



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 1558

FEBRUARY MARCH 2017

Asking me when a parent will be done with grief in their parenting to a dead child is like asking when a parent will be done with happiness in their parenting to their living children... you cannot expect them to have "closure" on their parenthood. They are still parents. [It would be] like telling someone whose mother died, that they are no longer someone's kid.

-Different Kind of Parenting, July-Sept 2004, KotaPress, "From Grief to Parenting"

Reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter newsletter

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](mailto:tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz)

*We are all alike and, at the same time, we are very unlike. Our stories are different, our solutions are different, our ways of handling our grief are different, but we are all alike in that we all hurt to the depths of our capacity to hurt. We experience many of the grief symptoms alike, and we are alike in our need for help. While we cannot give each other definite answers or take away from each other's pain, we can help each other simply by being there and listening to each other.*

*Dennis Klass, TCF St Louis, USA  
Childless Parent Newsletter London*

## Our Children ... Remembered with love

### Forever Young

### Forever Loved

### Forever Longed For

Paul Graham Albrecht	Born 28/2/84	Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young	Born 19/3/95
Yvonne Kay French-Wollen	Born 4/2/64	Simon Charlton	Born 26/3/96
Rebecca Clare Halket	Born 22/2/84	Shane Elliot Davis	Born 18/3/82
Allan Stephen Hobbs	Born 20/2/56	Marcus Fitchett	Born 11/3/70
Faye Marie Joyce	Born 5/2/61	Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton	Born 9/3/67
Keegan Lineham	Born 14/2/94	Aidon Samiel Konise	Born 2/3/88
Hughan Scott Norton	Born 9/2/63	Sara Loo	Born 2/3/92
Vaughan Arthur Nuttall	Born 17/2/87	Thomas Craig McDonald	Born 3/3/91
Logan Scott O'Hara	Born 17/2/78	Anthea Gail McDowell	Born 1/3/79
Marlene Joy Penny	Born 5/2/73	Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Born 9/3/90
Melissa Jane TeHuia	Born 23/2/72	Georgia Rose Poplawski	Born 30/3/00
		Quintin Christie Reid	Born 23/3/92
		Callum Robertson	Born 8/3/82
Glenn Arscott	Died 1/2/02		
Tania Rose Baldock	Died 6/2/09	Mitchell James Beaumont	Died 29/3/96
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Died 13/2/89	Kyle David Edwards	Died 4/3/98
Ben Paul Gillanders	Died 18/2/77	Tineke Foley	Died 25/3/10
Daniel James Gillies	Died 18/2/03	Ricky George	Died 19/3/04
Krysha Helen Hanson	Died 6/2/03	Faye Marie Joyce	Died 14/3/94
Bevan Andrew Hookway	Died 17/2/08	Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Died 19/3/06
Kai Klein	Died 20/2/98	Paul John Nicholaou	Died 21/3/98
Keegan Lineham	Died 14/2/94	Hughan Scott Norton	Died 9/3/01
Nicholas Ian O'Hara	Died 8/2/00	Vaughan Arthur Nuttall	Died 14/3/06
Brent Allan Stenton	Died 12/2/94	Quintin Christie Reid	Died 26/3/07
Jonathon Upton	Died 11/2/02	Trinity Lea Taylor	Died 12/3/05
		Nicole Leigh Templer	Died 30/3/11

## Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora everyone. I am writing on behalf of Jan and me. We are sitting here in Central Otago sweltering in 33 degrees. But by the time this newsletter reaches you, the hot days may have passed and it may even be Autumnal weather!!!!

Unfortunately we have been very busy in lots of different ways. It is frustrating for us to not be able to give the quality of help that might be much needed by our grieving families. We apologise to those of you who would have liked more of our time and more opportunities to meet and talk with other parents who have had a child die. On the back of the newsletter you will see phone numbers for Jan Pessione and Wilma Paulin who have volunteered to be phone friends, so remember that they are happy to receive calls and are willing to listen also. And in Queenstown area we have Arlette Irwin. Her phone number is on the back of the newsletter too.

Our next group meeting will be our Orchard Gardens Afternoon Tea meeting, this Sunday 26 February, 2.00pm. This is an opportunity for those of you who are more recently bereaved to meet those of us whose grief has subsided over the years. We know that the death of a child has caused a pain that can best be understood by other bereaved parents. Some people benefit from expressing thoughts and feelings and we are offering an opportunity for sharing and learning from other bereaved parents.

So do not feel that you are alone and abandoned. We are here to help.

Kind regards,

Louise McKenzie

### **There is a light at the end of the website tunnel!**

**Wording for our NZ website is going to the web company as I write but I haven't had much feedback from any of you. I would like to put in activities regular or sporadic from each area. So far I only have the Wanganui details. This is going to be a New Zealand TCF site so you will all be part of it. Could the contacts for each area please send me a brief statement about happenings in your neck of the woods. Please make this a priority and e mail it to me THIS WEEK or post to my home. The e mail on the newsletter is not working yet so email Keren at home [marshkandb@clear.net.nz](mailto:marshkandb@clear.net.nz) or post to 90 Surrey Rd Springvale Wanganui**

The basic structure of the website will be: About TCF who we are and what we offer : History of TCF : TCF in NZ: TCF Mission statement: Credo and Sibling Credo : Sponsors : News : Up coming events: and the newsletter will be attached too.

