



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 160

JUNE/JULY 2017



The Melody of Life

The melody that the loved one played upon the piano of your life will never be played quite that way again, but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust.

We must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who gradually will help us to find the road to life again, who will walk that road with us.



Rabbi Joshua Liebman, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL
Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg 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

Little by little, step by step, I learned that I didn't need
to hang on to the death to remember the life.

What a joyous discovery!

~Kittie Brown McGowin TCF/Montgomery, AL
Winnipeg Chapter News

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Matthew Alexander Birtles	Born 17/6/2004
Richard Cowie	Born 1/6/1974
Sophie Kate Elliott	Born 11/6/1985
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Born 29/6/1968
Daniel James Gillies	Born 22/6/1986
Robbie Knight	Born 9/6/1975
Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Born 25/6/1978
Brendan James Vass	Born 30/6/1986

Mitchell James Beaumont	Born 13/7/1976
Heath Neil Colina	Born 18/7/1981
Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Born 2/7/1975
Ben Paul Gillanders	Born 13/7/1977
Matthew David Innes	Born 27/7/1987
Jake Lucas	Born 10/7/1978
Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Born 9/7/1974
Brent Allan Stenton	Born 19/7/1974
Julie Barbara Warren	Born 9/7/1961
Timothy James Williams	Born 6/7/1980

Claire Benicarke (Mary Schiehsel)	Died 10/6/2004
Stefan Francis Cockill	Died 28/6/1994
Heath Neil Colina	Died 1/6/2002
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Died 24/6/2005
Ian Peter Foley	Died 24/6/1987
Allan Stephen Hobbs	Died 27/6/1998
Callum Warwick Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Keryn Sarah Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Shaun Matakai	Died 27/6/2003
Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Died 5/6/2006
Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Died 19/6/1997
Melissa Jane TeHuia	Died 21/6/1998
Ben Watt	Died 3/06/2005

Terry Barnfather	Died 11/7/2000
Matthew Alexander Birtles	Died 1/7/2007
Marcus Fitchett	Died 18/7/1996
Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Died 2/7/1975
Vicky Knight	Died 1/7/1980
Aidan Samiel Konise	Died 23/7/2009
Sara Loo	Died 19/7/2010
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Died 4/7/2001
Kirsten Jane Maydon	Died 23/7/1989
Marie Anne O'Neill	Died 21/7/1985
Julie Barbara Warren	Died 14/7/1985

Dear Friends,

In those first days, weeks, perhaps even months after our child has died, we struggle to get out of bed. Not only because we have no energy, no strength. In bed, perhaps, we can go back to sleep, perhaps dream of our child, believe that it has all been a bad dream, that when we wake our family will be whole again.

And if we do get up, what is in front of us. Reality! people looking at us, not knowing what to say, or worse, saying the wrong thing. Because of course, they don't know (if they are lucky.) When we get up we have to face questions from our younger children, "when will he/she be back, why aren't they here now?" We have to face the empty room, the empty chair, the empty life that now stretches in front of us.

It is so much easier just to lie there, however, we can't do this forever. Time moves on, life moves on, the world moves on and eventually we must as well. And for those of us who have moved we know that it is necessary. We can't stay there, locked in the total despair that we face in the early days after the death of our child.

But to move past that total despair we do have to physically move. Once we start to physically move, we can start to mentally and emotionally move. We start to acknowledge and accept the realisation that THE worst thing has happened. We can start to rationalise our feelings and emotions. And some of those emotions may be irrational. The hate, the blame, the guilt. But these are our feelings and emotions and they are what they are. We can't change what we think but we can change what we do about these thoughts. That doesn't mean that we hide them nor suppress them. What we need to do is acknowledge them but put them where they belong. As thoughts, not facts. We don't have to act on the thoughts that are negative. If we acknowledge them we can talk about them, to a spouse, to a counsellor, to a Compassionate Friend. Sometimes we need help and support to work through these thoughts. In fact, most people need support at this time. Becoming a Bereaved parent is not a subject we study at school, there is not a Do-it-yourself course for bereaved parents.

What is there however are groups such as The Compassionate Friends, SIDS groups, suicide support groups. There are websites, there are counsellors, there are special friends and family members who take time to listen and not judge and certainly not give advice if they haven't been there.

Once you are able to physically move, start to look for the right support for you. Don't isolate. And if the first person you talk to isn't right for you, look again and if necessary look again, until you find what you need. Believe me, there is the support out there that you need and which will help you to move through this grief journey, which we all hate, but to continue to live we must all go through it.

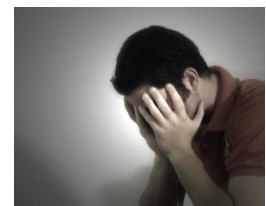
Please keep looking, keep talking and ask for support when you need it.

Take care,
Lesley Henderson.

SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Grief waits:

- If you put it away and try to ignore it, it will simply wait until you have no choice but to experience it.
- We grieve as intensely as we love.
- There is no "normal" in grieving.
- You will never be the same person you were before your loss.
- You must make a conscious decision to "get better."
- There are no set-in-concrete stages or timelines in grief.
- Other people will not understand your grief unless you share it.
- It is okay to talk about your loved one as long as you want.
- It is okay to keep their belongings as long as you want.
- It is okay to include them in celebrations and special occasions for as long as you want.
- "Finding closure" is not a requirement of healing. For many, it is not even an option.



Even in death --- love remains.

~author unknown

Reprinted from TCF Queensland Newsletter



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Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Dear Friends,

I am sorry, but I cannot write without mentioning the weather here in Central. Last night was minus 5 but at least we now have the sun shining on the snow! We have had several days in gloomy fog so to see the sun at last is a treat. Hard to fight off the winter blues!

I think that I mentioned our meeting at the lovely home of Alan and Gaylene McCrostie. We watched a documentary following the lives of 7 people who had suffered a family death. Sad and beautiful!

We have also met for coffee and catch up at Millbrook in Arrowtown. What a beautiful setting. Felt like we were on an overseas holiday.

Our next get together is a continuation of the Workshop that was presented by Caroline Loo last year in Cromwell. This year we will host it in Alexandra, Saturday 19 August, 1.30 – 4.30pm at Alexandra Community House. The topic will be Family Grief. Caroline describes her presentation as “an in-depth, interactive workshop that discusses the theories around grief and discusses ways to move forward and reconcile our own grief.” It was very successful last year so we have asked her to present again for those who missed out. And of course there will be new content for those who wish to attend again. Everyone welcome!

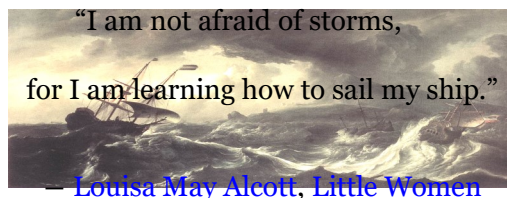
This is a good time for me to mention the funders who so generously grant funds to our organisation so that we can host meetings, distribute the newsletter for free, travel to visit and host an annual workshop for the public. Central Lakes Trust has supported us generously for many years. As have Otago Community Trust, Pub Charities, HealthCare Otago, Rotary and Trust Power Lend a Hand, and Trusts Community Foundation. We are so fortunate to benefit from the goodwill of our Community Funders.

That's it for now.

Go well,

Louise McKenzie

Wanganui Chapter



Dear Friends,

I guess like Louisa May Alcott we need “to learn to sail our ship” over stormy seas.

I read this quote recently and it led to me to wonder about Louisa May Alcott. She is only known to me as the author of a favourite childhood book “Little women” a book loosely based on her own girlhood. This quote comes from this book so I am re reading it to see where the quote fits into the plot.

I was interested to read about this fascinating American novelist and poet who lived and died in the 1800s. She was a tomboy, never married, was very family-focussed, was a housemaid a nurse in the American Civil War where she contracted typhus, a feminist and keen on the abolition of slavery. She suffered much grief and change in her life and lost a dear sister in her 20s.

In the same book that I found this quote, I read a poem by American poet Barbara Crooker. It resonated with me as it mentioned both the autumn leaves and the geese that have been the themes of our last two Coffee meetings. There are many times when my grief has “strung me out to dry” As this is a northern hemisphere poem you need to change the months to suit our winter and spring. Reading more about her, I see she has a grief and sorrow element running through many of her poems after the death of her mother.

We all learn ‘to sail our ship’ in many ways on our grief journey... for some it helps to write, for some to be silent and meditate and for some to talk with others. Do come along to our Saturday gathering this coming week however you are feeling or coping.

As usual Yellow House at 11am first Saturday of every month. Hope to see you then.

Warm regards Keren Marsh

Snow Geese



A sign of changing seasons in the USA are large flocks of honking geese migrating from the chill of Greenland, Alaska and Siberia to the warmth of Mexico.

What beautiful and amazing birds. Watching them one could imagine being in a snow globe or snowstorm. The cacophony of honking as they fly is to encourage their leaders and each other to keep going.

They are seen travelling in a “V” formation for several reasons:

- It reduces the drag and buffeting of the wind.
- It conserves each bird’s energy on their long journey.
- It minimises the risk of collision and injury.
- It enables them to keep track of each other.
- Each goose creates uplift for those following.

The geese also change positions in the flight formation to prevent fatigue so the leaders get a rest.

If one bird gets sick or wounded, two geese will drop out of the “V” formation to help and encourage it to keep going.

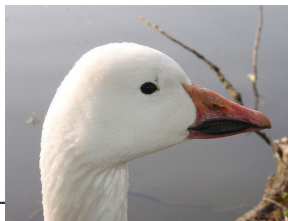
What a perfect example of care, teamwork, communication, visual contact and co-operation.

I couldn’t help thinking about us in The Compassionate Friends.

