

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 155

AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2017

"I have learned that some pain cannot be healed, but must be endured. I believe our Higher Power will help us to endure and find peace. I loved the boy with the utmost love of which my soul is capable and he is taken from me yet in the agony of my spirit in surrendering such a treasure, I feel a thousand times richer than if I had never possessed it."

William Wordsworth 1812

Lovingly reprinted from Childless Parents Newsletter UK

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

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

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

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included.

Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs.

Please contact me on 03 4326004, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

Right now...
Take a moment, close your eyes
and remember
the smile of your child!
Sascha

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young Forever Loved Forever Longed For

Brian Thomas Booth	Born 4/8/57	Brian Thomas Booth	Died 26/8/58
Sashi Coulter	Born 6/8/91	Jason Bradley Burford	Died 25/8/13
Michael Barry Duke	Born 25/8/68	Christopher Burke	Died 22/8/00
Kirsten Jane Maydon	Born 26/8/68	Andrew Meldrum Cox	Died 15/8/68
Stefan David Maydon	Born 14/8/72	Henare Wiremu Fielding	Died 2/8/02
Trinity Lea Taylor	Born 31/8/82	Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton	Died 29/8/01
Eddi Te Arihana Tutaki	Born 1/8/74	Hayden Ivan Pope	Died 11/8/08
Peter Gregory Warren	Born 31/8/62	Brendan James Vass	Died 8/8/05
Dan Wells	Born 13/8/86	Haydon Ross Whitaker	Died 19/8/04
Terry Barnfather	Born 3/9/1953	Greg Burns	Died 21/9/2004
Richard Craig Bell	Born 11/9/1987	Sashi Coulter	Died 6/9/2006
Jason Bradley Burford	Born 25/9/1993	Michael David Cox	Died 20/9/1996
Christopher Burke	Born 12/9/1998	Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Died 22/9/2004
Bevan Andrew Hookway	Born 9/9/1990	Nicholas Evan Hood	Died 23/9/2004
Greg Holley	Born 12/9/1978	Hollie Jay Kirk	Died 11/9/2012
Erica Kewish	Born 11/9/1995	Anthea Gail McDowell	Died 2/9/1987
Hollie Jay Kirk	Born 11/9/2012	Logan Scott O'Hara	Died 28/9/1999
Gordon Legge	Born 22/9/1976	Georgia Rose Poplawski	Died 2/9/2005
Pauline Anne Newall	Born 10/9/1962	Thomas John Poplawski	Died 2/9/2005
Cameron Smith	Born 25/9/1999	David Massey Reid	Died 13/9/2000
Gary Brendon Thompson	Born 27/9/1968	Cameron Smith	Died 23/9/2015
Ryan Ashley Thompson	Born 30/9/1985	James Wing	Died 6/9/2000

Dear Friends,

With September rapidly approaching so are both Spring and Father's Day. For bereaved Fathers the difference between these two must seem huge; Spring the season of new life, new growth, and Fathers Day, without your beloved child, a day where often thoughts of death and dying are forefront of your memories. How can you get through this day, what can you do to make it bearable? Are there things that others can do to support you?

Perhaps reading some of the articles in this newsletter will help you feel less alone or isolated. Remember to talk with your family, let them know what might help.

Whatever you do, remember the love you have for your child and they for you and remember that death does not destroy either the love or the bond and certainly can't destroy the memories.

May you have a peaceful Fathers Day.

Great excitement this month with the announcement that the NZ TCF website is all up and running. A few minor glitches but please read Kerens article on page 5 and check out the site. The website will make it so much easier for bereaved parents to know what is here in NZ for them and link them in with support people. Many thanks to Keren and her team for many months of worry, headaches and hard work. It is all very much appreciated. Thankyou so much.

Please all take care of yourselves and each other. Reach out if you need support or reach out to another if you can offer some.

Lesley Henderson.

Christchurch Support Group.

Some people may have noticed that there are now a couple of telephone friends contacts on the back page for the Christchurch area. Although not officially a TCF support group this group has recently formed and some of it's members were part of the Christchurch TCF chapter which closed around 10 years ago. They are now back to receiving the newsletter and we welcome their support for bereaved parents in Christchurch.

Details of regular meetings are as follows.

We meet on the first Tuesday of every month at 248 Lyttelton St., Spreydon, Christchurch, from 5.30pm for a 6pm start.

Coin donation/koha for group expenses is appreciated.

Coffee Catch Up held at a café usually on the last Sunday of the month at 10.30am. Date and venue can be found on Facebook or phone/text Claire for details—0274242830.

Find us on Facebook under Bereaved Parents Christchurch or go to Bereaved Parents at www.cinch.org.nz for further information about our group.

Regards Claire

Central Otago Chapter Report.

Fathers Day...

Since Fathers DAY is fast approaching. This is a hard time for bereaved parents. Unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breath of both the pain and the love we carry. we grieve for a lifetime.. there is no moving on / getting over it / no fix it /no solution to the heartache / This ripple effect ... Stay around GOOD Friends and Family. YOU are a Father and a very special one. You will always be the Dad of your child.. Try enjoy Fathers DAY...

Any enquiries to Louise (03)4486094 or Jan (03) 4488360

Southland Report

Kia Ora from Murihiku.

It was great to see everyone who attended our AGM this month. We are keeping the new format of only having the AGM and the first meeting in February at the city library and all other bi monthly meetings as dessert gatherings. This is a nice informal way of catching up, and getting out and about.

