

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 198

DECEMBER 2023 JANUARY 2024

Christmas is a fragile time for bereaved parents everywhere.
 Childhood is a kingdom where no one should die.
 As parents, we are stuck in a place where Earth and Heaven meet,
 as we try to snatch our children back.
 Where Angel babies add sparkle to the radiance of a star-filled sky.
 We will never find joy equal to our sadness.
 This is irreversible and forevermore...
 It is our hope that soft and treasured memories
 fall gently on your tender heart.
 We wish you peace and strength as you honour your sadness.
 We had to let go of our beautiful children
 but our arms are wrapped around every one of them at
 Christmas time.

Del and Donna
 Lifted with love from TCF 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

Children's names appear in this column if parents ask when they complete their annual donation form. You are also able to e-mail, write or phone me to have your child's name included.

This column includes names of those children whose anniversary or birthday occur in the months that the newsletter applies for.

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included. Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs. Please contact me on 021 2155279, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz



Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

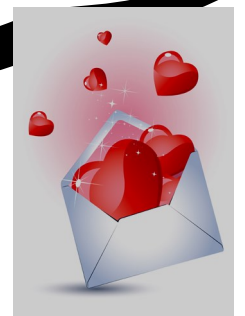
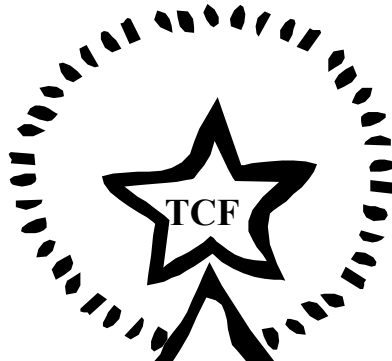
Forever Longed For

Glenn Arscott	Born 12/12/81		
Stefan Francis Cockill	Born 12/12/57		
Rick Daysh	Born 27/12/81	Richard Cowie	Died 11/12/90
Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Born 26/12/92	Shane Elliot Davis	Died 13/12/84
Ryan Joseph Frost	Born 9/12/81	Jack Stephen Dyer	Died 6/12/07
Laura Johanna Hood	Born 31/12/89	Gordon Legge	Died 30/12/96
Matthew David Hubber	Born 10/12/78	Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Died 1/12/84
Daniel Philip Innes	Born 13/12/85	Caren Amanda Phillips	Died 30/12/01
Keryn Sarah Langley	Born 2/12/98	Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Died 23/12/03
Jessie Lineham	Born 27/12/89	Ryan Ashley Thompson	Died 20/12/01
Andrew John Manson	Born 8/12/75	Eddie Te Arihana Tutaki	Died 2/12/00
Shaun Mataki	Born 2/12/83	Ayla Rose Whitaker	Died 9/12/06
Maryann Gaye Pearce	Born 21/12/73		
Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Born 23/12/75	Richard Craig Bell	Died 21/1/05
Nikolaas Remmerswaal	Born 5/12/96	Simon Charlton	Died 14/1/08
Esme Caitlin Millais Stewart	Born 27/12/91	Sophie Kate Elliott	Died 9/1/08
Wayne Edward Summers	Born 14/12/75	Ryan Joseph Frost	Died 16/1/99
Ben Watt	Born 28/12/87	Laura Johanna Hood	Died 21/1/00
Dion Wells	Born 5/12/61	Tara Louise MacPherson	Died 14/1/05
Hayden Ross Whitaker	Born 12/12/86	Peter John Oxley	Died 6/1/96
		Corey Ryalls	Died 13/1/99
Claire(Mary) Benicarke(Schiehsel)	Born 10/1/75	Anthony Mark Staite	Died 19/1/98
Randell Stuart Coster	Born 29/1/82	Dion Wells	Died 1/1/01
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		



*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.



WORLD DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS

The World Day of Road Traffic Victims (WDR) is commemorated on the third Sunday of November each year

November 19 in 2023. It is a high-profile global event to remember the many millions who have been killed and seriously injured on the world's roads and to acknowledge the suffering of all affected victims, families and communities. Millions of people are added

Do I need another Day of Remembrance?

Pondering what I could write about for the newsletter, this headline in today's newspaper (Whanganui Chronicle 16/11/23) hit me like a ton of bricks. I don't remember knowing there was such a day.