Plus a contact map of NZ with all the areas noted and then a Contact us page with phone numbers and an e mail for the North Island and the South Island. At this stage it is thought to use me and Sue as NI contacts and maybe Lesley or someone for the SI. We will not do a facebook page at this moment so if any of you have a facebook page or any details you would like listed put it in your local statement

**Also if you have businesses that support you locally we will put them on the Sponsor page. It will be a bit of free advertising for them or they and your group may like to give a small donation to us as we are footing the bill for the website ( that has been a lot of sausages!) - Over \$500.00 so any contributions would be accepted. Send cheques made out to TCF Wanganui**

**Thanks to you all for all you do for TCF**

**Keren Marsh and Sue Walker  
Wanganui Chapter.**

## Love Has Found a Home

### Perhaps ...

Love has found a home and it rests with us. Most of the time we can answer the who, when, how, what and where in regards to our child and their death. The "who" is your child and their name, age, gender and the unique qualities that make them so very special. The "who" is the splendid Soul that is there while we are here.

The "how, what, when and where" is found in the particulars of the circumstances that have sized your child. Whether their life ends by illness or accident, suicide, murder or miscarriage, or any other manner the circumstances are not identical but they are the same separation. They are the unique fingerprints of finality. All of us have fingerprints none of us have the same ones. Bereaved parents own the saddest of realities for now and forever. Separation and finality team up to devour your life and make you cry in the oddest of places, at the strangest of times. You know why even if the world is mystified.

At first it is impossible to have thoughts of death and our child together in any conceivable fashion. It makes no sense to the new Moms and Dads who have been drafted into the army of the bereaved parent. It makes no sense to veterans. Perhaps angry or questioning logic fades as love takes hold and lights our world. Would it be better to not hurt at all but not have had a child? There are some parents in this world that do not suffer since their son or daughter died because they only know of the word love and not its meaning, form without substance. You hurt so much because you love so much. You are crazy with grief because you are crazy with love. The determined desire to go beyond simple survival, to travel beyond deaths' details, holds great power over death and depression. The bad news is, it isn't easy. The good news is, it can, and has been done.

It is the "why" that remains elusive. The "why" that escapes practical evaluation resulting in concrete conclusions. The "why" that is sought for answers. The "why" that is often concealed in confusion that pretends to hide a nonexistent solution. What answer? How can there be an answer to why Him? Her? Me? Us? Normal thinking does not work. The way we use to do things does not work. Logic has been stripped from our evaluation process. We are lost since there are no answers to "why" this happened. "It" happens to others. Why have we lost our immunity? Is it our fault? Could we have taken some other course of action? Inaction? Should we have made different plans? Thoughts float in and out of our mind taunting our Souls with unanswerable questions.

At some fork in the grief trail we travel we can let go of the "why" issue. There is no drum roll to announce the arrival of Hope. Nor are there triumphant trumpets signalling the departure of the tortuous unanswerable "why". The saddest and most frustrating of questions is allowed to disintegrate and be replaced by a fuzzy, vague presence of Hope. Our awareness ability has detected its presence. One morning you wake and a whole minute goes by before you remember. Hope is not the shallow, cheery optimism that the bereaved wear for worldly consumption. It is the deepest and most glorious of productive inspirations that the Hope of eternity and reunion can bring. It is the Hope that all is not lost. It isn't easy to see through curtains of tears so often pulled tightly shut by overwhelming sadness. Hope can open those eyes to observe the scene where love exposes finality as an illusion. Hope and love can make eternal death disappear. There will still be hurt, it will still be intense, it will not fill every waking moment as time changes from enemy to ally. Our love for the child that is not here the way we want will always be with us and eventually replace all else. Our children fill our lives through others that are still here. They do it every day. We just have to keep looking for the place that love calls home. [Pat O'Donnell]

Reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Dear Friends,

How well I remember that deep terror and fear that something would happen to my youngest son, after the death of his older brother. I couldn't let him run in the house as I feared he would fall, hit his head and die. Whenever he went away boating with his father I feared there would be a car accident or a boating accident. I even went through a stage of having full-blown panic attacks when the school bus was a few minutes late as I was convinced that the bus had crashed.

I was completely over-protective and the fear was something that was obvious even to my son who often commented 'you just think somethings going to happen and I'm going to die like Ben'. How right he was, that was exactly what I was thinking.!

Recently my son moved out of home to attend polytech in another city. Initially I was beside myself and I wondered how I was ever going to cope with the return of the fear. However as they say, time is a great healer and after the first few days, once I knew he could safely drive to and from course, I settled very quickly. Of course I do worry, but no more than every other parent. This is validation that I have moved, I have made progress and that the grief and despair can and does lessen.

This knowledge is a big part of what I believe we, as Compassionate Friends, must be sharing with bereaved parents starting on this grief journey. By sharing and talking and writing articles we give hope and support at a time when people are unsure that they will even survive, let alone ever be able to live a normal life again. It may not be the 'old' normal, but it is a life which is well worth living and fighting for.

Lesley Henderson.

"There is nothing that can replace the absence of someone dear to us, and one should not even attempt to do so. One must simply hold out and endure it. At first that sounds very hard, but at the same time it is also a great comfort. For to the extent the emptiness truly remains unfilled one remains connected to the other person through it. It is wrong to say that God fills the emptiness. God in no way fills it but much more leaves it precisely unfilled and thus helps us preserve -- even in pain -- the authentic relationship. Furthermore, the more beautiful and full the remembrances, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude transforms the torment of memory into silent joy. One bears what was lovely in the past not as a thorn but as a precious gift deep within, a hidden treasure of which one can always be certain."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Lifted with thanks from Childless Parents Spring Newsletter

## "Should Haves" and Regrets

"There were things we could have done after David's death, like have a special service of celebration. But we didn't. I've never regretted that decision, nor any of the others. Thankfully, we made a commitment to each other to live with our decisions and not regret what we should or could have done." [Jim Nelson, in loving memory of his son, David]

Sometimes we may dwell on the decisions we made around the time of our loved one's death. We think about what we could have or should have done, playing out each new scenario in our minds. The endless possibilities represent mysteries we can never solve.

