



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 181

DECEMBER 2020 JANUARY 2021



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

RETURN ADDRESS
52 SUNRISE DRIVE,
SEAWARD BUSH,
INVERCARGILL
9812
NEW ZEALAND

TO

OUR CHILDREN



Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Glenn Arscott	Born 12/12/81	Richard Cowie	Died 11/12/90
Stefan Francis Cockill	Born 12/12/57	Shane Elliot Davis	Died 13/12/84
Rick Daysh	Born 27/12/81	Jack Stephen Dyer	Died 6/12/07
Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Born 26/12/92	Gordon Legge	Died 30/12/96
Ryan Joseph Frost	Born 9/12/81	Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Died 1/12/84
Laura Johanna Hood	Born 31/12/89	Caren Amanda Phillips	Died 30/12/01
Matthew David Hubber	Born 10/12/78	Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Died 23/12/03
Daniel Philip Innes	Born 13/12/85	Ryan Ashley Thompson	Died 20/12/01
Keryn Sarah Langley	Born 2/12/98	Eddie Te Arihana Tutaki	Died 2/12/00
Jessie Lineham	Born 27/12/89	Ayla Rose Whitaker	Died 9/12/06
Andrew John Manson	Born 8/12/75		
Shaun Mataki	Born 2/12/83	Richard Craig Bell	Died 21/1/05
Maryann Gaye Pearce	Born 21/12/73	Simon Charlton	Died 14/1/08
Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Born 23/12/75	Sophie Kate Elliott	Died 9/1/08
Nikolaas Remmerswaal	Born 5/12/96	Ryan Joseph Frost	Died 16/1/99
Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Born 27/12/91	Laura Johanna Hood	Died 21/1/00
Wayne Edward Summers	Born 14/12/75	Tara Louise MacPherson	Died 14/1/05
Ben Watt	Born 28/12/87	Peter John Oxley	Died 6/1/96
Dion Wells	Born 5/12/61	Corey Ryalls	Died 13/1/99
Hayden Ross Whitaker	Born 12/12/86	Anthony Mark Staite	Died 19/1/98
		Dion Wells	Died 1/1/01
Claire(Mary) Benicarke(Schiehsel)	Born 10/1/75		
Nicholas James Cox	Born 15/1/70		
Ricky George	Born 16/1/87		
Ben Henderson	Born 6/1/89		
Steven Micheal Jack	Born 21/1/71		
Kai Klein	Born 22/1/62		
Shane Parish	Born 21/1/70		
Corey Ryalls	Born 4/1/76		
Nicole Leigh Templer	Born 28/1/91		



Dear Friends,

As we come to the end of a year like no other we have known, we are now having to face that time of year that for many of us is still one of the toughest times of the year. I (like many of you) have faced this for more than 15 years, and yes, it is a lot easier than the first or even the fifth, but I still think, '*Ben should be here!*' And for those of you, earlier in this journey, I know it is even harder.

Of course, these days, most people I see and talk with, do not realise that I am grieving the loss of a son, the loss of dreams that we had which were specifically associated with Ben, the loss of our original family unit. Those friends who are aware of Ben's death know that we still remember him and would expect that if we think about him, we will of course be sad, but you, my Compassionate Friends, know that the grief and sadness we feel is more than that.

I am so grateful that I have moved past that totally raw pain, distress and helpless feelings of those early years. I am grateful that these days I function as a contributing member of society, able to fully partake in everyday activities, do what is needed and what is expected, support and be there for friends and family members. BUT, *Ben should still be here!!*

I have sent a couple of sympathy cards this year and in each one I have written 'He is no longer where he was, instead, he is now, wherever you are.'

This was something that I read in a TCF newsletter and I think this is one of the quotes that I fall back on in those tough times.

Ben IS with me now. I talk with him, I ask for his support to look after my partner and youngest son, or other family member or friend I think may need some extra help. I believe he is around and knows what I am thinking and feeling. He is and always will be a part of me, in my heart, on my shoulder and in the space that I inhabit. A parents love for their child is never ending and nothing can break that bond and tie. So as I move into this Christmas period and the start of a new year, although I grieve the loss of Bens physical presence, I celebrate the love between us that continues, and will continue forever, I celebrate the joy of being a mum to him and I am eternally thankful for the opportunity to be his mum.