Big thanks goes out to Linda for still being our chairperson and to Sue as secretary. Thanks to everyone for everything they do. The more hands the merrier and it is greatly appreciated. With this said also a big thank you to Lesley for the wonderful job she does on the newsletter. A great comfort for many.

The winter is nearly over with the daffodils popping through and the lambs starting to pop out and hop about as well. This also means the nights are getting shorter with less hours of sitting in the dark. The sunshine always puts a lighter aspect to the days which for some families are still very dark and bleak, but within this whanau/ family we are not alone, we have The Compassionate Friends.

I have been on this journey for nearly 16 years and it is a journey that still has the odd pothole, but one good thing that has come about was finding TCF. I have made some very special, and now lifelong friends while being in this group. We may not see each other a lot but do know that if we need an ear to listen or an arm to hold there is someone available who knows exactly how we feel and what we are going through. I say this especially to the members who do not attend meetings and gatherings, that if you do ever decide to meet face to face with some very nice, caring and fully understanding people, attend a meeting. You might be surprised.

For all the fathers out there, take care of yourselves this fathers' day. You are still a father to a very much loved child who will always love you.

Aroha Murihiku/love southland.

Vanessa Young xx

Kapiti Coast Report

Dear Friends,

We continue to be a small but close and supportive group meeting occasionally for dinner, coffee or a chat. We provide companionship and a listening ear to any who require it.

At the moment I am having computer issues, such a great thing when going well but not so when something happens.

To all Fathers I wish you peace and love this Fathers day. Remember any precious memories and the love of your child.

Take care,

Anna Upton

The great New Zealand TCF website

Yes! We are on line.....

Yes! We have had a contact already.....

Yes! It has been a long and rocky road but we are there.....

Yes! Huge thanks to Nygllhuw (Nigel) Morris of Kiwiwebs Ltd. for a brilliant web site

Our web address is (will be) www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

.....**BUT**.....at the moment.... Just use

www.compassionatefriends.org.nz to get in

Google in their wisdom has blocked the "the" as so often happens on the internet but not in our case.

We need the "the" to align us with all the other TCFs in the world.

Nigel our web manager is on to it but says Google is not as fast as their web when it comes to correcting errors.

Please do not advertise the web address until it is corrected as this will cause confusion.

A weird thing has also shown up under the address - an old random page from Wanganui's old website which got lost in cyberspace in 2015 appears. It was September 2015 and mentions Father's Day so two years later.....

This page will be deleted by Google also....eventually.

The internet is a weird and wonderful thing.

Our National site

The site belongs to us all. As you will see:

the North Island Contact is me Keren Marsh

the South Island contact is Lesley Henderson Otago

This simplifies things.

How to add or change details on the website

Please e mail all details to me marshkandb@clear.net.nz

Please put **TCF website** in the subject line

As the newsletter is now being included on the site. This includes the final page which has **telephone friends** listed for NZ. If you are not comfortable with having your personal details on the website please let Lesley or me know.

Also if there is any alteration to your names, addresses, emails, phone numbers etc let us know. We need this information to be accurate and up to date in case of contacts. This makes our site more reliable to vulnerable people who may be searching for support. It looks bad if they make contact and there is a blank!

Also anyone not listed on that telephone friends (back page of the newsletter) who would like to be, please contact Lesley.

We want our group added to the website

No problem, again, send as much information and details to Keren and it will be forwarded to Nigel to go on the web. Please make sure your people are comfortable with having their details on such a public site. Details of the history of your group how and when you meet.

This can be sent at any time preferably with a couple of weeks notice for events.

What if I have a strange contact from the web?

Well, I guess in this world, so open to this media, this may happen but you must report it to me immediately.

Worldwide Candlelighting

It's not far away! We will do a big feature on the site about Worldwide Candlelighting if you have any stories about your previous events or photos(make sure people are happy if they feature in photos) please send to me with Worldwide Candlelighting in the subject line.

As soon as you have your plans for December 10th 2017 send to me.

Does the website cost anything?

Oh No! she is going to talk about money!

The site has largely been paid for by the Wanganui TCF with a generous donation from Central Otago. A lot of sausages have been sizzled in Wanganui to pay for it.

The cost was several hundred dollars with annual fee for the upkeep of the site. Kiwiwebs will do this for us.

Worth every sausage as we can rely on them to do a professional job.

As part of TCF NZ it would be good if all groups took ownership and paid a small donation to help with this on-going promotion. We know TCF is non-profit and has no charges so this could be difficult but even \$10, \$20 or \$50 would be helpful.

This money should be forwarded to us. We may need to open a separate bank account for the website upkeep.

This would be transparent for you all to see.

Sponsors

You may have community groups that help support your TCF group - they may like to have their name on the sponsor list - as you will see the sponsors are linked to their website so this is on-going very cheap advertising for them. You would need to get their permission of course.

Again send sponsors details to me to pass on to Kiwiwebs.

Sponsors should look at the site first of course and be happy to be linked.

We are going to draft a letter to send to sponsors here so if you would like a copy e mail me.

Well.... it has been a long time coming but they say good things take time.

I have already had a contact from a bereaved mum in Auckland who found the site. Sadly there is no group there, but we have connected her with us at the moment.

I can see how this website could well be the means of getting bereaved parents together throughout the country.