Yet regardless of whether our decisions were ultimately the best choices or not, spending hours berating ourselves about the past is not helpful. Our regrets prevent us from living in the present, and may prolong our grieving and intensify the sadness of our loss. We need to forgive ourselves for any decisions or actions we regret, and let go of them.

I will be kind and forgiving to myself. The choices I made were the best possible decisions I could make at the time.

Lifted from Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

## Letters to my son, Andrew By Robert Goor

*A father deals with grief over his son's death by writing letters to the boy.*

You introduce yourself to me, the solitary stranger in the cafeteria. You're just being friendly. In the course of conversation, you ask, "How many children do you have?". And you are slightly disconcerted when I hesitate. Don't I know how many children I have? The answer, when it comes, is a shock. "I have three children, two living and one deceased." And now what do you say? This is your unspoken question; I hear it in your uncomfortable shifting in your seat and the disappearance of your smile.

My 8-year-old son, Andrew, was hit by an SUV and killed in May of 1988. and the not-so-subtle message from our society to those of us who are grieving is, "Just get over it. It doesn't do any good to dwell on the past. I wish you live in the present." But we are changed forever by those we love in life and equally by their passing. And so, it has not, in fact, been a long time since Andrew died. The experience of that day 28 years ago lives timelessly in my heart. From then on, I was left to try to make sense of what defied reason, to accept what was unacceptable. Part of me knew that Andrew was gone, and yet another part reeled in disbelief—and still does. I often feel that I stand with one foot in each of two worlds, this living reality and then unknown beyond, mourning for two: Andrew and myself.

To avoid total emotional isolation, I sought companionship from trusted friends and group support from others who suffered losses. I learned that shared tears are far less salty than solitary ones and that open expression lessens the pain of grief. In telling our stories, we learn that we have more in common than we have differences. And, perhaps, most of all, we learned that we are not alone. I listened to others' stories, and I learned to care again—to allow someone new a place in my still fearful heart.

And I learned what truly endures in this uncertain existence: "it is a glimpse of play out an open window, a knowing smile at bedtime, a sleepy head resting on a shoulder, a sigh of contentment, a cheerful wave hello. It is a moment of warmth, a secret shared breathlessly, a casual glance that says nothing in particular, but says all. It is a quick impression, a flash of pride, a stolen hug, a silent tear. It is a thousand such moments, each of them a heartbeat, all of them a lifetime. It is what we were to each other. It is what we are to each other. It is all that happened. It is all that didn't.

I wrote those words to my son in one of many letters meant to keep our relationship alive and to help find myself again. Those letters have now been published as a book called "Dear Andrew" Over the years, I have evolved so that my grief is no longer as raw as it once was. Rather, it has settled like a fluid in every cell in my body, and seeks balance with my every thought and movement. "I'm all right now," I wrote Andrew. Perhaps this is what it means to heal.

Still, your cafeteria question is not simple. Grief is not simple.

Lifted with thanks from Queensland Chapter Newsletter

### VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

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

with all proceeds to go to TCF.

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

C/- Lesley Henderson,  
76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D.,

Windsor

Oamaru

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

as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

## THERE WERE NO STRANGERS

There is a tenderness among bereaved parents. A gentleness far beyond “normal” interactions with people in everyday life. We speak softly to each other and silently acknowledge our mutual fragileness and vulnerability. That doesn’t mean we might not hurt each other from time to time through a misunderstanding, but it seems to me, the hurt is never meant to be. We have hurt enough already.

Somehow, there is forgiveness among bereaved parents. Forgiveness that comes from knowing we are just struggling human beings trying to make the best of our lives that will have, forever, an empty hole.

There is a quiet beauty among bereaved parents. A beauty that comes out of the experience of being hit with such pain and love all mixed together that words completely fail us.

There is courage among bereaved parents. The courage to get up, get dressed, and face another day.

We look to each other for the tenderness, the forgiveness, the beauty, and the courage. How often we say, “I’m so glad to know you...but I wish we had not met like this.” And then we often add, “But, would I... could I...have ever felt so close if it wasn’t for the pain?” Strange, isn’t it, how there are hidden gifts in the middle of unspeakable agony?

The closeness of bereaved parents and siblings is universal. I just returned from the National TCF Conference in Washington, DC, where 1,500 people, from all over the world and every walk of life, attended. It didn’t take a name tag to identify each other. Formal introductions weren’t necessary. The question, “What do you do for a living?” never came up. The words most often spoken were, “Tell me about your child (or brother or sister).” There were no strangers. Even if you were not there... you were there. The invisible link ... is love.

Alice Monroe, TCF/Mesa County, CO

Gratefully reprinted from Winnipeg Chapter News

## I Know You I know who you are ...

I see your face reflected in mine.  
Ravaged by tears, distorted by the pain of a lifetime.  
You are a parent of a child who now lives on in your heart,  
joined in spirit, though physically torn apart.  
To live between two worlds is now our task  
To be recognized by others, we all have a mask  
But in the abyss, in the darkness of the in between  
we often fall on our knees, tearing away the pretence  
and silently scream.

