



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 184

JUNE JULY 2021

There are some people who could
hear you speak a thousand words
and
STILL NOT UNDERSTAND YOU.
And there are others who
will understand without
YOU EVEN SPEAKING A WORD.

Yasmin Mogahed

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

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

In one sense there is not death.

The life of a soul on earth lasts beyond his departure.

You will always feel that life touching yours, that voice speaking to you, that spirit looking out of other eyes, talking to you in the familiar things he touched, worked with, loved as familiar friends.

He lives on in your life and in the lives of all others that knew him.

~ Angelo Patri Madison Area Chapter Winnipeg Chapter News

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 Tairaoa	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 Mataki	Died 27/6/2003
		Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Died 5/6/2006
Mitchell James Beaumont	Born 13/7/1976	Claire Jillian Tairaoa	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,

Firstly a big thanks to Louise McKenzie who has just resigned as Central Otago coordinator. Louise has been a huge support for bereaved parents and families in Central Otago and I am sure her energy and commitment will be greatly missed. Thankyou Louise.

This month I struggled to write something so instead have reprinted something from 6 years ago, which still holds true today.

Since the last newsletter, we have had another anniversary for our son and brother, Ben. I have written in the newsletter previous about how we spend part of this day, as we do his birthday, at the cemetery with close family members and have music, sing and let off helium balloons with notes attached, and this anniversary was no different. Following the day I spent some time reflecting on our rituals and on how family members act and view the day. Although there continues to be tears and sadness in the buildup to and on the anniversary day, I realise that time at the cemetery is not part of this sadness. Rather it has developed to be a time of celebration of Ben's life, and a sign of the closeness and importance of family. There is laughter as we inflate the balloons, with the odd one popping, often a balloon is accidentally let go before we are ready for our mass release. This year we used foil balloons which failed to rise as expected, rather skimming across the paddocks, with sheep scattering in front of them and my young nieces chasing along behind. As it was autumn, there were piles of leaves to be jumped in and scattered and as always, fizz and chips. (These days do really have a party atmosphere!)

I also had cause to reflect on how we have portrayed Ben's death to my young nieces, who were not born at the time of his death. We talk often of Ben, and at the cemetery talk about the date, whether it be his birthday and how old he is or his anniversary and how long he has been 'gone'. We also talk about how he will be looking forward to all the beautiful balloons and the messages sent up to him and how he is always watching over us and how happy he is to see the kids doing good and funny things. We don't generally read the notes other people write however this year my 7 year old niece wrote hers by herself and very proudly showed me. It read "Happy anniversary Ben, I hope you have a good day. I love you, Mary." It was very clear that because of the way we talk about Ben, it seems to these young children that he is still somewhat alive, although not living here on earth. Does this mean that we are misleading or lying to the children? Is it wrong to let them believe that he is somehow still alive? Or is this actually how we see him and therefore are we just passing on our beliefs? Part of how we view what happens after death, is certainly connected to our religious beliefs; belief in Heaven, afterlife or reincarnation being some of the outcomes people believe. There are also spiritual beliefs and cultural beliefs not necessarily connected to religion. For me, Ben continues to 'live' both in our memories and through what we do and how we keep him alive in our conversations with others. I also believe that he is a type of spirit or angel and as such can watch over us and guide us. Obviously in the future as my nieces grow, they will have a clearer understanding of what 'death' means and their beliefs will change and develop. They may or may not believe as we do, but whatever happens they will always know that Ben continues to be an important part of our family and that love and memories endure far beyond death.

May the love and memories of your dearly loved child continue to bring you and your family peace.

Take care,
Lesley

Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora everyone,

We have had a whole week of fog and grey skies, so it is hard to keep the spirits high!!! And it's not as if we can get on a plane and head to a tropical island for some time in the sun. Hei aha! Never mind! Life is a rollercoaster ride.

Some good things have been happening in Central. Our coffee drop-in sessions at Monteiths have worked well. No pressure on anyone, just drop in if you can and order a coffee, or tea or something stronger if you wish. And sit back and enjoy conversation and company. They have nice padded couches for us, so have a nap too if you want!

Our evening group meeting was very interesting. Sue Tait, one of our members, talked about the work that she is doing as a "Connector" for community suffering as a result of COVID 19 and her talk generated a lot of discussion. It is not an easy time for anyone. We shall endure!

I am retiring as Coordinator for Central Otago Compassionate Friends at the end of this month. Sue Tait is going to take my hours and job share with Jan Johnson. Hopefully, we will find time to give you updated contact details.

