

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 195

JUNE JULY 2023

Grief is odd  
Like yesterday  
I looked at your picture  
and  
Smiled

Today I cried

[Encouragementforlossofalovedone.blogspot.com](http://Encouragementforlossofalovedone.blogspot.com)

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



## Our Children ... Remembered with love

### Forever Young

### Forever Loved

### Forever Longed For

Matthew Alexander Birtles	Born 17/6/2004	Claire Benicarke (Mary Schiehsel)	Died 10/6/2004
Richard Cowie	Born 1/6/1974	Stefan Francis Cockill	Died 28/6/1994
Sophie Kate Elliott	Born 11/6/1985	Heath Neil Colina	Died 1/6/2002
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Born 29/6/1968	Matthew William Ross Dryden	Died 24/6/2005
Daniel James Gillies	Born 22/6/1986	Ian Peter Foley	Died 24/6/1987
Robbie Knight	Born 9/6/1975	Allan Stephen Hobbs	Died 27/6/1998
Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Born 25/6/1978	Callum Warwick Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Ross Templeton	Born 22/6/1996	Keryn Sarah Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Brendan James Vass	Born 30/6/1986	Shaun Matakai	Died 27/6/2003
		Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Died 5/6/2006
Mitchell James Beaumont	Born 13/7/1976	Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Died 19/6/1997
Heath Neil Colina	Born 18/7/1981	Melissa Jane TeHuia	Died 21/6/1998
Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Born 2/7/1975	Ben Watt	Died 3/06/2005
Ben Paul Gillanders	Born 13/7/1977		
Matthew David Innes	Born 27/7/1987	Terry Barnfather	Died 11/7/2000
Jake Lucas	Born 10/7/1978	Matthew Alexander Birtles	Died 1/7/2007
Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Born 9/7/1974	Marcus Fitchett	Died 18/7/1996
Brent Allan Stenton	Born 19/7/1974	Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Died 2/7/1975
Julie Barbara Warren	Born 9/7/1961	Vicky Knight	Died 1/7/1980
Timothy James Williams	Born 6/7/1980	Aidan Samiel Konise	Died 23/7/2009
		Sara Loo	Died 19/7/2010
		Robert Shane McLaughlin	Died 4/7/2001
		Kirsten Jane Maydon	Died 23/7/1989
		Marie Anne O'Neill	Died 21/7/1985
		Julie Barbara Warren	Died 14/7/1985

Dear Friends,

As we travel this long journey together, both comforting others and being comforted ourselves, sharing our feelings and emotions and reaching out to others, we are carrying on the work and support for which TCF was founded. In 1969 Joe and Iris Lawley, whose son Kenneth was killed in a road traffic accident, and Bill and Joan Henderson, whose son Billy died from cancer, both in May 1968, were made aware of each other by the then Reverend Simon Stephens while their sons lay dying in hospital and, finding comfort and support from sharing their grief, decided to offer this to others similarly bereaved.

## Our creed

### **We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.**

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.

Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.

We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt, or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together, as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

## **WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE, WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

*Joe Rousseau – TCF, Saginaw, Michigan*

Remember this newsletter is your newsletter and I always welcome suggestions or ideas and you are always welcome to send me articles, stories of your journey, poems etc.

I have also been thinking that perhaps there may be a sibling who would like to be responsible for the Sibling page so email me to discuss if you would be interested.

Take care of yourselves and stay warm.

Lesley Henderson  
tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

Kia ora.....Dear bereaved families,

I so hope you have managed to stay well, and warm.....not easy when the temperature stayed at a high of 0 degrees all day!!! The promise of warm sunshine and spring flowers is certainly encouraging however, and right now I am already experiencing a little of that!

As you will recall from my letter in the last newsletter, we are currently operating on a totally Voluntary basis, but PLEASE, if you would like a listening ear, any time, don't hesitate to phone me :

027 309 1246 or Email me: janpessione@xtra.co.nz

Any communication will remain completely confidential, and as a retired Health Professional that is in my DNA!

As many of you know I have lost 2 children, Margarita, 16 years ( electrocution) and Marina 54 years, ( complex medical issues.)

In the spirit of Matariki we remember those who have died over the past year.

I would like to close with Richard Attenborough quoting Mandela, who was expressing his sympathy to Richard & Sheila when they lost they daughter and granddaughter in the Boxing Day Tsunami..

"Richard I so wanted to see you because I know what the loss is. I want to hug you. I want to hold you in my arms. And I am so disappointed. But I will hug you with my voice..... and the next time we meet each other I will hold you in my arms....."