I love and miss you Ben.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people involved in TCF throughout New Zealand. Because of you there are many bereaved parents and siblings who have been given hope and support during their grief journey. You all do an amazing job giving your time, compassion and love. Thankyou.

I would also like to thank Southland Chapter and Central Otago Chapter who recently provided funding for a new laptop for the newsletter production. This is very much appreciated.

To everyone reading this newsletter I would like to wish you peace, love and hope during this Christmas period.

All my love, Lesley Henderson.

Dear Friend

Because I really care about you, I'm not going to pretend and wish you a merry Christmas as if nothing's happened. Instead, I'm going to reach out to you and tell you that I realize this must be a very difficult time for you.

It probably doesn't seem fair that everyone else is smiling and laughing and enjoying the holidays as usual, while your heart is aching. There may be times a favorite carol that used to bring a smile to your face now brings tears to your eyes. You may feel confused, cheated, and even angry... and I wouldn't blame you.

But rather than force yourself to fake the holiday spirit, please be honest with your emotions. Cry, be angry, do whatever it takes to get through this.. always remembering that you will get through this.

Remember, too, that in time you'll be ready to celebrate Christmas again. And until then, know that there are many people whose hearts are with you, especially now... people who care about you very much and always will.

Renee Duvall, Lakes Area Chapter, MI Loving lifted from Kamloops

Christmas Without You

Although it's sad to reminisce
 On Christmases we knew,
 This year I shall celebrate
 In memory of you.
 I will put aside my sorrow
 With every unshed tear
 And concentrate on all the love
 We shared when you were here.
 Our time together taught me
 What Christmas time is for,
 And that's what I'll remember
 Until we meet once more.



www.griefandsympathy.com

Tips for Coping at Christmas

Be Prepared

Think about what is best for you and your family. Some people will just want to cancel Christmas or maybe do something completely different like volunteering for the day. Others find celebrating as normal is important, or may need to keep going for the sake of children.



Remember A Loved One

It can help to bring memories of loved ones into the celebrations.

You could include a visit to their grave, or a place that was special to them. You may have photos or particular memories which you treasure and look at alone, or share with others.



Look After Yourself

Christmas can be a time of over indulgence with food and alcohol. Using alcohol to escape the pain of loss only brings temporary relief.

Try to keep to regular patterns of sleeping and eating. Get out and enjoy the fresh air, exercise is a great way to relax.



Take Time For You

Don't be alarmed if your emotions take over, just take some time for yourself no one will judge you. Remember there is no right way to grieve, and keep talking. Keep plans flexible and allow yourself to change your mind.

As time passes, Christmas can be a time to focus on memories of good times shared in the past. But it can also be an intensely emotional time. Be kind to yourself, and ask for help if you need it.



Somebody to turn to when someone dies.



Grief and *Christmas* go together like fire and wood. When everyone around you wants to be happy and joyful .. you just want to be left alone with the hurt of loss, curl up and hide with the tears and pain .. It's okay! It's your grief .. So do it your way!
 all-greatquotes.com

I light a candle for you this Christmas...

With each flicker of light, I am reminded of all the joy that you brought into the lives of the people who knew you.

The glow of the flame reminds me of the warmth of your spirit.

I light a candle for you tonight, to remember and celebrate a life well lived.

~Kelly S. Buckley~



www.kellybuckley.com

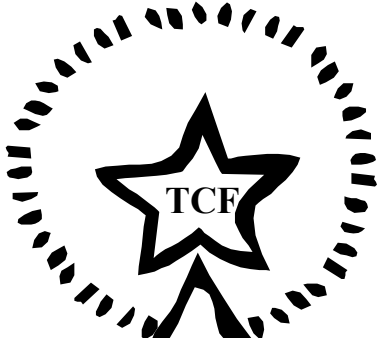


*May the Memories
of this season
Come on Gentle
Wings
To bring you
Love and Peace*

Merry Christmas to all
our beloved children. Our
hugs and kisses and all
our love we send to those
we hold deeply in our
hearts and live with
through our memories.