Maybe I haven't wanted to know. Maybe I don't want my son to be a road fatality statistic.

It is 15 years since that dreadful day. The day we got the 10pm knock at the door and found a policeman standing there. I knew why he was there. The time became a haze, though I do remember two kindly gents from Victim Support turning up at midnight to see if they could assist in any way.

No assistance needed thanks. No details either. No white cross on the road. Just let me be.

It was a few years before we visited the spot where Simon left this earth. We were lost on a back country road and went to the nearest Police Station to see if they could help us find the road.

The Policeman on the desk said. "I will take you and show you the place, as I was on duty that day"

He drove us there and talked freely and told us he believed Simon had fallen asleep at the wheel it was a sunny Summer afternoon at 4pm and he crossed the median strip and died instantly. That was a comfort to me. No pain for him but endless pain for his Mum and Dad.

A year later family joined us as we placed a white cross on the roadside to remember him and to be a reminder to travellers that there was a beautiful boy and his parents and brother will always hold him in their hearts.

Strangely, this November 19th we will be at a family wedding in Waihi - near to the place Simon died - so we will spend time amidst family joy and celebrations in remembrance.

I don't need a special Day to Remember I remember him every day.

*Keren & Barrie Marsh Parents of Simon Blair aged 23.
Whanganui NZ*



I do not need a special day

I do not need a special day
to bring you to mind.
The days I do not think of you
are very hard to find.

No one knows the heartache
that lies beneath the smile.
No one knows how many times
I have broken down and cried.

This roller coaster of emotions
is the worst ride of my life.
Nothing can prepare you
For this never ending strife.

So please don't ever tell me
that time will heal my pain,
because not even time nor reason
can bring you back again.

My thoughts are always with you
your place no one will fill.
In life I loved you dearly
in death I love you still.

Ian Robson
Candle Lighting 2018
Whanganui

CO Compassionate Friends.

Kia ora dear friends...

My heart goes out to you all, as you face anotheror perhaps your first Christmas without the precious child that was always with you...that empty space at the table, which makes me shudder in anticipation...

I had planned to invite you all to my home with a photo & candle, but now with the 5th wave of Covid circulating in our communities, I realise that it would be unwise, sadly....and cannot risk causing the spread of infection, the last thing we want!

What I can continue to offer you is a listening ear, or I would respond to you quickly should you wish to express your feelings of devastation, fatigue, or overwhelming sadness by email.....or a meeting at a venue of your choice...can be arranged...

Please reach out...we are here for you....

Jan (Pessione) Chairperson COCF
Ph: 027 309 1246
Email janpessione@xtra.co.nz

With the best of good wishes to you ALL..
Jan

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas, spending time with loved ones and maybe recalling happier memories and times spent with loved ones no longer present.

To all those who are supporting bereaved parents and siblings a special thankyou for all that you do to comfort and give hope, sharing stories and experiences.

Take care of yourselves and your families.

With thoughts of love and hugs of comfort,
Lesley Henderson



16 Ideas for Creating New Holiday Traditions After a death

Someone you love has died and now the holidays will never be the same. I'm sorry to put this so plainly, but it's true and you need to acknowledge it. Too often, people stumble into the holidays after a death believing things can stay the same. Some passively assume everything will work out, while others think if they try hard enough to be positive and maintain old traditions that PEOPLE WILL ENJOY THEMSELVES, DANG IT. I hope these approaches work out for some, but I can promise you they won't suffice for all. The truth is, even if you manage to rebuild your tradition to the closest approximation possible, there will still be sadness.

The "King" Elvis Presley said it best: "And when those blue snowflakes start falling That's when those blue memories start calling"

We've written posts on how to handle existing holiday traditions after a death, and we've written about honouring deceased loved ones at the holidays. Still, we've yet to get in-depth about creating new traditions after a loss. The creation of new traditions and rituals provides you the opportunity to find meaningful and lasting ways to remember loved ones. Further, it allows those who have died to play a continuous role in holiday celebrations going forward.