Such tenderness, which, dear friends I so hope you are able to feel as you navigate your way along your own grief pathway.

Do please take best ever care of your precious selves...

Jan Pessione ( Interim chairperson COCF)

Kia ora TCF whanau.

We are well in the grips of winter, but still a mild one compared to years past, hope it doesn't mean a mild summer. I hope that on these dark and chilly nights your are taking care of yourself and your loved ones. Instead of writing a report this time I have included a poem I have written. Writing is something that helps me to express myself and poetry is a great avenue for this. Writing maybe something that may help you on your journey. This poem is about something that I experienced a lot especially the first year after we lost our daughter.

Ignore

Don't ignore what I say

Don't ignore what you see

Don't ignore when I speak

Don't ignore what you hear

Don't ignore what I show

Don't ignore what you see

Don't ignore when I explain

Don't ignore what you don't understand

Don't ignore me when I am happy

Don't ignore me when I'm grieving

Don't ignore me, because one day I may be you

Vanessa Young

We have been quiet here in the deep south the last couple of months but on Wednesday the 2nd of August we will be having a get together, meal combined with AGM. This will be starting at 6pm at Invito restaurant on Tweed st. RSVP on our facebook page by Monday 31st July would be appreciated. It would be great to see you there.

Rug up, keep warm, take care Vanessa x

## Matariki—A time to remember

I am reminded today as we in NZ recognise Matariki that there is a special star out of the seven, for setting aside time for our grief and sadness.



Let's remember our children today (Matariki)

Matariki (Maori New Year) is now recognised as an official public holiday in NZ. A time for reflection and celebration.

Matariki is the [Māori](#) name for the cluster of stars known to Western astronomers as the [Pleiades](#) in the constellation [Taurus](#).

Each star is named and has a traditional meaning in Maori culture.

The star which has particular poignance for us is

**Pohutukawa - remembering those who have died.**

Let's reflect with fondness and love on our children who have gone too soon.



### Pōhutukawa

- This star is the star associated with those that have passed on.
- It is also a beautiful native tree known as the New Zealand Christmas Tree as it flowers brilliant red during our summery Christmas.

Keren Marsh Chairperson

The Compassionate Friends Bereaved Parents Grief Support

Whanganui

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz)

## Grieving People Scare Me

As I got up from my desk to head downstairs from my office, from the balcony above I saw him walking into the mail room below. He looked as he always did, a 50 something professor, the same colleague I had known for 20 some years. I reached the last stair step and glanced at him as he spoke with the building secretary. There was absolutely nothing in his demeanor that would indicate his 50-year-old wife had died the day before. My first thought was, “Oh no? Is that what I said? Really, Bob?”

If there was anyone in my building of 20 social science faculty who should know what to say to a recently bereaved person it should be me. For the past 30+ years I’d been teaching a course titled Death & Life. In addition, I’ve given hundreds of workshops to thousands of people deep in the throes of grief. They have been my teachers. Human beings who’ve experienced the deaths of children, siblings, spouses, grandchildren, parents, and friends to chronic illness, accident, suicide, homicide—you name it—I’ve heard their story. Wouldn’t you think, therefore, that after years of hearing thousands of stories that I would be the last person to say, “Oh no, I’m going to speak with a bereaved person”?

I guess I’m saying that, if I’m afraid of grieving people, think about the average person. I’m certainly not saying that everyone is fearful. There are those few angels out there who have no problem listening to story after story of dying, death, and grief. However, let’s look at why the average person may be nervous around a person in grief:

