



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 164

FEBRUARY MARCH 2018

Much like the nature of the ocean,
grief flows in waves.

Sometimes you can predict the impact or even see the
waves coming from a distance.

Other times it can blindside you,
knocking you clean off your feet.

Gratefully copied from TCF Johannesburg Chapter News

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

The Survivors

The depth of your sorrow diminishes slowly and, at times, imperceptibly. Your recovery is not an act of disloyalty to the one who has died. Nor is it achieved by forgetting the past. Try to strike a delicate balance between a yesterday that should be Remembered and a tomorrow that must be Created.

TCF, Atlanta, Georgia

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		
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Died 13/2/89	Mitchell James Beaumont	Died 29/3/96
Ben Paul Gillanders	Died 18/2/77	Kyle David Edwards	Died 4/3/98
Daniel James Gillies	Died 18/2/03	Tineke Foley	Died 25/3/10
Krysha Helen Hanson	Died 6/2/03	Ricky George	Died 19/3/04
Bevan Andrew Hookway	Died 17/2/08	Faye Marie Joyce	Died 14/3/94
Kai Klein	Died 20/2/98	Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Died 19/3/06
Keegan Lineham	Died 14/2/94	Paul John Nicholaou	Died 21/3/98
Nicholas Ian O'Hara	Died 8/2/00	Hughan Scott Norton	Died 9/3/01
Brent Allan Stenton	Died 12/2/94	Vaughan Arthur Nuttall	Died 14/3/06
Jonathon Upton	Died 11/2/02	Quintin Christie Reid	Died 26/3/07
		Trinity Lea Taylor	Died 12/3/05
		Nicole Leigh Templer	Died 30/3/11

Dear Friends,

***‘What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.’***

T S Elliot - Four Quartets

Do you remember the joy when you first knew your baby had been conceived? From that moment you had dreams, plans, hopes, for this very special child - ‘what might have been’. And then ‘it’ happened - ‘what has been’.

But we would not be where we are now, if both of these events had not occurred. We would not be grieving for our beloved child if we did not start with what might have been. Our grief is so much about the future that we have lost, that future which might have been had not tragedy struck. And now here we are in the present. Just exactly where that present is for you will depend on where you are in your grief journey, depend on the support you have, depend on your life and coping skills and your personality. But where ever you are you are there because of a combination of your child being conceived and your child dying. Although initially it is so hard to be grateful for the life your child had, because the pain and loss is so huge and so raw, there does come a time where we are able to look back and know that there was exquisite joy, however brief. When you are able, take time to remember this joy, because this is the one of the best parts of being a parent, and a part that no-one can take away. When you are able, share this joy with a friend, share some of those special, happy moments. And hold on tight to them, they will sustain you during the bleaker times.

As Easter approaches, it is another time which bereaved parents and siblings find difficult. A time that for many families mean family gatherings, but of course, now one of us is missing. There are also many memories of our children searching and finding Easter eggs and, when they were very young, having chocolate covered faces. And if you have younger children you will still be hiding eggs and grieving silently that there is one less child searching. For many families Easter is also the time when Christ died on the cross in order that we will have eternal life. This means that our children are waiting for us and watching over us from Heaven and we know that we will be reunited with them in time. Until then, hold your special memories close, share them as often as you can and take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Lesley Henderson

Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora koutou,

February has been an awful month for us so far with way too many sad events. And we have had very hot, dry weather to contend with as well. But today we have rain, so maybe, as Hirini Melbourne wrote in his waiata: “Purea nei e te hau, Horoia e te ua, whiti whitia e te ra.” The wind and the rain cleanses and the sun will shine again!!! Hirini was a friend of mine in our younger days and he wrote the waiata after a friend of his had died.

However, yesterday we did have a very lovely gathering at Orchard Gardens in Clyde. This is an annual afternoon tea that we have on a Sunday afternoon which always proves to be a popular choice of format for meeting. The sun was shining, the temperature was warm, there was no wind and we were able to sit under the trees in a beautiful garden and be waited upon as we shared our stories and friendship with each other. The Sunday afternoon provides a better choice for our elderly parents and also for the younger parents who are able to bring their children along with them. It is also a better option for those who live in another town or village (as we have here in Central Otago!) Our members are “far flung” and it is not easy for us to get together.

So, here’s hoping that there are more peaceful times ahead of us for the rest of this year!

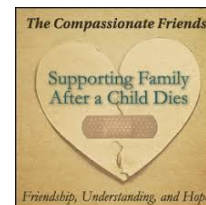
Arohanui ki a koutou katoa,

Louise McKenzie

Wanganui Chapter

NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER 2018

From our place to your place.



Welcome to 2018. Two months have flown by already.

We are ready to face another year on our perpetual grief journey. We all hope we can all find some peace and fortitude this year. What uncertain times? Weird weather, weird world events but still we must carry on without our loved children.

The end of the year is always a busy time and no less for The Compassionate Friends.

We in Wanganui, met in early December at the Aramoho Cemetery and decorated the lovely magnolia with small tokens in memory of our children.



The annual Worldwide Candle Lighting was held on the 2nd Sunday in December as it is each year and we commenced a global wave of candle light that went around the world remembering children who have died. We met in the peaceful and restful Logie Rose Garden.



