



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 180

OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2020

We Didn't Think...

We didn't think he was on earth temporarily.

We didn't think he could go to a place we couldn't visit.

We didn't think overwhelming sadness would be our constant companion.

We didn't think we were going to hell and partway back; there cannot be any all the way back.

We didn't think that the blow of his death cannot be softened.

We didn't think we would experience so many levels of loss after his death.

We didn't think we would have to confront a new identity.

We didn't think we would see his name on a granite bench

We didn't think the world could seem so depopulated with one teenager gone.

We didn't think he could age without growing.

We didn't think of all the wasted air until now.

We didn't think his dream of going to Alaska could only take place after his death.

We didn't think he would become our sun, moon and stars.

We didn't think of the end of his life when we were thinking of the beginning.

We just didn't think...

In our quiet moments without him, we ask him to enter our thoughts, to come into our minds,

to be with us any way he can.

He does, he reaches us on a level beyond touch.

An immeasurable loss.

Del Brydges, Winnipeg: in memory of Cody, 16 years

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

Those little things that you alone see, aren't by chance.
The sign, the squirrel, the dragonfly, the whisper, the song, the lily, the robin, the feather...
It's me.
I'm always with you.
I'll do anything to reach you - to give you hope, keep you on track, answer your questions.
Look even closer.

The Universe, The Minds Journal

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Tania Rose Baldock	Born 22/10/69	Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young	Died 17/10/2001
Kyle David Edwards	Born 15/10/1980	Mark Peter Enright	Died 31/10/1993
Henare Wiremu Fielding	Born 8/10/1983	Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Died 23/10/2005
Sally Verone Kitto	Born 3/10/1991	Yvonne Kay French-Wollen	Died 19/10/2001
Tara Louise MacPherson	Born 13/10/1987	Daniel Philip Innes	Died 9/10/1994
Hayden Ivan Pope	Born 18/10/90	Matthew David Innes	Died 9/10/1994
David Massey Reid	Born 6/10/1981	Steven Micheal Jack	Died 23/10/2003
Hayden Watson	Born 21/10/1981	Jessie Lineham	Died 23/10/2010
Ayla Rose Whitaker	Born 9/10/1989	Andrew John Manson	Died 14/10/1991
		Stefan David Maydon	Died 12/10/2001
Greg Burns	Born 27/11/89	Grant Mills	Died 6/10/1999
Michael David Cox	Born 19/11/64	Shane Parish	Died 7/10/1974
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Born 10/11/03	Callum Robertson	Died 24/10/2002
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Born 30/11/90	Alan Bruce Scorrington	Died 30/10/1999
Mark Peter Enright	Born 30/11/73		
Krysha Helen Hanson	Born 18/11/64	Nicholas James Cox	Died 18/11/03
Callum Warrick Langley	Born 4/11/96	Rick Daysh	Died 17/11/95
Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Born 3/11/58	Pauline Anne Newall	Died 12/11/98
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Born 5/11/74	Cindy Parish	Died 26/11/01
Grant Mills	Born 9/11/62	Marlene Joy Penny	Died 30/11/91
Marie Anne O'Neill	Born 18/11/61	Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Died 11/11/00
Peter John Oxley	Born 29/11/75	Ross Templeton	Died 29/11/17
Thomas John Poplawski	Born 25/11/97		

LIGHT A CANDLE IN MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD WHO HAS DIED

World Wide Candle Lighting: Sunday 13th December 2020 at 7pm

On the second Sunday in December at 7pm (local time) parents and families around the world (starting in Aotearoa) will light candles for one hour in remembrance of their children who have died at any age, from any cause, recently or years ago.

Passing through the world's time zones, this 24 hour candle vigil is a moving experience as families unite to visually remember their children gone too soon.

World Wide Candle Lighting was created in 1966 by the Compassionate Friends, an International organization supporting bereaved parents and has been held every year since.



Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purist white

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who knew great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honour and remembrance
We light candles in the night

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
Aswe remember.

