



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 192

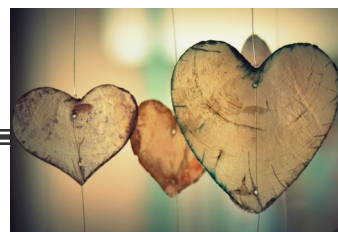
OCT NOV DEC JAN 2022-23

“Hope isn’t a place or a thing.
Hope isn’t the absence of pain
or sadness or sorrow.

Hope is possibility.
Hope is the memory of love
given and received.”

~ Darcie Sims

Lifted with love from Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



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

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Tania Rose Baldock	Born 22/10/69	Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young	Died 17/10/2001
Kyle David Edwards	Born 15/10/1980	Mark Peter Enright	Died 31/10/1993
Henare Wiremu Fielding	Born 8/10/1983	Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Died 23/10/2005
Sally Verone Kitto	Born 3/10/1991	Yvonne Kay French-Wollen	Died 19/10/2001
Tara Louise MacPherson	Born 13/10/1987	Daniel Philip Innes	Died 9/10/1994
Hayden Ivan Pope	Born 18/10/90	Matthew David Innes	Died 9/10/1994
David Massey Reid	Born 6/10/1981	Steven Micheal Jack	Died 23/10/2003
Hayden Watson	Born 21/10/1981	Jessie Lineham	Died 23/10/2010
Ayla Rose Whitaker	Born 9/10/1989	Andrew John Manson	Died 14/10/1991
Greg Burns	Born 27/11/89	Stefan David Maydon	Died 12/10/2001
Michael David Cox	Born 19/11/64	Grant Mills	Died 6/10/1999
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Born 10/11/03	Shane Parish	Died 7/10/1974
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Born 30/11/90	Callum Robertson	Died 24/10/2002
Mark Peter Enright	Born 30/11/73	Alan Bruce Scoringe	Died 30/10/1999
Krysha Helen Hanson	Born 18/11/64		
Callum Warrick Langley	Born 4/11/96	Nicholas James Cox	Died 18/11/03
Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Born 3/11/58	Rick Daysh	Died 17/11/95
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Born 5/11/74	Pauline Anne Newall	Died 12/11/98
Grant Mills	Born 9/11/62	Cindy Parish	Died 26/11/01
Marie Anne O'Neill	Born 18/11/61	Marlene Joy Penny	Died 30/11/91
Peter John Oxley	Born 29/11/75	Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Died 11/11/00
Thomas John Poplawski	Born 25/11/97	Ross Templeton	Died 29/11/17
Glenn Arcscott	Born 12/12/81		
Stefan Francis Cockill	Born 12/12/57		
Rick Daysh	Born 27/12/81		
Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Born 26/12/92	Richard Cowie	Died 11/12/90
Ryan Joseph Frost	Born 9/12/81	Shane Elliot Davis	Died 13/12/84
Laura Johanna Hood	Born 31/12/89	Jack Stephen Dyer	Died 6/12/07
Matthew David Hubber	Born 10/12/78	Gordon Legge	Died 30/12/96
Daniel Philip Innes	Born 13/12/85	Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Died 1/12/84
Keryn Sarah Langley	Born 2/12/98	Caren Amanda Phillips	Died 30/12/01
Jessie Lineham	Born 27/12/89	Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Died 23/12/03
Andrew John Manson	Born 8/12/75	Ryan Ashley Thompson	Died 20/12/01
Shaun Mataka	Born 2/12/83	Eddie Te Arihana Tutaki	Died 2/12/00
Maryann Gaye Pearce	Born 21/12/73	Ayla Rose Whitaker	Died 9/12/06
Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Born 23/12/75		
Nikolaas Remmerswaal	Born 5/12/96	Richard Craig Bell	Died 21/1/05
Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Born 27/12/91	Simon Charlton	Died 14/1/08
Wayne Edward Summers	Born 14/12/75	Sophie Kate Elliott	Died 9/1/08
Ben Watt	Born 28/12/87	Ryan Joseph Frost	Died 16/1/99
Dion Wells	Born 5/12/61	Laura Johanna Hood	Died 21/1/00
Hayden Ross Whitaker	Born 12/12/86	Tara Louise MacPherson	Died 14/1/05
Claire(Mary) Benicarke(Schiehse)	Born 10/1/75	Peter John Oxley	Died 6/1/96
Nicholas James Cox	Born 15/1/70	Corey Ryalls	Died 13/1/99
Ricky George	Born 16/1/87	Anthony Mark Staite	Died 19/1/98
Ben Henderson	Born 6/1/89	Dion Wells	Died 1/1/01
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,

Due to personal circumstances I have decided to combine the next 2 newsletters. Apologies for this however one thing I have learned during this grief journey is there are times I have to be kind to myself and say no to some requests and expectations and this is one of those times. I am sure you will all understand and also when you need to, be kind to yourself and only do what you can do and say no to things which will make it hard.