We are ‘migrating’ on a long grief journey and we should travel together in formation, keeping track of each other, encouraging each other, thus helping to reduce the buffeting of grief. We need to ‘honk’ and encourage each other to keep going and support those who ‘drop out’.

If you have never read the charming simple story The snow goose by Paul Gallico try and get hold of a copy. It is a lovely read – a bit of a tear jerker. The story of a solitary artist, a young girl and an injured snow goose set in 1941 at the time of Dunkirk.

Keren Marsh, Wanganui



Troubled Child

I was so scared to tell them about you. I felt so ashamed... You were a “troubled child,” Not “perfect” like all the rest.

Stories of children loved by everyone... Sons and daughters with such promising futures. Even though you were not like them, You were my baby.

Even though you got into trouble and took drugs, I was always by your side. Even though you spent time in jail, You could not have been loved more.

At times you were so frustrating And seemed all bad, Then you would do something wonderful, And I knew you loved us. I don’t need to feel ashamed any more, It didn’t matter what you did or who you were. You were my child And you did not deserve to die.

I love you, Mom

Gretchen Wasson, TCF/Bethany, Oklahoma
Lifted with thanks from Winnipeg Chapter News

Permission to Grieve

I was only 10 years old the first time I was introduced to death. Both of my grandparents and my dad's best friend died within weeks of each other. My memories surrounding their deaths were very clinical. It was treated simply as a part of life. No crying (at least not publically), no grieving, no display of loss. They died, were buried and not mentioned again.

When I was 22, my only brother was shot and killed, leaving behind a wife and 5 young children. I know my mother was grief stricken, but once the funeral was over so were the tears. She very carefully hid her pain. Again, my brother was not talked about or his death discussed. When I look back now, I realize I had quite a struggle with handling my grief. Although I didn't know I was grieving, it came out in erratic behaviour. It finally resulted in a divorce from my first husband and a total division of my family.

At the age of forty-one, my 19 year old son completed suicide, and again I was faced with grief. This time there was no escaping it. I went immediately to my own mother, knowing she had to understand - after all she had lost her only son. But what I got was correction and scolding. I had not even buried my son when I was told to "stop crying!" "You need to straighten up." "You're only making yourself sick." "You need to cut it out." "This is what Richie wanted to do; you can't change it, so forget it."

I think everyone around me wanted to act as if nothing had happened and just go on with their lives. But this time I couldn't. No one wanted me to cry. My husband would let me if I went into another room. My children couldn't handle being around me as I was too depressing.

The only person that gave me "permission" was my 8 year old son, Gene. He would not only talk about his big brother but would remind me at Easter to put coloured eggs on his grave. When Ritchie's birthday came around that first year after his death, Gene told me I had to make Ritchie a birthday cake. At Christmas, Gene reminded me to hang up Ritchie's stocking. Gene also felt the importance of "owning" his big brother's possessions. Even now, 5 years later, Ritchie's sports' trophies, baseball and matchbox cars are proudly on display in Gene's room. Gene did not show his grief in sadness - he showed love in remembrance of his brother.

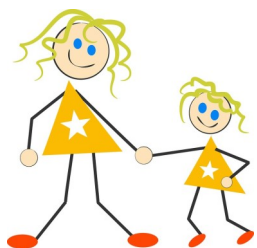
I grieved silently and alone for 3 years before I realized I needed help. It was a counsellor at the Christian Counselling Centre that finally told me "I'm giving you permission to grieve."

It's ok to cry in front of people - it still hurts
It's ok to miss my son - I love him
It's ok to forgive myself - it wasn't my fault
It's ok to ask for help - we all need compassion

Don't be sorry that others are uncomfortable with your grief. That's their problem they don't understand because it has not happened to them. Be forgiving of others but most of all yourself.

I'm giving you permission to grieve. Go ahead and cry. "If the eyes have no tears, the soul has no rainbow."

Carol Helmingler Reprinted from TCF/Otago Newsletter 2001



For all your years we walked together Hand in hand
Your hand so small at first At last, outgrowing mine.
You led the way You showed me paths. Sometimes those paths were dark,
But more often now were lit And the future glowed.
When suddenly you slipped your hand And went ahead of me
To where I could not follow

But this I know
We will be hand in hand again And this time we will run.

Gwyneth Lorimar
Reprinted with love from Childless Parents Newsletter UK



My Precious Grandchild

I waited for that moment and it arrived one special day.
My first glimpse of you nearly took my breath away.
I was apprehensive about being called a grandma it's true,
until the first time I was called grandma by you.

Being a mother was a wondrous joy for me,
I gave it all I had with great responsibility.
Then I watched my child become a father of his own,
now I could be a grandma and explore the great unknown.