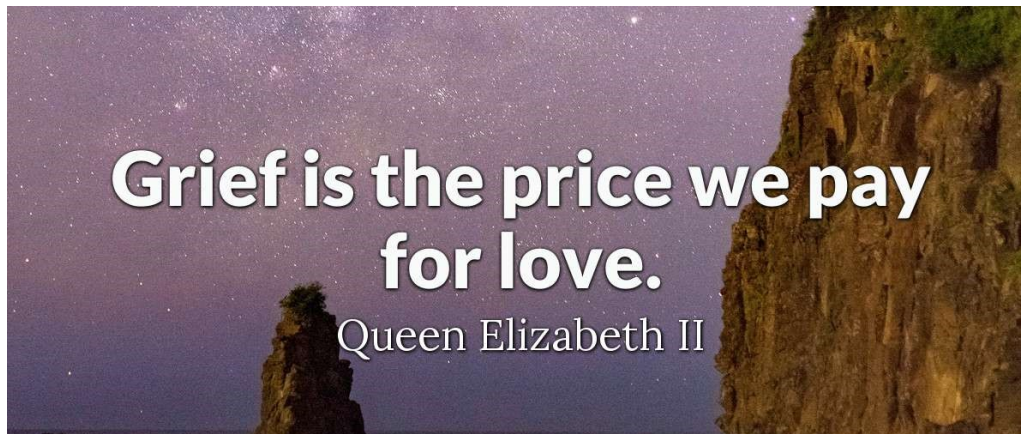
Ma tera atu wa,
Louise

Report from Whanganui TCF June 2021

We are very aware of our TCF friends coping with the extreme weather of late. Please take heart and remember you are on our hearts.

As I write this we are heading for Queen's birthday weekend. Half the year gone and winter is showing up.

I am a fan of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 2. What a remarkable woman and Queen she is. I am sure we all feel her grief as she so recently said a final goodbye to her beloved Prince. I think we were all moved to see her so stalwart yet alone at the Duke's funeral.



This sentiment attributed to her is one we all know well.

Talking of birthdays TCF Whanganui is heading for its 10th anniversary since we restarted TCF in Whanganui in November 2011. It is hardly cause for 'celebration' as TCF is the group no one wants to belong to – but we are pleased with the people we have touched and helped as we journey together. It was lovely recently to reconnect with an out of town family who came to our groups for some years after losing a beautiful school age girl suddenly. We were thrilled to meet a new wee daughter born to them last year.

We are very busy having received some community funding. We are redoing our promotional material and hope to do a post out soon.

Don't forget our website. We have had a computer glitch in getting email contact from the site but that is all fixed now. North Island contacts come here and South Island contacts go to Lesley in Otago. Sometimes I wonder..... and then only today, I had an email from a lady in South Africa contacting us via the website on behalf of a friend in Gisborne

She writes...Hi, fellow TCF's. We needed TCF in South Africa 25 years ago, and boy did they help us! I have a friend now, who lives in Gisborne, who has suffered a family suicide. I can't find a group in Gis-sie, only you online. I no longer have any of my newsletters etc, I gave them away when we first came to NZ from South Africa.

Can you please tell me where I can get some info for her. She thinks she is going mad (Don't we know that feeling!) and she can't concentrate long on the computer either, so it's no good emailing her stuff. And I certainly don't think Elizabeth Kubler Ross will help her either.

The short, to the point articles we used to get in the TCF newsletters were so helpful. Do you still supply them?

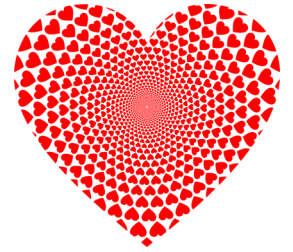
Many of the requests come from places where there is no established NZ TCF group so we take the responsibility here in Whanganui to keep in contact however suits the enquirer.

I will be really happy to help and post her some material and keep in touch. I no longer will 'wonder' whether on line is helping others.

Keep warm and well. From us all in Whanganui



Hearts are us



The heart is a universal symbol. It is simply two lines joined at the top and bottom, but these are gracefully curved outwards as if to embrace something in its interior. To us at TCF it is where we hold our children, deep in the centre of our hearts, safely and forever. To alter or embellish it is an attempt to make it something from our own imagination. Something unique.

No doubt we have all sat ruminating or listening, with a pen in hand 'doodling'. Quite likely unconsciously drawing a heart then continuing creating a picture, spending time on it until we look at it anew and realize that we are pleased with it and consider keeping it. Maybe you know what it means, maybe not, but it certainly was not just by accident. It is telling you more than you are telling it.