We were thrilled some friends from Auckland travelled all the way to be with us. These friends had suffered the death of a beautiful son from cancer. They shared with us blue arm bands they had made remembering Peter who "loved fiercely"



Victoria writes

After a 15-month battle with cancer, our 18-year-old son, Peter, passed away in June 2017. Strangely, prior to him being diagnosed, Peter, had expressed he would always want to be remembered as a 'lover of life'

It was fitting then, when a friend suggested the idea of the bands and had thought of the wording "LOVE FIERCELY FOR PETE'S SAKE".

For us as a family this depicted the fierce love Peter had for life and for all those around him. The play on words perfectly reflected Peter's humour and also allowed the bands to be generic for all to wear. They were a great reminder of Peter, for those that knew him, but we also wanted the bands to inspire others to notice the life they had and love those in it fiercely. Life can be too short, not to!
 We hoped the bands would represent all the people you love and help keep them close to your heart. Perhaps, if we all loved a little more fiercely then the world might be a better and kinder place to live in.
 We know that is what Peter would have wanted for everyone.
 Love fiercely, for Pete's sake!

We will continue our casual Coffee Care and Chats....
 every FIRST SATURDAY of EVERY MONTH at The YELLOW HOUSE Café in Wanganui.

"We talk about them, not because we're stuck or because we haven't moved on, but we talk about them because we are theirs and they are ours and no passage of time will ever change that."

A quote I found somewhere... attributed to "Scribble and Crumbs"

I like the sentiment **except** for the "moved on" comment.

My hackles rise when I hear statements like 'moved on' and 'closure'

I don't intend or want to 'move on' and Simon's death has no 'closure' for me.

I am not stuck in '*the slough of despond*' to quote Pilgrim's Progress.

I grieve daily, in fact it is 10 years this week, since Simon died.

Those 10 years have raced by... and.....dragged by.... at the same time but we love to talk of him and do so daily.

My 5 year old grandson Bruno talks of Uncle Simon often. Simon's bedroom is where he plays a lot. I love to hear him say "*I'm in Uncle Simon's room Nana*"

Recently we were playing with Simon's rather outdated lego and Bruno asked me what some piece was for. "*I don't know*" I said and he replied

"That's OK, when I get to heaven I will ask him."

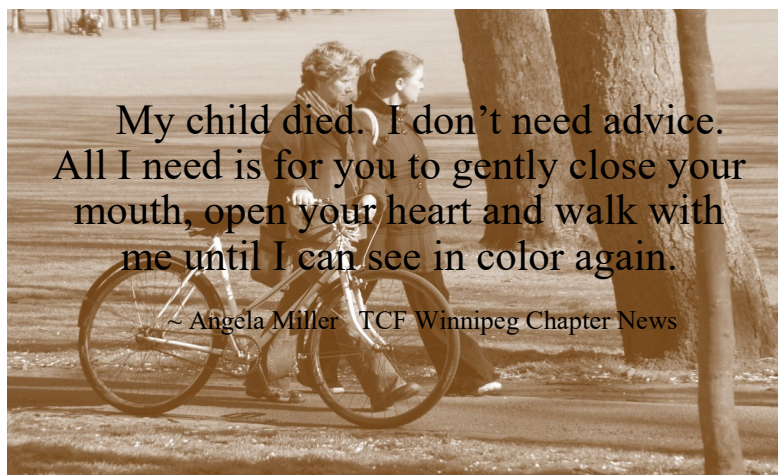
We in Wanganui wish all our TCF friends and contacts a positive 2018.

Keep in touch and check out the website too.www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

The NZ newsletter will be available on the website. This comes out bi-monthly and is an interesting and helpful read. If anyone would rather have a paper copy let me know and I can pass the details onto the South Island group responsible for the newsletter. It is free with just a koha to help with postage costs.

Aroha

Keren Marsh



My child died. I don't need advice.
 All I need is for you to gently close your
 mouth, open your heart and walk with
 me until I can see in color again.

~ Angela Miller TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

SECOND CHANCES

The scourge of losing my twenty-six-year-old son, Paul Philip Grammatico, and his best friend, Michael, to a drunk driver leaves scars, and each day I chew on my thorns in the stunning reality of Paul's death. The title, "MADD Mother" was impaled on me, and it breaks my heart.

Paul was my past, my present and my future; he was my only son. A natural leader, he was an extremely generous young man, the epitome of loyalty, passion, motivation for life, and a true goal setter. Our hopes as a family were crushed against the pole that split open Paul's head in four places. I can no longer experience him; I cannot touch him or hear his charismatic voice. He cannot hold me and whisper as he always did, "Mom, I love you." He is not physically in my life; nothing new will happen between us.

Paul's life was cut short by a man with total disregard for sacred life who lost control with road rage. With the influence of alcohol and speed, he annihilated the brilliant, promising, productive life of my child. Our entire family dynamic was altered and traumatized in a nano-second, and we cannot even measure our loss.

Paul had no voice, no choice, no second chance in his death! His injuries were so horrific and devastating that I could not even recognize my own child. His handsome face had no features. He was declared brain dead when just hours before he had been an effervescent young man with a big heart helping to get ready for the wedding of his sister. Instead, we had two funerals, and my daughter, Christine, is condemned to life without her only sibling.

The offender was convicted of vehicular manslaughter and sentenced to jail for two to seven years. At his sentencing, the judge gave him an "F" for failure and told him that he was every parent's worst nightmare, that he was a criminal, that he had taken hold of 3,000 pounds of steel and killed two innocent young men. During his time in jail, he never reached out to either family, and his parole was denied twice. He served four years, never accepting responsibility for his heinous crime and deadly actions, whereas I have a twenty-four-hour, lifetime sentence on earth in an unconstructed jail without my precious son.