Yours in great relief,

Keren Marsh Wanganui TCF

Emotional Handicap – By Fred Bagley

I have been associated with mentally and physically handicapped people for many years, not least because our only child, Andrew, had both handicaps, one which led to his death (scoliosis of the spine), and I have often marvelled how such people enrich their own and other's lives in spite, or because of their handicap.

I have always thought that there were only two types of handicap but from my own experience there is, I believe a third handicap – that of emotions.

Before we lost our dear son, I judged myself a pretty average sort of guy, smiled at funny or good things, frowned or was sad at bad and unhappy events and generally took my surroundings with some appreciation, for granted. Over the years there also grew in me, with Andrew's influence I'm sure, a need to do my best, and I was slightly frustrated when others did not. But looking at myself objectively now, I see something very different. Many times I have heard and read that you are never the same when you have lost a child, and how true is that of the emotions.

Where I smiled, I now laugh with joy, where I was sad, my heart aches, and tears well in my eyes. The scenery of our country that was pleasant to the eye is now marvelled at in every detail; a view becomes a tapestry of beauty, a bird perched on a branch is examined from its alert tiny eyes to its unique and exquisite plumage. A tree in heavy blossom heightens the spirit by the wonder of nature, while acts of environmental vandalism, dismissed years ago, will fill me with an inner rage.

And what of personal relationships? I find joy in friendships and the sharing of feelings so much closer than ever before. I also let my intolerance and frustration show far more, mostly with people who either don't appreciate what they have or can't be bothered to do their best. This latter facet has I admit caused some problems in my work, but at least the realization of it is a step in the right direction. My emotions swing wildly through these extremes, rarely resting in the moderate middle ground and although describing these emotions is difficult, I ask myself several questions:-

- Are my emotions and resultant mood swings normal? But then, what is normal?
- Are my present emotions an improvement or deterioration on my previous state?
- What do people who knew me before, or those who only know the "new" me, think of me now, and do I really care what they think?
- Should I try to change, stay the same, or moderate between the old and the new, if that's possible?
- If people make allowances for the physically and mentally handicapped why don't they for the emotionally handicapped?

Whatever the answers, I suppose I will be what I am, desperate with my loss, forever grateful for what I had and always trying to show love, compassion and consideration where it is needed and deserved, in a life that is precious to each and every one of us but a life which – for better or worse – has left me emotionally handicapped.

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter



If you're embarrassed because you have some notion about how men are supposed to behave, and it doesn't include weeping, then you have some personal work to

do.

Ray Bradbury



Dark Days

I was driving in to work today and thinking how far I have come since the early days of my grief. I started thinking about how something as simple as a good song gets me singing (not pretty, but to me I sound good) along with the radio. I now have goals and dreams that I look forward to pursuing. I also started to think about some of the rough days I had early in my grief. The only goals I had on those days were to survive and to get out of bed to make it to work. There was no singing along to the radio on the way to the office, only tears. Every time I start to beat myself up for not being “further” along in life, I try to stop myself and remember some of those early days.

One particular day really stands out to me. It started out with the normal dread of waking up and getting out of bed. I had one of those moments of bliss between sleeping and reality. The moment that you thought you had the worst nightmare of your life and the reality that you were living that nightmare. The day progressed with the mental struggles I often fought. But this day I didn't have the strength to fight it, so I surrendered to it. I was on my hands and knees and had been gagging, throwing up from the stress every time I tried to eat. Throwing up from the stress! I didn't even realize that was possible. I was crying but there were no tears, only convulsive-type spasms that resemble bawling, but again there were no tears. Only extreme sadness, fear, despair, depression, emptiness, guilt, devastation and anger. I am sure I am missing a bunch of other emotions that I was feeling that day.

I remember that it was a wintery afternoon and there I was on my hands and knees not knowing if I was going to survive. “Survive” is a word I asked myself a lot during the early days of the journey. “Am I going to survive this?” The reason I asked it was because I could feel myself dying and I really wasn't sure I was going to survive. I asked my counsellor, wife, family and friends. I needed confirmation that I was going to survive. And even when they said yes, I returned with “Are you sure? Because it doesn't feel like I am going to.” I think some people around me started to ask the same question.

One friend of mine responded to an email I sent him. “Hey buddy, I am getting worried about you. This is the first time I have had concerns. I don't want you hurting yourself, and you need to go to the doctor for help.” I never got to the point of thinking about ending the pain, but I can see how people get to that point. My friend was right. I needed to see a counsellor.

When I was sitting with my counsellor telling my story, I was fine (ok not fine, but better because I had an opportunity to tell my story and cry), but when I was on my own it would start to build up until my next appointment. I needed her with me to help tame conversations I was having with myself regarding the survival of this nightmare. Unfortunately, my insurance only covered one visit per week.

As I mentioned earlier, I sometimes have a tendency to judge myself for not being the guy I was 10 years ago before the loss of my first child. However, when I look back at some of those dark days, I realize I have come a long way from those days and that it's ok to have easy/relaxing/enjoyable days and that the most important thing is the fact I feel happiness and peace in my life. Those two things are not easy to come by and I need reminders of those days to realize that it's ok to just sit back and enjoy the simple things in life.

I decided to share my thoughts and this story today because I want you to realize that no matter where you are in this journey, there is hope. There are brighter days ahead if you put in the hard work of allowing the grief process to run its course instead of fighting it. Learn to surrender and be vulnerable.