With Christmas fast approaching, many will already be filled with dread as to how you will handle this period and the day itself.

For those who have already had to endure the day without their beloved child, it is still very hard in the lead-up to Christmas and for those whose child has died in the last year, it is even harder.

Some people believe in Heaven and some may gain some comfort by believing that their child will be part of the biggest birthday celebration held each year in Heaven. For some people they will be able to remember their child at previous Christmas Days, happy, smiling and excited and this can bring comfort. However there will be others out there whose babies died either before ever being part of a Christmas Day or who were too young to understand and appreciate the joy.

No matter in which category you fit, Christmas Day can be one of the hardest days of the year.

Sometimes planning ahead can help: talking with family and loved ones on ways to include your child in the celebrations, ensuring you have the space to mourn and grieve your child, making changes to the usual plans and routines. For bereaved parents without other children at home it may be that you will decide to forego the day altogether and if this is what will help you get through the day, there is nothing wrong with this. For others with other children make some plans so that perhaps there will be someone else there who can look after the children for a time to allow you to have some 'me' time. Whether alone or with your partner, it will be up to you. Some people give to a charity in their child's name, others ask people to share a written memory of the child which can then bring joy on the day and in the future.

Whatever you decide, will be right for you and there is no easy way through this day. What I can say from 19 years of experience is that often the dread and fear of the approaching day is harder than the actual day however I also know that the tears and sadness and emptiness will be there. And of course that is because our families are now missing a very, very special person and no changes or planning can change that.

Whatever you do, take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Love and thoughts,
Lesley (mum of Ben)

Compassionate Friends Central Otago would just like to extend our heartfelt sympathy to Gil Elliott our president in the death of his wife Lesley, mother to Sophie, Nick and Chris.

Lesley was a campaigner for domestic violence. Following the death of Sophie their daughter, Lesley travelled across New Zealand delivering talks to schools and community groups.

Lesley was made a member of the New Zealand Order Of Merit in 2015.

Police now continue the work of the Sophie Elliott Foundation with THE LOVES-ME-NOT programme.

New Zealand Candle light services

Central Compassionate Friends would like to warmly invite parents, siblings, grandparents of bereaved children and their families to our Christmas Candlelight Evening to be held in the Alexandra Community House on Monday 12th December 2022. Time 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Please feel free to bring a photograph or portrait painting of your loved one as well as a candle. Supper will be provided. Compassionate Friends are kindly funded by Central Lakes Trust.

Any enquires please phone Pauline 0273960611 (Central Otago Co-ordinator Compassionate Friends).



SOUTHLAND COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Remembrance service 7 December 6pm

Otepunui Gardens, Band Rotunda between Nith and Conon Streets

Bring a photo or flower, or both.

We will be making paper boats, writing messages on them and setting them off down the stream. Paper and pen supplied.

If you wish to join us for a meal after, details and RSVP for the meal only on our Facebook page.

For other areas please check for details on TCF website www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz or contact your local coordinator.

A Holiday Memorial

A wreath is a traditional part of the holidays in most homes. For this ceremony, place five candles around a simple wreath. As we light these five candles in honour of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, one for our love, and one for our hope.



- This candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.
- This candle represents our courage to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, and to change our lives.
- This candle is in your memory – the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things you did, and the caring and joy you gave us.
- This candle is the light of love. As we enter this holiday season, day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us.
- And this candle is the light of hope. It reminds us of love and memories of you that are ours forever. May the glow of the flame be our source of hopefulness now and forever. We love you.

From "Holiday Help... a guide for Hope and Healing" by Darcie D. Sims and Sherry L. Williams

26TH ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING DECEMBER 11 2022



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 11th, 2022 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon. Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purist white

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honour and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who knew great sorrow,

But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
Aswe remember.