Following are words from the eyewitness to the deaths of Paul and Mike.

"...As a surviving victim of the May 16, 1999, double fatality, the horror of witnessing the death of Paul and Michael will never leave me. The anguish and nausea I feel of those two young men being propelled like rag dolls, so high, crashing so hard against telephone wires, is almost unbearable. The drunk driver never expressed his sorrow for his cowardly act; I am not in favor of his parole..."

My son, Paul, leaves a legacy of himself in his own Circle of People in Organ Donation. After the declaration of "brain dead," I agreed to donate all of my son, and he saved the lives of eleven people. This gives purpose and meaning to the senseless way Paul died. Neglected and abused children live in a building named after Paul at Mercy First in Syosset, New York. When I speak at presentations with Paul's heart recipient at my side, I explain that "the heart inside Joe's chest is Paul's heart, but Paul's heart grew under my heart for nine months, so we are connected." This is a powerful witness!

Paul's story continuously renounces drunk driving, resonating each time I communicate as a sorrowful MADD Mother/Donor Mom. Recently, Kathleen Rice, District Attorney of Nassau County, opened the Grammatico Wrestling Tournament at Valley Stream High School in New York. As Rice stood next to me along with Paul's heart recipient, the song I wrote, The Gift of Life and Love, was played to proclaim the message of anti-drunk driving and the miracles of organ donation. Music and voice give power and transformation from shattered victim into survivor in the absence of my beloved son/sun, Paul!

The story of Paul's death is more than just a crime. Beside MADD's work and organ donation, it is also about forgiveness. Years into the journey of life without my physical son/sun, I realized that my anger was toxic to my spiritual well being. It was a noose around my neck. It was then that I decided to reach out and forgive the man who caused the deaths of Paul and Mike. I knew the perpetrator would never contact me as a mother or "the other mom," so I had to make the first move.

I wrote a letter to the parole officer, and eventually the offender answered. In a few words he said, “I did the crime and I did the time.” He said he needed to go on with his life and not look back, but was that a slap in my face? No absolutely not! I forgave him so that I could go on to another level. I put it in the universe! I learned that I cannot reach out and touch others while I have a clenched fist! I can’t be all that I can be if I am staying in chaos. Forgiveness is powerful; it is life-affirming to my broken heart! It released me from bondage, gave me freedom, challenges, new opportunities, second chances, spiritual wisdom, rebirth, transformation and hope.

I will never forget how Paul died, but because I have assigned purpose and meaning in the death of my Paulie, I am blessed. Each breath I take is a renewal of God’s gift. I am only one breath away from my precious son/sun, but my chance to make a difference is now.

Claudia Grammatico Grief Digest, 2012

Claudia Grammatico is a charismatic dynamic inspirational speaker. Claudia established and facilitates the Parental Bereavement Support Group in Warwick, NY. She is recognized for her Humor and Grief workshops at bereavement conferences. She is a Sister of Mercy and Union of the Catholic Apostolate Pallottine Associate. Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

Changing How We Think About Grief

Julia Samuel is a psychotherapist who has spent more than twentyfive years helping people grieve the loss of loved ones. She is the UK’s leading grief expert, author of *Grief Works: Stories of Life, Death, and Surviving*, and godmother to Prince George. She believes that when we face our fears—the death of someone we love, our own death, or being with bereaved friends—we are better able to cope with them. Here she shares her perspective on why we fear grief and pain and how we can talk about them openly. Q: Why does grief sometimes come in waves? We’re wired to protect ourselves so we’re not faced with reality all at once. We adjust to it bit by bit. Imagine walking into a room and seeing or smelling something that reminds you of the person who’s died. In that moment, you are acutely aware that they are not coming back. The pain forces you to face reality, its harshness and its brutality. The process of grieving is moving in and out of these moments. Q: Why do people have a hard time talking to loved ones about death? People who’ve been given a fatal diagnosis may only have weeks, months, or years to live. But often nobody around them, not even their partners or close friends, will talk to them about the fact that they’re going to die. They have this kind of magical thinking: “If I acknowledge that you’re going to die, I’m going to hasten your death. So if I don’t think about it, then good things will happen.” But the truth is that talking about death can be cathartic. When you start the conversation and take time to listen, it can help your loved one find the words for what they’re feeling. They can have a good cry and then sometimes feel lighter. So it doesn’t drag them back; it helps them move through what they’re feeling. We’re all going to die. We’re all going to know people who die. The more we accept that and talk about it, the more we’ll be able to connect authentically with our loved ones during those hard times. Q: What can help people who are grieving the loss of a loved one? The thing that helps most when people are suffering is the love of others. When we lose love, we seek it. But we don’t all receive love in the same way. You can get clues for how your loved one receives love by paying attention to how they give love. Often, we offer connection in the same way that we want to receive it. For example, maybe you have a friend who always finds a helpful book or sends you an inspirational quote when you’re having a tough time. She might also appreciate the same things if the roles were reversed. If you pay attention to the way your loved one connects with you, it can give you clues for how best to connect with them in return. Q: If a child goes through a great loss, how can we help them become more resilient? Those closest to the grieving child know their needs best. But in general, children need as much truth and information as adults— just in age-appropriate language. Parents love their children, and their instinct is to protect them. But children may experience this as exclusion. They may make up what they don’t know, and what they make up can be limitless and terrifying. So the truth, however difficult it is, is better than a lie or nothing at all. Children’s grief is like jumping in and out of puddles. They can be very sad one minute and very happy the next. You need to give them opportunities to be both. You can set aside specific times to talk about the loved one they’ve lost. It may help to create a memory jar or memory book. In other moments, though, they will likely want to have fun with their friends, play sports, or make crafts. Above all, children need to know that they’re loved. They need to be comforted. They need structure. They need to experience some things that feel familiar after something so unfamiliar and chaotic has happened.