Kelly Farley BP/USA, Coeur d'Alene Chapter

Kelly Farley is a bereaved father who has experienced the loss of his two children over an eighteen-month span. He lost his daughter, Katie, in 2004 and his son, Noah, in 2006. During that time, he realized that there is a lack of support available to fathers suffering such a loss. As a result, he is working on his first book as a resource for grieving dads.

Lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

Margaret and Sandie have given us 100 copies of VOICES to sell

with all proceeds to go to TCF.

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

C/- Lesley Henderson,

76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D.,

Windsor

Oamaru

I have personally found that many of my friends and family have appreciated reading this book

as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

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#1 DAD Father's Day



© 2008 KIMBERLY LEE

Fathers Day after a Child's Death

My daughter, Jeannine Marie Roberts, was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer in May of 2002, three weeks after giving birth to her daughter and my only grandchild, Brianna. Jeannine died at home, at the age of 18 on March 1, 2003, just 10 months after she was diagnosed. Jeannine never had the opportunity to be a mother to her daughter; cancer suddenly and unceremoniously entered the equation. During early grief, holidays were particularly difficult for me to manage. My memories of Jeannine became more frequent during the days leading up to the holidays, and as a result my pain became more intense. The holidays could never go by fast enough. Father's Day was in many ways my toughest holiday to endure. In the beginning of my journey, Father's Day was associated with many raw and painful triggers. While I am blessed with two great sons, Jeannine was my only daughter, and Father's Day was a constant reminder of many experiences that we would no longer share. There would be no more father-daughter lunches, no more rock concerts and no more of her beautiful smile to brighten up my day. Father's Day was also a reminder of lost future dreams. I would never get the chance to walk Jeannine down the aisle at her wedding or share that ceremonial father-daughter dance at her reception. I would not have the opportunity to watch her have more children or grow as a mother and as a companion to her significant other. I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

Father's Day was not bittersweet, it was just bitter.

Today, I do not dread Father's Day like I did early in my grief, nor do I experience the raw emotion associated with it. I believe that one of the things that has helped is my realization that Jeannine is still my daughter and that I can still have a relationship with her. That relationship has been strengthened in part by the signs that she has given me of her presence. The most emphatic sign that I received from Jeannine was during Father's Day in 2009. I was doing some work on the computer when my wife Cheri told me that there was a double rainbow outside. She believed it was Jeannine's Father's Day gift to me. I did as well, because I had been thinking about Jeannine earlier that day. Plus, I have learned that the signs we receive are usually a product of what is happening with us in the present moment.

What has also helped soften the pain of Father's Day is the conscious decision I made to embody the best qualities of Jeannine in my own daily life. Doing this has allowed her essence to become a part of everything I do and every holiday that I celebrate, thus softening the pain that her physical absence can bring.

Maintaining a relationship with Jeannine by embodying the best of who she was has also allowed me to stay connected to her. Because of my change in perspective about life and death, Father's Day (as well as other holidays), no longer brings me to my knees.

Here are some other suggestions for activities that can be helpful for fathers to stay connected and to honor the legacies of their deceased child on Father's Day. I believe these suggestions can also apply to anyone dealing with the challenges presented by the death of a loved one during any holiday:

- Plan a family gathering to share stories and memories of your loved one. Our loved ones come alive through the stories that we share.
- Write a special prayer about your loved one and say it to yourself or out loud. Also, if you choose, create your own special ceremony or ritual. On Jeannine's angelversary date this year I wrote a prayer for her using Native American influences, burned incense and played music. During my ceremony, I gave Jeannine permission to grow outside of our relationship so that she could share her wisdom with others who are struggling with life's challenges. I felt empowered and at peace during and after my ceremony.
- Plant a tree or start a garden. In our backyard, we have a mommy's garden that my wife Cheri designed to honor Jeannine as our daughter and also as mother to her daughter (our granddaughter.)

- Volunteer at a local organization that had meaning for both you and your loved one. I am a volunteer for Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc. in New Hartford, New York. Jeannine had Hospice Services during the last 10 days of her life. They provided amazingly compassionate care to Jeannine and to our entire family.
- Release biodegradable balloons or sky lanterns that contain messages from you, family and friends to your loved one. You can do this alone or in the presence of others.
- Find some old magazines and invite family and friends to make a collage of pictures and words that remind you of your loved one.
- Light a special candle.
- Make a donation to a favorite charity or cause in memory of your loved one. The amount does not matter – even a small amount towards a meaningful cause can be a wonderful gift.
- Perform a random act of kindness for somebody. The act can be as simple as holding a door open, or letting a car in front of you in traffic. The warm feeling that you get from doing this may put a smile on your face and give you a brief respite from your emotional pain.

The activities that you choose to honor your deceased loved ones on Father's Day and on any day of the year should be those that uniquely connected you to your loved ones during their life on earth. There is no human law that governs what rituals or activities we choose; it is sacred and personal law that rules.

"And if they tell you that love fades over time, tell them that there is no such thing as time." – Jack Johnson
David J. Roberts became a bereaved parent after his daughter Jeannine died of cancer at the age of 18.