How your brain copes with grief, and why it takes time to heal - BERLY MCCOY

Holidays are never quite the same after someone we love dies. Even small aspects of a birthday or a Christmas celebration — an empty seat at the dinner table, one less gift to buy or make — can serve as jarring reminders of how our lives have been forever changed.

Although these realizations are hard to face, clinical psychologist Mary-Frances O'Connor says we shouldn't avoid them or try to hide our feelings. "Grief is a universal experience," she notes, "and when we can connect, it is better." O'Connor, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Arizona, studies what happens in our brains when we experience grief. She says grieving is a form of learning — one that teaches us how to be in the world without someone we love in it.

"The background is running all the time for people who are grieving, thinking about new habits and how they interact now." Adjusting to the fact that we'll never again spend time with our loved ones can be painful. It takes time — and involves changes in the brain.

"What we see in science is, if you have a grief experience and you have support so that you have a little bit of time to learn, and confidence from the people around you, that you will in fact adapt."

Quotes from an interview conducted with her about her new book.

On the grieving process

When we have the experience of being in a relationship, the sense of who we are is bound up with that other person. The word sibling, the word spouse implies two people. And so when the other person is gone, we suddenly have to learn a totally new set of rules to operate in the world. The "we" is as important as the "you" and "me," and the brain, interestingly, really does encode it that way. So when people say "I feel like I've lost part of myself," that is for a good reason. The brain also feels that way, as it were, and codes the "we" as much as the "you" and the "I."

On the difference between grief and grieving

Grief is that emotional state that just knocks you off your feet and comes over you like a wave. Grieving necessarily has a time component to it. Grieving is what happens as we adapt to the fact that our loved one is gone, that we're carrying the absence of them with us. And the reason that this distinction makes sense is, grief is a natural response to loss — so we'll feel grief forever. A woman who lost her mother as a young person is going to experience that grief on her wedding day because it's a new moment where she's having a response to loss. But "grieving" means that our relationship to that grief changes over time. So the first time, maybe even the first 100 times, you're knocked off your feet with grief, it feels terrible and awful and unfamiliar. But maybe the 101st time, you think to yourself, "I hate this, I don't want this to be true. But I do recognize it, and I do know that I will get through the wave."

On the emotions involved in grieving

The range of emotions that someone experiences when they're grieving is as long a list as the range of emotions we have in any relationship. Commonly there's panic, there's anxiety, there's sadness, there's yearning. But what we sometimes forget is that there's also difficulty concentrating and confusion about what happens next. I am often struck by the intensity of the emotions. Grief is like someone turned up the volume dial all of a sudden. The emotion that I think often interferes with our relationships and friendships when we're grieving is anger, because the anger feels so intense. You have someone blow up at a dinner party and you think, "What's happening with them?" And then to try and remember, "Oh, they're grieving and everything is amped up a little bit."

On prolonged grief

When you're knocked over by that wave of grief, you want to know, "When will this end?" From a research perspective, there is a very small proportion of people who might have what we now call prolonged grief disorder, something we start looking for after six months or a year [after a death or loss]. ... And what we are seeing, [in such cases], is that this person has not been able to function day to day the way that they wish that they could. They're not getting out the door to work or getting dinner on the table for their kids or they're not able to, say, listen to music because it's just too upsetting. So these types of concerns ... suggest it would be helpful to intervene and get them back on the healing trajectory where they will still feel grief, but they will adapt to it differently. The older term that we were using for a long time was "complicated grief." And although prolonged grief disorder is the term we've settled on, there's a reason that I like the term complicated — because it makes you think of complications. As an example, one of those is the grief-related rumination that people sometimes experience. The better term for that that people will recognize is the "would've, should've, could've" thoughts. And they just roll through your head over and over again. The problem with these thoughts — we sometimes call "counterfactuals" — is that they all end in this virtual scenario where the

person doesn't die. And that's just not reality. And so, by spinning in these thoughts, not only is there no answer — there are an infinite number of possibilities with no actual answer of what would have happened — but it also isn't necessarily helping us to adapt to the painful reality that they did die. And so our virtual version is not really helping us to learn how to be in the world now.