Candle-light Services of Love and Remembrance.

CENTRAL OTAGO/LAKES DISTRICT

Tuesday 1st December, 7.00pm.

Alexandra Community House, Centennial Ave., Alexandra.

Please bring a candle to light in memory of your loved one and a photo or memento if you wish.

For further details please contact Louise, 027 6508986

SOUTHLAND

Tuesday 1st December 7pm

Hospice Southland

Please bring a photo of your child if you wish and a small plate to share

If you would like your child's photo to be added to the slide show please send it to bennettyoungfamily@xtra.co.nz by 25th November

KAPITI COAST

Thursday 10th December starting at 7pm

In conjunction with Kapiti Coast Funeral Home Annual Remembrance Service

For further details please contact Anna, 04 2936349

WANGANUI

* Time 6.30pm Sunday 13th December 2020

Contact www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz or phone Keren 3443345 for further details

CHRISTCHURCH

Tuesday 1st December 6.30pm 44 Bealey Ave, Presbyterian Support

Please bring a candle, a photo of your child/children and a small plate to share.

There will be music (harp and guitar) and a chance to give a brief talk about our child/children who have died and light a candle.



The Compassionate Friends Bereaved Parent's Grief Support Whanganui Chapter

This is a revamp of my Annual Report 10 10 2020

Chairperson Keren Marsh.

2020 has been a strange year for us all with COVID 19 preventing us from meeting. Also an horrendous storm here which prevented us holding our Annual Candle lighting in December. This was a huge disappointment as we had planned to meet at Virginia Lake at the same time as the local Carol service.

Both events were cancelled. We are all prepared for the event this year Covid and weather permitting. **MARK THE DATE:** 13th December 2020.

Now into our 9th year since TCF regrouped in Whanganui and 51 years since TCF commenced in the UK.

Coffee Care & Chat gatherings are our main events. Held every first Saturday of each month at the Yellow House Café Whanganui minus 3 months over Covid.

Topics have included : One size fits all : We'll meet again : Mothers Day (late) Father's Day. It was encouraging to return in July and have 11 attend, 13 in August. We are grateful to the Yellow House for their continuing support.

La Fiesta This year we have been involved in this local Women's Network initiative. Held February/March we were able to be included in their general advertising which gave us exposure at no cost to us. **Good Grief: Making Memories** was well attended, but mostly by our regular contacts. We didn't attract others in. We presented an inspiring and interactive evening and concluded with our Candle Lighting memorial service as we had missed it in December.

We have been invited to take part in the 2021 La Fiesta in February/March and plan to do 2 daytime functions to see if this attracts more people. These will take the form of a drop-in coffee and chat with information and displays. One in the morning will be entitled **Good Mourning** and a second one after lunch a week later will be called **Good Mourning this afternoon**

Thanks to Carla and her team at Women's Network. They are so supportive of us.

Website: This gives us a face on line and we (North Island) have had 14 responses from it. All have been out of Whanganui bar one but we do keep in touch with these folk. Thanks to Nigel at KiwiWebs for his prompt attention to updates done with no charge. This site is for all of NZ and costs us \$200 annually for hosting rights.

Have you looked at the website recently? Please have a look and if there is anywhere you and your area would like to be mentioned or any articles, experiences, poetry etc. you may like to add or information to update including names and Candlelighting dates and times please e mail it to me. north@thecompassionatefriends.org

If you prefer to write the info, post it to me 90 Surrey Rd Whanganui 4501 and I'll gladly add it. This site is for our whole country.

Publicity Our publicity focus is now our focus for 2021 dependant on funding.

We do need to do a promotional drive, letting community, medical and social work areas, funeral homes, chaplains, celebrants, churches and the general public know about us. This means more printed material/ brochures posters/ business cards etc. Our problem has been funding but we are resolving that now

Welcome Pack: This pack of material created and copyrighted by Whanganui TCF is well received by newcomers and inquirers but we have run out of copies so it was a good chance to revamp and update it. Thanks to the Committee for their input and editing. As funding allows we will reprint these.