Father's Day – 2015" by Kelly Farley

Well, as much as I don't like to think about Father's Day, it's kind of hard to ignore it. All of the advertisements are in full swing on social media, websites, TV, radio and everywhere else I look. It's not that I am afraid of this day; I just don't really know how to handle it. I don't have any living children to spend time with so I generally just spend quiet time with my wife. Most of the time we just stay around the house or go out for lunch. Maybe go for a run or a bike ride. I don't know what it feels like to spend Father's Day with my children because they died before I got to experience this and other things a parent are supposed to experience with a child. Very rarely do I hear from anyone of Father's Day. Most people probably don't know what to say or do, I get it. I do want people to acknowledge that I am a dad and that this day is difficult, but I don't like to hear "Happy" Father's Day, because it's not. There is nothing anyone can do or say to make it "happy." That's just the reality of it. Instead of wishing all of you a "Happy" Father's Day, I am going to say, "I am thinking about you on this difficult day and wish you a "Peaceful Father's Day." Because one of the most important things to me is the feeling of peace. That is not an easy thing to come by after the loss of a child, but once you find it, it's invaluable. What are your plans for Father's Day? How do you plan to "get through it?"

Gratefully reprinted from Johannesburg News

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BOXING IS A MAN'S GAME

'Ladies and gentlemen! In the right corner, weighing in at 10,000 pounds, fighting bare knuckled, undefeated in millions of fights, GRIEF! GRIEF! And in the left corner, fighting for the first time in his life, wearing six ounce gloves, YOU! YOU! There is no three knockdown rule, no standing seven count and the fight continues till YOU is dead. Shake hands and come out fighting!'

As a bereaved father, you are in the worst and most uneven fight of your life. You can do it all alone or you can have some experienced trainers and managers in your corner. Take your choice! You wouldn't climb into the ring with Sugar Ray or Ali without all the help you could beg borrow or steal. So why do you think that you can fight the most experienced, the most savvy, the dirtiest and most vicious fighter man has ever faced, all by yourself?

By coming to support meetings, you'll meet other bereaved fathers who have fought GRIEF and they can advise you in your fight. No, they won't get into the ring with you, but they can tell you how to bob and weave, when to duck and hold, how to grab and strike back.

They can help to staunch cuts, they can recall strategies that worked for them, and if necessary, they can help you call in the ring physician. Of course you can fight it all alone; it is your choice. The fight never ends. Finally GRIEF becomes tired and the bout turns to an uneasy truce. GRIEF can still throw out a jab that will knock you to the canvas. But with friends in your corner, your eyes can clear faster and you can get up quicker.

With good handlers the uneasy truce stage arrives sooner, but it is your choice! You can stay home and never go to a meeting or talk with another dad. GRIEF vs YOU. How long do you want to fight alone?



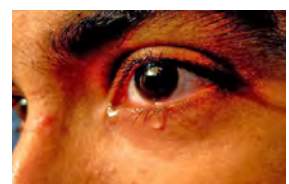
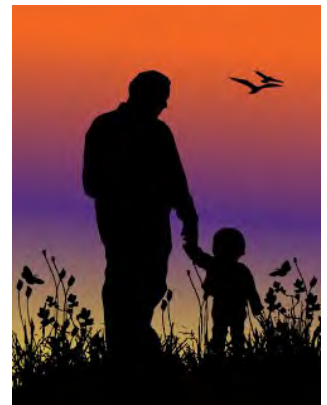
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Tom Crouthamel, TCF Sarasota, FL TCF Vernon Fall 2013 newsletter
Reprinted from Compassion UK

The Strength You Gave Me

They tell me it's amazing how I've stayed so strong,
but they don't see how I cry when I hear your song,
they see the smile on my face but miss the hurt in my eye,
I would rather seem rude than let them see me cry,
I put on this front as I don't want the world to see,
the pain and sorrow so deep inside me.
I don't act this way cause I'm ashamed to feel the way I do,
I act this way in honour of you,
because although I hurt right now and my heart is broken,
I can't help but feel pride and love when your name is spoken,
my strength comes from the love you gave to me,
and it's that strength I want the world to see.
I will always love and miss you Lexi, that I will never hide,
and when people ask me about my daughter Lexi, they will always see my pride,
you were so precious and your memory will always live on,
I'll never be sad that I had you only that you're gone.
My tears are not a sign of my weakness, they are a sign of the love I have inside,
they will always fall down my cheeks, when I think of you with pride,
they say it takes a real man to admit when he is sad,
but how can I be sad when I look at the daughter that I had,
I will always have the memories of my little girl, and you will always be my
world,

Lexi always remember you gave me this strength and that, you will always be your daddies little girl!!!



Lifted with love from TCF Johannesburg Chapter News

POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

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

I am now but an empty shell
washed up on a dark and lonely beach



The brilliance of the stars at night
I see and know I'll never reach

My shattered heart in pieces
no way for it to mend



Each day it starts and I can't wait
for it to finally end

For now I must put on my mask
and struggle to act and be like you

Although I may put on a smile, inside
I'm broken through and through

I am so happy for you that you'll
never feel my heartache and my pain

But please take time and understand
I'll never be myself again.

Derek Watt, TCF/Winnipeg

Why her, not me? Over and over again it plays within
my mind.