I know who you are ... your voice sounds as familiar  
as mine.  
It calls out, vibrating throughout all of eternity,  
searching, trying to find.  
Where are you my child?  
I hear you in my mind, but I cannot find the way  
Somehow I have gotten lost,  
where are all of my yesterdays?  
In the void, a child’s voice has fallen silent.  
Deafening silence, echoing cries ...

We are left to follow each other in the darkness,  
always asking “Why”?  
Into the unknown, we stumble along.  
The sun will rise and another day will begin.  
But the only light I can see is in the outstretched hand  
of a kindred soul, another grieving friend.

I know who you are ... your heart is shattered,  
your soul is broken, just like mine ...  
And though the pieces may fit back together,  
one tiny fragment at a time  
we will never again be whole,  
for there is a gap in our lives where our child should  
be  
the child that lives in our hearts, dances deep in our  
souls, laughs in our memories.

I know who you are ... I can feel your pain.  
We will never be the same  
I cry the same tears, we have the same fears  
Alone in a crowd, we both cried aloud  
as our dreams came to an end.

I know you, my grieving friend.  
You are not alone,  
look in the mirror and you will see  
standing next to you ... is a reflection of me.

[Lisa Comstock, Florence, KY – TCF, Atlanta]

## **The Challenges of Raising Children after the Death of a Child** by Maria Kubitz | May 16, 2014

While I will never know the unique pain of losing an only child, I know that raising my sons after the death of my daughter, Margareta, has been full of challenges.

At the time of her death, our family consisted of my husband and me, our three boys from our previous marriages (ages 10, 9, and 7), and our daughter together, Margareta (age 4). On that fateful day, two of her older brothers were home with us. They watched in helpless fear as the chaos of her drowning unfolded. I remember the police trying to distract me as I continued to scream in horror at the sight of paramedics desperately working on her. They kept telling me to comfort my boys instead. How could I? While we had moments of hugging and sobbing together, I would be compelled to go back and watch the resuscitation efforts to see if there was any sign of hope. I completely abandoned them in their greatest time of need.

We all went to the hospital where my stepson and his mom joined us while they continued to work on her in the ER. Their sister was later pronounced dead, and our boys went to stay with their other parents that night. My husband and I were simply unable to function. The boys did not return for several days. When they did, we were not the parents they needed. We were captives of our devastation. We did the best we could, but in hindsight, they had not only lost their sister...they had lost their parents too.

In the days and months that followed, we tried to make sure they received the external support they needed. We took them to a grief counsellor. We worked with their teachers and principal to make sure they had regular check-ins with the school counsellor. We tried to keep the knowledge of their sister's death limited to close friends and sports teammates so they wouldn't be inundated with uncomfortable questions and unwanted attention from classmates. We signed them up for grief support activities and groups at a local hospice. We encouraged them to talk to us about their feelings. We bought them journals to write or draw in.

Despite all of this, they never wanted to talk to us about her death or their feelings. They didn't want to return to the grief support groups after those first sessions. They turned down offers to go to a grief support camp for kids. They eventually stopped wanting to talk to the school counsellor. It was frustrating to say the least. I was horribly concerned for their wellbeing. I hated the idea of them holding in all the painful feelings I was sure they had. I already felt that I had failed my daughter in the worst way possible. Now I felt like I was failing them too.

My various grief support counsellors reassured me that their behaviour was normal. They explained that younger children are not equipped to deal with such intense feelings, and need to return to a sense of normalcy to feel safe. They explained that it will likely be many years before they begin to fully process their sister's death. I was advised to just keep an eye on them for signs of major depression or sudden changes in behaviour. So I did.

Despite their need to return to "normal", I was unable to shield them from my overwhelming grief. Even if I had tried, I wouldn't have been able to suppress my tears and obvious sadness. Since I couldn't, I decided I needed to be honest with them. I needed them to know it was normal to feel sad. I wanted them to know that the painful feelings after the death of a loved one isn't something you sweep under the rug and never talk of again.

With the birth of their baby brother the year after Margareta's death, I was faced with a new challenge: learning how to raise a child in the shadow of the death of a sister he never knew. We knew he was not a "replacement" of his sister, but how would we make sure he knows that? I wondered if my grief would allow me to be the mother he needed. Thankfully, I was.

I think for all of us, he was the catalyst for reintroducing joy into our lives. That is not to say our painful feelings of grief magically disappeared on his arrival – quite the opposite. But he taught us that intense pain and joy can coexist together. Feelings of pain can be softened by joy, and grief has the effect of making our appreciation of the sweetness and joys of life become that much more meaningful.

Now that he is a toddler, new challenges arise. He can recognize Margareta in pictures, but he does not understand why he cannot play with her. He thinks trips to the cemetery are normal, although he doesn't really know why we're there. I have not yet figured out how to explain the concept of death to him in a way that he truly understands. That will have to wait for another day.



Almost five years after her death, I recently asked my older children what was the hardest part of losing their sister. Their answer was unanimous: they didn't like thinking about it because it was so painful. They didn't want to talk to me about it because it would just make me sadder. They hated reminders of it...like walking by her empty room. They aren't as uncomfortable thinking about it as much these days, but they don't go out of their way to do so. Thankfully, they feel more comfortable expressing their feelings.