The heart shape is perhaps the very first emoji. Toddlers recognize it as part of some very early learning, knowing that is something to do with loving and being loved. Little do they know that the heart inside them sustains them physically, energizes their emotions and their very souls. For how long has the heart been a symbol of love? It was used in Egyptian hieroglyphics and appears thousands of times on ancient Greek pottery. So does the meaning we have for it today go back that far? In the Middle Ages we see it with its statements of sincerity and charity. We can easily surmise that by the C15th when it first appeared in Christian art it always conveyed religious compassion, devotion, and hope. However, for the past 300 years it has been a purely secular motif. We are unified by the heart shape.

We send wordless messages telling us we understand each other. We send endless little heart messages to each other and that suffices for old-fashioned letters. The heart conveys loving thoughts in times of great happiness or great sorrow and anything in between, or just to say, 'hi I'm here and I haven't forgotten you.' Understandably there is more heart shaped jewellery in the world than in any other form. Some no doubt is made from precious metals studded with precious stones, yet other simple handmade tokens, are beyond value especially when crafted by a grieving person in loving memory. Think of all the natural heart shaped objects we see every day. Look up at the clouds, at large spreading trees, bushy shrubs, curving branches, leaves and petals or go to the coast and find perfect heart stones or little pebbles in a variety of colors. Look amongst the seaweed, into rock pools or at the frothy water on the damp sand. Collect mystery objects. Scratch hearts on surfaces, carve one in old wood, bark, and notice markings on tree trunks etc. Most of these things are there one minute and then they are gone, yet to many of us they are messages to us and only us from someone very dear to us saying that he or she is still very near. Perhaps you feel a certain contentment which lets you slow down and focus on positive things.

We all seem to have cameras on hand these days and I wonder what you think about the idea of photographing the heart shaped things you notice either indoors or outdoors. You may find that one day you will have your own oddly fascinating and personal collection of photos on the topic of hearts, including your own heart 'doodles', enough to make a collage to keep as a memory of your dear child, the one who lives in your heart.

The Replacement Child

Forty-seven years have passed since the experiences I am about to tell you. However, despite the years, the intense emotion still remains in my heart as I recall this time.

As many of you know, Lindsay and I were involved with a shocking road accident on our way home from our beach house at Shoreham. Our beautiful and deeply loved only son, Rhys, (aged 11) was killed and I was badly injured. On a Sunday evening, Lindsay had to cope alone with the dreadful experience out on a country road after we were hit by a drinking driver back in 1973. In those days, we didn't know anything much about PTSD and we suffered from it terribly as time went on.

Soon after, amongst all the visitors who came to see us was Shirley, one of Rhys's best friend's mothers. She was such a lovely lady and deeply felt for us. I had known her at the school's mothers' club ... but wasn't a close friend. Her son Craig had often come to our home and beach house and was dearly loved by our family. When Shirley came to see us, she very earnestly and caringly told me that she would like to 'SHARE' Craig with us now. I didn't know what to say at the time but as the months went by, Craig became a constant visitor. He would arrive at our home after school, on the same bus as Rhys had come, dressed in the same distinctive uniform, same blond hair, and height, looking just like him. He was a delightful young boy, very friendly and outgoing. He would sit at the kitchen table, have after school snacks, and would tell me all the school news. I'd make him special treats and he'd stay for dinner with Lindsay and our two daughters, 18 and 16 and we would quite honestly make a huge fuss of him. He came to our beach house with us a few weekends and at Easter, played with all Rhys' toys, rode his bike (which we soon gave him) and slept in his bed. He was comfortable with our family and fitted in and we never discussed Rhys.

This might all sound lovely, beneficial, and great ... but the truth was, it nearly killed us! We tried so hard, we really loved him as a wonderful young boy ... but we were all just overwhelmed and annihilated after each time he left. We were often sick! We tried so hard to make it work but the truth was we were grieving so much, and this was making it so much worse when we were so often made aware of what we were missing and just wanting our own precious little boy.

Eventually after about two long years, Craig's family were transferred interstate and we all breathed a huge sigh of relief. However, it didn't stop there. Shirley wrote and suggested Craig be flown back to us and spend the whole Christmas holidays with us down at the beach. This filled me with absolute dread and Lindsay and the girls were consumed with confusion and despair. We knew we couldn't keep the act up for so long! The trouble was, we all loved Craig, but couldn't bear him to be near us. It switched on a grief so terrible, it was quite unbearable.