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Paul
Nicole
Glenn Terry
Mitchell Aidan
Brian Stefan Tara Michael
Heath

Andrew
Michael Rick Tineke
Nicholas Henare Ian Jack
Kirsten Richard Hayley Keegan Kyle
Quinntin Ben Daniel Sharyn Claire(Mary)

Rebecca Faye Laura Matthew Ayla
Ryan Pauline Hughan Sally Dan
Paul Nikolaas Vicki Sharyn-Maree Tania
Esme Peter Ryan Shane Marie Gordon Sophie
Yvonne Logan Leonard Hollie Robbie

Cindy Georgia Trinity Wayne
Jake Stefan Hayden Shaun Te-Ahu-Aroha
Anthea Maryann Caren Callum Corey
Callum Cameron Simon Franciss Steven Bevan
Vaughan Gary Greg Richard Brendan Alan
Claire Anthony Peter Craig Melissa Eddi

David Julie Quintin Dion Matthew
Kai Allan Robert James Ricky Rebecca Anna
Krysha Christopher Ben Greg Thomas Keryn
Shane Grant Jaylene Kirsten Timothy Marlene Thomas
Mark Daniel Jonathon Sashi Jessie Jason
Andrew Marcus



Coping with grief: The first Christmas without your loved one

Posted by [AK Lander](#) | On December 11, 2018 11:39

We asked grief writers and bloggers to share their advice and experiences about coping with the first Christmas after the loss of a loved one. We all know how overwhelming grief can feel, but when the holidays roll around, it can feel almost unbearable. Whether you've lost a pet, child, partner or friend, the idea of being without your loved one during Christmas can make the hole in your heart feel even bigger, and your grief more painful.

We spoke to three amazing grief writers about their experiences and advice with coping with grief over Christmas. So, if you're facing your first Christmas without your loved one this year, you can find comfort in knowing you are not alone.

Nancy's Story

"Everyone was still reeling and trying to wrap our heads around the fact that she was no longer with us. Being together gave us comfort."

Nancy from [Being With Grief](#) remembers her first Christmas well after the loss of her daughter, Leah. "On November 8, 2000, my world changed forever. That is the day my 17-year old daughter Leah died. She had been in a car accident five days earlier. She had massive brain injuries and never regained consciousness. To say we were devastated is an understatement. I thought my life was over. I wanted to withdraw from the land of the living. I had no idea how I was going to get from one moment to the next."

With Leah's passing so close to Christmas, Nancy and her family were still coming to terms with her loss when the big day arrived. "The first Christmas after Leah died we were still in shock. We had family and Leah's friends over to our house to decorate our tree. Everyone was still reeling and trying to wrap our heads around the fact that she was no longer with us. Being together gave us comfort.

"The second year we tried to do everything the same way we always did, and it was too hard. We expected to see Leah come bounding around the corner at any moment, and she wasn't there." After trying to celebrate as normal for two Christmases, Nancy and her family finally decided they needed to get away for the next one. "We decided to travel during the holidays. The change of scenery was enough to ease our tender hearts, just a little."

"Give yourself permission to take care of your needs."

"If you are approaching your first holiday without your loved one, take a look at what you need this year," says Nancy. "After that second year, we did not put up our Christmas tree until last year - 16 years later. Give yourself permission to take care of your needs. Maybe there are some traditions that are too difficult this year. Maybe you need a change of scenery too. Is there a new tradition that you would like to start to honour your loved one?"

Nancy also says to bear in mind that everyone will have different grieving needs. "Other members of your family, although grieving for the same person, may have different needs than you do. Since everyone has a different relationship with the person who had died, their grief journey will be different also.

"Make your needs known to your family and friends and listen to their needs too. Slow down and allow your feelings to come, pushing them away makes them louder and more intense; ask a trusted friend to sit with you to just listen, or be with you in silence.

"Remember that each year will be different, and it's important to ask yourself these questions each year. As you move further on in your grief journey, your needs will change. Most importantly though, be gentle with yourself."