This TCF information and education print outs will be made available to other NZ Friends/ Chapters next year 2021. This is an intrinsic part of our organization that we share and disseminate information, programme material and grief education (see The Compassionate Friends Seven Principles)

If any other TCF Friends in NZ would like copies of any of our promotional material we would be glad to share these. Copyrighted to us we can share them with you to reproduce as long as you acknowledge TCF Whanganui and leave our copyright note on the pages. Not quite ready yet but we will announce this through this newsletter early in 2021.

Fund Raising: It has become obvious that we need to raise some funds if we are to remain a viable organization. Sausage sizzles have kept us going for several years but these are hard work for our small band of volunteers. This money kept us afloat for basic administration costs - postage, photo copying etc. After much discussion, research and advice we decided to apply to become a **Charitable Trust** and apply for Community funding.

As a Trust we will be considered more favourably by Funders. Thanks to Barrie Marsh and CLAW Community Legal Advice Whanganui for their help.

We applied in September 2020 and were thrilled to have a favourable reply on 21 September. **The Compassionate Friends Whanganui Chapter** is now a registered Charitable Trust and our committee have become the Trustees.

This cost no money just some hard work! And a few grey hairs!

An application is in process funds from the Wanganui Community Trust Board for consideration in October 2020. More grey hairs!

Candle Lighting December 2019. Sadly this world-wide event was not celebrated in Whanganui because of a vicious storm. We look forward to better weather this year. We did have our usual visit to Aramoho Cemetery Children's Area to hang decorations in the tree shading the spot. A number of people came.

Our AGM was held in October preceded by a delicious Brunch, pancakes and all the trimmings. Our committee, now our Trust Board, is a team of faithful, hard-working and committed volunteers who have a heart for the ministry of TCF.

We now have 8 trustees who are able to use their strengths to share the load.

We have a most efficient Secretary who is also updating our files.

Our Vice Chairman will take on publicity, promotion and advice on meeting procedures and protocol.

We plan to regularly keep in touch with the out-of-Whanganui contacts we have had from the Website, including past local contacts. A Trustee will do this and another will send out Remembrance Cards to those on our data base near the anniversary of their child's death.

It is so good to have your child named and remembered.

Nina Sandilands remains our honorary Trustee plus mentor and advisor. She has been in TCF since it started in NZ. A gem we are fortunate to have. Yvonne Evans, our wonderful Treasurer has also been with TCF since inauguration. Despite no computer she does an amazing job by hand and also cycles to the bank!

Sincere thanks to Nina, Sue, Yvonne, Ian, Linda & Keren for their hard work in the past 12 months. We welcome on board Derna and Roanne and look forward to a positive year.

We continue to be grateful to our community supporters: Kiwiwebs: Yellow House:

Clevelands: Dempseys: Women's Network.

Central Otago Compassionate Friends.

Kia ora koutou,

We are basking in sunshine today with a gentle breeze. Lovely!

Our group is still ticking over, with life going up and down, as always. Last week we had a wonderful get together with our friends in Arrowtown/Queenstown, we have also had a successful AGM, and now we are planning our Candlelight Evening.

The Candlelight Evening is planned for Tuesday 1 December, 7.00pm at Alexandra Community House. Our programme will be the same as last year – a speaker, light the candles, release balloons and time for a chat over tea and coffee. Bring a photo and or memento of your loved one/ones and a candle to light in their memory.

The Candlelight Evening is an opportunity to sit quietly, reflect and pay loving tribute to those who have gone away. You will be in the company of people who know and understand.

Hope to see you there.

Arohanui,

Louise and Jan

Memories here and in my heart

My son Joel died nearly 9 years ago. Joel lived at home and for a few years after, his room remained exactly as it was on that day. A life cut short, never knowing this would be his last day on earth. Memories filled every drawer, cupboard, hanging space, pictures on the walls, teenage stuff on his desk and the contents of his computer. Then of course there was his sound system, complete with turntable and mixer, he really loved music.