At that time, I was doing Lifeline telephone counselling and we had training sessions with our special group of about 15 worker who had started with me. Our leader was an older lady called Bonnie and one day as we were training, she asked if anyone had a problem which could be shared and discussed. I was not a person who spoke much at these sessions as I was still shattered by Rhys' death and my grief and had not even told anyone what had happened to me, apart from Bonnie. However, my problem with Craig was overwhelming me and I quickly jumped in and told them I had a problem. I was so desperate at that stage to be able to share it. I explained the whole situation to the group, and they sat very quietly and seriously through my talk.

When I'd finished Bonnie said, "Look, I think we're all wiped out by Margaret's story and I feel we should have a break to think about it." The others all gathered, talking earnestly and I sat alone, still shaking, with my embarrassed and disturbed thoughts. I wondered if they all thought I was a really nasty person to have these feelings about a beautiful, caring little boy and his mother, who had been so kind to us. When they came together again with me, the universal feeling was that our relationship with Craig had to STOP! They were deeply understanding of my feelings and also were terribly worried about what this could be also doing to a young boy like Craig. Bonnie appointed a counsellor to further advise me throughout the crisis and made me feel that my distress was quite legitimate, and I wasn't a weirdo.

So, we then did what we should have done two years before: Lindsay and I wrote a long letter to Shirley, told her how we had been feeling and asking her if she would explain to Craig, we couldn't have him anymore but that we still loved him. And we did! That was the whole problem, he was such a special little boy and had been so much a precious part of our Rhys' life. She never replied and I have never heard of Craig again. Unbelievably he would be 58 years old now. I have no doubt Shirley could never have understood our feelings and probably thought ... "after all I've done."

After meeting and talking to hundreds of bereaved parents, I don't think I have ever met anyone like me. Most bereaved parents tell me they just LOVE visits from their child's friends and can't get enough of them. All of which makes me feel terribly guilty and emotional. I realise that we could have had a new beautiful family member still if we had continued with Craig and we would have had interest in him all our long lives. So, we lost a lot ... but somehow the situation was not right for our family. He was not OUR son or brother? Maybe you, as a bereaved parent can understand our feelings ... maybe not. However, at this late stage ... after 47 years, I feel like sharing this deep experience with you. Maybe it might relate to someone, it might also mean something to families who are thinking of adopting another replacement child. Who knows?

Margaret Harmer (Co-Founder of TCF, Australia 1978)
Lifted with thanks from TCF Victoria Newsletter

Nemo's Vigil

My son, Todd had two dogs in his life that were bonded solely to him. The first was a poodle who was with him from age five until age 21. Todd was always her person. Todd loved that dog. Todd and his family decided to adopt Nemo in 2000. Nemo is a mixed breed, probably part Blue Healer, part German Shepard. Nobody really knows. Nemo was Todd's dog from the beginning. Todd loved Nemo and took him with him whenever he could. Nemo was the protector and playmate of Todd's children and Todd's loyal companion in life. Nemo jumped in the car when Todd said "load up" or "let's go." Todd was building a new home for his family, and Nemo always accompanied him to the jobsite. When Todd left home to run errands, Nemo went along with him. At night Nemo would wait at the top of the stairs for Todd to come home. If Todd traveled, Nemo would spend every night at his post until Todd came home.

When Todd died in December of 2002, Nemo's world forever changed. His best friend, his partner in life, his joy, was gone. But Nemo didn't know this. Nemo sat at the top of the stairs and waited as family and friends came to the house after the Memorial Service. Nemo became so confused, so concerned, and yet, he didn't know what had happened. He knew all was in chaos, and he preferred the ordered world of his beloved master, Todd. Todd never came home. Nemo changed. He no longer interacts with the family. He no longer participates in daily activities or plays with the kids. Nobody asks him to "load up." He simply observes the mounting chaos and distances himself from the family and the menagerie of animals that have been added. Each evening, he sits at the top of the stairs.

It is said that dogs do not understand time. And so, every time the door opens, Nemo perks up and turns his head from side to side and looks. But it's never Todd entering the house. Nemo drops his weary head on his paws and he waits. Nemo's vigil will continue until he, too, leaves this plane.

Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Reprinted with love from TCF Minneapolis Chapter News

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

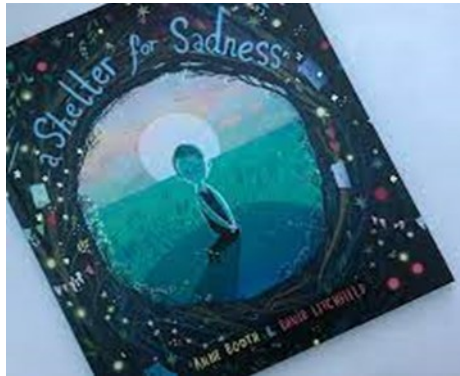
I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

Book Review by Keren Marsh

A shelter for sadness by Anne Booth published Templar Books, UK. 2021.

isbn 9781787417212



This sensitively illustrated children’s picture book is about coping with sadness.