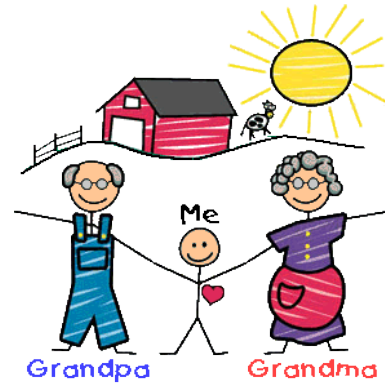
You brought so much joy when you entered this world;
you were grandma's pretty angel and daddy's little girl.
I loved to take you shopping, I loved to brush your hair,
in fact I loved taking you with me almost anywhere.

All those years of joy were filled with promise of much more,
how we could have known that sadness soon would be in store.
The ringing of the telephone, a knocking at the door,
in an instant all that mattered most didn't matter anymore.

The hurt was great for me and for my child so wracked with pain,
without my pretty angel, life would never be the same.
We gave each other comfort and we held each other tight,
somehow we have weathered the darkest of the night.

Today we still cry and we always ache for you,
but we also take some time remembering that you lived too.
Your smile forever sparkles and your laugh will always be,
because my precious grandchild you are still a part of me.

Connie Sheets We Need Not Walk Alone 2014
Lifted with thanks from Winnipeg Chapter news



VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

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

with all proceeds to go to TCF.

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

C/- Lesley Henderson,

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

Windsor

Oamaru

I have personally found that many of my friends and family have appreciated reading this book
as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

Week 141 by Maria Ahern

“Getting to the end of the holiday mum?”

Yes son, the bit where I would be frantically looking in all the shops trying to find you a funny T-shirt or a cute souvenir. Where I would be buying out all the Dime Milka in the supermarket and those little bite size salamis that you loved. All of those things that would have made homecoming fun. Right now I would be phoning you... ‘Right, I’ve got the chocolate, I’ve got the little sausages and I’ve bought you some little presents and I’m on my way home.’ Never sure whether you were excited to see me or what I had bought you. I’d get the usual question... What time will you be home mum?’ And I would answer, ‘James, you have about 16 hours to tidy the house and hide any damage!’

“But I was a good boy mum, there was never any damage.”

Really, I think your memory has become a little impaired son.

“Ok, the odd broken glass but nothing major.”

True. You know what? If you could be there when I get home tomorrow, I’d settle for a house full of broken furniture, glasses, walls. Whatever. Come home and have a party to end all parties James. I don’t care.

“Yeah, right. You say that now!”

I mean it now.

“I know mum. So... what have you bought me?”

I haven’t bought you anything. I’ve picked a pebble from the mountain for your grave. Lovely don’t you think? Just what you always wanted.

“Ok, I can see that you’ve got grumpy face on today mum.”

Well what do you expect James. The bit of the holiday that ended with me coming home to you has gone. There’s no ‘home’ anywhere anymore. It’s all so...

“So?”

Foggy.

“Ah, yes, like the photo that you took the other day. Foggy.”

Yes James. That was a metaphor for my life. One minute I was bathed in sunshine and the next minute, literally, a cold dark cloud descended that felt like it would stay forever.

“Did it?”

Well, no, obviously the sun came out again.

“But you don’t want to talk about that bit?”

It doesn’t feel as warm anymore son.

“Mum, the changing weather is nature’s way of showing you something. Everything changes. Nothing will stay the same. It isn’t just your life. It’s everybody’s life.”

Why does mine seem darker then?

“Because it was so much brighter to begin with, that’s why. The more you have, the greater the loss when it is taken. You had a lot more than some people mum and so the adjustment is harder and the darkness darker. You will feel the warmth again. Gradually. Trust me.”

Son, one thing I have absolutely learned to do is to trust you.

“Ha, that’s good then. We’re getting somewhere. And what about that mountain mum. Where was it in the fog?”

What?

“The mountain that you could see so clearly in the sunshine. Where was it in the fog?”

It was still there James... I just couldn’t see it... Oh! I see where this is going!

“Seeing a lot of stuff then aren’t you mum? See, not so foggy after all. It just needs a bit of thinking outside the fog.”

Box, James. Thinking outside the box.

“Box, fog, it’s all the same. Stretch your mind and think beyond it and you will see things that your eyes can’t.”

Ok Mr. Mountain. I hear you.

“Good. Enjoy your last day, mum, now that you can see the mountain again and safe journey home.”

Thank you son.

Lifted with love from UK Compassion



An Essay From The Heart

I first met The Compassionate Friends in August 1982, just weeks following the death of our son and only child. The meeting came in a time of utter desolation that I perceived as the midnight of my life. Survival was of little concern. The past as a whirlwind of nightmares, the present an eternity of unremitting pain. The future had been swept away, a victim of the same death that had taken our child.

I met these people in a cloud of confused hostility, my grief response to any and all things new. I vowed never to return, renewing that same pledge each week for nearly a month. Why did I heed continually the call to each meeting in that month? What forces compelled me to disregard my steadfast resolve of every week? After all, The Compassionate Friends were nothing more than ordinary people, strangers really, reaching out to sustain other strangers.