On how to support grieving people in your life

I think when you care for someone who is going through this terrible process of losing someone, it really is more about listening to them and seeing where they're at in their learning than it is about trying to make them feel better. The point is not to cheer them up. The point is to be with them and let them know that you will be with them and that you can imagine a future for them where they're not constantly being knocked over by the waves of grief.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Hope's Seed

Today I wrote a note to a bereaved mother. I wanted to say don't believe all those sympathy cards. The ones that say "time heals" and "God only takes the best" and may your sorrows be lessened." You'll only be disappointed.

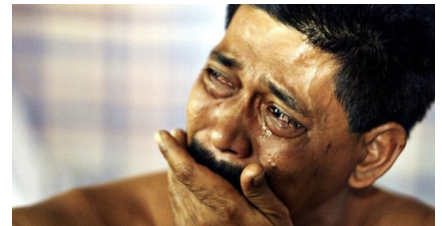
I wanted to say this is the most heartwrenching, chest crushing, breath stealing tragedy on earth. I wanted to tell her there will be days she wants to die, and friends who will not understand some of the things she does or says. I wanted to tell her she will feel her child's presence at times, sometimes so strongly that it is as if they are dancing just at the edge of whatever activity is going on. And other times she might not feel their presence at all.

I wanted to tell her that her life will not go back, that she will never be the same, because a piece of her left with her child. And that even though the pain does not go away, somehow her soul will eventually make enough room so she can hold it all - the grief, the pain, the joy and the love. I wanted to tell her...but I didn't.

Instead, I wrote this: I'm sending love, for words are pointless right now. And that is the truth.

Susi Costello Coeur d' Alene

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



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.



FINDING THE MAGIC

Once again, it's that time of year.

Will this year be different from the last seven? Will I find the magic again?

Wait. Let me revise that question: Did I ever feel the magic?

As a bereaved parent, I have experienced only two holiday seasons. While I have physically lived through 49 hell-idays, emotionally, there have been only two types: the ones before and the ones after Jason's death.

The two categories are distinctly different. If memory serves me correctly, which it doesn't always do, I spent the first 42 years focused on material issues. First as a child... What would I get? What did I want? What would make me the happiest child in the whole wide world? As I grew older and had my own little family, I spent the next 22 years asking myself, what I would get them? What did they want? What would make them love me more? How would I manage to pay for all of it?

I always felt there was something missing...but I didn't really have the time or interest to find that missing something. Besides, why borrow trouble? Each year, by the time I realized that something was missing, the decorations were packed in their boxes and the kids had gone back to school. I could always find the magic next year.

In 1996, Jason died. Suddenly, my life ended its forward march, and everything I had ever regarded as important became nonsense. My heart was not simply broken—it was ripped into shreds, emptied of what had fuelled it over the span of my life. I had no hope of waiting for it to heal and had to face the reality that only a total reconstruction would suffice. I would have to create a new heart...from scratch.

The first fall was difficult. I was still numb, still cushioned from reality, but the pain of Jason's death was beginning to seep in. Then it was Halloween, and the horror of what had happened was upon me. Thanksgiving came with Christmas on its tail, bringing an empty chair, an unbroken wishbone, and silence where laughter had once prevailed. I was sure it could not get any worse, but life always surprises us.

The holidays of 1997 and 1998 were devastating. The numbness that had protected me that first season was gone. Reality had arrived, and I could not escape it. I would never again see Jason walk through our front door with that grin that always made me nervous, tracking snow across my "freshly waxed for the holidays" floor. I was sure I would never again buy two of everything for Jason and his twin brother. I would never again enjoy the holidays...or life.

Years four through seven, we bought gifts for needy families, hung Jason's stocking right beside the rest of ours, illuminated special candles to include him in our celebrations, and smiled cheerfully at everyone who offered us their joy-filled "Merry Christmas." And as I spread my Christmas cheer and goodwill toward men, I had only one thought in my mind. It became my mantra: If I can just make it through December, I will be okay. I was no longer focused on the material side of the season. I was no longer focused on the season at all. I wanted it over.

And now, here I am, at year eight. My eighth season of joy, my eighth year of decking the halls, my eighth year of Jason's physical absence. You probably think I am going to tell you that this year will be no different from the last seven. You might even anticipate that I am going to tell you that it never gets better, that there is no such thing as healing, and that grieving parents will always be bitter and angry, especially during the times when families everywhere celebrate the season of giving.