Anne's Story

"What I was going to do for the rest of my life was the biggest dilemma, not Christmas."

We also spoke to Anne, who runs her own website [Losing a Child to Suicide](#) after losing her son Toby. "I lost my 23-year-old son to suicide in July 2011, he was my only child and it came completely out of the blue - a huge shock, I had no idea he was depressed or suicidal. I was living with my 80-year-old father at the time and we had just moved to Cornwall. I lost my Mum in 2006, and it was meant to be the start of my dream life."

While trying to process the loss of her son, Anne was soon to suffer another loss. "Toby died in Cambridge, so I held his funeral there so his friends could say goodbye. The day after I returned to Cornwall my father was diagnosed with cancer and passed away 4 months later in November, not long before Christmas.

"After my Dad died in November and so soon after losing Toby one of the first things people asked me was 'what are you going to do for Christmas?', as if this was my biggest dilemma. I wanted to scream that what I was going to do for the rest of my life was the biggest dilemma, not Christmas."

For her first Christmas without both her son and father, Anne was kindly invited to a friend's house, but Anne said it went terribly for her. "No one mentioned Toby or my loss, and she had her two daughters and their boy-friends there. It just shone a huge spotlight on my loss and made it feel ten times worse, I made an excuse and went to bed early and looked at the pictures of the previous Christmas and cried."

"Have faith that you will find new traditions and new ways to enjoy Christmas while also remembering that special person."

Anne's advice echoes Nancy's in that you should spend Christmas how you feel best. "Do what you feel in your gut is best for you. If you want to be alone, don't be persuaded to join in another family's Christmas, if you don't really want to. However, don't be alone if you feel you will descend into misery and gloom."

Anne recommends trying to find a happy medium between seeing friends and family but also spending time on your own. "Remember that your loved one would want you to feel happy so find a good balance between remembering your loved one, acknowledging your loss, spending time alone and spending it with people who you love."

Anne also says that you need to tell your loved ones what you need. "If you don't tell people what you need, there is a good chance they won't mention your loved one as they don't want to upset you. I think this is the biggest myth about death and grief, people get more upset at the silence than people asking about their loss.

"Make sure you tell them you want to talk about your loved one and share happy memories, and honour them by lighting a candle, visiting their gravestone or reading a poem."

Finally, Anne says: "Accept that Christmas will never be the same, but have faith that you will find new traditions and new ways to enjoy Christmas while also remembering that special person.

"At the end of the day, it is just one day, it is a difficult time and it is OK to feel sad, but in time it won't feel as raw and you shouldn't feel guilty about finding joy and happiness again."



A Practical Plan for Dealing with Grief During the holiday season

The main tenant of our Practical Guide for Grieving During the Holidays is the thought that one of the best ways to make it through the holidays after a loss is to plan ahead. Regardless of what you do, there is no way to avoid having to deal with pain and the sadness; no one can offer you a way around this. So as difficult as it is, we recommend you accept right now that parts of the holidays are going to be hard. But, by thinking about the elements that will be the hardest for you this holiday season, you can minimize stress and lessen the likelihood of being caught off guard by difficult situations. Try and complete the plan with those you will be spending the holidays with, this will open the lines of communication about worries and anxieties and it will allow for discussion about how to support one another.