We're going to provide you with a few ideas for creating new holiday traditions after a death. We encourage you to think beyond this list and create traditions that are reflective of who your loved one was and how you want to see their legacy continue. New traditions can be simple things you decide to do on your own or more elaborate rituals that you create with your family. As you think about this, remember traditions are meant to be repeated year after year—so choose something that your family can realistically keep going. Even better, create traditions that can be handed down to future generations.

1. Food: Holiday Dish: Choose your loved one's favourite dish (or recipe) and make sure the dish is present at your celebration year after year. For example, my family makes "Auntie's Beans". Why are they "Auntie's Beans"? I have no idea, I'm pretty sure "Auntie's Beans" are just plain ole green bean casserole!
Favorited Dessert: Instead of choosing a dish, choose their favourite dessert to make every year.
Breakfast: If the holiday dinner is crazy, crowded, and hectic, start a tradition of having your loved one's favourite breakfast foods with your immediate family.
After-Dinner Drinks: If the person who died wasn't a part of the family celebration, start a tradition of meeting friends and family in the evening to remember the person who died over hot cocoa or eggnog.
Cookie Recipe: This is my personal favourite: Use your loved one's recipe to make Christmas cookies. I used my mother's recipe this year and shared them on Facebook with my far-away family.

2. Music Holiday Playlist: Have a go-to list of holiday songs that remind you of your loved one. Sing: Start a tradition that involves singing your loved one's favourite holiday songs. My family always sings Silent Night just before going to bed on Christmas Eve and it always makes me cry. You could also try traditions like these: Have a carolling party before the holidays where you invite all your family and friends. Have a sing-a-long after holiday dinner.

3. Memory Tablecloth: Every year, lay out a special tablecloth and fabric markers or sharpies. Ask holiday guests to write down their favourite holiday memories, especially those that involve family members who are no longer present.

4. Light a Candle: As a family, light a candle at the beginning of the holiday season and allow it to burn throughout. If you're not comfortable with a real candle, use a fake candle or a special light-up decoration.

5. Candle Ceremony: On the night before the holiday or on the night of the holiday, gather everyone for a candle ceremony. Give everyone an unlit candle. The first person lights the first candle and shares a memory. They can share a memory of their deceased loved one(s), a memory from past holidays, or a time during the year when they felt their loved one's presence—you decide (it's your tradition after all)! After the first person shares their memory, they light the candle of the next person and that person shares a memory... and so on and so forth. Once the last candle is lit, do something to close out the ceremony (such as sing a song or say a prayer)

6. Blessing: If a blessing is traditionally said at any point during the holiday, add a lyric, quote, verse, poem, or saying that reminds you of your loved one. Choose something that really reflects your loved one, even if it's silly or out of context.

7. Secret Signal: Create a secret signal for your family members to give one another when something reminds them of the person who has died. This could be a signal used at any moment, happy or sad, throughout the year.

8. Give to Charity: Every year, chose a charity to give a gift to in your loved one's name. Keep the same process for choosing the charity each year—maybe you decide over a family dinner or you gather on the first Sunday of December, for example. Allow everyone to offer suggestions and then choose as a family. If you don't want to just make a monetary donation.

9. Go Somewhere Where You Feel Close to Your Loved One: Start a tradition of visiting your loved one's grave or another place where you feel close to them on the holiday. Choosing a designated time, like first thing in the morning, may make it easier to plan and uphold this tradition.

10. Moment of Silence: At your holiday celebration, allow people an opportunity to share the name of loved ones they've lost and then have a moment of silence to remember those people.

11. Tell Stories: Every year on my daughter's birthdays, I tell them about the day they were born. Why not start a tradition of telling special holiday stories on the holiday? Instead of reading the kids 'Twas the Night Before Christmas when you tuck them into bed, start the tradition of telling them a story from a holiday when their loved one was alive.

12. Add an Extra Plate: Always add an extra plate to your dinner table to symbolize your loved one's presence in everyone's hearts and minds.

13. Holiday Memory/Gratitude Box: Leave a box, slips of paper, and pens out, and ask friends and family to write down their favourite holiday memories, memories of loved ones, or gratitude's. Ask them to put their slips in the box and read them over dessert. If you feel as though your family has had an especially tough year, writing down gratitude's might help people to shift their perspective a little bit.