Wrong. But don't feel bad; this revelation has totally shocked me also. A few days ago, I woke up and was amazed to see that it was snowing. Overnight, the world had gone from brown to pure glistening white. It was beautiful. Later that day, I heard someone in my home actually humming Christmas carols. How dare they! But...I was alone. It was me. That evening, I spent an hour printing up a beautiful green and red Christmas "wish list" with graphics! That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Suddenly, it hit me. And no matter how guilty I feel in acknowledging it, I have to tell you: I am looking forward to the holidays. How can this be? Why is this happening?

Well, after much pondering, I think I know why. I think I spent 42 holidays looking through a lens that focused only on black and white, on the physical, on that which can be seen and physically felt. The lavishly wrapped gifts, excessive food, amount of money spent, and glittering (sometimes gaudy) lights on the tree. The next seven were spent looking through a lens that was distorted and scarred by grief. I focused on what was missing rather than on what was still here. I think I wanted it that way.

But now, I feel I've learned how not only to endure—but to enjoy—a memory that can be defined only as bittersweet. I've come to appreciate that feeling emotional is really about feeling impassioned. And I think this year, as the songs start to play on the radio and the cards begin filling our mailbox, I will choose a different lens, a lens that captures what we cannot see or physically touch. A lens that goes beyond. Not everything will change. I will still hang Jason's stocking beside ours, buy gifts for the needy, light candles in his memory, and all of the other things that have made the last seven years bearable. But this year, I hope to do these things with joy rather than with bitterness and sorrow.

This year, I want to grasp the hand of a homeless mother, kiss the cheek of a newborn baby, and hold a sleeping kitten while it plays in its dreams. I want to watch Santa as he holds wiggly toddlers on his lap. I want to sing "Silent Night" on a snowy night in mid-December when it feels as if all the world is sleeping. I want to feel the Christmas that we cannot see.

This year, I want to remember who I really am. I want to enjoy the months ahead. Not because I need to or because someone says it's time to—but because—well, because I can.

This year, I want to find the magic before it is time to put away the boxes. And I won't stop searching until I find it.

Merry Christmas to you and yours. Believe in magic. And always...expect miracles.

Sandy Goodman, In Memory of Jason

Sandy Goodman is the author of *Love Never Dies: A Mother's Journey from Loss to Love* (Jodere, 2002) Reprinted with permission from "We Need Not Walk Alone," The Compassionate Friends national magazine. ©2003

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 Lovingly lifted from Kamloops





Getting Through the Holidays



Holiday time: The whole world seems consumed with tinsel and glitter...the holidays are coming.

For the person or family that is dealing with the death of a loved one, the holidays are often anticipated with a sense of fear and dread. The days, weeks, months following a death often seem more pain-filled than one can stand and then the holidays arrive.

Many bereaved persons talk in terms of trying to “survive” the holidays. The work and pain of grief does not take a vacation. At holiday time there is not a choice of pain or no pain, but the challenge is how to manage the pain. The following comments are intended as an aid in exploring options that may ease the pain of these first holidays.