Written by Julia Samuel

Lovingly lifted from TCF Queensland Newsletter

Page 7 TCF Otago Feb march 2018

IN SEARCH OF LOST JOY

Just as it happened in your life, a single moment changed everything and so here I am with you tonight.

My son's death took with him all our hopes and dreams. All of us here know that loss, the emptiness that brings us here in search of something to stop the pain, something to stop the tears, something to dream about again. We came tonight as a family to share with each other, loving each other, protecting each other during the storm.

I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing right now than living. That wasn't always true. After my son's death there were days when all I could do was think about dying, to join my son, or just to relieve my pain. Now there is a freshness about each day that I never understood before. I got to where I am today because of time and a commitment to rediscovering the joy of living.

Time does help fade the fabric of our grief. As time stretches us away from the moment of our child's death, we may begin to grow away from our child. And so we cling to that which we know, even though it tears our heart again and again. Is it not possible that one day some-time in the future, we will begin to understand that joy can return as we remember our child's life, not his death? We once feared we would never be happy again, that only helplessness and darkness would prevail in our lives, but now ten years later, I can share with you the wonderful discovery that we can do more than survive. Survival is not enough: I want to live.

We cannot find words to sooth the hurt; there simply aren't any. We can, however, build supports and safety nets. Recovery from the death of a child is a matter of choice. Time does help heal over open wounds. Scars form and serve as reminders. Gradually, however, we must learn to live with those scars and, slowly, let them sink in place. Recovery begins to occur when we can learn to reinvest our energies, emotions and love rather than seek to replace it. When we completely understand we did not lose our child, recovery is possible. Our child died, but the love we shared between us can never be destroyed.

I cannot reach out alone. I need the love and strength of my new-found family to be a cheering section and a safety network of caring individuals who will support me if I fail, and who believe strongly enough in me to put me back on track to go on again. The human spirit has an infinite capacity to survive, endure, and grow. It requires both laughter and tears to thrive and flourish. It requires love and faith, strength and support as well.

Hurt and pain have their lessons too, and we cannot rob ourselves of the richness of the tapestry that hurt and love weave together. To eliminate one from the loom is to break the thread and steal away the fabric. For those of you who are hurting too deeply, whose pain is too fresh, whose child's death is still too close to hear me, I want to give you the message: "HOLD ON, HOLD ON TIGHT." Right now for you, there seems to be little sunshine, little hope and no energy to choose life. So hang on tight.

And if you know parents who are struggling just to hang on, reach out to them right now. Loan them some of your strength, knowing they will loan you some of theirs when you need it. That's what TCF is all about: helping each other through the valley of the shadow, helping each other through the hurt, helping each other through the anger, the pain, the emptiness, the silence, helping each other rediscover life. ~ Darcie D. Sims, PhD, CGC, CHT Reprinted with love from TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

Rules for Grievors:

Y'all get the shortest list. Why? Because you have enough things on your mind without me giving you 10 million other questions to wonder about. If you get nothing else from this list, just know you need to do whatever you can to heal.

1. You're crazy... so what? Even if you are undeniably crazy (which any sane person would be), you have a right not to be around people who make you feel that way. Tell 'em to get lost.
2. You will get let down. It will be purely unintentional, but most of the folks we love and care about, aren't great at talking about pain. We don't live in that kind of world. Prepare yourself by knowing, your biggest supports may come from the unlikeliest of places.
3. Sometimes you will cry in public places. Screw all those people that tell you to wrap that stuff up. You're human and something important just changed your life.
4. Being alive is sometimes painful, not comforting. Promise yourself to live long enough to see a time when you can truly experience joy.

Rules for Supporters:

Supporting someone in grief is a sacred rite. If you can accept that, keep reading. If you cannot, pass this list on to someone who can make use of it.