I know the challenges of raising my children in the wake of their sister's death are probably far from over and will change over time. We don't know what lies ahead, but we know that we will love and support each other along.

Gratefully lifted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter newsletter

### **Letter from the Chair**

#### **Dear Compassionate Friends,**

'Butterflies are miraculous insects. They are magical mysteries. They are so fragile, yet they are some of the world's greatest international travellers. They inspire hope and joy'. TCF's founder, Canon Simon Stephens, spoke movingly at the recent Gathering about the butterfly, the 'universal TCF symbol of hope'.

'Just as it inspired the Holocaust victims of man-made darkness' - even children who scratched butterflies on death-camp walls with pebbles and their finger-nails - 'so too it has a special place in our hearts. In the Solomon Islands I had the joy of daily dawn encounters with dinner-plate size butterflies taking nectar from frangipane blossoms. They always brought me hope. For the butterfly is the supreme survivor'.

Many in TCF think of sons and daughters who have died as butterflies, released from the cocoon of death into some form of eternal or angelic life beyond. Canon Simon gave a different inspiring vision of butterflies. He talked of an airline pilot seeing millions of Red Admirals flying north over the Pyrenees, rising from winter sleep to summer in sweet feeding grounds in Britain and elsewhere.

We bereaved parents, he suggested, are like butterflies as we emerge 'from a place of great darkness and uncertainty. We seek hope for our many unanswered questions. We are on a long painful journey through the valley of the shadow...

'At the heart of the Gathering is the dynamic presence of our child's love - a force that moves mountains. Grief is the price we pay for love...Shedding tears, listening to each other's stories, we glimpse hope. The Red Admiral gives us hope in the difficult challenge that each one of us faces. For butterflies are buffeted over the Pyrenees by cold winds - they sometimes need the protection of outlying valleys in which to take shelter. Bereaved parents, despite their inner pain and despair, every day surmount the insurmountable, empowered by their child's love. That you are here is a tribute to your courage and determination not to let grief destroy your lives...There is great beauty and strength in the awakening butterfly.

'You need not walk alone. Travelling together, you too can spread your wings in the sun's warmth and can in turn give help to those behind who are still walking in the valley of the shadow. Grief, shared, empowers. Yes, hearts are broken and our lives are never the same. But in that sharing of grief, healing and hope have been found'.

With love,

**Margaret Brearley**

Lifted with thanks from UK Compassion

“People will tell you to ‘move on.’ Instead, think of your life as 'moving forward', forward WITH your loved one beside you in spirit and in your heart. It's unthinkable to move on without them. They are forever with you, closer than you know.” Ashley Davis Bush

Page 9 TCF Otago Feb March 2017

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Minneapolis newsletter

## ***Physical Reactions to Loss*** *A sorrow that has no vent in tears makes other organs weep.*

*By Dr Henry. Maudsley*

*When the stress of an emotional injury is felt, there will be warning signs in the body. Expressing emotional pain indirectly through physical symptoms may be more acceptable in some families and more worthy of attention. But it is very hard on the body and it can be dangerous. When you don't express your emotional pain directly, your body may do it for you.*

*Grief can cause any of these physical symptoms:*

- Low energy: needing more rest; tiring more quickly; feeling generally fatigued*
- Hyperactivity: an intense state of arousal or panicky feeling; bursts of physical energy; difficulty sitting still; needing to move around*
- Crisis response: elevated heart rate, high blood pressure, muscle tension, dizziness, weakness, headaches, not feeling well, tightness in the throat and chest, shortness of breath, dry mouth, feeling overwhelmed*
- Susceptibility to illness: suppression of the body's immune system*
- Feeling off balance, uncoordinated*
- Nausea*
- Temporary hair loss*
- Internalizing, or taking on symptoms of the illness your loved one had*
- Erratic eating and sleeping patterns: insomnia, weight loss or gain*
- Susceptibility to the abuse of drugs, alcohol, nicotine, caffeine and food*
- Heaviness; feeling as if you're made of lead*
- Feeling "out of sync" with your body*
- Distorted perception of time and distance*

*Caring for yourself won't erase your grief, but it will offer a welcome respite from it. Pampering yourself with "food for the soul" (such as a massage, manicure, pedicure, facial or bath) releases body tension and makes you feel nurtured. Even though your energy is low and you don't feel like establishing a healthy routine, force yourself to do it anyway. Pay careful attention to your need for nutrition, rest and relaxation, exercise and human contact.*

*Nutrition can suffer because appetites often shift after loss. In an effort to comfort and nurture yourself, you may eat more than usual, or you may have trouble eating anything at all. Stress can interfere with the absorption of important nutrients, while fats and sugars deplete energy.*

*Rest and relaxation are essential. Because rest relieves, restores and refreshes you, it is important that you make time in your day for "mindless" activity, or get away for a relaxing weekend. Your usual sleep pattern may be disrupted in the first few weeks of grief. You may not sleep well at all, or you may sleep more than usual as a way to avoid or shut out the pain.*

*Exercise is good for you, since regular physical activity stimulates the release of biochemicals in your body that relieves pain, alleviates stress and enhances your sense of well being. Exercise increases you circulation, stimulates your heart, cleanses your body, discharges negative energy, and gets you out and about.*

*Human contact is basic human need. Touching, hugging, holding and having contact with another is comforting and healing.*