1. During grief you have less energy, so re-evaluate your priorities and decide what is really meaningful for yourself and your family. Begin with a family meeting to decide just what part of old traditions you would like to carry on and what new traditions you might like to start. Include the children in your planning as they have needs and ideas to share.
2. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. Do not set unrealistic expectations for yourself to be joyful. Your life has changed and the holidays will be different.
3. Decide what you can handle and let these be known to family and friends: whether to talk about the deceased; whether you can handle responsibility of the family dinner or if you wish someone else take over some of these traditional tasks; whether you will stay home for the holidays or choose a totally different holiday environment this year.
4. Don't be afraid to make changes...open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning; have dinner at a different time; attend a different church for your Christmas service; let children take over decorating the tree, making cookies, etc.
5. Great comfort may come in doing something for others. You may wish to consider giving a gift in memory of your loved one; donating the money you would have spent for a gift to a particular charity; adopting a needy family for the holidays; inviting a guest (foreign student, senior citizen, etc.) to share festivities.
6. If you are sending Christmas cards, consider a photocopied letter that is mailed early. That will let friends know the changes in your life and perhaps save some discomfort when holiday greetings arrive. If the thought of sending holiday cards is simply too exhausting, yet you discover that some of your friends are still unaware of your loss, you may enclose the simple little funeral service card inside the already bought greeting card. Some have found the response from friends is most rewarding.
7. Make your entire shopping list out ahead of time. Then shop early, avoid stores when they are over-crowded, take a friend with you and shop early in the day when the stores are not so busy. Hustle and bustle adds to one's stress so catalog shopping is another option that may relieve some pressure.
8. If you hang stockings, do you want one in memory of your loved one, or is that too painful? One possibility is to put thoughts and feelings about our loved one on notes and put them in that special stocking. Family members may wish to read them at some time during the holiday.
9. Spread the workload among the family. Fatigue can lead to depression under normal circumstances so try not to tax your limited emotional and physical resources.
10. This may be the time to enrich your religious experience and add a new dimension to your life.
11. Perhaps you might find comfort in taking a decorated tree or other decoration to the cemetery.
12. Recall the memories – they are a very important part of you. Perhaps this is the year to establish a new tradition in memory of the person you love...burn a special candle to quietly include your absent loved one, buy a living plant in memory.
13. Take time for yourself as exhaustion alters perspectives and blows everything out of proportion. Getting adequate rest will make the days ahead less difficult.
14. Planning holidays that will bring the most comfort depends more on feelings of the family rather than on how things have been done in the past. Do not set unrealistic goals for yourself. The world will not end if you do not attend every holiday function. Have faith in yourself. You will indeed adjust and be able to smile and function more with ease. Many bereaved families have affirmed that the anticipation of the day is far worse than the day itself.
15. Know that whatever you choose to do this year, you may decide to handle things differently next year. Growth and change go hand in hand.
16. Be kind to yourself. Let the holidays come.

Getting through the holidays written by

Gail Noller, Coordinator for Hospice Care Mercy Hospice Program, Mercy Medical Center, Coon Rapids, Minnesota. Adapted November 1985 from several sources including the Bradshaw Family of Funeral Homes, Minneapolis, MN and Hilltop Hospice Bereavement Program, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Gratefully reprinted from 'Handling the holidays handout' from TCF Minneapolis

From the Ashes of Grief

In the early morning fog of a spring day,
The sunlight drifts slowly across the lake
Lifting the dark shadows of night.
The honking geese frolic in the early morning
Rays of sunshine



While the birds sing
of promises yet to come.
Through the dark clouds of
grief,
Slivers of sunlight filter
down.
The pain and fear residing in
my heart



Is starting to give way
To the hope of finding joy once again in my life.
The warmth of the sun flows through my body
And now I feel and see flickers of that joy.
It is but a fleeting moment in my thoughts.
But it fills me with the hope of perhaps
Finding peace once again.
The forever tears cleanse my heart and pain.
They pave the way for love and laughter
Once again in my life.
My heart will forever be empty from the loss
Of my precious child.
But the sparkling sunlight spreads light
around that hole in my heart.
Gentle healing is beginning; springing anew
From the Ashes of Grief.



I'm warming up to Christmas By Mark Myers

My morning routine revolves around coffee and darkness broken only by the glow of a laptop screen. I don't see the need to turn on the lights. I like the dark; I don't know why. Oh sure, I occasionally step on things left in the floor. But as the kids have gotten older there seem to be fewer obstacles in the path. My wife doesn't like coffee. I don't know how she has survived this far. She also doesn't like darkness. The minute she enters the room, she turns on a lamp.

This is also true at Christmas. Although we have lights strung on a massively fat tree, across our mantel, over the entry arches, and (need I go on) covering every available surface, I don't turn them on. In fact, I haven't turned on the tree since I checked the lights we strung on it. I don't know why. I don't see the need, I suppose. She will awaken soon and make the rounds turning on switches and plugging things in until the house is awash in colour and light.

Funny how that works – how two people alike in so many ways can do things completely differently. We grieve differently, too. When confronted with our loss, I tend to stuff it down until it is convenient whereas she lets it flow. Her way is probably healthier, but neither is wrong. They are just different. But then December comes and even I can't stuff it down. Coloured lights... cry. Reindeer ears... cry. I see her face in every decoration. Every little thing we unbox holds a memory. Part of me wants to ship all the boxes away instead of opening them; to close the lid on the entire thing and not bring this emotional mess to the surface. But Kylie loved Christmas. Her last one was so special because despite her frailty she demanded we keep every one of our traditions.