1. I don’t know what to say. Have you ever been in a situation where stupid things came pouring out of your mouth? Perhaps you knew it the moment the words jumped out or perhaps the recipient of your blathering had to inform you or you saw the look on their face and said to yourself, “Did I really just say that?” It may have been one of the hundreds of clichés that well-meaning (aka, mindless) persons utter in a vain attempt to “make things better.” “Oh, I understand just how you feel. My cat died last year.” “It was God’s will.” “Well everything happens for a reason.” And on and on. Perhaps it was a judgment statement, “You shouldn’t have done that.” Or, perhaps these wonderful words of wisdom emanated from your lips, “It’ll be okay” or “Life goes on—tomorrow’s another day.” Or how about, “If that happened to me, I just don’t know how I could go on.”
2. What should I not say? In addition to fearing that you’ll say the wrong things, you may fall into the belief that there are certain things that should not be said to a bereaved person. One of the biggest mistakes is believing, “I don’t want to bring up the deceased’s name because it will remind her of what she lost.” So, what happens? You talk about everything but the most important thing—their loved one.
3. What should I do if tears, or anger, or expressions of guilt emerge? This is a big reason people in grief are so scary. Here you are standing in the grocery store with this person and suddenly they are in tears or their voice rises as they get in touch with how unfair all this is. Or the discussion moves to 37 types of guilt they are experiencing. And, all you can think about is, “How can I change the subject to something like, “Wow, aren’t you glad hamburger is on sale this week?”
4. What if I start crying more than them? This is a common concern. Here you are trying to be of comfort and suddenly there you are, immersed in their pain of loss and you begin boo-hooing so much the person now needs to comfort you.
5. If it happened to him, it could happen to me. It is frightening to look into the eyes of a parent whose child has died, a spouse whose partner will never walk through the door, an individual who will always be a bereaved sibling, a grandparent who will never again hold that precious child, a child (of any age) who is now motherless or fatherless, a human being who has to live without the friend they always thought would be there; and, in the presence of such a person, you realize that it could happen to you—frightening.
6. It’s such a downer. An interaction with a bereaved individual is never easy. We consider keeping our distance because we know that, by approaching this person, we are opening ourselves up to a glimpse into their world—a confusing, crazy world called grief. And, we know that looking into their world is never easy. Never.
7. How should I end our conversation? Once you are in presence of a bereaved person and you realize once again that no words can touch their grief, no sad facial expression of your or no “Uh-huhs” or “I sees” can make their pain go away, you begin to wonder, “How do I leave this fragile person in this condition?” You wish for something that can make it better. And, now you hurt because you realize that you can’t make it better.

Back to the story. Despite my fear, did I speak with this man? Of course. I approached him, asked, "Would you like a hug?" Despite the fact that this man is not a hugger, he quickly said, "Yes!" We walked back to his office, sat and talked. Talked about her time in the hospital, about her final moments, about how it all doesn't seem real, about crying and then laughing at stupid little things, about how her family is reacting. We chatted for 15-20 minutes and, once again I realized the truth in all this grief stuff: Of course we're scared of bereaved people. Who doesn't feel inept in the face of unremitting despair? But, they need us. They do. And, despite the fact that we'll trip over ourselves, they need us to walk up to them and say, "I'm here." "Tell me about your loved one." Tell me how you're feeling. I'll listen." "I may not know what to say, but I'll listen." "And, then they need us to do what every good listener does: Allow the person in grief to be in pain, let them take the lead, and then shut up. Now, that doesn't sound too scary, does it?"

Bob Baugher, Ph.D.

Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

When you passed, I was told that  
 "You will always be with me."  
 It is a comforting thought  
 but sometimes  
 the silence is too quiet,  
 the space between us  
 too vast  
 and my questions are  
 too unanswered.

The After Glow  
 Still Mothers (facebook)

### 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.

Page 7 TCF Otago June July 2023

## Understanding Survivors of Suicide Loss Deborah Serani Psy.D.

Suicide is a death like no other

Grief is a universal experience all human beings encounter. Though death inevitably touches our lives, research shows that many people grieve in varying and different ways. From the textures of emotions, to length of time in mourning, to even the kinds of rituals and remembrances that help heal the irreplaceable loss. Grieving the death of a loved one is never, ever easy.

Suicide, however, has been described as a death like no other ... and it truly is. Death by suicide stuns with soul-crushing surprise, leaving family and friends not only grieving the unexpected death, but confused and lost by this haunting loss.

### Who is a Survivor of Suicide Loss?

Despite science supporting a neurobiological basis for mental illness, suicide is still shrouded by stigma. Much of the general public believes that death by suicide is shameful and sinful. Others consider it a “choice that was made” and blame family members for its outcome. And then there are people who are unsure how to reach out and support those who have lost a loved one to suicide, and simply avoid the situation out of ignorance. Whatever the reason, it is important to note that the underlying structure of grief for survivors of suicide loss is intricately complicated.

When someone dies by suicide, research shows that at least 6 people are intimately traumatized by the death. Those who are directly affected include immediate family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, fellow students and/or co-workers. And because 90% of people who die by suicide have a psychological disorder, mental health clinicians are also included as a survivor of suicide loss.