14. Remembrance Ornaments and Trees: Buy a new ornament every year that reminds you of your loved one. This could be an ornament that you think is pretty, a photo ornament, or an ornament that symbolizes something about your loved one. If children are affected by the loss, invite them to help you select the ornament or even allow them the opportunity to make the ornament themselves. You can also try: Having a tree for your loved one: Consider buying a small tree specifically for these remembrance ornaments. This will give people an opportunity to look at the ornaments all together, ask questions, and reminisce. You might even consider having a specific tradition for decorating and lighting this tree. Create a remembrance tree: If you will have a lot of people at your celebration, or if you have a lot of visitors throughout the season put up a remembrance tree. Set up a table with sharpies and ornaments people can write on close to the tree. Allow anyone who passes through to write the name(s) of their deceased loved one(s) on an ornament and invite them to hang their ornament on the tree.

15. Stockings and Garlands: Set out slips of paper and pens and instruct people to write any of the following on the slips of paper: memories: moments that made you think of/miss your loved one. words of encouragement to other family members .words of appreciation for other family members gratitude's or have a designated stocking or garland where people can share their slips.

16. Put Regrets to the Fire: Henry Havelock Ellis said, "All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on." In addition to the memories and traditions you keep with you, you may also be holding onto things like regret, guilt, and feelings of resentment. Start a holiday tradition of lighting a fire, writing down your regrets from the past year, and then throwing your regrets into the fire to symbolize a fresh start.

Reprinted with thanks from TCFJohannesburg Chapter Newsletter



The Compassionate Friends

27th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting

December 10th 2023



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 honour the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 10th, 2023 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.

Dear Friends,

This is a lovely way to start the Christmas period, setting aside some time to remember our loved ones who can no longer be present with us.

There are also some formal Candlelighting services around the country. Please contact the co-ordinator in your area or go to the website www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz for details.

If you are unable to attend a service there are also various online options just google **tcf candlelight service online.**

Whichever option you choose candlelighting provides an opportunity for quiet reflection to remember our beloved children, grandchildren and siblings and know that their memory and our love will continue to shine brightly.

Giving Myself Permission

It has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season.

After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays. Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before. But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me. Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply too painful for me.

Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter? Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son's name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made.

That's Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF/Katy, TX

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



Hannukah Thoughts

**At this season of lights,
we remember the light you brought into our lives:
The light of your laughter,
The light of your wit and intelligence,
The light of your love.
May the time not be distant when the memory of
these lights
will illuminate our hearts and minds and eradicate the darkness therein.**



Stephanie Hesse Rockland Co., NY
Minneapolis

Time is all we have on this earth to make the most of what we have.

I am a 52yrs old mother of four boys I watched them grow into fine young men, I was their teacher through their lives; now three of them teach me through their deaths.

13th March this year will be my youngest son, Rikky Lee's 29th birthday. In Dec it is his 10th anniversary, Rikky died on his motorcycle.

30th April will be Corry Daniels 6th anniversary. 3rd May will be his 31st birthday. He is my second youngest son. Corry was with Rikky, could not help him. Corry suicided.

28th May is my eldest Jason Kenneth Johns 34th birthday, 4th October is his 2nd anniversary. He was last seen on the 29th Sept. The coroner told me he died from Bronchial Pneumonia but can't tell me which day, so I don't know which date.

Their brother Aaron who is 32yrs has survived like me. With our love we help each other— he has a lovely partner and 4 children now also, but we still feels so alone even tho we are surrounded by loving friends and each other. He tells me he has lost all his secrets, lost his best friends. He works hard and loves his family; he is surviving.

Life takes a different turn every day; we don't know what hides behind every corner. I have started a new job after completing studies and now I am thirsty for more, I work very hard to keep myself occupied. I can't sit too long, I need movement. I don't like my mind wandering, I let it go when I visit my sons in the cemetery, there I cry, yell, think. In the outside world I control and pace through life with a smile on my face thanking my sons for the things they have taught me in their deaths.