Then came the first one without her. Everything was so raw and fresh. If we hadn't been trying to soldier through for the sake of the other girls, I might have gotten approval from my Christmas fanatic to forgo the lights and decorations that year. The second was hard also but we knew what our triggers were. Some of them, at least. We were able to anticipate most of the more difficult things and that helped us negotiate the season. There is no avoiding everything, though, because you stumble into things like what you think is a random piece of fabric but was actually her headpiece when she played Mary in the Christmas play. And you cry.

This is our third Christmas without Kylie. I want to preface everything I am about to say with this: I am not getting over her loss and I never will. I will miss her every minute until the day I follow her into the grave.

I haven't done anything differently, but I find that this Christmas seems to be bringing me more joy than pain. Packed away with the elves was a note she had written and sleeping bags she had made for them while bedridden. It was the sweetest note and I could hear her speaking it. Surprisingly, I smiled. It was a touch from her that I so desperately needed. This Christmas has been like that. When I look around at the ridiculous quantity of lights and decorations she loved, I feel her more and it doesn't (always) bring me to tears. More often, it warms my heart.

Love and pain; joy and sorrow... they are uniquely intertwined. Without love, loss wouldn't bring pain. The absence of joy would render sorrow irrelevant. It is an unfortunate fact that we have no means of protecting that which we love. Ultimately, their safety and security is out of our hands. When we come to peace with that and still choose to love, we are setting ourselves up for pain because loss is inevitable, the only question is when.

When the loss comes, we grieve it in proportion to the amount we loved. And in a strange way, the pain of loss perpetuates the love. The sorrow of a memory that causes tears in one moment often brings her smile to mind the next. The emotions are mercifully mingled together and I would rather feel them all than feel nothing.

When I came into the darkness this morning, I turned the tree on. It wasn't a conscious decision, I just did it. I don't know why. With my coffee in hand I sat in their glow and brushed a few tears away, but mostly I smiled.

I think I'm warming up to this Christmas thing.

Adapted from an article: markmyers.net and reprinted with thanks from FOCUS TCF NSW newsletter

Some points that might be helpful as we approach a new year

- Keep on talking and listening to each other, and to those you trust
- Chat about what each of you want or need, and think about who might be able to support you if others want to do different things in your family
- Spend time with those who are important to you, visit them or invite them round
- Allow others to help you
- If routines help you, stick to them
- Plan things into your calendar for next year so you have things, however small, to look forward to
- Focus moment to moment, day to day, so it feels more manageable
- Plans are great, but remember you can change them too
- Be kind to yourself
- Hold on to what you have and know that you will find a way to walk your path together with those who you hold close
- Adapted from: winstonswish.org/ You may consider sharing your experience with other bereaved families. We would love to hear from you.

Gratefully reprinted from FOCUS TCF NSW Newsletter

New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved

By Tanya Lord

This year I resolve to:

- ♥ Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my life time whether they are physically present or not.
- ♥ Tell their stories, the happy and the sad, they will live on through me.
- ♥ Encourage others to share memories.
- ♥ Teach others that they cannot "make" me cry, tears are only an external expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- ♥ Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. "Doing well" means expressing my feelings.
- ♥ Understand that others will not understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.
- ♥ Recognize that asking for help from those that love us is a really a gift that we give to them.
- ♥ Help others, reaching out to others in pain will help me to heal.
- ♥ Do something nice for myself every day.
- ♥ Know that if today I can not do everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- ♥ Cry when I need to, laugh when I can and to not feel guilty about either one.
- ♥ Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret and anger because I know holding on to these emotions can be so damaging.
- ♥ Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- ♥ Take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- ♥ Reinvest in life a little bit each day...

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Sibling Page



WHY!!

I have asked myself that very question over the last few weeks. A friend at work lost her child the week of my brother's anniversary. Even though Sean has been gone for five years, all of those memories came rushing back to me. The pain was once again fresh and new.

I have only attended one young person's funeral since Sean died. My experience at that funeral was awful. I was close to being hysterical through the whole funeral and when it came time to go up to the coffin, I fled the building. I just couldn't look into the eyes of the child's mother and sister and feel that pain all over again. I later apologized to the mother and she understood so well.