The author was inspired by these words of Etty Hillesum, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust WW2

“Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that it is due, for if everyone bears grief honestly and courageously the sorrow that now fills the world will abate.

But if you do instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge – from which new sorrows will be born for others – then sorrow will never cease in this world.

And if you have given sorrow the space it demands then you may truly say

: Life is beautiful and so rich.”

A young boy creates a safe place for his Sadness, a shelter where it can be

BIG or small ; NOISY or quiet.

He visits the shelter every day – sometimes every hour – but he knows that one day Sadness may come out of the shelter and they will look at the beautiful world together.

Check the title on You tube and find a chat by the illustrator about

how he drew ‘sadness’ Also an interview with both author and illustrator.

Thought For the Day

It is not easy returning to the world of normalcy when your world is so upside down.

It is not easy to stop being a mother or father to your child that has died.

The thought for the day is a word — **patience**

...patience with yourself who suddenly and powerlessly has been thrown into this horrid nightmare;

...patience with your spouse who always seems to be having an up day when you are having a down day;

...patience with relatives and friends who wish to help but seem to hurt with hollow advice and logical words;

...and patience with time, for it takes time to adjust, and time can move so slowly.

PATIENCE!

Rose Moen TCF Carmel-Indianapolis, IN Reprinted from TCF Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

When dealing with the pain and grief of a child's death, take time to do the work of grief. Grieve in the way that best works for you, talk about your feelings, be gentle with yourself, and remember that this is not a path that needs to be walked alone. There are loving and caring people who are willing to be there with you. Reach out, get support, and know that only the strong know how to ask for help.

Howard Winokeur, PhD, and Heidi Horsley, PsyD., TCF USA magazine

Grieving the loss of someone you love feels like carrying them around, hidden and invisible to the naked eye but your spirit heavy with their memory and presence.

I carry him with me everyday, and these days, it doesn't weigh me down as much with sadness.

These days his memory stamped on my heart is as normal to me as the color of my eyes, the sound of my own voice.

When you mention him, you aren't reminding me of him. He's already intertwined with my every thought.

When you mention him, you are reminding me that I'm not alone in remembering that he did exist, that he was here, and that he's still mine.

Lexi Behrndt Gratefully lifted from Upper and Lower Cape Cod

MARCUS' SONG

The music's gone, the turntables don't turn
The keyboard's silent, your pen and paper don't stir
The bag's on a hook in the hallway
Waiting for your return

The poems I have in his book, The story he told on CD
I cry gentle tears in the morning, For the beautiful man who loved me

But I know where you are my son, I know your mind's now free
To wander in far flung places, to galaxies way beyond me

Like those who have gone before you, the courage you showed on Earth
Went unnoticed by ordinary people and filtered away into mirth

But you'll always be young in my eyes, always be loved and near
I feel you in the breeze sometimes and hear your words so clear

Don't give up Ma, keep on trying and tell them what I say
It's not what happens to you in life It's what you do with what happens That's the way

He fought so hard for his sanity, for all like him to be cured
Of that we dare not speak of, schizophrenia's a very big word

Twenty he was, when it happened, he dabbled in drugs and then
His mind took a flight to the heavens, leaving paranoia and terror instead

You fought the big fight my son, I've never known braver than you
The years you tramped hills in darkness, craving the sleep you once knew

He searched the internet daily in the hope of finding a cure
Dreaming for himself and others, their minds and brilliance restored

For the drugs they give you are numbing, they play with body and brain
And leave but a trace of the person, their spirit dies slowly in pain.

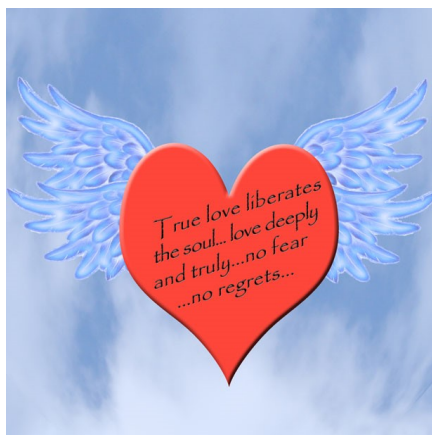
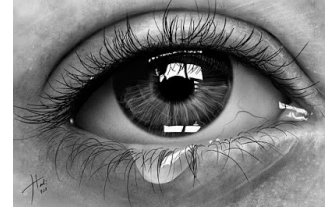
He took his life one November on a hot, blistering day
He gave me a necklace that morning, with a smile that would melt you away