From the nearly 800,000 suicides reported from 1986 through 2010 and using the 6 survivors per suicide estimate, it is believed that the number of survivors of suicide loss in the U.S. reaches 5 million people. Understanding Suicide

Based on the accounts of those who have attempted suicide and lived to tell about it, we know that the primary goal of a suicide is not to end life, but to end pain. People in the grips of a suicidal depression are battling an emotional agony where living becomes objectionable. Most people who die by suicide have a significant depression narrowing their problem solving skills. Corrosive thinking reduces optimism, the hope of possibility and increases feelings of helplessness. The depressive illness itself makes it virtually impossible to hold onto any semblance of pain going away. While some may argue that a person who dies by suicide has done so by their own choice, I argue that serious mental illness, in fact, limits choice. Studies of those who have survived their suicide attempt and healed from their depression report being astonished that they ever considered suicide.

### Why Grieving is Different

Research has long known that suicide survivors move through very distinctive bereavement issues. Family and friends are prone to feeling significant bewilderment about the suicide. Why did this happen? How did I not see this coming? Overwhelming guilt about what they should have done more of or less of—become daily, haunting thoughts. Survivors of suicide loss often feel self-blame as if somehow they were responsible for their loved one’s suicide. Many also experience anger and rage against their loved one for abandoning or rejecting them—or disappointment that somehow they were not powerful enough, loved enough or special enough to prevent the suicide.

These mistaken assumptions plague survivors of suicide loss for a very long time. Many struggle for years trying to make sense of their loved one’s death—and even longer making peace—if at all—with the unanswerable questions that linger.

Society still attaches a stigma to suicide. And as such, survivors of suicide loss may encounter blame, judgment or social exclusion - while mourners of loved ones who have died from terminal illness, accident, old age or other kinds of deaths usually receive sympathy and compassion. It’s strange how we would never blame a family member for a loved one’s cancer or Alzheimer’s, but society continues to cast a shadow on a loved one’s suicide.

What also makes grieving different is that when we lose a loved one to illness, old age or an accident, we retain happy memories. We can think back on our loved one and replay fond memories, share stories with joyful nostalgia. This is not so for the suicide survivor. They question the memories, “Where they really good?” “Maybe he wasn’t really happy in this picture?” “Why didn’t I see her emotional pain when we were on vacation?” Sometimes it becomes agonizing to connect to a memory or to share stories from the past—so survivors often divorce themselves from their loved one’s legacy.

Survivors of suicide loss not only experience these aspects of complicated grief, they are also prone to developing symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder—a direct result from their loved one’s suicide. The unspeakable sadness about the suicide becomes a circle of never ending bewilderment, pain, flashbacks and a need to numb the anguish.



### Ways to Help a Survivor of Suicide Loss

If you know someone who has lost a loved one to suicide, there are many things you can do. In addition, by reaching out, you also help take stigma out of the equation.

Don't be afraid to acknowledge the death. Extend your condolences; express your feelings of sorrow. Make sure you use the loved one's name. "My heart is so sad that John died." Many who have lost someone to suicide have a broken heart, clinically called Stress Cardio myopathy, and really need your empathy, compassion and understanding to heal.

Ask the survivor if and how you can help. Though they may not be ready to accept help, asking signifies that you are there—not avoiding or distancing during this tragic event. The notion of being there if needed is extremely comforting for survivors.

Encourage openness. Be accepting of however survivors need to express their feelings. It may be with silence, with sadness or even anger.

Be patient. Don't set a time limit for a survivor's grief. Complicated grief can take years to process. Moreover, don't limit a survivor's need to share and repeat stories, conversations or wishes. Repetition is a key factor in grief recovery.

Listen. Be a compassionate listener. This means don't look to fix things. The greatest gift you can give someone you care about who has survived a suicide loss is your time, reassurance and love.

### Ways to Help Yourself if You're a Survivor of Suicide Loss

Ground yourself: It may be very painful, but you must learn to hold tightly to the truth that you are not responsible for your loved one's suicide in any way, shape, or form.

Don't put a limit of your grief. Grieve in your own way, on your own time frame. It will take time to find a place for your sadness and loss. It may take even more time for you to feel hope again and envision possibilities.

Plan ahead. When you feel ready, assist your family in finding ways to mark your loved one's birthday, family holidays or other milestones. Understand that new moments, experiences or events will be met with sadness, even with emotional setbacks. Preparing for how you will move through these calendar dates will help minimize traumatic reactions.

Make connections. Consider joining a support group specifically designed for survivors of suicide loss.

The environment can provide a mutually supportive, reassuring healing environment unlike anywhere else.

Give yourself permission. To cry, to laugh. To seek professional help if you need it. Remember that you are moving through the most difficult of losses—and you can take control of the path to healing.