Yet, among them I sensed a bond that sundered the aloneness all seemed to feel. These strangers became instant friends in a common search to understand, to somehow hear, to find the will and strength to meet each day. These were indeed ordinary people confronting extraordinary tragedy.

Among them I learned to face the darkness, to dare the dawning of each new day. When I felt compelled to attend a conference, it was from these ordinary men and women that I received the support and courage to meet the fears I felt over the venture. They entrusted their newsletter to me and asked for words of healing. In finding them for others, I felt them stir in me. They supported my writing and restored my confidence and self-respect.

Over the past 10 years, I have encountered many deserving of my thanks. But on my long journey from darkness to light, The Compassionate Friends were most steadfast. This road was difficult beyond measure. I could not have done it alone.

These fellow bereaved parents had forged a mighty instrument to create anew a vigorous desire for life in themselves and others. I became a part of them and they of me. By the wonder and profound magic of human association, we worked within and beyond ourselves for recovery. It worked of us. It set me free.

Perhaps I would have survived without The Compassionate Friends but I now have not only endured, I have rediscovered life and a meaning for it once more. I have healed and through The Compassionate Friends have had a chance to help others do the same. With the help of The Compassionate Friends, I am able at last to honour the love of my son with life. Could there be a greater gift?

Don Hackett TCF, Hingham, HA Gratefully lifted from Oak Brook, Summer 1992 and reprinted in TCF South Africa newsletter

To every parent who has been touched by the loss of a child, my prayer
for you is this:

“May you remember more often the miracle of life that ignited
your soul
than the darkness of death that stole that life away.”

Author unknown.

Lifted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

What I Wish I had Known

My eyes were squeezed shut; nobody told me what a recently stillborn baby looks like at full term. Eventually I slightly opened my eyes enough to see my husband on his knees, sobbing by the bassinet the midwife had carefully placed her in. I wish someone had told me that these few memories would be the only things I would have of my daughter and that I should cherish them.



My midwife told me I should hold her; I was too afraid of touching her because I didn't know what she would feel like or how it would make me feel; instead I had her kept in her bassinet in my room, my perfect little baby that looked like she was going to wake up at any minute. I wish I'd known how much I would ache to hold her for years to come.

The hospital worker took a few photographs for me, the flash made her skin look pale, not at all the memory I had of her. They cut a few locks of her hair and took her handprints for me to keep in a special memory book. I wish someone had told me that there were organizations that were trained to come and take photographs and memories of sleeping and unwell children.



I was ashamed of letting everyone down, for failing as a mother. I chose not to have any service to acknowledge her passing. Leaving her in the hospital was so incredibly difficult and I didn't think I could handle another goodbye. I wish I had known that it wasn't just me that needed to say goodbye, it was her grandparents and sister too.

My doctor felt that after four weeks, I should be showing less symptoms of grief and put me on antidepressants. He suggested I talk to a counsellor which in my mind was absurd. There was nothing a counsellor could do to make me see things differently or fix me. My child had died and I was mourning her. I wish someone had told me that I was normal, that child loss is a long and difficult journey.

My grief remained and the world kept on moving. Friends and family seemed to have forgotten my grief or acted like I should have moved on. I began to feel trapped, like the suffocating weight of grief would never end and I would be in this pain for the rest of my life. I wish someone had told me about The Compassionate Friends so I could see I was not alone.

The months went by and eventually I found support with people who had lost children. I connected with other parents who had lost babies and were trying again to conceive. After a lot of fear and worry, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Initially I fussed and panicked about every tiny noise she made, but my new friends reassured me that it was normal and this time I did not feel guilty about my emotions. I wish I had known that last time I doubted myself.

My pain never went away, but I learned how to cope with it better. I began to volunteer with The Compassionate Friends WA and met this beautiful group of people, all with stories of their own who had overcome the initial pain of grief and turned it into strength to help others who had lost a child. I wish I had known about the amazing healing power of connecting with other bereaved parents.

Tricia Jancovich (Mother of Katie Samara Jancovich 22-06-2010) TCF/Western, AU
Reprinted with thanks from Winnipeg Chapter News

POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

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

When No Words Seem Appropriate

written by a paediatric nurse

I won't say, 'I know how you feel' - because I don't.
I've lost parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends,
but I've never lost a child.
So how can I say I know how you feel?

I won't say, 'You'll get over it' - because you won't.
Life will have to go on.
The washing, cooking, cleaning, the common routine.
These chores will take your mind off your loved one,
but the hurt will still be there.

I won't say, 'Your other children will be a comfort to you' -
because they may not be.
Many mothers I've talked to say that after they have lost a child,
they easily lose their temper with their remaining children.
Some even feel resentful that they're alive and healthy when the other child is not.

I won't say, 'Never mind, you're young enough to have another baby'
because that won't help.
A new baby cannot replace the one that you've lost.
A new baby will fill your hours, keep you busy, give you sleepless nights.
But it will not replace the one you've lost.