1. Text messages don't show care. They show you have a working cell phone plan. Texts are better than nothing... but not by much. It can sometimes feel antagonistic, as in, "Do I have to fit the complicated feelings of my trauma into the confines of your Android screen?"
2. You have the capacity to be an amazing person; you do not have the capacity to be an expert on someone else's pain. You're going to say, "But J Mase, I've been through X, Y, Z." Okay, if that's the case, grab yourself a cookie. But, do not be so wrapped in your own survival needs that you mistake the experiences of others for your own. We all have a different process.
3. Therapy doesn't get you off the hook. When my father died, lots of very well-meaning people suggested I seek a therapist. The first person seemed concerned, the 500th got my wrath. Of course I thought about therapy, but finding the right therapist often takes time and is not an overnight cure all. If ever I seemed emotional or 'too sad,' the 'get therapy' line was something friends would retreat to if listening was hard and they couldn't deal with my emotions. We all get it. The sad friend isn't exactly the life of the party. But that kind of approach can make someone feel as if you are pawning them off to the professionals when being a friend starts to feel like too much work. Genuine friendships do take work. If/when someone experiencing grief or trauma is able to or decides to seek mental health care, they will still need friends. They will not magically be healed at dawn — and your willingness to listen shouldn't be dependent on whether or not they have done what YOU deem to be necessary for their healing.
4. Be sincere about what you can offer. Grief made my memory sharp. I mean, I can remember what you had for lunch seven months ago type of sharp. So, when folks said, "Tell me if you need anything," while I was grasping at the straws of my sanity, I remembered that. If you don't mean "anything," don't say it. Be honest about what you can do. If you can only provide a phone call every now and again, say that. If you can make dinner a few times say that. The worst thing you can do, is promise something and not deliver to someone who feels like they've lost everything. (Even if you think you know better.) If you mess up or can't fulfil a promise, make sure you acknowledge it and be more realistic about what you can actually accomplish. Sorry, is also a hugely important word.
5. Being alive isn't always a sign of resilience. It just means you haven't died yet. We are talking about grief here. I often find that a common sentiment folks want to offer is, "Well at least you're alive." But when you are grieving, being alive hurts. Existing hurts. Most of us expect this feeling is temporary, so we find ways to push through. When someone/something/some-experience you love more than anything else has died, you often can't see the brilliance of being alive. Instead of offering a phrase lost on the hurting, think about ways to encourage small steps of joy. Maybe a movie. Maybe a call. Maybe just saying I love you.
6. Stand strong. Grieving means I may not always be as patient or giving as I was before dealing with major loss. For you, as a potential support, observing an individual's grief may be a once a week experience. For the bereaved, every interaction may be a question of survival and reliving that situation. People will have promised all kinds of support, and many won't follow through. So, if someone lashes out at you, it may be that they are tired — tired of being let down. It may have nothing to do with you. It can be hard to have hope in others, if most of them are not sticking around. If you are able, be someone who does.

Follow J Mase III on Twitter: www.twitter.com/jmaseiii

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Page 9 TCF Otago Feb march 2018

The Things I Have Learned About Grief Since the Death of My Child

☐ Grief is not an event, it is a process. It does not have a distinct finish line. It takes each person a different amount of time to do their grief work – each person’s journey is as unique as their fingerprints.

☐ Grief is unique for each person because of the relationship they had with the child who has died. That relationship was also unique. It is different for a father, different for a mother, different for a surviving sibling. Your grief journey will be guided by many things besides the relationship you had with the child who died. It will be influenced by your past life experiences (including previous losses); your religious beliefs, your socio-economic status, your physical health, the availability of a support network, and, in many cases, the cause of the death itself.

☐ People want you to be “over it” way sooner than you can ever imagine that as a remote possibility. They don’t seem to understand that this is not the flu and we don’t get “over it”, we learn to integrate it into the fabric of our lives. People want us to be back to our “old selves again” but what they don’t realize is that we will never be the same people we were before our child died. One of our tasks as we make our grief journey is to redefine who we are in this new reality that we did not choose.

☐ Grief is not a predictable journey and sometimes feels as though we are on a roller coaster. One day we may feel somewhat stronger and feel we are making progress, the next day we may crash and burn. Grief is sometimes like winding a ball of yarn – you wind and wind on it and sometimes drop it and it unravels before you – then it is time to start winding it up again. Grief can be like that. It is unrealistic to think that things will be “normal” again because they won’t be the “normal” we have always known. It will be part of our job to define our “new normal” – an existence without that child’s physical presence.

☐ It is important to remember that as we grieve, we must also mourn the death of our child. The two words are usually used interchangeably, but they mean different things. Grief is on the inside – what we are feeling inside. Mourning is “grief gone public” – in other words how we are allowed to express our grief outside of ourselves.

☐ We have a great need to tell and retell our story far longer than many people are willing to listen to us. We need to find safe places to tell our story and continue to talk about our child. This is probably one of the greatest values of a TCF Chapter. Being part of a TCF Chapter also helps to validate what we are feeling and helps to make us feel less alone.

☐ Pain is part of the grief process and cannot be ignored or “gotten around” if we are to heal. You must integrate and process the pain to get to the other side of it – to the place where healing can start taking place. There is a Buddhist saying... “In order to heal, you have to lean into the pain.” While grief and pain are inevitable in most people’s lives, misery is optional. I am sure you have heard the expression “we cannot change the wind, only the direction of our sails.”

☐ Remember that letting go of the pain does not mean letting go of the love you had for your child. That love will remain with you always.

☐ I think at some point each of us must make a conscious decision to heal. We must decide whether or not we want to become bitter or better. I believe each of us has the tools within us to heal, but we must listen to our inner voice to tell us how to proceed.

☐ Everyone seems to have an explanation for why this happened to you. It is a characteristic of our society that we want to be problem solvers, so people often feel they have to provide us with some kind of explanation. I haven’t met a bereaved parent yet who felt there was a reasonable and acceptable explanation for why their child had to die.

☐ I also think we need to be selfish as we grieve. By this I mean we must be good to ourselves, be patient with ourselves, look to what we need to do to move forward. Sometimes we get so busy caring for and nurturing others, we neglect to nurture ourselves. Remember, the word grief means “to carry a heavy burden”.

☐ We need to be open to the help others can provide. This is not a journey we need to make alone. Let people help you. Ask for help when you need it. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but an acknowledgement that you want to heal. ~Susan Chan, Rachael’s Mom, TCF Topeka, KS

Gratefully lifted from TCF Minneapolis 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.