1. Identify which individuals you will be spending the holidays with. Who will be present for events, traditions, and celebrations? Make a list of the individuals you may want to plan with. Often times these individuals will be dealing with the same loss. If you will be spending the holidays alone or with people far removed from your loss, grab a journal or a notebook and complete the plan on your own.
2. If you decide to involve family and friends in making a plan, call a family meeting Plan the meeting date early enough so people can think, process, and plan. Try and have everyone present. If individuals can't make it, you can have them on speakerphone or Skype. You could also start a Facebook group, private blog, or e-mail chain for group conversations and updates. Don't overlook the children. Even the youngest family members need to have a chance to express feelings and concerns. It's also good for children to feel heard
3. Decide what to do about tradition Identify the rituals and traditions that will be the hardest. Allow each member of the group to discuss what will be hardest about these identified moments. Brainstorm ways to make these elements of the holidays easier. Also discuss ways you can support one another during these times. In the end you may decide to keep the event or tradition the same, change it, or skip it until next year.
4. Discuss roles and responsibilities Your loved one may have held several roles and responsibilities during the holiday season. Take a little time to make sure there aren't any roles, big or small, that will need to be filled or changed (i.e. Who will plan the holiday meal, who will get the tree this year? Who will plan the holiday gift budget?) Some people may not feel comfortable stepping into their deceased loved ones' shoes to fill these roles, respect their feeling and don't push. Make sure the roles and responsibilities don't fall too heavily on one person.
5. Finalize your plan You may need some time to think about the plan so schedule follow up time to finalize if needed. Brainstorm or discuss support needs you think you will have (i.e. I may need someone to help me decorate the tree) and discuss how you can offer support to others (i.e. I will help you buy the grandchildren gifts this year). Let others know the things you just can't muster up the energy to do this year, like shop for gifts or attend holiday parties. Small things can take a lot of energy when you are grieving so give each other permission to opt out of things. Make a plan to follow up with those who aren't present.
6. Communicate with children affected by the loss The holidays are hard for children because, although they are sad about the loss, they still may be excited for the same reasons we all were as children. Let them know they don't need to feel guilty about enjoying themselves. Ask them to let you know if they start to feel sad. Make a special code word they can use if they need a break or some space.
7. If you haven't already, take time to think about you and how you will take care of yourself during the holidays Make a plan for how you will cope when things get really tough. Will you go to a support group, call a friend, go to church, exercise, journal, etc? Give yourself permission to cry, even in public. Don't feel bad when you find yourself sobbing in the middle of the shops because you saw a gift they would have liked or their favourite song came on over the loud speaker. Set aside time for self-care. Preventatively schedule an hour here and there for 'mental health' time.
8. Find ways to incorporate your love one in the holidays. This is the best way to feel close to your loved one and fill their absence. You may want to find at least one or two ways to incorporate your loved one in each tradition and event that you identified as potentially being difficult.

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter



Saying 'No' to Holiday Traditions is OK After a Loss

For many of us, for much of the time, it is hard to say “no.” Even when we’re busy, even when we’re tired, even when it’s something we really don’t want to do. It’s especially hard when it’s something that we’ve done before, when it’s been our routine, our habit, or our tradition. We get into patterns and they’re hard to change. One of our patterns and traditions can be saying “yes” when asked, especially by friends, family, and those we respect. One of the harder voices to say “no” to is that voice in our head. The one that guides us to what we “should” do. This voice has high expectations. Often this voice is the voice of wisdom and helps us balance our needs, our aspirations and our impulses. It can be helpful. It’s the voice that supports the idea that sometimes being mature is doing what we don’t want to do when we don’t want to do it. Saying “yes” when part of us, a strong but less wise part of us, really wants to say “no.”

There are times, however, when this voice in our head becomes unreasonable and something of a tyrant. It gets caught up in appearances and shoulds, and then it shoulds on us. Because sometimes “no” is the right response to a request. Sometimes “no” is what we should say when presented with an invitation, opportunity, or expectation. Sometimes “no” is what needs to be said to the way we’ve done things before. “No” even to family traditions. We get this need to say “no” and reprioritize when a serious illness crashes into our lives. When our child, spouse, or parent gets the big diagnosis. When we get the big diagnosis. What was important before, on the “have to do” list, now becomes negotiable or off the list entirely.

In a healthcare crisis, expectations get a new and needed reevaluation. How important is this in reality (compared to other things that are not negotiable)? Do I now have time for this? Do I have the energy for this? Is this really something I want to do? A friend living with cancer described it this way: “Fewer priorities...I guard what I do with my time like a soldier now. None to waste, especially on fatiguing chemo. I just let go of so much now...”

After a death, it can be the same. Priorities can be fewer and reordered with only so much energy to spend. What felt important before no longer has the same power, draw and pull. Death is the great prioritizer. When it calls, we drop the rest and give it top billing, not because we like it but because it’s that important. And in the shadow of death, or perhaps in the light of death, we can often see things more clearly than we did before. With this new clarity, we can be inspired to live differently, make new choices, and make old choices with greater intentionality. And in this new world, grief world, we can be better at saying “no.”