You may hear all these platitudes from your friends and relatives.
They think they are helping.
They don't know what else to say.
You will find out who your true friends are at this time.
Many will avoid you because they can't face you.
Others will talk about the weather, the holidays and the school concert
but never about how you're coping.

Lifted with love from UK Compassion

Anne Huxtable's son, Dan, died of a virulent form of cancer whilst at university. He was only 19. Anne wrote this poem addressed to the cancer which took her son's life, on a creative writing course about which she says, "I'm absolutely loving the writing course I'm taking, met some lovely people too. The course is creative writing/short stories etc but everything I learn I'll be able to put into practice when I write Dan's story"

How Dare You

You grew unexpectedly, silently.
Devious and cruel, you hid the signs.
He didn't know you existed.
How dare you.

Your filthy cells multiplied,
You made him cough,
You made him bleed,
You caused him pain.
How dare you.

He fought but you were too strong.
You took his dreams, his ambitions.
You took his chance for a child to call him Dad.
Then you took him.
How dare you.

You took my reason for living that day.
You took my future,
You took my Son.
How dare you.

Anne Logan Huxtable July 2014

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Childless parents newsletter UK

A Journey of HOPE

A new widow asked me the other day (in a somewhat disapproving tone), “What do you mean when you talk about hope?”

That’s a perfectly legitimate question—we talk about hope all the time but we do not often define just what we mean. Hope seems to be such a clear and simple concept, doesn’t it? But what exactly does “hope” mean when you have lost children to death, when you and the world are a bundle of pain, when you feel as if you could never enjoy anything ever again?

Those who speak about hope wish first of all the pain of your first grief will lessen. While no one can guess or calculate how long the phase of intense first grief will last, it always lasts longer than we want. This is the time when grief keeps you from thinking clearly, when you are confused about almost everything, even about things which have nothing to do with the tragedy. It is the time when you are always tired but can seldom sleep enough, the time when your energy seems to be drained by the sheer effort of staying alive. You find that nothing consoles you—life hurts, feeling hurts.

Whenever that time is over, you may be able to function reasonably well. What griever has not walked around doing a good job at the office, while feeling like an empty shell? At that point you may even be able, briefly, to concentrate on something other than your dead children. There is a small hope then, to wish for a little more strength, a little less pain, a good night’s rest. Perhaps this is time when you can start talking more clearly to someone about the way you feel or what you think you might want to do for yourself and other grievers. The schedule is different for each person.

When we talk about hope, we start out with a wish for your recovery from what may have felt like a mental illness. Except—you need to remember that it was no mental illness at all; it was an almost insurmountable onslaught of pain.

The next step of hope comes when you realise (sometimes with regret) that you will continue living and that you actually want to do something with the life left to you. Often the notion of doing something in honor of the dead children feels sadly comfortable. This is the stage when you reach out deliberately to speak about grief, to address new tasks, to find the “small islands of peace” in your sea of pain. But most of the pain is still there.

Rooms are left unchanged; clothing remains hanging in closets; you still cry when you see photographs or when you remember the days before the child died. There is no escape from awareness of loss, which still dominates your daily existence, no matter what you plan or undertake. This is usually a long phase, and no amount of rational resolve or practical termination takes the ache away. However, you do sleep better.

Next on the journey of hope comes the first signal of comfort. While you still cry and hurt about the loss of your child, you sometimes find yourself thinking of soothing memories; you are even able to smile about things you remember. This is the time when a memory that makes you smile is often followed by tears. Your emotions are alive and powerful—and you realise that your reactions are quite natural. Not all feeling you have at that time are focused on the main event, the death of your children, but you begin to consider realistically that there are many other things in life. As heavy as this phase still is for most grievers, it is a great deal more manageable and gentle than the tearing pain of grief.

The next step comes imperceptibly—there are moments that first, then hours, when your mind is not preoccupied with remembering the dead child. You can think of other tasks and events without simultaneously thinking about a grief-related memory. Before, you may have been so closely connected to grief that you connected any experience to the children’s death, even if an event or task had nothing all to do with them. You may encounter a strange, almost surprised feeling like: “This has nothing to do with grief”. Such intervals are rare at first, and you never quite reach the point where you can totally divorce feelings and thoughts from your memories. Initially, all grieving parents find such a time difficult to imagine—and the inner quietness actually arrives before we are able to believe it. But there is a balance that achieves itself—it gently eases itself into your days and nights.

At this time a preponderance of pleasant memories make itself at home in your heart. You smile at things remembered without crying; you can call up the details of a memory without being overwhelmed by heartache. These are the most basic stages of hope—there are many fine and varied distinctions and the stages do not clearly follow one after the other. But when we speak of hope we generally mean the griever’s return to a less painful and more confident form of self. We are not talking about denying the death or forgetting the child we lost. We are speaking of a change in feeling about them. Among the things we think of when we talk about hope is the time when we reach the ability to ‘recall our memories in tranquility’. The day when we realise that having children, even if only for a small part of our lifetime, was first and foremost a gift and a treasure. While we will always want to keep the awareness of our dead children, the time will come when we can live in peace, as helpers and friends to others in grief (perhaps deliberately to honour the memory of our dead children) or to find unencumbered enjoyments.

