscious brain. The subconscious is normally beyond our control, as well. Try to tell the heart to stop beating, or veins and arteries in the body to stop constricting in order to move blood through the body. It simply cannot be done. So, when it comes to bitter emotions which have found a home within the subconscious, they begin to negatively take over the natural personality, and they begin to escape without conscious effort or control. Further, once negative, repressed emotions reside in the subconscious and assume the personality, they become very difficult to extract. Soon they become the new you, always angry or bitter, possibly depressed or always sullen.



This year let springtime, with its transitional month of June and celebration of Father's Day, be a period of reawakening for you, too. Our once coveted blueprints have changed into a New Normal. Yet, we are always aware in our journey towards healing that a New Normal is one where we once again live a life of peace and purpose, all the while carrying the unconditional love of our lost children with us every day.

Be it Mother's Day in May, or Father's Day in June, take time to recognize the pains of unexpectedly losing your own blueprints for life. Even if repressed emotions may have moved back to the subconscious, recognition is as healing as the spring time sun to withered flora and fauna. Do not beat yourself up, however. It will take time. If bitter emotions do act on your behalf without conscious effort or control, simply recognize them each time. As you do, they will slowly move back to conscious thought, where your healing journey through grief can reawaken life from what was once dormant and barren.

Happy Father's Day...and "Peace and Purpose" to all.

R. Glenn Kelly Upper and Lower Cape Cod Chapters

Reprinted from Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

## **Grieving Dads: On The Importance of Your Self-Care**

- Still Standing Magazine

Those of us who have been through child loss know as well as anyone the power of a moment in time. Grasping those moments with the child you know you may not have long, and trying to survive in the meantime and the after. It's so easy to slip into a depressive cycle after losing your child and, in a way, this highlights the importance of self-care. The hardest part, though, is knowing exactly what that is, especially for men.

As a dad and husband, the first person I think of when talking about self-care is my wife. For her, it's nails and hair, massages and yoga. Self-care is something that we men recommend when we can tell our significant others are worn down, not something that we think of needing for ourselves. While those things are happening, we're usually holding down the fort and providing support where it's needed.

I'm here to tell you, dads who have lost a child, that self-care is for us too. After we lost Luke I had two primary thoughts - take care of Cassy, and do things. All of them. Anything I could think of that needed to be done, I did when I was strong enough to get out of bed. And immediately after coming home from losing our second child Jonah, I went to my garage and shed and started cleaning them out.

I needed busy time to either process what was happening to my life or to give me a break from it. I built furniture and trained for triathlons. I got some extra house projects finished and did planning for the next ones. I didn't realize it at the time but self-care was exactly what I was practicing - taking the time to do what I needed to get a little closer to centre. Guys, whatever you want to call it or however your grief pattern lays itself out I'm urging you to take a second and do something for yourself on purpose.

This isn't a matter of convenience and it isn't a consolation - we hurt too and it is fully deserved to have time to yourself to heal in some way, no matter how small.

Part of what makes couple-life so difficult after a loss is that we don't grieve the same - in my experience talking with other couples there is almost always one that is expressive and another who is busy, and it's pretty often that one feels like the other doesn't feel it as deeply. If you're reading this and nodding along, chances are you're the mother/wife thinking about the father/husband - these are natural roles and responses. What we miss in highlighting how differently we process is that we're doing it for the same reason and from the same place - our hearts hurt from a loss unlike anything else in this life.

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Give each other grace and take the time to carve out space for your own healing.

**My New Normal?** I wrote the following after a discussion we had in our local Compassionate Friends support group in Colchester Area in January 2020.

We react to the idea of a new normal after the loss of our child because to do so would acknowledge that it has happened – and we don't want it to. So the realisation of the new normal is part of accepting that the worst has happened and that we are forever changed by that event. My new normal is personal (I wrote this for myself) – yours will be different but may have similarities. So what follows is offered as an encouragement to stop and think about yourself (!) and maybe discover something encouraging and hopeful:

Normal is the integration rather than avoidance of the pain of loss into the whole of my life.