George forever

1 Clompy shoes	3 Boyish pranks
Baggy trousers	Teachers' meetings
Smelly shirt	Random phone calls
And scruffy hair	Mates walk in

2 Dirty plates	4 Empty, quiet
Banging music	Clean and pressed
Late night laughter	Lonely, desperate
Homework rare	Missing him.

Lisa McCulloch
TCF 2015 National Gathering
reprinted from TCF UK winter

There's this place in me
where your fingerprints still
rest, your kisses still linger
and your whispers softly
echo, it's the place where a
part of you will forever be a
part of me.

Your pup and I

Your old pup sleeps before the fire,
Muzzle resting on outstretched paws.
He twitches with a little yelp,
Reaching to a dream gone bad that he can't
help.

A sound from outside jerks his head alert,
Ears listening intently,
Radar in search of your special step.
Not hearing the sound that he wants, he
looks hurt.

His head goes down with a sigh.
He looks to me with mournful eyes.
I declare I think that dog sometimes cries...
He, like I, never dreamed you'd be the first
to die.

He misses you as badly as I.
Even old pups want to know why...
And they grieve, like us, for one last good-
bye,
And tonight I joined him as he cried.

Fay Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Minneapolis

The Bin Liner

I've done it! I've done it....
Bagged your suits and put them outside
Awaiting collection
For a charity of yours.

It's taken eight years and six months
To do this deed – so hard.
But it's time for your son's clothes
To hang from your rail – now his.

I cried as I folded them
Stroking, feeling and smelling,
Imagining your form
Filling them, and you are back.

I watch the bag from the window
Not wanting it to go.
As the rain falls, I consider
Should I bring it back inside?

I watch and wait all day.
They don't come.
Now it's dark I rush outside, drag it in,
Undo the bow,
Hang 'em up 'till next time to go!

Janet Armstrong

Reprinted from TCF UK Compassion

Page 11 TCF Otago Feb march 2018

Coping With Other People's Grief By: Jennie Kermode - Updated: 20 Jul 2017

<http://www.facingbereavement.co.uk/coping-with-other-peoples-grief.html>

Everybody experiences grief differently so knowing how to respond to other people's grief can be difficult, especially if you're also dealing with your own. Practical issues around bereavement mean that you can't always give people as much space as you might like to. How can you figure out the best course of action? How can you provide support without exhausting your own resources?

Accepting Grief

As well as responding differently to grief, people feel it to different degrees, and not always in the ways you'd expect. Sometimes people quite close to a deceased person are not severely affected - they may, for instance have had more time to adjust to a death that was expected. Others who are not that close may feel a deep loss. It can be damaging to expect grief off people and make them feel bad if they're coping, but it's equally important to look out for unexpected grief. If you are the person closest to the deceased, accepting that other people may be grieving as much as you are can be hard. It can feel like an intrusion into your private space. These feelings are natural and nothing to be ashamed of, but try to remember that those people can't control their feelings either. It will be easier all round if you can support each other.

Communication

Some people who are grieving want to pour out their distress to anyone who will listen whereas others try to avoid the subject completely. At each extreme it can be difficult to make sure they're saying what they really need to say. Lots of talking can itself be a form of obfuscation.

Pushing people who are resistant to talking about grief can be risky, but so can leaving them alone. Generally the best course of action is to let them know you're there for them and then give them space, but gently remind them every now and again that you are concerned. Grief can lead to depression and low self esteem so there's a risk that such people will otherwise end up feeling they have no-one to turn to. Most people find it easier to face their own grief when not overwhelmed by yours, so try not to get too emotional in conversations of this sort. If you can approach the subject in a matter of fact way it will usually make it easier for them and less exhausting for you.

Understanding Difference

In any situation where you have strong feelings it can be confusing to have to deal with people who express theirs in a different way. You may be tempted to think they're insincere, that they're showing off their grief or that they're being aloof. If you want to communicate effectively and avoid conflict, it's important not to project your own feelings and perspectives onto them. As you are probably aware, there are several stages of grief. People pass through these at different rates. What's more, our experiences of grief can be complicated by losses we have experienced in the past, coincidental depression or anxiety, and other major events that may be happening in our lives. Rather than being a barrier to understanding, these differences mean that we have different strengths, so we are more able to support each other through our particular difficulties.

When Grief is Hidden

Some people don't show their grief at all. Coping with other people's apparent lack of feelings when you're hurting intensely can be very difficult, even if they are trying to be helpful to you. It may also leave you worried that they are secretly hurting but unable to communicate it and therefore unable to get any support. Some people hide their grief even from themselves, so suggesting that you know how they really feel can be counterproductive. It can be more useful to approach the situation hypothetically. If you say that if they were feeling bad you would always be ready to help them, you can give them what they need to cope or to seek help should they decide it's right for them to do so.

Protecting Yourself

Coping with other people's grief - even if you're not supporting them directly - can be an exhausting and frustrating experience. It's especially tough when you too are missing somebody, so it's important that you create space and support structures for yourself. Remember that you'll be less help to people in the long term if you damage yourself by taking on too much in the short term. When looking out for others it's important to remember that you matter too. Try to show yourself the same kindness. You deserve it

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Loss of a Child - Marilyn A. Mendoza Ph.D. The pain that never ends

There was a picture online that showed a young child in excruciating pain. The father, a photographer, took the picture of his daughter who was within weeks of dying from a neuroblastoma. It was a raw picture capturing her intense pain. It was taken to raise awareness of pediatric cancer. Comments about the article were diverse. Some readers expressed their compassion for the family, while others were angry and condemning the father for having taken the picture.