When the sense of loss is overcome by a sense of acceptance and peace, when we find new things to do with our life, then we will have completed the journey of hope—from disbelief to struggle to achievement.

By Sascha Wagner (sourced from TCF VIC 2016) Gratefully reprinted from TCF Queensland Newsletter

Peace

As bereaved parents, we look to others for answers about our grief journey. For 12 years I have listened as so many parents spoke about the combination of factors which brought peace to their hearts and allowed them to move forward into a different, less painful life. I have read books, watched movies, attended seminars and retreats. I have gone to 138 Compassionate Friends meetings.

And I have discovered one key factor in finding peace and resolution on this terrible grief journey: there is no single element or singular combination of elements that answers the needs of more than one parent. Each parent must patiently seek those elements that will enhance the individual and each unique personal journey: there is no magic map to finding the path to peace.

There is one common denominator in this quest for the peace on our long journey, and that is patience. Patience with ourselves is mandatory, because the grief journey after the death of our precious child is so horrible, so painful, and so isolating that our psyches and our bodies take so very much time to begin the healing process. There are setbacks. There is progress. Each of these comes in spurts. Each is partially reversed and the process begins anew. Friends and family do not thoroughly understand our perspective on our unique journey. We must make allowances for them. But we must ask that allowances be made for us. For we are finding ourselves while on a path that we did not choose. We are lost. We are weakened. We are heartbroken. Each of us in our own way is seeking the formula that is uniquely our own. Some parents find a kind of peace in their religion. Some parents are angry with their God. Many parents seek private counselling. Other parents read prolifically about the grief journey, seeking some element which resonates with them. Many parents come to Compassionate Friends meetings and actively participate. Others attend meetings and say little. Some parents slip into denial and proceed on the old path of their lives.

We each make choices. We are different people with different experiences, backgrounds, cultures, genetic hard wiring, education and abilities. The path to peace is found by searching, by reaching out to every resource available. We will reject much of what we find; but if we search, we will find what we need. For most of us, finding other bereaved parents presents an opportunity to listen to the stories, of their child and their journey and, within those stories, we find many threads that fit our unique journey. Many stories, many journeys, many new threads are shared in group discussion and in private discussions. We find "seasoned" grievers who provide perspective on our feelings, and listen to our story. We find newly bereaved parents who touch our hearts and remind us how we have built our path to peace brick by brick. Their pain brings reflection and new revelations about our own grief journey. I found kindred souls at Compassionate Friends. These kindred souls have allowed me to explore the various aspects of my being and gradually create a path of peace for myself.

But the journey does not suddenly end. We will walk this path for the rest of our lives. And if we do the hard work and face our demons early on, we accept the unacceptable and face life on our own terms. And that is as it should be.

Kate Shand - In memory of her beloved son John Peter Butler, TCF Johannesburg Chapter
Lifted with thanks from Summer Compassion UK





Sibling Page



It is nearly two decades since the death of my brother, Jeremy. I have to admit a certain resentment has built within me in recent times, given that so many developments have occurred since Jeremy (or “Jez”) was with us. Fortunately, in early December of 2010, I was privileged enough to experience an event that brought Jeremy powerfully to the present.

It couldn't have happened at a more unexpected event; my mum Jan, my sister Kathryn and I travelled to Brisbane to attend the ‘decommissioning’ services and ceremonies for the F-111 fighter jet. It was an F-111 crash that killed Jeremy and the air craft's navigator, Mark Cairns-Cowan in September 1993. Now, seventeen years later, we were attending the retirement of this controversial aircraft; over the F-111s thirty seven years of service in Australia, the air craft has claimed ten fatalities in peacetime accidents.

We approached the ceremonies with a mix of anticipation and apprehension. Would retiring the aircraft feel like we were closing the door on a crucial link to Jeremy's life?

Links were foremost on our minds. On our way to Amberley Air Force Base, Kathryn, Mum and I made a detour to Yamanto, the suburb Jeremy was living in, in 1993. I had not visited his house for seventeen years and was amazed to find it just as I had remembered it. We then drove a couple of blocks further to visit a court and a park, both of which had been named in memory of Jeremy. Jeremy's death had had a strong effect on the people of Yamanto, and we were touched by this gesture from the local council. After having some lunch in the special environs of McNess Court and McNess Park, we headed to Amberley to attend the ceremonies.

A number of the ceremonies included “flyovers” and aerobatics from the F-111 air craft, a last opportunity to see them in all their grace and glory. (Of course, there was a darker side to the air craft's function, but we always preferred to view the F-111s in the way Jeremy did, that is, a graceful, inspiring jet that, in flight, felt as close to God as one's physical being could allow.) We saw many inspiring

aerobatics, and revelled in the “roar” of the planes – anyone who has attended an air show will know what I mean. The planes flew over an awestruck and reverent crowd of civilians and service men and women. Mum, Kathryn and I, I suspect, were not the only crowd members feeling a wave of melancholy in saying goodbye to a beautiful aircraft.