Gratefully lifted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter



## Does Crying Help People Cope With Grief and Loss?

The death of a loved one is truly one of the most intense emotional experiences that we will face in life. People can grieve for many reasons other than the death of a loved one. People can grieve when relationships fail or they experience some other setback in their lives. So it's no surprise that many people cry when they grieve. But should we be concerned when we do not cry ourselves or someone else does not cry as expected. Not necessarily according to grief consultants. While crying is an integral component of the grieving process for many people, the absence of tears shouldn't be interpreted as a signal something is wrong or missed in the response. That's because people differ so much in both their tendency to cry (under various emotional circumstances and events) as well as in their other responses to grief. There is no wrong or right way to grieve.

People should feel comfortable crying if they want to. The same applies to the non-crier, who should not be made to feel uncomfortable or guilty because they do not cry; made to feel bad about that. What really matters is that everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves in the way they want to. Being unable to express yourself the way you want to makes things far worse. So if you are helping someone who is bereaved because they have lost a loved one, it is important to provide a private place and environment where the person feels comfortable doing what they want to do. Don't judge people's response by the quantity of their tears because this varies a great deal from one person to the next. If you're a person who cries twice as more or twice as less, it's just your crying quota and it doesn't matter.

### **Tears as natural painkillers**

When we have to deal with intense emotions such as the death of a loved one, our bodies respond by naturally generating a number of painkilling chemicals – which resemble morphine. The tears can transport these chemicals to the eyes, where they are absorbed and may help ease some of the emotional pain, and so tears may have a physical and chemical role in responding to emotions. This is probably why many people feel better after a session of crying. Our tendency to cry seems to be biologically determined by our genes and sex. Research has shown that on average women cry four times more frequently than men, and this may be due to the greater amounts of the hormone prolactin in women. This hormone plays an important role in milk production but it also may help to stimulate tears.

### **Blocking crying may be detrimental**

People want to cry but are blocked in some way may be denied some of the painkillers and emotional benefits of crying. It is important that those who want to cry are allowed to do so and are not blocked. There is some evidence crying may help eliminate some substances that could build up in our bodies and affect our mood and feelings of wellbeing. For example a build-up of the chemical manganese in the brain is known to be associated with poor moods and increased risk of depression. Manganese is known to be excreted through tears.

### **Extended crying can be a good sign**

Many people get concerned about extended crying but it is not necessarily a sign that someone is not coping and their mood is deteriorating. Becoming upset and crying a lot can be just the opposite – a sign that someone is dealing with their grief. Tears are a healthy display of passion.

### **Getting Over Grief**

The concept of getting over grief is largely a myth. People learn to live with it and adapt but never really get over it. There is no time frame, and no right or wrong way to deal with it. You need do whatever helps you and feels right for you and feels helpful. You need to be able to express your feelings openly in a place of emotional safety. Tears may sneak up on you at any time, without any cause or reason and this is natural and to be expected. Many people get great relief from a good cry and feel a huge weight has been lifted and it helps people cope with their loss.

Nobody should judge or give advice about what another person should be feeling, doing or displaying in response to a major loss. There is no time limit set for grief and some people take longer to adapt and live with it than others. When the reaction to grief causes excessive disruption in a person's life, professional help may be required. Sadness and honesty about the grief and loss and tears are all acceptable and natural responses.

Do what is right for you, not what is right for someone else. A major part of grieving is feeling sorry for yourself and other loved ones affected. Recognizing this is important for living with grief. Grief should not threaten your own life. There is no need to "get over it" or to completely "stop feeling sorry for yourself" but you need to adapt by experiencing grief, feeling it and expressing it. [J Anderson]

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Chapter News

# 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.

I tried to call your number  
but Heaven has no phone.  
I wanted to hear your voice again  
I felt so all alone.  
The aching in my heart it seems  
will never go away.  
Until I see you again. . .  
I'm afraid it's here to stay.  
So please know that I miss you  
and though we are apart.  
You will always be tucked safely  
deep within my Heart

TCF/Okanagan  
Reprinted in TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