Which brings us to holiday seasons. No time of year has more expectations and shoulds, both within and without, than holiday seasons. We get messages all around about how they are supposed to go. The foods to prepare and eat. Decorations that are required. Smiling family gatherings. Holidays which were intended to be meaningful times of remembrance and celebration can become gauntlets of expectations and activities.

Holidays don’t have to be that way. They can be times where we pick and choose what is meaningful and worth doing. Where we look those voices of expectation in the eye and politely say, “No thank you, not this year. I only have so much time and so much energy, and I am guarding both like a soldier.” When I worked in the pediatric cancer world, I would often see parents reprioritize their lives. Many would comment that they had a different view of what was really important and worth their time. They said “no” to many things they would never have said “no” to before. This change in perspective was powerful and I would wonder if it lasted or what parts of it lasted in the years to follow after cancer treatments had ended. Here is where the memory of the early days of loss can be our friend. Memory of those days of clarity and fewer priorities can continue to teach us and support us when those should-y voices regain their strength and try to take over again. The wisdom of grief can help us say “no” when it’s not worth it, to say “yes” when it is, and to sort out the differences.

There is a freedom to be found in grief, and it is one holiday (and life) invitation that deserves a “yes” in response.

Written by Greg Adams on Tuesday, November 14, 2017. Greg Adams is a social worker at Arkansas Children’s Hospital (ACH) where he coordinates the Center for Good Mourning, a grief support and outreach program, and works with bereavement support for staff who are exposed to suffering and loss.

Gratefully lifted from Central Iowa Chapter

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT, ALL IS CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT.

Not so, is it? It's the first Christmas since your child's death. It is hell. You find it hard to face the crowded shopping malls; the fala-la-la-la is removed from the decking of the halls; the dancing doll and ever-so-fast racing sets which glitter of newfallen "create a flake" leave you feeling uneasy; and ole Santa cannot give you what you want most, regardless of how good you are. Funny, this is the seventh Christmas since your child died, and damn, it's not much easier than the first. You still want to rush up and tell the man or the woman with their hands loaded down with Christmas gifts how lucky they are to be buying for their kids. You still want to buy that doll or racing set, but you feel half-crazy as you walk into the store. And those Christmas cards are still avoiding the issue, and they hurt, just like they did on the first Christmas.

Perhaps you can and do identify with the paragraphs above. Perhaps your season of glad tidings is a season of hurried tidings. Perhaps the peace on earth hasn't quite found its way into your heart yet. Perhaps your holiday season is filled with avoidance rather than involvement. In the holidays of joy, why are we so reminded of sadness? Why do we seem to do so well all year long, until Christmas time? Oh, I know, you do not need to be reminded that it's particularly a children's holiday, and that the windows are so filled with those things that you always wanted to buy for him or her. Maybe it's because it's the season to forget the rational and indulge in our children's fantasy world, only to discover the sea of broken toys on December 26. Maybe it's because it's a season filled with laughter, joy and life. It is a season where the lack of it is disturbingly noticed. It is a season where emptiness becomes emptier and loneliness becomes lonelier.

Trapped in this paradox, last Christmas I visited a cemetery off West Florissant Road where children I had known and worked with were buried. The area I visited was particularly significant for it is known as Baby Heaven, that area set aside for the burial of young children. On that day, I almost thought I was at another Compassionate Friends meeting as parents freely mingled and shared among other parents who were visiting their children's gravesites. I sensed an unusual camaraderie in that other parents had a real sense of what the others were going through. It was as though each was telling the other that "you are not alone." After awhile many couples (and a large number of children of all ages) departed, and I took the liberty of visiting the graves. The ensuing twenty minutes I will never forget. There lay the spirit of Christmas, as if the area was under a huge Christmas tree. There was the big red drum with the words "We miss you, Robbie" on the top. And Amanda has "Tiny Tearful," the crying doll, next to her tombstone. A teddy bear, a tin soldier, and manger scenes helped to fill the cemetery toy land. Another child's family had Christmas cards, complete with personal messages in each, paper-clipped into the ground. And, of course, there were numerous decorated Christmas trees with ornaments made by the surviving siblings - sad, yet beautiful.