*Suggestions for coping with physical Symptoms:*

- Ask someone to stay with you to help you focus and prioritize what needs to get done*
- Inform your physician what's happen in your life, so your blood pressure, weight changes and other health indicators can be monitored*
- Know you will make it through these episodes, even if it doesn't feel like it at the time*
- Recognize that your thinking processes, coordination and reaction time aren't up to par right now*
- Breathe. Frequently throughout the day, stop what you're doing, take a deep breath, hold it, then exhale very slowly*
- If your diet is not well balanced, try supplementing it with vitamins and minerals. Add fruits, vegetables and grains. Eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than three big ones. Eat foods you like that are easy to fix and digest, and include a special treat now and then. Drink plenty of water*
- Find an exercise you can do (stretching, walking, swimming, dancing, swinging or swaying to music) and set aside time to do it regularly*
- Reach out and touch someone. Cuddle children and pets; hold hands with your friends; get a massage*
- Attend to personal grooming (hair, skin, nails, wardrobe) that will enhance your body image. There is truth in the saying that when you look good, you feel good too.*

Lifted with thanks from TCF Queensland 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.**

**My daughter, Beth Bradbury** died in a road traffic accident on the 30th November 1991. Beth was 17. A few days later my brother, Dafydd, wrote the poem, I'm a long way from your smile, which still gives me comfort.

**Margaret Bradbury**

## I'm a long way from your smile

Drowning in my feelings afloat in a storm  
Drenched with unhappiness.  
Oh headstrong child caught between defiance  
and Life!  
Yearning to be independent and so grown up,  
Soon to be of age,  
Wise without wisdom, Young without age,  
Sage with no experience of what could be  
And what cannot be,  
Lost to us now through no one's neglect.  
Your lust for life your only crime  
And that a little fault, easily forgiven.  
We weep at our incompetence  
Preferring to sentence ourselves for no one's  
crime.  
Our only respite, that yours was a quick taking,  
Instant nothingness,  
Hopefully and mercifully exiting from this life  
To whatever or wherever we will eventually fol-  
low.  
Bright child go with our blessings!  
And may your lightness of spirit or soul drift  
Towards the Light that does not radiate  
But absorbs and engenders all our levels  
of spirit.  
We are a long way from your smile  
And it cannot be measured in units that  
We can understand or comprehend.  
But we touch each other by being  
And having been, we are near and far  
Fundamentally close and abiding.

**Dafydd**

Reprinted with thanks from UK Compassion

## Forever prepared ... Forever Unready —A Mother's Grief

We who have lost our child  
Are often caught out unexpectedly  
Mostly in an expected situation  
We try to honour those we love  
By attending their celebrations  
To represent our lost child as well  
It's those times we know will be tough  
We prepare ourselves  
We plan what ifs?!  
We have an escape plan at the ready  
We put on our bravest face  
Try to truly embrace the goodness of the day  
Yet in just a moment A word ... A look ...  
Our brave face can just fall  
Then right there for everyone to see  
Is the sadness so deeply felt  
This is the truest core of me  
The part that accompanies every second of my life  
The part I cannot hide away  
No matter how much I try  
It just comes out to look about  
Usually at the most crucial times  
The ones we're trying to share with loved ones  
But I can't help it ... I'm here without my child  
So even if you think you've covered all your bases  
Prepared yourself to do your best  
Try your hardest not to stress  
Just pack some extra tissues  
Compose your self again .  
Those who truly love you  
Or call themselves your friend  
Will accept that this is hard for you  
Regardless of how much time has passed  
Most of them can't imagine  
The pain associated with losing a child  
Only having memories from the past.

Rachael, Campbelltown Chapter

Lifted with love from NSW Chapter Newsletter

## Grief work to help effectively deal with grief

Psychotherapists refer to the process a bereaved person will encounter as "grief work." This is because the process is not one that just happens to you, or that will be healed only with time. "Grief work" means tackling some very difficult emotional tasks. Those families who work through these tasks do eventually experience relief from the intense pain. It has been said that there is no way around grief. You must go through it in order to come out of it.

A well-known psychologist, William Worden, Ph.D., has explained the tasks of grief. These tasks are discussed below. Working through your grief can take many, many months or years.

1. *Accepting the reality of loss.* When a loved one dies, people often experience a sense that it isn't true. The first task of grieving is to come to the realization that this person is gone, and that reuniting with him or her, at least in this life, will not happen. Some families tell us they sense their loved one's presence through sound, sight, smell or touch. Whether or not these experiences are "real" is a matter of belief. However, they are common and not a sign that one is "going crazy".
2. *Working through the pain of grief.* One of the goals of grief counsellors is to help people through this difficult time, so that they do not carry their deep pain with them throughout their entire life. Those people who allow themselves to feel and work through the deep pain find that the pain lessens. Some things may prevent this experience. Friends, relatives, and co-workers may give subtle or not so subtle messages to "pick yourself up and go on" as if nothing has happened. Or, sometimes family members cut off their feelings and deny that pain is present. Allow yourself the time to cry or to be angry. Many people find these feelings appear while going through their daily routines such as grocery shopping or driving to work. Know that these experiences, though very hard, are normal.
3. *Adjusting to an environment in which your loved one is no longer present* Your loved one had a special place in your heart and in your family. They can never be replaced. But bereaved families can eventually adjust to the absence of a loved one. This process might involve finding new ways of interacting with your surviving family members and friends.
4. *Withdrawing emotional energy and reinvesting it in other relationships* Many people misunderstand this task and believe it means forgetting about their loved one. They believe that this would be dishonouring their loved one's memory. This task is simply a continuation of the first three tasks. It involves the process of allowing yourself to make relationships with others. It does not mean that you care any less about your loved one or that you will not keep your special memories.
5. *Rebuilding faith, beliefs and values that are tested by the loss of a loved one.* The loss of a loved one can test your faith and philosophical views of life. Talking with a spiritual leader or advisor such as a rabbi, priest, minister or holy person may be helpful since they have experience counselling others who have experienced a loss. Many bereaved families, whom we have known over several years, can remember their loved one and smile. Sometimes there is still sadness, though it does not come as often and is not as draining. Over time and through these "tasks", you will begin to remember your loved one without experiencing the unbearable pain. It will be a different kind of sadness. Do not hesitate to seek professional help. Counsellors are trained to assist you in working through these tasks and other issues you may be facing. It is okay to ask for one session with a therapist to see if you both will be able to work together.
6. *Seek Support:* It's very important to find people in your life who are good listeners, so you can turn to someone when you need extra support. You may find it helpful to talk to a friend, family member, mental health professional or spiritual advisor. Some find joining a support group helpful since each person will be able to relate in different ways to your experience.
7. *Be Patient* Just as you may be feeling a range of emotions, people around you may also be sorting through their feelings. Be patient with yourself and others: those who are supportive of you as well as those who do not seem to understand. Limit your contact with those who tell you how to feel and what to think. Take time to heal. Set limits for yourself, and give yourself permission to say "no" to things that may come your way. It's difficult to make decisions when you're feeling overwhelmed; you may decide it's best to put off important decisions until you feel ready to make them.