## The Song Is the Same

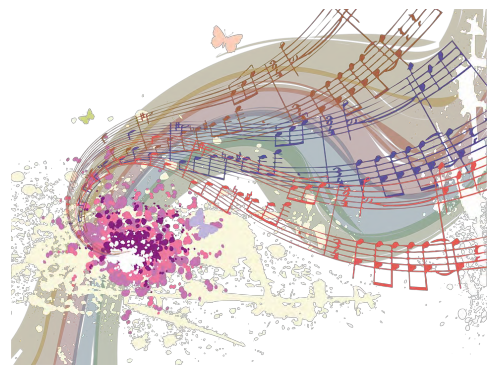
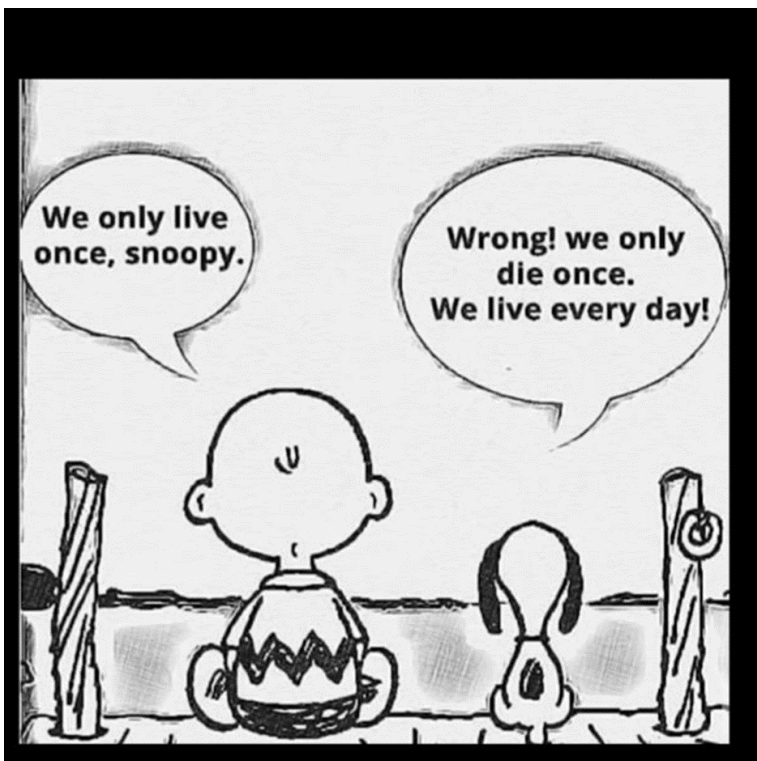
Different are the circumstances  
of our child's death,  
Different are their names,  
Different was their life and the  
length of it,  
But their song was the same.

They lived for one brief  
moment in history,  
Much too soon they were gone,  
They left us here, parents,  
grandparents, brothers and sisters,  
To remember the gift of their life  
and somehow go on.

Whatever the time  
that has passed for us,  
Whatever the pain and grief  
that we claim,

We are all here together  
to remember our kids,  
So your song becomes my song  
and our song is the same.

Barb Seth TCF Madison, WI  
Lifted with thanks from TCF Minneapolis  
Newsletter



## A Visit to My Son

It's been too long since my last visit with you, my son. I'm coming to visit you.

It's been on my mind most of the time, this is true.

I so look forward to seeing your sneaky smile and light hair.

I never know what to expect, I can't help but stare. I'm so proud of you!

When you were younger, you were such a spitfire.

You were adventurous, always trudging in muck and mire.

But you've grown up to be a wonderful young man.

You were always string in your actions and stuck to your plan.

You became so independent at such a young age. I

never knew what to expect, a surprise on every page.

Who can believe that you joined the Army, married and became the father of two beautiful girls?

Both daughters share blonde hair, one with straight hair and the other one with slight curls.

I know how much you love the hot sun and riding on your motorcycle, revving so loud.

When you rode by, it surely attracted a crowd.

I dreamt about what else will become of you?

Your aspirations were always high, my determined child.

You are strong-willed and steadfast, but empathetic and mild.

If I could go back in time, I would hug you tighter.

I would hold you longer. I would never want to let go, just want to hold you stronger.

I would want you to stay young forever!!!

Is that every mother's dream?

But life goes on, isn't that the way it would seem?

I never worried about my care in old age. I knew I could always depend on you.

You would make sure I was comfortable and happy; this I know to be true.

I knew you would want to take good care of me.

I knew you would always want your children to see me and love me anytime I care to.

I love your children; they are a part of you!

Today, on my way to visit you,

I think of how worried I was back when you were deployed to Afghanistan.

You had such minimal contact with the outside world.

I worried about you and I worried you might not make it home.

But you did, my son.

Your deployment was over, you are our hero, and our admiration grows a ton!

I wish I had part of your energy and determination.

I truly admire you. You are an inspiration to me.

You are a true American, a Veteran, an inspiration for all to see.

I can't wait to see you.

I pull up and park the car.