I appreciate what I have. There is always some one worse off. I look at the flowers, stop to smell them, wonder at the sunrises, look at nature in all it's beauty. I talk to everyone as I would like to be spoken to and I CARE about those I come across in my path to meet my sons again. We all have our own paths to walk but being part of TCF has helped me through these years of mental and physical turmoil. I have received cards and beautiful hand made butterflies that stick to my window and catch the early morning sun rays. I look at them and feel love; three butterflies make me smile when I feel sad.

I am lucky to have a partner who has looked after me and loves me. I don't think I would have been able to have done this on my own. I have been into some very dark places but with love, care and time we seem to go forward.

My motto is LIVE LOVE LAUGH— now I do it with the side of my heart that is not broken. The broken side will always be there for my sons who I miss every day. There is not a day pass without them in my thoughts.

Silent tears that come and go at odd times, I just let them flow now, it is my life and my story I have to live it the best I can so I do it my way.

*Suzzanne Lodding (Married Knight)
Focus TCF NSW Inc 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.

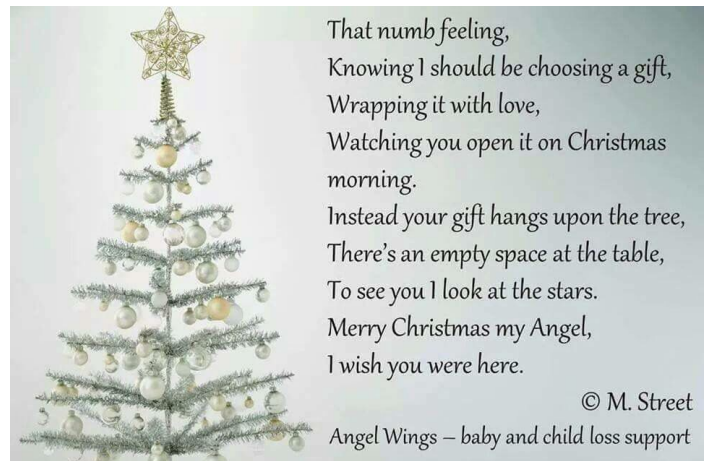
CHRISTMAS

Without You

How very much you're missed
 I think you somehow know,
 For, I feel you beside me
 No matter where I go.
 To be reminded of you
 I don't have to go that far,
 For, every night I see your face
 In every shining star.
 As every moment passes by
 Now that Christmas time is here,
 I'll be thinking of the joy we shared
 At this special time of year.

TCF/Okanagan

Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



I will carry your light deep within my soul
 Allowing its warmth to encircle my heart
 And when I am ready for others to see
 I will shine your light across the world
 I will speak your name,
 sing our songs share the stories,
 whisper the dreams
 And when the dark of night threatens
 I will lighten it with a love deeply shared
 And as day breaks I will hold your light
 Protected and safe deep within my soul

Tanya Lord

Lifted with love from TCF Victoria Chapter Newsletter

Not So Happy New Year

Elizabeth Yassenoff

If there is one thing I've learned about grief since losing my son shortly after his full-term birth in July 2016, it's that grief strikes when you least expect it. When I have anticipated a particular day being impossible, grief usually hits harder in the days preceding it than on the actual day. My son's first birthday, for example, or what should have been his first Thanksgiving.

Last holiday season, I was most concerned about Thanksgiving and Christmas being devastating days. But much to my surprise, New Year's hit me the hardest. I feared that people expected a new year would bring me hope. A fresh start. A chance to look forward rather than backward. But that expectation is just a great example of how most people, although loving and well-intentioned, misunderstand a grieving parent's feelings.

The Passage of Time

Maybe it comes from my choice to focus on my son's life instead of his death. But putting more time between the present and those few precious hours I had with him, is the opposite of comforting or hopeful to me.

A new year meant more distance between my son and me. 2016 was Jacob's year, and once the clock struck twelve on January 1, 2017, it would never be Jacob's year again. I could no longer say I had a son "this year." Instead, it would be "last year." Or in the future, "2 years ago," "3 years ago," and so on. The longer ago it sounds, the more people would expect me to have moved on and my grief to have lessened. I knew that wouldn't be the case. The trauma of losing a child isn't like the trauma of a bad car accident or a painful medical procedure. If your trauma is the loss of a child, putting more time between you and your trauma doesn't ease the pain.

Time doesn't heal this trauma because the source of your trauma is love, and that love is something you want to cling to as closely as possible.