8. *Stay Present* Take each moment as it comes. That way, you can better accept whatever you're feeling and be able to respond in the way that is most helpful to you. Maybe you would benefit from calling your best friend. Maybe journaling would help you let go of your thoughts for now. Learning mindfulness or relaxation techniques like deep breathing can help you stay present and experience your emotions without feeling overwhelmed.

9. *Express Yourself* You can choose to tell others how you're feeling or acknowledge your feelings privately. If you don't feel like talking, you can set aside time each day to grieve. Just make sure you leave enough time to do something pleasantly distracting before bed. Either way, acknowledging your experiences helps.

10. *Allow Yourself to Have Fun*: Social events or pleasant activities can provide relaxation and distraction. Laughter heals, and it's also OK if you cry.

11. *Establish Routine* Even getting dressed may seem challenging, but it's important to re-establish routine as soon as you can. Building in some structure can help you manage your grief and provide a sense of normalcy and hope.

12. *Take care of Yourself* Eat as well as you can, exercise when you can, and avoid alcohol and other drugs that will make it harder for you to work through your feelings.

Lifted With Love From TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

I went to my first TCF meeting three weeks to the day after my baby girl died. I was so thirsty for information. I was received with open arms and the members genuinely wanted to hear my story. I remember seeing this broken man sitting across the table from me, his son had died nine months before. I vowed to myself that I would not "be him" in nine months, I was going to get over this sooner than that. Of course I was wrong. It was about six months later when I noticed a change in this man. His eyes looked brighter, he held his head higher, he didn't cry with every word he uttered and he even laughed. That was the moment in my grief when I knew there was hope. I didn't have it yet and I couldn't see it for myself, but I knew it was out there because I'd seen it firsthand. TCF has been my lifeline since the day I walked in their doors almost six years ago.

Susan Peavler, Tori Jade Peavler's Mom  
Johnson County, Kansas Chapter  
Lifted from Winnipeg Chapter news

## The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were. "Parent" is a living word. It is an eternal word.

Our children would want us to remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name of "parent" that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts. We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

Janet G. Reyes TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX  
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter



# Sibling Page



## THE LOSS OF A LIFETIME.... Anonymously written

When I was 24, my younger brother, who was my only sibling, died. The day the phone rang and I heard my mom say dark, foreign words like coroner, needle, heroin, autopsy, was the most impactful day of my life. In the thickness of shock, I didn't realize that the rest of my life would be measured in before and after. Before, when my family was intact. After, when I would somehow learn to live without the person I was supposed to get a lifetime with.

"Be strong for your parents," said blurs of people at Will's memorial service. I nodded, but inside me, something twisted. I stood in a daze as people streamed by, offering their awkward words and hugs. Be strong for your parents? I thought. I was barely breathing. I was barely standing here. Strong was the last thing I felt.

In the early months after Will's death at 21, I existed in a heavy fog. Nothing was as I knew it. I'd abandoned the little life I'd started in Maine and landed back in Alaska where my parents were, where my brother and I had grown up. My friends were living their lives — going to college, working, falling in and out of love and lust.

Meanwhile, my life had stopped. My childhood home was filled with the cloying scent of flowers just starting to die. It struck me then how terrible it was that we send flowers to the grieving — here you go, another reminder that nothing is permanent, that everything lovely will be lost. My brother's absence was heavy in the house. Though he had died in Seattle, his room was scattered with relics: the bed he had slept in for so many years, his big flannel shirts hanging like shadows in the closets, a handful of videos and books. Memories pinned to each corner.

Having always taken comfort in words, I scoured the internet for a book for someone like me — an adult whose (barely) adult brother had died. What I found was unimpressive: There were more books on losing a pet than losing a brother or sister. A few books existed for surviving children after a death in the family, but they were for small children. One memoir documented a sister's grief following her brother's death, but it was out of print.

What did it mean that there were no handbooks for me? That people asked me to be strong in the face of the biggest loss I'd ever experienced or imagined? At times I felt like I didn't deserve to feel so shattered, especially in the shadow of my parents' immense loss.