I walked away and tried to gather my emotions. My psychological side began yelling out various and unimportant theories, conclusions and abstracts; my personal side found peace. What I indeed saw was beauty in the midst of tragedy. I saw families remembering their children in special, real ways. They had not put their deceased child into a special role, but allowed the child's role to remain special. The grave decorations did not make the deceased children untouchable saints, but allowed them to be the memory of what they really were - good but not perfect children. What I saw that day will stay with me forever, for I saw expressions of giving, expressions of Christmas. I saw the hope in parents' eyes, the same hope found in a child's eyes as they awake Christmas morning to discover that Santa has arrived. And perhaps that is what God had in mind when He sent his son to us on a Christmas morning two thousand years ago - hope, understanding, and the feeling that He is with us always.

And so, this Christmas, I encourage you to visit your child's gravesite. Allow Christmas to happen there as it happens in your home. Allow the giving-ness inside of you to give once more. God bless you. Have a hope-filled Christmas. SILENT NIGHT. HOLY NIGHT. ALL IS SOMEWHAT CALM. ALL IS SOMEWHAT BRIGHT.
 ~ Larry Siedle, Pastoral Counsellor, from the TCF/St. Louis, MO
 Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg 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.

The Light Still Burns in Your Heart

In the glow of the candle, I can see it in your eyes
The ache of old memories and the pain of days gone by
As I listen to the sound of heartbeats softly in the night
Wondering if the answer lies within the candle light

Does the light still burn in your heart
Forever shining bright as day
In treasured places tucked away
Each memory is cherished for its part
While the light still burns in your heart

And now I see the reason why there comes another day
And why we can pick up the pieces dropped along the way
With friends to blow the candle and take us through the night
We find the answer lies within the candle light



For the light still burns in your heart
Forever shining bright as day
In treasured places tucked away
Each memory is cherished for its part
While the light still burns in your heart

(repeat chorus)

This song was written and composed by Anastasis for The Compassionate Friends/Winnipeg Chapter

The Message of the Season

As the year is drifting away
We remember the grievers
The friends and the strangers
Whose children have gone
From this life
In the year that is leaving us now
We remember the grievers
The friends and the strangers
We wish them hope.
Sascha



"Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come,
Whispering 'it will be happier!'"

~ Alfred Tennyson



www.whatsyourgrief.com

"On this bald hill the new year hones its edge.
Faceless and pale as china
the round sky goes on minding its business.
Your absence is inconspicuous,
nobody can tell what I lack."

~ Sylvia Plath,
Parliament Hill Fields



www.whatsyourgrief.com



To Our Special Angels
Happy New Year
In HEAVEN

Love You To The Moon And Back
Missing You Today And Always

all-greatquotes.com



**HAPPY NEW YEAR
IN HEAVEN**

all-greatquotes.com

Another year has passed us by
And a new one about to start
Each year I miss you more and more
Deep down within my heart.

If I could have a new year's wish
One that would come true
I'd wish that I could somehow
Spend it there with you.

A New Year's Wish

*A New Year's wish of peace and love
As we honor those above
To hear of them can make us smile
Please say their names once in a while
We need to speak of them to you
And know that you remember too
They're gone from sight, but not from heart
And for this time that we're apart;
We'll always miss them, always care
It helps when memories you share
To speak of them does not bring pain
It brings them close to us again.
So if you have a memory
A thought that you can share with me
I'd love to hear it if you could
Please speak their name, I wish you would*

kp©2013
Out of the Ashes/FB

New Year's Wishes For Bereaved Parents

To the newly bereaved: We wish you patience – patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

To the bereaved siblings: We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.

To those who are single parents: We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone with your loss.

To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child: We wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To those who have suffered the death of more than one child: We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of all your children: We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

To those of you who are plagued with guilt: We wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that.

To those of you who are deeply depressed: We wish you the first steps out of the "Valley of the Shadow".