But love's what he came here to teach us and love is what he left behind
His beautiful gentle nature and gifted talented mind

And his ashes were thrown in green sanctuary near the railway tunnel he'd slept
Flowers were strewn on the river, round a painting of memories we'd kept

I wondered who'd see that flotilla, what idea would they possibly make
Of the soul of my son drifting softly, beyond storms to the calm of a lake

Beth Jessup Lifted with love from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter



POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

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

We All Need to Grieve

If we don't allow ourselves to grieve, if we try to repress the dreadful pain of our child, grandchild or sibling's death and busy ourselves so we don't have to feel anything, we are not allowing ourselves to begin to heal.

*Grieving allows us to heal,
to remember with love
rather than pain.*

It is a sorting process.

*One by one you let go
of the things that are gone
and you mourn for them.*

*One by one you take hold
of the things that have
become a part of who you are
and build again.*

Rachel Naomi Remen
Reprinted with love from Compassion UK



Hands

Little handprints in a frame,
Flashback of memories,
days long gone,
yet still so fresh in my mind
as if only yesterday.



Tiny hand of my baby girl,
Fingers curled around my own,
Only a reflex to some,
But not in my mind,
For me only the purest of loving connections.

Outstretched toddler hand
reaching out for mine.
Trusting mother's protective grasp,
maneuvering the busy streets,
we skipped together, hand-in-hand.



Slender-fingered teenage beauty,
polished nails, smooth scented
hands.

Seeking independence,
Hands pushing me away,
Sensing somehow her reluctance,
Not really ready, not quite yet...

Hands of her adult years,
I thought would have held mine
as I navigated through the ageing years.
Hands to comfort and hold,
but never to be,

I am left only with my memories,
and tiny handprints, in a frame...

Cathy Seehuetter TCF/St. Paul, MN In Memory of my daughter, Nina
Winnipeg Chapter news

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Relationships suffer during Grief

Over 100 years ago, grieving was not what it was today. Back then, many children grew up on farms, saw animals live and die as well as watched the death of their elders. The old or sick family members were cared for by family and the family took care of them during their final days. Even after death, it was the family's responsibility to wash and dress the body and have the 'wake' at the house. Families worked together and stayed together during the grieving process. Death was normal, yes sad and painful but a normal part of life.

Grieving then was not nearly as tortuous as it is today. Today, we don't see much of death. We live our lives unconsciously thinking that 'death' happens to other people. Our elders and sick die in hospitals and nursing homes. It's rare that we see a farm, let alone live on a farm and see the birth and death of animals. Death is kept quiet and away from society.

Then, without knowing 'Death' hits your life, You get a phone call that someone close to you has died and the shock and grief emotions are soon to follow. Or you find out that someone you love has an illness and is going to die. You experience 'Anticipatory Grief'. You experience the same shock and grief emotions even though that person has not yet died. To make matters worse, you learn that you'll experience these emotions a second time, after the person has died.

Grief is a very hard journey on anyone. We need our friends and family to be there for us, to listen to us, to be a shoulder to cry on, to look to them for support. However, this can be VERY HARD thing for family to do, because they are going through grief as well. There is an astonishing number of divorces that take place after a death of a loved one, For instance, many spouses get divorced after a child dies. When a parent or grandparent dies many children and grandchildren 'fight' and as a result, never speak again. When one spouse has a life-threatening illness, such as cancer, very often the couple will get divorced, even though the person goes into remission and does not die. That will never happen to me and my family,' you think. Well sorry to say, there is not one family that is not touched with grief. Most families I spoke to said this very thing. 'My family was so close, I would never have dreamed this would happen' or 'My brother and I were so close, I cannot believe he got this greedy' or 'My wife was always so loving, I cannot believe she is so cold to me.

A term that comes up often in conversations is 'True Colours'. Such as, someone's 'true colours' coming out if they are selfish, angry, financially greedy or void of emotion ... such as no longer being loving or compassionate. I ask you right now to consider that people's 'true colours' are the attributes and mannerisms that the person has had consistently, in life, not in this time of grief. Deep down, People are still those same loving, generous, kind, compassionate, fun to be with human beings, but when they experience grief...the body goes into shock and a new, temporary, set of emotions takes over. That new set of emotions that might take over your husband or wife, that just lost a parent or child? You might be experiencing these emotions yourself and find it hard to relate to others, worse yet, you and the people closest to you are experiencing grief, and if not properly identified, you may 'write off' or disassociate with someone permanently!