Normal is the expectation that I will be ambushed (that pain will be touched without warning) from time to time.

Normal is to have painful flashbacks but also to be able to remember fondly the joyful times.

Normal is making the choice to be grateful - ultimately grateful for the life of my child.

Normal is the choice to let go of my child, alive or dead, in the end letting go matters.

Normal is, while rightly remaining angry, letting go of all negative feelings of bitterness, resentment and regret around my child's death.

Normal is for my feelings to be nearer the surface and hopefully being able to empathise more with others in their pain.

Normal is making no comparison or judgement of another's pain.

Normal is being on a journey to being more real and whole as an integrated human being to the benefit of myself and others around me.

Normal is for my identity not to be that of a bereaved parent but of an increasingly whole human being.

In no way do we find this new normal easily or quickly. It is part of the continuing journey of grief which, in turn, is inevitably part of the journey of life.

Paul Bowtell Paul and Chris' son, Stuart, died of cancer in January 2002 aged 23 years  
Compassion Spring UK TCF

### Thoughts on Grieving and Driving

After my son was killed my car was my haven. I could weep there in privacy; there was no phone. I didn't have to meet to talk to anyone and I knew roughly how long I had on my own.

The trouble is that tears obscure your vision and can make driving a hazard. Lay-bys are useful; you can regain control before getting back amongst the traffic.

Thoughts can also stray far from the road situation in front of you, and I'm sure many of you are familiar with the phenomenon of suddenly realizing that you can't remember the details of the last few miles of your journey. We need to be aware that grief can make us less than perfect drivers. There is an uncomfortable irony in this if our own child has been killed in a road traffic accident.

But times to weep are vital. Men sometimes find it difficult to shed tears in front of other people, although Churchill did, Wellington did, and my grandfather, a Church of Scotland minister, did, after the death from leukaemia of his young son.

Nevertheless, I blessed my car as a cocoon to weep in.

Dr. Lindsay Neil, a bereaved father and grandparent Reprinted from Childless Parents Newsletter, London

Daddy I know you have to be strong.  
But crying is not wrong.  
Mummy's heart is broken in two,  
Just like I know yours is too.  
I go to work with you each day,  
I know you wish you had the  
strength to say,  
You're hurting too & you wish  
someone would understand.  
Well Daddy, I'm always here  
holding your hand.

[www.ygoh.org.au](http://www.ygoh.org.au)  
[www.facebook.com/yasminahsgifttohope](https://www.facebook.com/yasminahsgifttohope)

# 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.

## A Young Life Cut Short

Do not judge a song by its duration  
Nor by the number of its notes  
Judge it by the richness of its contents  
Sometimes those unfinished  
are among the most poignant...

Do not judge a song by its duration  
Nor the number of its notes  
Judge it by the way it touches and lifts the soul  
Sometimes those unfinished  
are among the most beautiful...

And when something has enriched your life  
And when its melody lingers on in your heart  
Is it unfinished?  
Or is it endless.....

Author unknown  
Compassion Spring UK TCF



## 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.

## News from the Catharine Pointer Memorial Library

### Autumn 2019 - Compassion | [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

I'm writing this on one of the hottest days on record when the temperature has peaked at around 38 degrees and yet, by the time you read it, autumn will be upon us and another year will be more than three quarters over.

One of the dates from the summer which is always hugely significant for so many of us in TCF, is father's day. Every year my daughter, Claire's dad takes flowers to her resting place and every year he thinks, and often says, the same thing, "I shouldn't be coming here bringing flowers to her, she should be coming to bring them to me".