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

In the early days of my grief
a tear would well up in my eyes,
a lump would form in my throat,
but you would not know – I would hide it.
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall
that I had attempted to go around
as an ever present reminder of a wall yet un-
scaled.
Yet I did not attempt to scale it
for the strong will survive –
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall –
step by step -
remembering, crying, grieving. And the tears
flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over.
The way was long, but I did make it.
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief
a tear will well up in my eyes,
a lump will form in my throat,
but I will let that tear fall – and you will see it.
Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care
For I am strong

Terry Jago, TCF Regina

Lifted with thanks from Childless Parent Newsletter UK

FAMILY MEANS FAMILY MEANS SHARING INADEQUACIES, IMPERFECTIONS AND FEELINGS WITH EACH OTHER. BUT EVEN WHEN YOU SET OUT TO LOVE, YOU MAY NOT ALWAYS BE A LIKABLE PERSON. AND WHEN YOU'RE NOT PERFECT, FORGIVENESS FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS BECOMES IMPORTANT. THEN YOU GET UP THE NEXT DAY AND START AGAIN. IT IS A PROCESS, LIKE THE OPENING OF A BUD. IT IS A FLOWERING, A BLOOMING AND BLOSSOMING. [Bernie Siegel]

A High-Functioning Bereaved Parent

So where am I now, 13 years after my 2 1/2-year-old son, Jacob, died because of a brain tumor? One thing I can say is that my junk mail has no idea where I am. The other day I threw out yet another letter offering to give us advice on Jacob's college career, as well as a solicitation to re-subscribe to Highlights magazine. Obviously, Jacob is not going to college. And my surviving children are 11 and 13, a bit out of the Highlights demographic.

One construct I use to help myself understand where I am now is a term my wife and I came up with: High-Functioning Bereaved Parent. As is often remarked, someone who has lost a spouse is handily defined by the word "widow" or "widower." But there is no shorthand to describe a parent who has lost a child. Language is a reflection of culture. The great majority of people will never experience the loss of a child and would prefer not to think about it all that much. Raising children is fraught enough without having to dwell on their mortality. So for now, H.F.B.P. will have to do. I'll certainly take it over "every parent's worst nightmare."

So how exactly does being a High-Functioning Bereaved Parent manifest itself? I get out of bed, I help raise our kids and run our household, I laugh, tell jokes, watch violent movies, listen to music and go to concerts. So it all looks pretty good from the outside, and it usually feels...not bad, which is how I prefer to answer when someone asks me how I'm doing. I have no doubt that much of this equilibrium comes from the fact that my wife and I have been together through all of this and still find a lot of joy in our marriage and our surviving children. I also have the privilege of being the executive director of Hope & Heroes Children's Cancer Fund and working every day to improve the lives of children with cancer alongside the staff of the Herbert Irving Child & Adolescent Oncology Center. Among bereaved parents, I consider myself very lucky that I get to work for Jacob every day.

But I knew from the moment Jacob died that we would never get over his loss; we would only learn to live with it. At the risk of torturing grammar, perhaps I should revise that mantra to be "we would only be learning to live with it," because it's a process that never stops.

One way I know that is from the physically jarring sensation I feel when the huge chasm in my life abuts the solid ground I usually walk on. It could be at a high school information seminar for my daughter, for example. There's just this moment of wrongness. Somewhere in my soul there's a trajectory for Jacob's life that is still going on, a part of me that wonders why we haven't already hit these milestones with him first. The natural order of things has been disturbed, but that hasn't entirely stopped me from attempting to hew to that order. Or it could happen with a change in the weather, which can trigger a sense memory sending me back to the time when Jacob was being treated.

That aspect of things is a form of post-traumatic stress disorder, I suppose, which feels like unprocessed experiences that my brain is constantly working on behind the scenes. A hint of fall in the air, and the curtain is momentarily yanked open, exposing the churning attempt at understanding what happened.

For reasons like those, some days are more effort than others. Also, occasionally my status as an H.F.B.P. can lead to a balancing act in relation to my work. Naturally, I can empathize with the parents I meet at the clinic — I have walked in their shoes. But since Jacob did not survive, I don't want to shake their carefully constructed hope that their child will. One thing I always make sure to convey is that each diagnosis is unique and that treatments have continued to improve. My perspective still allows me to have hope for others, and if things do take a turn for the worse, I can offer the powerful example of my own survival after the loss of my son. But it hasn't always been that way. In the emotional chaos shortly after Jacob died, my wife and I took our infant daughter to a retreat for bereaved families provided by Chai Lifeline. We were already wrung out, but this was a new form of wringer: story after story of gut-wrenching, unimaginable loss. My wife got a migraine so intense that the rattle of a newspaper caused her pain; we considered leaving after the first night. We stuck it out, and through the haze it dawned on us: you can live on after the loss of a child, it's not impossible. After the retreat, when the sadness would threaten to become overwhelming, I would think of these other bereaved parents and take strength from their behavior. Regular conference calls with a group of dads also helped a great deal.

So my path has not been through completely uncharted territory. I have had mentors to follow, whether or not they would have called themselves High-Functioning Bereaved Parents. In the end, I'm not sure if being an H.F.B.P. is a choice, exactly, but I believe that putting a name to our "condition" has helped us not just survive, but to thrive and engage with life more fully.

Jeremy Shatan lives in Inwood, Manhattan, with his wife and two surviving children.