New Year's Grief

So if your loss is fresher than mine, or maybe even if it's not, don't be surprised if New Year's grief sneaks up on you. And if you're able to explain that to your friends and families, maybe they will gain a better understanding of how grieving parents feel. But I will also offer some words that I hope will be comforting. I will say that I am less scared to turn over this calendar page.

Since time has gone on and I've continued to talk about Jacob, most people in my life seem to understand that more time is not the answer to my grief. In fact, they should not expect me to stop grieving in this lifetime. And that is comforting. My other big fear – that with time my memories of my few hours with my son would fade – has been mollified too. Somehow, even as time goes on, I can easily remember what he looked like and what it felt like to stare into his sweet face. I will never stop wishing I had more time with him, but at least I'm less scared now of those memories fading away. And so the passage of time is ever so slightly less terrifying than it was last year.

If grief hits hard this New Year's, know that you are not alone, and those feelings are very, very valid. But take comfort that the passage of time may not distance you from your child as much as you think. Your love for your child is strong and will preserve his or her memory better than you think.

Wishing you a year that's as peaceful as possible and filled with love and memories of your lost little one.

.Elizabeth Yassenoff lives in Columbus, Ohio with her husband Erik. She writes for Still Standing and on her [blog](#) to honor her firstborn son, Jacob Dale, who passed away three hours after birth due to unexpected complications during labor. Elizabeth is a co-founder of Alive In My Heart, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides connection and resources to bereaved parents in the Columbus area, and she is studying to become an Integrative Nutrition Health Coach. Jacob's baby sister, Ella Jane, was born August 11, 2017 and has brought a lot of light and healing. carryingjacob.wordpress.com/ Still standing magazine

As the Holiday Season Ends

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me.

No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways, they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you believe this now, there is no reason that this New Year shouldn't be better.

Which brings me to a favourite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of your-self. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture your-self, both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in your chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

*The newsletter is another way you can become involved in your chapter. Let us know by contributing poems or stories. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs. Have a Happier New Year!
Pat Akery, TCF/Medford, OR*

Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

Seasoned Grief

There used to be a point to summing up a year just past not as a personal accomplishment but as a reflection. Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible thing to do.

I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older. With new years clean and full of possibilities, becoming another person seemed simple, another chance at getting it right, like a redemption, being forgiven for having blundered or been found wanting.

But death changed everything, without permission. Resolutions, made sincerely and broken quickly, offended my need to hold on to the past, to rewind life, fast backwards, so I could capture what I had lost. Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas.

And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must, I understood there would be another future, not the one I thought I had the right to expect but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.

Eva Lager TCF/Perth, Western Australia





Sibling Page



EVERYTHING IS A FIRST A compassionate friend shares her story

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced.

There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday.

Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me-NEVER!

The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions.

The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. Forgot? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere. Love and concerns were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time.

People don't know what to say-nothing is NORMAL. Tragedy has brought seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind.

I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents?

There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me "how are you?"

Here is my answer:

"I am mad Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong."

Written by Lisa Ann Jones,
Lifted from TCFV/NSW, AU



It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn't heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore's house.

Inside the house was Eeyore. "Hello Eeyore," said Pooh. "Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet" said Eeyore, in a Glum sounding voice. "We just thought we'd check on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay."

Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. Which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time hanging out with someone who is Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All, would you now."

Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house.

Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"We're sitting here with you," said Pooh, "because we are your friends. And true friends don't care if someone is feeling Sad, or Alone, or Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are."

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh."

And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better.

Because Pooh and Piglet were There.

No more; no less.

This was written by Kathryn Wallace. It appeared on her Facebook page on 22 November 2018 Illustration by E. H. Shepard Based on A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh & Characters



Wishing you all good friends like Pooh and Piglet to help and support you on those days where you “ feel really rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. ”.



MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (Chairperson) (16 yr old daughter, accidental) janpessione@xtra.co.nz (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	027 309 1246
CENTRAL OTAGO	Pauline Trotter (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611
INVERCARGILL	Josie Dyer Vanessa Young (Jaylene 6yrs chemical poisoning) Southland Coordinators	0276321742 0273562271
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	021 688504 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

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