“Take as much time as you need to”, people told me, and that’s exactly what I did. There was no need to rush in and do anything, and I was pretty numb those first few years as anyone who has lost a child knows. Plus I was working pretty much full time and just didn’t have the physical or emotional energy to deal with it. Slowly as the years went on I changed little things, new curtains, bedding, moved the bed to a different spot in the room. I took things off the desk and stuffed them in drawers or cupboards—more sorting through involving emotional time and energy would have to wait for another day.

One of my other sons, Ben, who lives interstate, stayed in Joel’s room when he came to visit. It gave him comfort to still see Joel’s posters on the walls, his computer on the desk.... My granddaughters had their first sleep over and one of them slept in Uncle Joel’s room. Things were beginning to change and time moved on. I was beginning to feel that I could pack up more things. When Ben was visiting last year, he helped me go through some of Joel’s things in the cupboards. We had a smile and shed tears for the son and brother who had gone too soon, and what would have been. We only got about half way through. It will wait for another time, we said.

Today I decided it was time to change the bedroom from being Joel’s room, to a spare room. This meant the desk and contents would have to go, along with his computer, which still sat there, and also his beloved sound system where he spent many hours listening to his favorite music. The turntable he got for Christmas when he was fifteen years old and the amplifier his grandmother handed down to him around the same time. He had big speakers hooked up to these which were made by his grandfather long before Joel was born and had stayed in the family. Joel was so excited to get all of these. I was dusting in the bedroom a few months ago and I turned the power on the amplifier, thinking I would listen to some music in Joel’s room. It went for a few minutes then let out a big spark and crackled and smoke poured out the back. I think it was Joel telling me ‘it’s time Mum, you have me in your heart, you don’t need these things anymore.’ I wanted to be sure I had everything from his computer that would bring memories of him, photos, music, anything. I copied it all to my external hard drive so I could get rid of the actual computer. I didn’t spend a lot of time looking at things then, but once again looked at a few things which brought more smiles and tears. I found things that perhaps I wouldn’t have done if he had grown up and moved on, teenage boy things.... Some things that made me feel uncomfortable. I felt like I was prying into his private world, it felt wrong. But I was desperate to find anything to bring me memories, something else to hang onto. It was an incredibly hard few hours and it felt so final after all these years.

I still have things to clean out, it’s a big job, and while I coped on one level, underneath my heart was heavy, thinking this isn’t how it should be. While I was waiting for the files to copy from Joel’s computer, I watched a short video by a speaker at a TCF convention a few years ago, Darcie Simms. She spoke of how in the early days of our grief, we cling to things, we may have a picture, jewelry etc. to remind us of our children, and she spoke of how one day she realized she didn’t need these things anymore because she had her child in her heart. In the midst of my cleaning the room and wanting to hold onto things, I knew it was time for me. I may never look at anything I have taken from Joel’s computer, nonetheless it was something I needed to do at that point in time, wanting all I could retrieve, which reminded me of him. I will definitely hold onto special mementos I come across, but I know now that I have Joel and his love in my heart. I will learn to thank him for ‘the little while’ he spent with us and be grateful for those memories.

Julie McGregor, Mum to Joel 10-10-1988—19-08-2007 Originally published April 2016 in [hht://listeningheartsmoms.org](http://listeningheartsmoms.org)

Reprinted from TCF Queensland Chapter Newsletter

Parents of Infants -- On Losing a Baby

Unlike parents who have had an older child die, our memories are few, and for some people, even non-existent. Those of us who have had a baby die have found it common for some people not to recognize the loss as being as tragic as the death of an older child. Maybe it is just as tragic, maybe it isn't. For most parents who have lost a baby, the tragedy is felt as intensely as can be. For many parents who lose a baby, there is nothing else with which to compare their loss. It is just like we who have lost a child (at no matter what the age) feel that no one can understand the way we feel unless they too have lost a child. Those of us who have not lost an older child have nothing else to compare the loss of our baby with, just as those who have lost an older child cannot completely understand our feelings upon losing a baby.