Now with my friend's child dying, I was beside myself. I didn't know if I could even go to the wake much less the funeral. I had no idea what was about to unfold for me. My office is a small office, so when we heard about my friend's child dying the impact was felt intensely. My co-workers and I couldn't think or work. We just kept thinking about my friend and her family.

One by one people began asking me what they could do for her. I immediately called my mother and the next day everyone had a pamphlet on knowing how to help a grieving co-worker.

Then we began talking about how we were feeling. I let them know some things that they might expect, and that if they thought what they were going to say was stupid then to just say they were sorry. We then made plans to attend the wake. I was taking things one step at a time.

I went to the wake and when my mother and I arrived, car loads of kids were arriving also. I took a deep breath and in we went. I made it to the coffin. My friend had been taken out just before I arrived, so I talked with her sister.

When I looked at her beautiful child all I could think of was why. Why did another young life have to end? Why did another mother have to feel this pain? Why did one more sibling have to feel the way I do? Why did another family have to change forever?

I will probably never know the answers to those questions. I know that when I looked into that brother's eyes, I knew that pain. When I hugged my friend, I remembered that numbness. I realized that I will just have to take my experiences and help anyone I can – the kids that go to my group, a co-worker, a perfect stranger

I just know that I feel a need to show people that life does go on, but in our own time.

Traci Morlock, Sean's Sister BP/USA, St Louis, MO taken from the national newsletter of Bereaved Parents/USA, A JOURNEY TOGETHER www.bereavedparentsusa.org.
Reprinted with thanks from TCF Minneapolis Newsletter



November is International Bereaved Siblings Month Lynne Stakkack
Shadow of a memory:

I'm sitting with my mom on my parents' bed. I'm newly three years old. "Want to feel the baby kick?" she asks. I edge my palm toward the orb of her belly. I look at her, feeling nothing. "Wait," she says. And then I feel it—a nudge of my hand, a gentle jab. Too small to symbolize how my world is about to both shatter and expand. Sister. I whisper it to myself, trying on the word for what I'll become.

When I first heard about National Siblings Day, I averted my eyes from it. When I was 24, my 21-year-old brother Will died from heroin. He was my only sibling. "Be strong for your parents," I heard after my brother died.

Losing a child is unfathomable—it aches to even contemplate. But without my brother, I wasn't sure who I was anymore. We were, in so many ways, just beginning. On the verge of adulthood, we were edging toward friendship. We talked on the phone often, crushed on each other's friends, sometimes even drank together. We competed and coveted. I assumed we'd have decades and decades to mature, to weave around each other's lives in new and layered ways. To hash over our childhood, compare notes, tracing the maps of how we became who we'd someday be.

The loss felt immense and gaping. But it also felt invisible. I scoured the Internet for books on sibling loss, and found almost nothing. Just after Will died, I was browsing Mother's Day cards when I saw the Hallmark section: From brother. The breath squeezed out of my lungs as I realized I would never receive another birthday card from my brother. I'd never get to pick out one for him. Am I still even a sister? I wondered, tears nipping at the corners of my eyes.

As it turns out, National Siblings Day wasn't created to rub salt in the wounds of those of us grieving a brother or sister. The day was founded by Claudia Evart, who lost both of her siblings, Alan and Lisette. She created the holiday as a way of celebrating the uniqueness of the sibling bond. I see this special bond every day in my own children, though at ages 10 and 7, they mostly annoy each other. These two beautiful beings look more like each other than anyone else. They envy and irritate, they stretch toward and away from one another. Whether they eventually become friends or not, they will always have shared the same space and time, the same parents, the same twists of DNA.

I call sibling loss "the loss of a lifetime." Of all the relationships we have, our brothers or sisters are the ones we're supposed to get the most time with. They're the co-keepers of our childhood. They're the people we compare and measure ourselves against—our brothers and sisters help mold our identities. Now, my brother's been gone nearly as long as he was here. Just as his birth did, his death shattered and expanded me. And now I know something I didn't know just after he died: I'm still a sister. Nothing can erase the 21 years we had together, just like nothing can excise the pain of losing him. The loss evolves and unfolds over time, just as our relationship would have.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johnnesburg Newsletter



MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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



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	Pauline Trotter Central Otago Coordinator (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611 centralotagocf@gmail.com
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	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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