The ceremonies spanned two days. On the morning of the second day a memorial service was held for the families of pilots and

navigators killed in F-111 accidents. It was held under an immense sail and I think there would have been 600 people in attendance. We saw a small number of men and women who served at the time of Jeremy and Mark's accident, but most of the faces were new to us. It was an inescapable fact that time had moved on. But for me, the barrier of time fell away at the conclusion of the service.

The bereaved family members were invited to join a procession, led by a chaplain and a dozen or so marching cadets, in which we would walk 400 metres to a memorial wall. At this spot a wreath would be placed. Mum, Kathryn and I were the first of the family members to join the procession and we walked directly behind the cadets. It was a powerful, stirring experience; as we processed down the aisle, with air force personnel standing either of side us, the beautiful “Going Home” was played. I never, in my wildest dreams and hopes, imagined that we would walk in Jeremy's name again.

There was also something else that was very special about this moment. I had never seen Jeremy march during his years at the air force, and despite the photos we have of Jeremy marching at air force ceremonies, I was always sorry to have missed the opportunity. But now here we were walking directly behind the marching cadets, as they processed steadily to the memorial. I felt as close to the essence of who Jeremy was, and the world he inhabited in his final years, as I think I ever have.

When you lose someone close to you, it is difficult at times to feel blessed. But in those two or three minutes, I felt greatly blessed; blessed to have been granted such a fantastic opportunity. Meaningful experiences can emerge in unexpected ways; walking behind the cadets, I truly felt we were walking with Jeremy.

Written by Andrew McNess in memory of his brother, Jeremy.

Taken from TCF Victoria website. And reprinted in NSW Newsletter

Losing My Superhero

I was in the middle of finishing a 6 page paper for my last assignment in my abnormal psychology class. Around 2:00 I was in the middle of my 5th page when someone knocked on my door. I opened the door to see my dad's best friend frantic with blood shot eyes. Before I could even get a word in he said "There's been an accident. We lost Trent."

I imagined my little brother off in a field somewhere lost after a car accident because he was scared, but that wasn't the case. He was gone. 4 days before his 6th birthday, he was gone. At 1:11 on Saturday June 11th, 2011 my world was shattered by a 19 year old girl that over corrected, drove across the median, and killed my brother and an elderly couple.

I'm a Criminal Justice/ Psychology major. Nothing I ever learned had prepared me for the feelings that overcame me as I gave out a scream and slid down the door. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't speak. I couldn't believe this was my reality. I went to make a phone call but couldn't find the words to tell my mom I needed her to come home. I couldn't tell her that I had just lost my little brother and that my dad, stepmom, and sister were in Tallahassee in ICU with injuries caused by a fatal accident. My dad's best friend gave her the news and she came home.

I had to call my brothers and tell them. My brother Tadd came home as soon as I called him and sat in the drive way and sobbed. Many people showed up to my house and watched me as I sat numb on my couch not knowing what to do or say. I watched my brothers pack for Tallahassee and before they left we held each other and sobbed. I was still in disbelief.

My little brother. The baby that was a surprise when I got home from school one day. The baby I spent my summers with. The chubby toddler that played in the dirt all day. My little Batman with a speech impediment and baby blue eyes. My 5 year old brother Trent was gone.

No one ever said the right words or did the right things. I just wanted to be left alone. I never wanted the text messages that said "Thinking of you" or "praying for you". I wanted it all to be just a bad dream. He would never be 10, 16, or 18 years old. He would never grow up to be a NASCAR driver or football player. He was truly gone and there was nothing I could do about it.

For a very long time I was angry. I blamed the girl for not paying attention. I blamed God for taking someone so young and full of life. I blamed myself for not being in the car to keep him safe. With the pain of losing him came pain from being a sibling. He wasn't my child. He wasn't my parent. Surely I wasn't in as much grief as everyone thought I was in. I was there for my dad and my stepmom but no one asked how I was doing. No one asked how my step sister, my brothers, and I were taking this. It was like only my dad and my stepmom had lost a child. I felt guilty for awhile feeling this way, but we lost him too and it wasn't fair.

The only person that was fully understanding was our mother. Through the loss of my brother I have found the silver lining to my dark storm cloud. Such a beautiful, wonderful, and pure soul will never have to truly witness the horrors of the world. Though his life was short, it was full of love and kindness. There are still teachers of his that speak on how precious he was and how generous he was. He is with me always now. Sometimes when I close my eyes I can hear his giggle, see his smile, or hear his foot steps running across the hardwood floors. It's these thoughts that keep me going.

I feel that with my name will always come his and when I succeed, he will succeed.

I want to live a beautiful and prosperous life not just for myself, but also for my personal superhero, Trent Logan Thompson.



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 wanganui@thecompassionatefriends.org.nz
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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