Why am I nervous to be around the person I love so much?

For a parent, it's never enough.

The drive felt long, the desperation to see you is tough.

I have new decorations for you.

I can't help it.

You are my first-born; I can't help but spoil you.

The weather doesn't matter, storms or sky-blue.

**I HAVE ARRIVED! A VISIT TO MY SON!**

I close the car door and walk down the path.

My stomach is familiarly churning.

I walk on the grass and here you are.

You are always waiting for me.

Does anyone else see what I see?

You know I love you and can't wait to be near you.

Christopher, I love to say your name.  
 I can say it a million times, as a mom that is no shame.  
 It's so quiet. It's so peaceful.  
 I don't stand for long. I can't help but kneel and look down.  
 Do you see me? I hope I don't frown.  
 Here you are, my son.  
 Again, I visit you at the only place I know you can rest.  
 You stand out from all the rest.  
 I clean the dirt from your tombstone.  
 I lovingly and aching look at your name.  
 I say your name because you can't.  
 I cry endlessly, can't help but mercifully chant.  
 I see your birth date engraved on the stone.  
 I don't want to see the date when your life on this earth ended.  
 It was the worst day of my life and for those who love you.  
 That tragic phone call, your motorcycle and that horrible car, it can't be true...

I had said I wished you could stay young forever.  
 Can I take those words back; twenty-five years old is now your forever?  
 Will a miracle happen today, right now?  
 Will I see a vision, a butterfly, perhaps a special bird?  
 Will there be a familiar voice heard?  
 Will my visit bring the touch of an angel wing?  
 I so desperately need a present from you now.  
 I will accept anything, anywhere, anyhow.  
 Oh, what a selfish visitor I am. I am so sorry.  
 But I bring you love and memories, I am here for you.

Thank you, my son. I needed this visit so much.  
 It felt so good to cry at a solitary place.  
 I feel I can be free to open my broken heart at this sacred space.  
 Are you still here? If not where are you?  
 I so want to follow you. I ache to be with you.  
 I am so weary and broken-hearted, so lonely and blue.  
 I wish I could stay here forever. This is not enough.  
 But I have others who depend on me.  
 I have to eventually end this visit, at this place and time, till the next time I'm free.  
 I must adhere to my responsibilities.  
 I know you understand.  
 I know you want me to go and do whatever needs to be done.  
 But it breaks my heart to leave you, my son.  
 I don't want to say goodbye.  
 But I promise to come back so very soon.  
 I will have new decorations to bring you. Holiday wishes to share with you.  
 I am sorry so many tears are left behind.  
 Son, no matter where I'm at, you are always on my mind.  
 I'm afraid you'll be lonely when I walk away. It's too hard to leave.  
 I don't, ever know if I should look back.  
 Maybe I might see you standing there.  
 But if I don't, my heart will break even more.  
 I lie down on your burial site, don't care if I get grass or dirt on me, it's you I adore.  
 I get in the car and pull out of the cemetery.  
 As I drive down the road, no one is the wiser that I visited my son today.  
 My moments with him at his graveside are all I have.  
 It means so much to me.  
 My visits are private; I need them to breathe.  
 I need to be at his side, don't you see?  
 A parent's work is never done.  
 A visit to my son.



# Sibling Page



Siblings almost universally experience distress but many feel unable to share this for fear of burdening their already fragile parents. One of the many factors which influence sibling grief is developmental level and the impact this has on the child's understanding of illness and death.

## Development and concepts of death

Most children learn to recognise when something is dead before they reach 3 years of age. However, at this early age, death, separation and sleep are almost synonymous in the child's mind. As children develop and experience life, their concept of death becomes more mature. Six sub-concepts are acquired during this process (average age of attainment in brackets):

<b>Separation (age 5)</b>	dead people do not co-exist with the living
<b>Causality (age 6)</b>	death is caused by something, be it trauma, disease, or old age
<b>Irreversibility (age 6)</b>	a dead person can not 'come alive' again
<b>Cessation of bodily functions (age 6)</b>	
<b>Universality (age 7)</b>	all living things will die
<b>Insensitivity (age 8)</b>	the dead can not feel fear or pain

There are important consequences of an incomplete understanding of death. Children younger than five years old may not appreciate that the deceased will not return. This belief will have been affirmed by stories such as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and exposure to irrepressible characters like the Wile E Coyote. A young child may also believe that they have brought about the death of another through their wishes or behaviour. This reflects their tendency to think 'magically' and their inability to understand causality in death. Slightly older children who understand irreversibility and causality may not grasp the idea that bodily functions cease after a person dies. They may then worry that the buried person will be hungry or cold. Perhaps more significantly, children who understand that a dead person does not need to eat or breathe, may not necessarily appreciate that the person can not feel pain or fear. They may have fantasies of the person trapped in a casket in the ground and feeling afraid. Children who do not understand universality may view death as punishment for wrong doing.