We need people when we grieve. If the grieving process is properly understood, I hope for more people to have compassion with each other... no matter if it's happening NOW or if something happened 20 years ago. It's never too late! Please realise the symptoms of grief are an emotional response to the loss that has occurred. No matter how smart you are and how much you may have read about the subject, your body will still have to go through grief.

In addition to the emotions that you will experience during grief, there are TWO big areas that cause communication breakdowns, between people. Those areas are your perception and your memory. When a death or a traumatic experience occurs (it could be a divorce or loss of a job), the body instinctively goes into 'survival' mode.

- Impairment of short term memory - e.g. you may not remember conversations and activities as they really occurred—but things that you do and believe you are telling the truth
- Diminished concentration and attention span
- Distorted perception e.g. you may get angry and cut a person out of your life because you heard a 'tone' in the way they spoke to you. Or you may assign an incorrect meaning to something a person did. For instance 'Judy balanced the cheque book and she knows that's my responsibility, now I don't trust her anymore'
- Absent-mindedness, forgetfulness, feeling distracted
- A tendency to focus on a negative aspects of life, and often a sense that everything is going wrong.
- Loss of interest in what was previously of great interest
- Difficulty in dealing with responsibilities
- Fear of going 'crazy'.

- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling stupid
- Inability to think about the future and make plans
- Worrying about not achieving or not living up to usual standards
- Worrying that you will never feel good again and will always feel the way you do now
- Just worrying about everything

Please, please, please be gentle and compassionate with yourself and others during grief. Unless you are in someone else's shoes, you don't know how difficult of a time it is. Do your best to listen, don't make them wrong for their behaviour and love them thankfully, with mutual respect and patience, relationships can withstand and even sometimes grow stronger due to grief.

Grief and Relationships

Grief can take a toll on relationships because it is primarily an individual experience. Partners can try to understand someone else's grief but they can never experience it or take on the burden themselves. Grief can have a number of affects on relationships. Partners may grow close as they need each for support or realise that they would like to spend more time together. However, partners may also grow apart if the grieving individual retreats into him or herself, his or her partner lose patience with grief or a combination.

Intimate relationships may also experience slow period if the grieving individual does not feel like becoming physically close to others. Finally, some relationships may not experience any changes if grief is not intense, if it is fleeting or if partners are able to give and receive support in an open and 'efficient' manner.

Supporting Others Through Grief Perhaps the greatest mistake someone attempting to comfort or console another can make is to insist on how the other must be feeling. Instead, friends and relatives of the bereaved should be patient with whatever emotions the individual may be feeling without deciding whether these emotions are 'right' or 'appropriate'. Talking about how each person is feeling often helps everyone stay on the same page and understand more about what others are going through, and scheduling activities that the bereaved enjoys may help him or her to experience positive emotions. If more than one person is experiencing grief at the same time, it may be that allowing each to experience their own grief without feeling that they must make the other feel better helps all involved. However, throughout grief, physical affection, tokens or love and affection, and reminders that others will always be there for the bereaved will likely always be appreciated.

Grief is often a solitary, unique experience. Others will never be able to understand exactly how the bereaved is feeling, so patience with whatever may come will help all relationships stay strong. If it is believed that grief is interfering with the bereaved life then counselling may be in order.

Sandra M Chaplain <http://www.wedontdie.com/ifyouargrieving/ourrelationships.html>

Reprinted with thanks from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter

**Grief never ends, but it changes.
 It is a passage, not a place to stay.
 The sense of loss must give way –
 If we are to value the life that was lived.**

[Lifted from Reflections, TCF, WA]

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Sibling Page



What If? ~By T. F. McCray

We followed a silver Mustang to New York on Friday. My mother and I. Traveling from my home farther south. The boys buckled tightly in the back. It had black stripes on the hood and the windows were too dark to see inside. Like his.

We joined minds, spoke without speaking, and imagined the unimaginable. That he was still here. That it was his. His Mustang, zipping up and down the Belt Parkway in Canarsie, in Flatbush, in his Brooklyn. Visiting this and that, her and her, blasting his music, picking up the pieces, the bits, for the collection, for his soul. We imagined, jointly. It's like we both heard the whisper; a soft, silent whisper, "What if?" "What if?" it said.

What if October 22, 2009, never was? The cloudless sky on that sunny, sorrowful, unexpected day. The day my brother's soul ended its tangible journey beside us. The day that concluded us as we were and began us as we are.

"What if?" we whispered. He whispered.

What if . . . he was here all along? What if it was as simple as catching up to him on his drive? What if we would find him watching a waterfall in Saratoga? Eating a Klondike bar in Elmont? Outside of a repair shop, getting a car service that took a little too long. Or what if we found him parked in my mother's driveway in Queens at home? At home . . .