Of course he's absolutely right; a father taking flowers to his little girl in a cemetery is nature turned on its head; it's the wrong way round. It's made me think about dads and the library; how many books we have to offer you and how many are actually being written by men. The answer, I'm very pleased to say, is a large, and growing number. Men seem to be more and more willing to put pen to paper and share their experiences and their feelings and we now have an excellent selection to send to our readers. I thought it might be nice to talk about a few of them. I've tried to pick out a variety just as a taster of what we have to offer.

Actually, before we even think about books, I need to mention the wonderful film, 'Say Their Name', which is available on our website as well as from the library. This film was made by Jimmy Edmonds, with Jane Harris, after their son Josh died and it's a wonderful example of the way a father's grief can be used constructively to help others. Jimmy was already a film maker and used his skills and talents to honour his son and help other bereaved parents.

Another man who used his talent in this way is David Morrell. David is a quite well known writer of fiction and, after his 15 year old son died, he wrote the book, 'Fireflies', which is fiction based on fact. He imagines himself, as an 84 year old man dying in a hospital and desperate to go back to his son's final illness and change the outcome. Although the actual story is obviously not true (David Morrell was 44 when he wrote it) all of the details of Matthew's illness are correct as are the rather wonderful hopeful signs they received from him afterwards. There a lovely ending to the story, the one so many of us hope for, when father and son are reunited. David writes, "Why did I write this book? The truth is I didn't have a choice. It would have been impossible for me not to write it. Even though its torture, this book is also an act of love."

Another book written by a bereaved dad, is 'Holding onto love: searching for Hope when a Child dies' by Chuck Collins. This book is completely different from the previous one but is just as good in its own way. After Chuck's 19 year old daughter, Tiffany, died from a short illness, he and his wife were helped by TCF in the USA. Eventually he became a group leader and started to reach out to help others. His book came from the experience he'd had as a bereaved dad, and from being helped and helping others, and is a lovely book of advice covering all aspects of life. It's extremely well written and brings a wealth of good and wise advice to the page and I think it's particularly helpful for dads. This author understands what it means for a man to grieve for his child.

Men are writing biographies too and a fairly recent one is 'One for Sorrow' by Alan Hargrave, which is the story of Alan's 21 year old son Tom's death from cancer and the aftermath of that for the family. The interesting thing, for me, about this book is that Alan was a Church of England minister but his faith didn't make his grief any easier and he ended up having to change his job and move away. Alan Hargrave writes well and with honesty and again, because it's written from a dad's perspective, it's a helpful book for other men to read.

These are just three of the many books we have in our library written by bereaved dads which are all available for loan. We also have some written specifically for men such as 'Healing a Father's Grief' by William H. Schatz or 'Andy's Mountain - Fathers Grieve too' by Dwight L Patton, so please do borrow some if you'd like to. They're not helping anyone when they're sitting on the shelves. I'm going to finish with a quotation from the Book of Solomon cited by Alan Hargrave In 'One for Sorrow'. As Alan says "Love will surely survive death. And even death will not be able to overcome it (pp17)" "Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is stronger than death, passion fiercer than the grave Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can floods drown it." With love from Mary

*Although we in NZ cannot access the library it is good to know some titles and authors and if your local library doesn't have them I'm sure they will be available on line—Lesley*

### **Father's Role in the Loss of a Child - By Amy Newman**

While many fathers may put on an outward display of strength, inside they are as heartbroken as any parent would be over the loss of a child. They experience the same stages of grief as anyone else, even if they do not always express it. Society often focuses on the mother, but fathers also need support while being allowed to grieve on their terms.

**How Men Grieve** While women are generally open with their emotions, men often keep theirs bottled up. A father may not outwardly show any sadness over the loss of his child, either because of societal pressure to be strong or the feeling that he is expected to be.

**Grieving Silently** Many men have been taught that they should not share their emotions or reach out for support. They are raised to be strong in times of trouble, thus they often grieve silently. This does not mean he is not grieving - it just means he is doing it differently.