Every child is different and his/her understanding of death will depend as much on past life experiences and cognitive ability as on age. Children who have experienced the death of a grandparent, a fellow patient or even a pet will have a more mature concept of death than others of the same age or developmental level. It is also important to note that children often regress developmentally at times of illness or stress. For this reason, it is essential that assumptions are not made on the basis of age. Each child should be assessed individually as to their level of understanding before explanations are given.

## Implications for preschoolers

Children in this age group may ask many questions in their quest to understand what is happening. They may also ask the same question many times over. They have an almost matter-of-fact curiosity about death which adults may find confronting or even worrying. They do not yet understand that death is:

- Irreversible 'When is my sister coming back?'
  - Caused by illness, trauma and age children may have thought bad thoughts or said hurtful things to the deceased prior to death eg. In a fight with a sibling, 'I hate you, I hope you die'.
- Associated with loss of function 'What will my sister eat/breathe?'

Explanations need to address concerns that arise as a consequence of an incomplete concept of death. eg; 'Your sister, Amy, died because she was very, very sick. We won't be able to see her any more. Nothing you did or said caused Amy to die. Amy doesn't need to eat or breathe and she cannot feel sore or scared. Mummy and Daddy are very sad that Amy has died but they are not sick and will be here to take care of you'.

Preschool children may not sustain sadness for long periods. They may also appear indifferent. Young children often incorporate themes of death and dying into play. Parents need to understand that play is the child's way of making sense of their world, so it is normal for recent life experiences to be played out with toys or friends.

**Reactions to loss in this age group are variable but might include:**

- Apparent lack of reaction
- Periods of distress alternating with normal play
- Developmental regression (eg. bed wetting, clinging)
- Sleeping problems
- Separation anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Death/funeral/illness themes in play

## Implications for school age children

School age children gradually acquire and refine the capacity for logical thought. During these years, they develop a more complete understanding of death. At first, they see it as something that happens only to other people. From the age of six, children start to develop the death concepts of irreversibility, causality, and universality. There is considerable variability in the ages at which these concepts are acquired so it is important when speaking with children to make some individual assessment of their level of understanding. School aged children become increasingly curious about the causes of death and are interested in details and death rituals. Explanations should be tailored to the child's developmental level, cognitive ability and previous life experience.

**Possible reactions include:**

- Denial
- Anger and aggressive oppositional behaviour
- Guilt
- Sadness/withdrawal
- Disturbed sleep/appetite
- School failure
- Expressing a wish to die so as to be reunited with the deceased

## Implications for adolescents

By the beginning of adolescence, most children are aware of the reality of death. It is during this time that adolescents begin to ask theoretical and philosophical questions about life and death. Their mourning responses are similar to those of adults but they may find it easier to talk to adults outside the family than to parents. The peer group remains very important but adolescents may feel some ambivalence about confiding in peers for fear of seeming different. Many young people have not had a personal experience of death.

Young people who experience grief do so in the setting of important life and developmental changes. Grief presents yet another crisis at a time of heightened vulnerability.

**Possible reactions include:**

- Excessive concern for others, guilt, anxiety and insecurity
- Sleeplessness or wanting to sleep all the time
- Withdrawal from family, spending increased time alone listening to music or watching TV
- Wanting to be around the family more than before
- Preoccupation with the death, wanting to talk about it all the time or angrily refusing to talk about it
- Changed values and philosophy of life
- Poor concentration, memory, organisation, planning skills and reduced school performance
- Restlessness, always needing to be doing something or be with peers
- Angry, controlling, assertive and demanding
- More detached from life, the future or interests
- Rebelling against all authority
- Risk taking behaviours



## 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 (Acting Coordinator) (16 yr old daughter, accidental) <a href="mailto:janpessione@xtra.co.nz">janpessione@xtra.co.nz</a> (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	027 309 1246
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
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 <a href="mailto:lorraine.driskel@gmail.com">lorraine.driskel@gmail.com</a>
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 <a href="mailto:marshkandb@gmail.com">marshkandb@gmail.com</a>
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 <a href="mailto:atsilvester@actrix.co.nz">atsilvester@actrix.co.nz</a>

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz)

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