BP of USA. A Journey Together

(Taken from September / October Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter) and reprinted in TCF Queensland Newsletter

When all you've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough

My dinner companion said to me that evening, "How lucky you are to have lost a child when you were so young, so that you could learn to conquer grief and pain. Most people don't have an opportunity like that until they are much older." He went on "When a person dies, it is not a tragedy. His soul returns to the great stream of Life, like a drop of water returning to the ocean, its source. Dying is not painful. It is living that is painful, because being alive isolates us from the rest of life and leaves us vulnerable. When we complete our period of individual existence, we rejoin the stream of Life. Your son's life was pain-filled and tragic, and not only because he was sick. Everyone's life is pain-filled and tragic. But his death was not tragic. His death brought him peace, and it should have brought you peace and a sense of completeness as well, except that your habit of wanting things, wanting health, wanting children, wanting everything to turn out favourably, keeps you in pain." He leaned across the table and said to me, "You are a wise man and a fine writer but you still have to learn the most important truth of all: Nobody suffers in this world except people who want things they cannot have. When you learn not to desire, you will rise beyond suffering."

I looked at him incredulously. Here was a man I liked personally and respected for his religious sincerity. But what he was saying was so totally the opposite of what I felt and believed. What his religion taught him about life and death was so different from what mine taught me. I did not feel lucky to have lost a son whom I loved. Neither had I achieved tranquillity or transcended the pain. (To that, my friend would have replied that my mourning and religious growth were still incomplete. The sense of loss still hurts years later, though I had learned to live with it. More than that, I believed that it was supposed to hurt. In the same way that dead cells, our hair and fingernails, feel no pain when they are cut but living cells bleed and hurt, so I believe that spiritually dead souls can be cut into, separated from other souls, and not feel pain. But living, sensitive souls are easily hurt.

I don't like being hurt. I don't enjoy experiencing pain. But I believe that I become less of a human being if I learn the art of detachment so well that I can experience the death of a friend or relative, or watch a television news show about starving children, and not be emotionally affected by it. Maybe people living in a land of grinding poverty, infant mortality, and frequent floods, famines, and natural disasters have to armor themselves against the constant threat of calamity, the way doctors have to protect themselves against becoming too emotionally close to the seriously ill patients they treat. But I feel that the price we pay for that sort of protection is too high.

When I protect myself against the danger of loss (by death, divorce, or just having a close friend move away) by teaching myself not to care, not to let anyone get too close to me, I lose part of my soul. When I try to avoid pain by skipping the articles about famine and torture in the papers and turning to the sports pages and gossip columns, saying to myself, "It's too bad but that's the way the world is," I let myself become less human, less alive. When I protect myself from disappointment by not wanting to be happy, by telling myself that happiness is a mirage and an illusion, I diminish my soul. To be alive is to feel pain, and to hide from pain is to make yourself less alive. [Harold S Kushner]

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Chapter News





Sibling Page



WHEN A SIBLING DIES BY SUICIDE

Written by Michelle Linn-Gust on Tuesday, July 1, 2008 By Michelle Linn-Gust, PH.D.

In the initial months and years after my sister Denise died by suicide (just two weeks before her 18th birthday), I sought out as much information on sibling loss as I could. Denise was my younger sister, the one I shared a room with for 10 years, the one who knew more about me and my goals and dreams than anyone else. When she walked in front of a train near our parents' suburban Chicago home, I was 21 and working on a journalism degree at Ball State University in Indiana. My goal from first grade on was to be a writer. But the loss of my sister, which left my family of six now a family of five, redefined everything I believed in and wanted. In my search to understand my loss, I combed what now seems like mountains of information, looking for other losses similar to mine. What I found was little that defined sibling loss by the mode of death. Some studies confirmed that suicide loss was similar to other sudden deaths (homicide and accidents), yet some books disregarded mode of death. I found it difficult to relate to those who lost siblings by other means, especially illnesses where there was a chance to say goodbye. There was no anticipatory grief in the case of my sister. On the morning of March 18, 1993, I knocked on her door, she mumbled something to me that I could not understand, and I went on my way for that day. By 10 a.m. she had died and I had to spend the following years of my life trying to figure out how to say goodbye to her. Emotions following a sibling death are varied because families are unique, situations are different, our relationships change with our siblings throughout our lives, and because we suffer our losses through multiple types of death. The following is a summary of how mode of death affects some of the emotions grieving siblings might feel. It is important to note that because situations are unique to each relationship, one sibling might not experience exactly that of another.

Suicide When a self-inflicted death occurs, we often say there is a legacy of suicide left in the family. One suicide in a family puts the others at a greater risk (Jordan, 2001). Suicide becomes part of their normalcy, a part of their lives that it does not for people who have the fortune of never experiencing it. Surviving siblings, especially those who are younger than the one who died, might fear they will also die by suicide, particularly when they reach the age of the one who died. Surviving siblings also worry about the stigma that it will carry and thus they might deny that their brother or sister died by suicide. Not coping, however, will force grief to manifest itself in other ways, usually through physical illnesses. The fear of stigma siblings experience can be particularly stressful as they age and find themselves getting involved in possible long-term relationships. They fear rejection from their future in-laws because they've had a suicide (and possibly mental illness that could have contributed to the suicide) in their families. Circumstances of the death might have been kept from the siblings, even older siblings. Usually parents do this to protect their children, not realizing that the children affected must cope with the reality when they find out how their sibling really died. Searching for the answer to why might plague siblings for years. They will wonder if they caused their sibling to take his or her life, what is often called the could've, would've, should've of sibling grief. They might wonder if things they might have said could have changed circumstances, particularly true for younger siblings who may not fully understand death and suicide (Linn-Gust 2001). And they might feel guilty. As guilt is a primary piece of suicide survivorship, it is hard to find survivors who do not experience it after the death of their sibling. They will look back on their times together and remember the difficulties they shared, the typical emotions of growing up in a family, and believe they should have been nicer to their sibling or spent more time with him or her. Finally, blame is another emotion associated with suicide. But with suicide, the blame differs because the deceased sibling took his or her life; there isn't something tangible to blame like an illness or a drunk driver. For surviving siblings, the guilt also might stem from not realizing that their sibling was struggling and feeling bad and that they did not try to help them. Family members will each have a different story of what happened and what led to the person's death and siblings are no exception to this. Siblings have a different perspective on the suicide because their relationships were different with the deceased person than that of their parents' and each other. Siblings need an opportunity to express their emotions following the suicide without their parents because their stories and emotions will be unique.