Everyone suffers grief in their own way. In part, this was the father's way of grieving as well as letting others know how painful children's cancer can be. He also hoped that the picture might further the movement to find a cure for childhood cancer.

The worst thing that can happen to any parent is the loss of a child, regardless of the age of the child. People are uneasy and reluctant to talk about death and certainly not about the death of a child. Many people will pull away from a family that has suffered the death of a child as though somehow having a child die is contagious. Families who have lost children will say that others "Just don't get it." They are expected to move on and get over it when that will never happen. The pain will wax and wane but it is always there. With time, the pain will lessen enough to allow the parent to return to the living but their child is never far from their mind.

Compassionate Friends, a national organization, is a place that parents can go and be understood, as everyone there has lost a child. Grief can vary depending on how the child died. Some children will die from violence, some from cancer or other medical diseases. There are also miscarriages and stillbirths. These tend to be the less visible losses but can be just as painful. I have older adults who will talk about the loss of a child to stillbirth 40 years prior and how old the child would currently be if he had lived. The disappearance of a child has its own special torment. The parents never give up hope that their child will return someday. These parents live with intense anxiety and fear. The uncertainty can be unbearable at times.

For parents who have lost a child, the pain is indescribable. They suffer depression, anger, guilt, despair and loneliness. Even years later, I have moms say they cannot wait until they die so they can see their child again. They are not suicidal but long for that reconnection. Of the many parents I have worked with, the vast majority have a strong belief that they will be reunited with their child on death.

The death of a child can also lead to marital stress. If there have been unresolved issues in the relationship, they can remerge often with greater intensity. Different grieving styles of husband and wife can also cause hurt and misunderstanding, exacerbating the pain they already feel. While not all of these marriages end in divorce, a large number of them do.

I frequently ask parents who have lost a child not to make any major life changing decisions for at least the first year. All parts of the parents' lives are impacted by the loss. In addition to the emotional aspects of grief, there are also the physical and spiritual components. As with most grief, some will be angry at God while others will find strength in their religious beliefs. Physically, the effects of stress can wreak havoc with sleep, appetite and concentration, lowering our immune system and making us more vulnerable to illness.

I believe that people tend to avoid grieving parents, in part because they do not know what to say or do and do not want to upset them further. Below are some of the comments parents have told me they would find helpful from others:

"Please use my child's name when you speak to me."

"Share stories with me about my child that I may not know."

"I am doing the best I can, so please don't judge or criticize me."

"Just listen to me. Let me talk and show my feelings. I can't take care of you by pretending I am fine."

"It really upsets me when you say you know how I feel. If you have never lost a child, you don't have a clue."

"Let me do things in my own way and time."

"Please don't avoid me; I am in enough pain without feeling abandoned."

"I am never going to get over this so stop telling me I have to."

When talking to grieving parents, what we say can often make them feel worse. We cannot take away their pain, but by following these guidelines we can offer them some comfort and support.



Sibling Page



A Sister's Grief Excerpted from I am Not Myself: A Year Grieving Suicide - By Julie Gray

On movie screens around the world right now, people are dying dramatically. Memorable deaths. Breathily, sad, ironic deaths. Spectacularly violent, torturous deaths. We are drenched in and numbed by video game, the make-believe, stuntmen, prop guns and fake blood.

But in real life, people die every day, according to the newspaper that is. In riots and protests and freak accidents. Of old age, of starvation, of horrible diseases. In Gaza, in France, in Russia and in India. In train accidents and mine collapses and of cancer. It is horrible. We put the paper down and turn off the news. And then it happens to you. In your family. And it's surreal.

It's the mother of all record scratches. It is the mother of all unchangeable facts. It has ripples that will be felt down the years. Your birthday. His birthday. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day.

Suicide is the mother of all woulda-shoulda-couldas.

I am busying myself trying to get back to normal in an attempt to blunt the excruciating pain of the loss of my brother four weeks ago. Four weeks and one day since he was on this planet. And now he is not. It's still unbelievable to me. Unthinkable. But more and more the fact that my brother is dead— such an ugly word— is becoming a fact, not a mind-bending impossibility.

Suicide is the howl that sucks out your breath and hollows out your insides in one jagged pull.

Dealing with a person in the throes of serious clinical depression is like paddling madly on the starboard side of the Titanic, trying to get that huge ship to avoid the looming iceberg.

You just can't slowdown that kind of momentum. Paddle ceaselessly toward the green light as you might. And with each dip of the paddle this can't happen this can't happen this happens this can't happen. And then it does. And the icy water gushes in and the ship is fatally wounded. And you watch it go down, panting and exhausted. And furious. And helpless. And guilty. I could have paddled harder.

I look at the picture on his memorial pamphlet and my heart clenches up hard. This can't happen. But it did. Gone. Dead

Grief is a strange, many-faceted thing. It creeps up on you at odd moments, on little pig feet, and takes you by surprise like an undertow. Other times, when one is, say, having a laugh, one realizes one should be grieving and not laughing and one reminds oneself of the horror at hand and simmers down guiltily.

I exclaimed at the dozens of floral arrangements that filled my home with their uniformly white, sickly sweet smell, and the cards that kept coming every day. How loved I felt! How special! Until I remembered that this is the result of the immovable fact that my brother is dead. He's dead. Gone.