A few months later, I started attending a local grief group. I sat in a circle with a few widows and widowers, a woman whose daughter had died, and a woman whose mother had died. I was younger than any of them by at least 30 years, but I could relate to their shares: "I feel like I'm going crazy." "I'm so damned angry right now." "I can't sleep at night." Though the losses were different, the feelings were the same.

So much was lost: My parents, who would never be the same. Their pain was almost visible, as if a piece of their bodies had been cut out. I had lost myself, too, or at least the version of me that was unscathed by tragedy: an innocent version, who walked around in some parallel universe where her brother was still alive, ignorant to the incredible fortune of an entirely alive family.

My brother, my past. Will's big blue eyes. His loud laugh. He was the co-keeper of my childhood. The person who was supposed to walk with me longer than anyone else in this life. The only other person who knew what it was like to grow up with our particular parents, in our particular home. The future. I cried for the nephews and nieces I would never have. I cried for my own faceless potential children who would never know my brother. How would I explain him? How would I ensure that his essence wasn't lost, that he wasn't just a figure in old photographs, a handful of stories? And I had to have children someday, right? I was the only person who could make my parents the grandparents they always assumed they'd be. And all the hard times ahead when my brother wouldn't be by my side. When my parents began to age. When my grandparents died. There would be no one to share these dark milestones.

And so I had to stay alive. Burden of needing to stay healthy, to stay safe, to stay close. I felt like our family had been a four-legged table, and one leg had suddenly been torn off. The remaining three of us wobbled and

teetered. We felt the missing leg like an amputee, each morning waking to the horrible fact that Will was gone.

I wrote letters to my brother in those early months and years. At first, memories blazed through my head and I used the letters to capture them before they flitted away, gone forever: my brother walking towards me when he visited me in Maine, the sun splattering his cheeks, turning him golden. The time I taught him to make snow angels in the front yard of our childhood home, our bulkily clad limbs sliding in synchronicity under icy stars. My tiny hand on my mom's belly, feeling my brother kick. Later, I wrote the letters when I needed to cry — when the grief sat coiled and waiting in my chest, needing to be let out, released. I couldn't find the words of other bereaved sisters or brothers to bring me comfort, so I created my own.

One day, when I was lost in my sadness, my mom said, "You won't always feel like this. You'll have a family of your own. You'll move on." This seemed impossible in my 24-year-old skin. I couldn't imagine this potential future my mom spoke of, this predicted family.

But very, very slowly, I began putting my life back together. I finished college. I made the difficult decision to leave home again and move back to Maine. I met my husband and after several years, we had two children. Our son has my brother's big blue eyes and his love of music. Our daughter possesses the lighthearted spirit my brother had at the same age. The sibling love between them is palpable; they spat and giggle, they dance and huddle. Though sometimes adult siblings aren't able to close the distance between them, all those shared experiences and time and space and relationships matter. They tether us, they twine our stories together. I pray that my children remain close as they grow, and that they enjoy a long lifetime together.

After nearly 15 years, the sharp shock and grief I felt in those early months and years are gone. It took years for the pain to fade, for the words "your brother is dead" to stop pounding in my head — but they did. Will's absence is mostly a dull hurt, the ghost of an old broken bone that aches when it rains. I feel it more on holidays and anniversaries, when someone else close to me dies. I'll always wish he was still here. I'll always wonder what he would look like and what he'd be doing if he was still alive — at 36. At 50. At 75. I move on and through. Perhaps I am even strong, like those well-meaning mourners at my brother's memorial asked me to be.

But my brother's loss will remain with me for my whole life — just like he was supposed to.

Gratefully lifted from TCF Queensland Chapter newsletter

## Looking to the Light

It is difficult to articulate thoughts and feelings about a life-altering event such as the death of a brother. For a long time, the only thing I could do to find any solace was to read about the tragic experiences of others. I was often moved to tears, so strong was my identification with their anguish.

I never suffered from denial. My brother's death was always a very tangible thing. It was my grief. I owned it. In accepting it, I feel that the healing was somehow expedited.

I don't mean to imply that I am now returned to the unaffected individual that existed prior to his death, that my acceptance of his death is now clear. I don't think you ever "get over" such a loss. What happens is that incorporation of that loss into your daily life.

In my case, that process brought a number of changes in attitude and priority which, as it turned out, were in my best interest. I had become centered on myself and my career to such an extent that I was armed against life's disappointments. When meeting me, it became clear to others that "career" was what it was all about. I keep pictures of my brother all around so that I can see him several times each day. In doing so, I am alternately both comforted and saddened. But mostly, I am comforted. I know he is in heaven and I believe he looks in on me and is aware of the magical events that have taken place in my life.

When I look upward through my kitchen skylights, I can see the sky and the top of the big old elm in the lights. I talk to him in my heart and I know he is near.

I still shed my tears, for I miss him and will the remainder of my life. Given a choice, I wish he had never become ill and that he hadn't ended his life. Today, some two years after his death, I can accept it and understand his choice.

The love we feel for a loved one never has to leave us, even though our loved one has departed physically.

Rhonda St. John, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

Page 15 TCF Otago Feb March 2017

Gratefully reprinted from Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter



## MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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



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

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh ( 22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
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
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 <a href="mailto:marshkandb@clear.net.nz">marshkandb@clear.net.nz</a>
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 <a href="mailto:atsilvester@actrix.co.nz">atsilvester@actrix.co.nz</a>

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