Sudden Death (Including Accidents and Homicide) Sudden death has its own issues for surviving siblings. While some of these emotions will be in line with those of suicide, people who experience the death of a sibling by sudden death will be faced with circumstances usually beyond their family's control. Homicide and accidents can be questionable and lead to lengthy grief because of unresolved cases in the legal

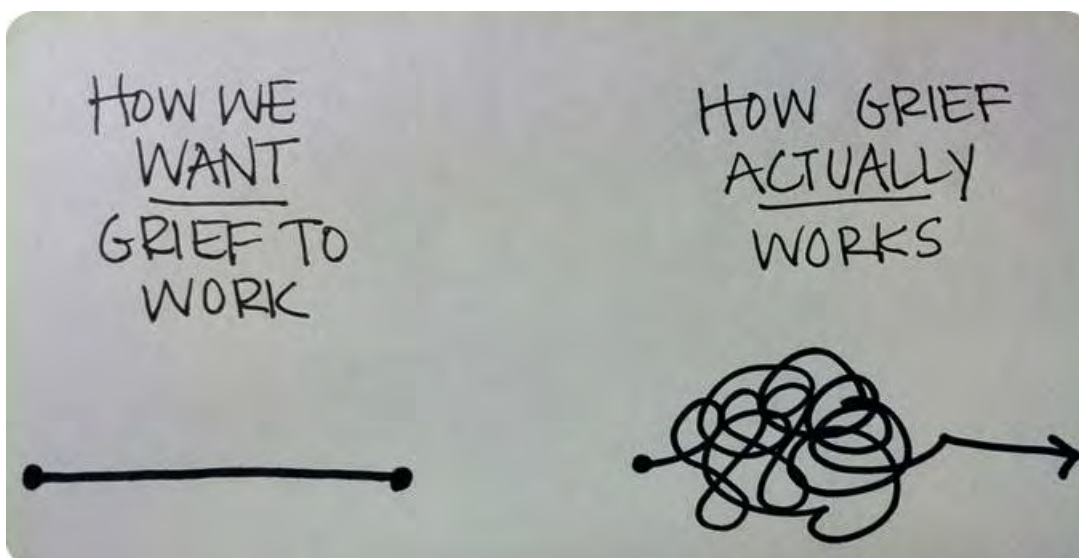
system. Siblings might be ready to move on following their brother or sister's death, but the legal battles and open investigations keep them from moving forward. Sometimes there is no closure for siblings in these types of death. As with suicide, there usually is no time to say goodbye. The death is instant, coming at a time when it's not expected and under atypical circumstances. Siblings who see their brother or sister die, whether by an accident, homicide or suicide, could suffer post-traumatic stress disorder as they relive the vision of seeing someone they care for very much die in front of them. In some accidents, the siblings might believe they were to blame and suffer long-term complications from grief.

Illness Siblings who experience the loss of a brother or sister to illness often have a chance to spend time with them and say goodbye. This experience might seem like it could ease the process because they have an opportunity to express their feelings. However, it also can be difficult because the process can go on for an unknown period of time. Life is disrupted and no one is quite sure when it will be normal again. And that normal will be forever changed. For children, it can strain their relationship with their parents because parental attention is devoted to the sick child. Children are forced to live through the sickness of their sibling with worry and sadness because their playmate is no longer available to be with them. Siblings who watch their brothers or sisters die also might have lasting memories of those last scenes of the siblings lives (Bank and Kahn, 1997). It might have been traumatic for them to witness their sibling's death. Or the sibling might have died in a hospital in another city and the sibling is left to imagine what really happened.

While sibling grief has many parallels to the loss of a friend or another family member because of the loss of memories and a shared childhood (Cicirelli, 1995), the reaction to the death also will be unique based on the experience of the surviving sibling and the closeness of the relationship. The way that sibling dies will affect the grief experience as well. Thus, when working with sibling survivors, it is important to acknowledge that the sibling's grief will be complicated by the manner in which the sibling died. Surviving siblings must acknowledge their loss and the manner in which it happened before they can move forward in their lives. They also must be reminded that just because their sibling has died does not mean their sibling is gone from their lives. They do not have to let go of the memories of their deceased sibling. Only through coping with the death will they learn how they can take that person's memory with them as they continue to move forward in their lives.

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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
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 chrisguerin@clear.net.nz
	Sandra Porter	0221275541
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	04 9387212 lorrained@paradise.net.nz
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
WANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yo, car accident)	06 3443345 wanganui@thecompassionatefriends.org.nz
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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