**Grieving Physically** Men often express their grief physically. A grieving father may throw himself into work or projects around the house, or he may take up a hobby to keep himself occupied and avoid dealing with his emotions. He may turn to physical activity, such as playing basketball or going to the gym, to get the anger out. He may avoid contact with his wife because he doesn't know how to deal with her emotions on top of his. Whatever form his grief takes, a father must be allowed to process his feelings in his own way.

### **Helping a Grieving Father**

Society often neglects to care for the grieving father, showering all its support on the mother. Yet fathers need support as well, and he may not wish to turn to his wife for support, who is working through her grief. If you know a father who has recently lost a child, here are some suggestions for helping him work through his grief.

**Be supportive:** He may need help with funeral arrangements, including driving him to the funeral home, picking out a casket or selecting flowers.

**Don't pressure him:** If the father refuses to talk about his child's death, don't try to force the issue. Let him know that if he needs to talk, you'll be there to listen.

**Listen:** When he is ready to start talking, just listen. Tell him how sorry you are for his loss. Use his child's name. Do not throw clichés at him, such as "Your child is in a better place", or "Now you have an angel to look after you". Not only are these not helpful, but it may make him feel that expressing his emotions is making you uncomfortable, which may cause him to stop talking about his grief.

**Help him with daily tasks:** Find out what needs to be done, show up and just do it if you ask if he needs anything, he will likely say no. Tell him you will be at his house at a specific date and time to do the laundry or mow the lawn, or that you are dropping off dinner. If he has other children, offer to take them to the movies or the park to give him and his spouse some time alone.

**Invite him out:** He may decline, but keep inviting him. Even if he never accepts, sometimes just knowing the invitation is there and that somebody cares is enough to get through a bad day. Often friends fade away after the loss of a child because they don't know what to say. He needs to know that you will not abandon him. *Gratefully reprinted from Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter*



# Sibling Page



## When it's Grief, Not Depression

One sleepless night, I tiptoed down the stairs, slipped outside and stared up at the low-hanging moon, so close to me it looked as if it had been pinned against the black canvas with a thumb tack. I reached out a hand to snatch it from the sky, tuck it inside my heart, feel its warm steady glow burn through my body, filling the empty places my brother's death left behind.

Perhaps I'd be able to float, or fly into the midnight sky, join him there in the crook of a star, swing our legs and whisper all that he gave to me in his short life. How he inspired me. Expanded me. I'd tell him my favorite parts about being his sister and the infinite ways he changed my life and is changing it still. I'd tell him how he taught me about love by giving me the gift to love and lose him in this lifetime.

Love, the lightest and heaviest four-letter word that keeps artists sweating and panting as they attempt to capture this elusive emotion in words, in brush strokes, in haunting notes strummed on an acoustic guitar. To open the chambers of our hearts to real intimate love—love for our children, our parents, our best friends, our lovers and our siblings requires courage. The courage to be vulnerable. The courage to allow another human being to tread into our shadow side, that sacred, secret space where our fears, our hurts, our unrealized dreams curl up and cower.

Many of us let our loved ones halfway in, or three quarters of the way in, but protect the lady's slipper fragile parts that belong only to us. The last quarter of who we are as reassurance we'll remain whole and standing and alive when we inevitably lose someone we love. At least this is the way I lived my life, I just wasn't aware of it until my brother Rocky died.

Grief lit up those dark protected corners like someone shot a flare through my heart. Those fears, past hurts, unrealized dreams surrendered with their hands in the air. There was no more hiding. There was only me and my cracked-open heart, gazing bleary-eyed at the pieces of me I'd shooed into the shadows, said, "Keep quiet. I will keep you safe."

Three months after Rocky died, after my travels to Asia, after watching his ashes glint under the Balinese sun and drift away from me and his beloved wife and daughter and brother, after the memorial service in the states, after there was nothing left to distract me, nothing left to keep my mind from re-living that nanosecond when my life blew apart as if I'd swallowed a hand grenade, I offered up a gift to my brother. I offered up a gift to me: to allow myself to dive into the deep river of grief. I was terrified I'd drift away to some remote semblance of myself, but I was sure if I wanted to arrive somewhere new, it was necessary.