To all mothers, fathers, and those of you unable to cry: We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

To those of you who are exhausted from grieving: We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned: We wish you the understanding you need, the assurance that you are not alone, and that you are loved.

We at IRIS wish you and your family a peaceful holiday season and a new year filled with hope and love

Infants Remembered In Silence

Infants Remembered In Silence—irisremembers.com

New Year's Wish

I wish you gentle days and quiet nights.
I wish you good memories to keep you strong.
I wish you time to smile and time for song

And then,
I wish you friends to give you love,
When you are hurt and lost and life is blind.
I wish you friends, and love and peace of mind.

Sascha

Lifted with thanks from Compassion TCF UK



Sibling Page



SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP – Letter To Our Living Children

Yes, to all you beautiful, living children – we are so fortunate to have you. We love you very much. When fate takes one of you from us, we are so hurt. We have lost a part of us, and you have lost a part of you, too. We haven't forgotten all the good things you do – no, we haven't forgotten you, but now in our sorrow, we try to hang on to what we have lost. Please don't shut us out because you're afraid, by mentioning the death, we'll cry, and you don't want to add to our hurt and sorrow. We all need each other now. Unless we talk to each other and tell each other how we hurt, we will all suffer needlessly. We know you have lost a playmate – someone you told secrets to and grew to love very much, too. Let's tell each other our thoughts, talk them over together, and cry and grieve together.

Gratefully lifted from Johannesburg Chapter News



To *all* surviving siblings,

Thank-you for being there for us.

We love you.

Wishing you peace, hope
and happiness

and a VERY, VERY, Merry Christmas.



Tips for helping grieving children through Christmas



By Ellen Hoggard, writer at Counselling Directory Published on November 20th, 2017

We spoke to counsellor, [Zoe Mcpherson](#) for her tips on how to navigate the festive season after [losing a loved one](#).

Christmas can be a difficult time for many people; the cost, the stress, the high expectations, and the early ambush of Christmas fanfare attacking our senses. TV, radio, social media and every shop and supermarket guilting us with treats and delights that will *make this Christmas perfect*.

Worse still, can be those intrusive thoughts that are often hard to distract from; thoughts of happy families sitting around a twinkling tree, opening a mountain of impeccably chosen and wrapped gifts. A family eating a cooked-to-perfection turkey, sat around a table heaving with festive treats.

These are the dreams of families where a loved one has not died.

Imagine the impact of Christmas on someone whose mum, dad, wife, husband or child has died. There will be no apology for the harshness of that statement. Death is part of life, a horrible and painful part, but still, a part. And, Christmas can become a thing of true dread.

Few other, if any, holidays succeed in conjuring up the sheer panic people can feel at this time of year, due to the festive season being so heavily associated with 'happy families'.

For [bereaved children](#), Christmas may be a confusing time; they will be coping with their own grief, as well as trying to understand yours. They will often still feel some childlike excitement about the season, which can lead to feelings of guilt and shame.

For bereaved parents, it can be hard to know exactly how to help their child to cope.

Here are some tips that you may find useful:

1. **Talk to your child about the person who died;** many families shy away from this as they 'don't want to upset the other person'. However, talking openly and honestly will help you understand what is going on with your child and vice versa.
2. **Help them to understand that all feelings are valid;** there is no right or wrong way to grieve and it's important that children know they can express themselves without fear of reprimand.
3. **Decide as a family how you want to mark Christmas;** this might be a starting a new tradition, or it might be deciding to keep traditions the same.

Do something specific for your loved one; this might be lighting a candle or choosing a special Christmas tree ornament in their memory.

Finally, feeling nostalgic or sad is part of life after a death. But it's important to remember that **you will eventually enjoy Christmas again**. Hold on to that hope and never be afraid to ask for help.



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	Ngaire Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
QUEENSTOWN	Arlette Irwin	03 4510108
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
CENTRAL OTAGO	Louise McKenzie (David, 14yr, accident) Central Otago Co-ordinator	03 4486094 louise.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz
INVERCARGILL	Linda Thompson. (Ryan, 16yrs, Cardiac Failure. Dec 2001) Southland Co-ordinator*	03-2164155 027 390 9666
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	04 9387212 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz



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