I have learned that one should never stop grieving or one is liable to come home with three pounds of organic gumdrops and two bottles of Belgian beer. One should never drink Ouzo grieving, and I think that is self-evident.

One step forward, two steps back. The bizarre begins to take on a hint of normalcy. The unthinkable has come to pass. It's over, despite my constant imaginings in which I roll back the tape and try to change the ending. Paddling ceaselessly.

Lifted with love from TCF Queensland Newsletter

“Virtual Dreams”: An Insightful Exercise For Group Meetings

In a recent TCF Victoria bereaved siblings group meeting, we discussed a little something called “a virtual dream”. The concept of the “virtual dream” was first introduced in a 2011 “Death Studies” journal article; the idea behind the “dream” is to construct a short story about one’s grief through choosing three elements – a situation, a figure and an object.

This probably sounds a bit abstract, and yet it is really quite a simple exercise. I’ll illustrate with an example. The “Death Studies” article provided us with a list of about thirty elements. We could select three elements from the thirty. For instance,

SITUATION: a troubled sea FIGURE: a quiet whisper OBJECT: a mask

After selecting three elements, we had approximately five minutes to construct a short story/scenario, our “virtual dream”. Here is an example of a “virtual dream” that was created through the above three elements

“I have always seen grief as a troubled sea, but it is expressed through a quiet whisper, barely heard by others. In many ways it is a mask, something that now comes very naturally to me at social occasions. But that troubled sea remains close by, rough and unsettled, and threatens to pull me down into the depths.”

We were all quite amazed how we could gain insights into our own grief journey through engaging with these elements, these “symbols”. I couldn’t agree more with the authors of the “Death Studies” article when they say: “We have been repeatedly struck by the power of this simple method to let people explore complex legacies of loss, typically while donning the protective mask of make-believe.” That’s it! The elements provide us with a sense of the make believe which, in turn, helps us feel safer to explore the reality of our grief.

The funny thing is that we all initially wondered how we could construct any sort of story from three seemingly abstract and unrelated elements; but once we settled, the words and sentences came easily – and I think we were both intrigued and moved by the pieces of writing we produced.

SITUATION: a tranquil garden FIGURE: an angel OBJECT: a blank page “I am in a tranquil garden. Waiting for a visit. A sign. An angel will tap my shoulder and say it’s ok... your brother is always with you. He loves you and always has. I have a blank page in my book where I want to write my story. Not all of the story is out, but it will come out. I will find peace in this tranquil garden.”

SITUATION: a fork in the road FIGURE: an angel OBJECT: the moon “Although dark, the moon shines bright enough to make out a fork in the road; two directions that can be taken. One is brighter, the other darker. Yet both are scary. I try to imagine I am being guided by an angel; my sister Gem, to keep walking towards the lighter path. But this scares me as I feel I am walking away from her. Yet the dark path is one of being stuck, never becoming brighter, but it remains closer to her and the memories of our past.”

SITUATION: a bedroom FIGURE: a teacher OBJECT: an open book “When I go into your bedroom, I see the remnants of who you were, but they don’t tell the whole story. You were a closed book, and I, the teacher of English, who was forever opening books, collecting books and reading books, never tried to open you to see what was truly inside. Because on the outside you face was cold, frozen beauty and you were stylish and popular and the girl everyone noticed first. Your bedroom displays your love for basketball and Kobe Bryant, your fixation with kickboxing, your athletic prowess, your trophies and ribbons and photographs, depicting only happiness. How could we know how you suffered inside when you disguised who you truly were so well? How can I forgive myself for never trying to prise open your cover and read those hidden pages?”

SITUATION: an unknown village FIGURE: a wandering monk OBJECT: a letter “Grief is like stepping into an unknown village, there’s something a bit scary about it, I feel homesick and yearn for another life. But after a while, I’m like a wandering monk, feeling more at peace with the new surrounds. I’m battered by the elements, but the peaceful wandering through the village makes me feel closer to my brother. I hold with me “a letter”, a postcard my brother wrote to me decades ago; with him close by, I feel less fearful in my wanderings.”

SITUATION: a troubled sea FIGURE: a wise woman OBJECT: the moon “Today I sit on the moon as a wiser woman watching the troubled sea. Knowing I am wiser as I have my brother guiding me, however disconnected from Earth. The troubled sea presents shapes, sounds and feelings that I haven’t known before, but I am learning. As the moon rotates the Earth and the sea moves around me the wiser I become, learning and learning from those who also inhabit the place that I am.”

SITUATION: a tangled garden FIGURE: a wise woman OBJECT: a treasure box “In my dreams of you, there is often a wise woman guiding me through the tangled garden of emotions that this grief has been for me. She represents the strength I have, the self nurturing I need to continue using when I am triggered into grief, at work, at home, in other situations where I am thinking of you. This wise woman is a reminder that there is a treasure box, hidden, for me to draw healing and meaning from. I am slowly giving meaning to your death through the work I do, and through the depth of my emotions, making me feel close to you.”

If you would like more information on the “Virtual Dream” exercise, including the list of elements, please contact Andrew McNess at: andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au Original article: “The Virtual Dream: Rewriting Stories of Loss and Grief”, Robert A. Neimeyer & Carlos Torres, Death Studies, issue 35.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Victoria Grieve Heal Grow

Page 15 TCF Otago Feb march 2018



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
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	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
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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