I've known my sibling for forty three years. I remember when my parents brought him home swaddled in a blanket. I want to feel the loss. I want to because it honors what we had. It honors the sister/brother bond we shared. It honors the love we had between us. It honors my brother's spirit. Moving through grief is a choice. I'm not talking about the aftershock, or the endless days, clutching photographs to our chest or breathing in the scent of our loved ones clothes or the desperate dire need to join them on the other side. I'm not talking about remaining stuck in the stages of grief. I'm talking about being present in the process, moving with it and through it so we can rejoin the living and hear the sound of our own laughter. Real laughter. Guttural laughter.

I'm talking about giving ourselves the space, the time to feel into the murky depths of our grief without the numerous assistants eager to numb the edges of our emotional discomfort: valium, anti-depressants (when it's grief, not depression), street drugs, alcohol and business. Why is it we want to numb our pain? Where do we think it goes when we don't allow ourselves to feel it, breathe into it?

I've witnessed it over and over as a therapist, the "assistants" and "distractions" that keep us from feeling love and losses fully. We would not know one without the other. Only a few months into my own grieving process my doctor wanted to put me on anti-depressants. I said, "But I'm not depressed." He said, "Well it's situational depression." I said, "No. It's grief."

We don't, as a culture, want to feel the depth of emotion that sears through the heart like a fire through a parched field. We want to slap some salve on the rising blisters, cool the hot, raging ache. But those blisters need to rise. They need to pop, scab over, and scar.

I don't believe we ever "heal" from profound loss or that grieving has an end point. Overtime, our grief transforms into something new. Something different when we allow ourselves to feel our way all the way through it. And even if it's not our pain, but that of a friend, a loved one, it's no easier. A human being in suffering bleeds an energy that is thick, and palpable. It cups its mouth over yours and siphons your breath. We don't want to suffer and we don't want others, too either. It hurts because we, me, you are powerless to transform those blisters into scabs.

As I stood motionless that night, just as my brother had done in a photograph where he and his two college pals tilted heads toward the sky, mesmerized by stars or the moon, maybe both, I thought about how that picture captured his spirit, the way he lived his life one moment at a time, immersed in the wonder of it all. My brother taught me about love, about loss. He showed me there's beauty in both. My blisters are not scars yet, I'm not even sure they've scabbed over, but I welcome them because the beauty in the pain is that I had the chance to love him in this lifetime. And that I'd choose over and over and over again.

Written by Susan Casey

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Queensland Chapter Newsletter

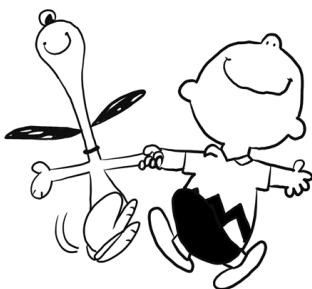
It's music that bonds the soul  
 The room you once lived in doesn't look the same.  
 The people, who used to call you, never mention your name.  
 The car you used to drive, they may not make any more.  
 All the things you once treasured are boxed behind closed doors.

The clothes you set the trends by, are surely out of date.  
 The people you owed money to have wiped away the slate.  
 Things have changed and changed again, since you went away.  
 But some things remained the same each and every day.

Like this aching in my heart...a scar that just won't heal.  
 Or the way a special song can change the way you feel.  
 Brother, you must know that the music bonds us and will always keep us close.  
 Because secretly, I know deep in my heart, it's the music you miss the most.

So, let the world keep on turning and time can take its toll.  
 For as long as the music keeps playing,  
 you'll be alive and dancing in my soul.

Stacie Gilliam Oklahoma City, OK  
 Lifted with love from TCF Minneapolis 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.



## **D**o 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
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 CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
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.co.nz](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.co.nz)

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