What if we had just been blinded by a bizarre streak of glaring sunlight? Cast from a low-flying plane? It was possible because we grew up by the airport. What if we had missed him standing there all along, and that man we watched leave us on 10/22 wasn't my brother at all? It was someone else's brother, someone else's son, someone else's . . .

What if when the glare cleared he would appear? Smirking. Buffing a small fingerprint from his sideview mirror and walking over to us with his heavy steps to make some joke about the latest current event. What if we had another chance to kiss his warm cheeks and cover him in our embrace? Make my mother smile again . . . from the inside? What if he could tickle my sons and meet my dear Wesley, his namesake?

We raced alongside that silver Mustang. Watching and waiting, wondering and willing, wondering and willing . . . life. We wondered, *What if?* We tried desperately to mask the quick sounds of our breaths as we chased this dream. We chastised our souls for wanting to bound toward him and dance in the unimaginable. To morph what wasn't into what is and make this impossible our possible. But it wasn't . . . The universe curses us with unexplained gifts.

That driver snuck off at an exit before we could see for ourselves, before we could answer, before we could reason . . .but left us . . . imagining, even for that moment, that second, in that small slither of unmovable, imaginable, glorious, beautiful space . . . *What if?*

T. F. McCray is a lawyer, freelance writer, and married mother of two. She is a native of New York and currently residing in Maryland. She lost her brother Thomas Wesley Higdon Jr. at the age of 38 on October 22, 2009, from congestive heart failure.

Why The Death of a Sibling Is Like Losing a Part of Yourself

If you're anything like me, you grew up in a fairy-tale surrounded by siblings who stood 10 feet tall. You grew up with parents who were as brave as superheroes. You grew up naïve to the world around you.

Don't get me wrong; I was well aware of what the news never failed to talk about. I knew mothers and fathers could lose their battles with cancer. I knew children could be kidnapped. I knew houses burned down, and car accidents happened almost every day. But, I had created a world where my family was untouchable, where nothing could ever happen to them because they were mine.

Five years ago, a police officer knocked on our front door. It was 10 pm, and I had just gotten ready for bed. "There's been an accident. You need to come to the hospital right away." By this point, I had seen enough TV shows to know this was not what you wanted to hear from a police officer, especially not at 10 pm, and especially not when your older brother still hadn't made it home. I lost a brother that day. I lost a cheerleader, a mentor and a best friend. The safe space I had created so easily disappeared, and I was left to tackle the world without the one person who had always paved a path before me.

There's no word to describe the loss of a sibling. If you lose a spouse, you're a widow or widower. If you lose your parents, you're an orphan. But if you lose a sibling, you just become the girl who lost her brother. My therapist described it as losing a limb. If someone tells you it gets better with time, the person's lying to you. Yes, cuts get better and wounds do heal, but when you lose an arm, it's foolish to await the day it "gets better." You simply learn to live with one arm.

I learned to do the things I know he would have liked. I learned to listen to the songs we sang together in the car without breaking down in tears. I learned — and am still learning — to function normally without him just a phone call away. However, "normal" has lately been like a blanket too short for a bed. Sometimes it covers you just fine, and other times it leaves you shaking in the cold. I've come to find the worst part is I never know which one it's going to be when I wake up. It's been almost five years since that day. Some days the ache is a little less than before, but other days it makes me want to lock myself in my room. And some days, I still feel like I am stuck in a void.

There is no statute of limitations on grief. There is no time limit to waking up crying, or having to leave the grocery store because you see your sibling's old friends. There is no special cure for those dull aches in your heart that don't seem to ever go away. But, coming from a sister who thought she would never find the light again, know there will come a day when the thought of that loved one brings a smile to your face instead of leaving you gasping for a breath you cannot find. There will come a day when you find yourself talking about your sibling and you do not feel uncomfortable. There will come a day when the universe sends you a sign to let you know your sibling is doing OK. And there will come a day when the 19 years you were able to have with your sibling becomes enough for the 19 more you'll never have.

There is no other love like the love for a brother, and no other love like the love from a brother. And if you're lucky to have a brother who was also your best friend, that love is going to cover you during the best of times and hold your hand through the worst.

This article was written by Kady Braswell for Unwritten

Lifted with love from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

In our family, all our children have grown up knowing their sister by name and the stories about her. They know she's a member of our family. We have photos of her next to photos of them. None of them ever got to meet her, but they genuinely sense the gap she's left. They know she's treasured and feel proud of her. Some people find it odd, but it's true .

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Reprinted with thanks from TCF Focus NSW



MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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



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

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
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.org.nz

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