The death of an infant is often times considered "unfortunate" but so many feel that it can be remedied with the birth of another child. Some people find it difficult to understand the love, hope and the future that has been lost with the death of a "much looked forward to" baby. In my own situation, I have found that the words of consolation most often given to me are things like, "You're young, you can have other babies..." or "It's so much better that you were never able to hold her and love her." And things like, "It's over with, forget it, put it all behind you..."

The truth of the matter for me, at least, was yes, I could have more babies, but it did not matter how many children I could have in the future, I still had lost Jessica. She was the baby daughter I had wanted and tried to have for eight years. Upon her death, all my hopes and dreams and my happiness I felt, were gone. The daughter I had looked so forward to holding and loving and spending time with was gone. Yes, since her death I have been blessed with the birth of two children, a son and another daughter. I give thanks daily for their health and loving presence. But, just as another child could never take their place, nor have they replaced Jessica.

Was it really better that I never got to hold her? I think not. If only I had been able to hold that blessed little angel in my arms, if only for one short moment, I would be better able to cope with my loss. If I had been able to see her (even though she was already dead) I would have had a memory to hold on to the rest of my life. Learn to love her? I already loved her. Any mother who carries a child knows love for that child even though it is still unborn. I loved her. I knew her. I knew that she would become quiet and still when I spoke softly to her, I knew she would react with somewhat violent kicking when surrounded by loud noises. I knew her while she was yet inside me. She was real. I loved her. I can never forget about her. I never want to.

I still wonder what she would have grown to be like, what she would have grown to look like. Would she have been fair and active like my son Justin, or would she have been dark and quietly composed like Ashlee? I think about these things even after four years. I expect to think about them for the rest of my life. I wonder what it would have been like around here with three children, close in age, playing together. I wonder what it would have been like with three children to love. I wonder... I guess for a parent of a baby who dies, the wonderings are the worst. We just do not know. We have no memories to cherish. I am not trying to make a comparison with the loss of a child who lived to be older. I cannot compare things which I do not know about. I just know that a parent who loses a baby feels grief, and loss, and pain and hurt. To grieve is to grieve, to feel the pain and loss is to feel the pain and loss, to miss a child is to miss a child. Of course, there are, as in everything, various degrees of feeling and to each parent his or her child was special and the feelings still go deep and the loss is still felt at no matter what age a child is lost.

Deby Amos TCF Anniston, Alabama
Reprinted with love from Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

Bryan Clover Writes to his Early Bereaved Self

There's a country song called 'Letter to Me' by Brad Paisley and listening to it while driving home last week, it got me thinking about what I would say to the me, sat at home, broken, on 12th January 2018, the day after Evie died. What advice would I give, looking back at the last two and a bit years? There wouldn't be any revelations, no silver bullet and certainly no cure. But what pitfalls would I warn about? What would I say?

Dear Me, With the fabulous benefit of 20/20 hindsight, can I help you avoid some of the excruciating pain that you know is coming? Can I protect you from the hurt of others, from the bewilderment, the exhaustion, the utter confusion? Can I save you from yourself sometimes? As much as I might like to, I can't, because even if I manage to head off some of the pain, it will only be replaced by something else.

But what I can do is try to convince you now, that you are truly not alone, that every step of the way, someone will be there when you need them. I can also tell you categorically that you are going to make mistakes, lots of them, and that's okay, just learn from them. But most of all, I need you to understand that your love for Evie will carry you through everything. It will give you the strength when the darkness is overwhelming, when there seems to be no point carrying on, when the black dog sits with you, begging you to follow him. No father has loved a daughter more and that love will stay as strong forever.

You will undoubtedly throw yourself at work, trying to convince yourself that you can still succeed at something, anything, trying desperately to compensate for the fact that, in your mind at least, you failed to keep Evie alive. That you failed as a father. You won't believe me now that there was nothing that you could have done to change the end result, but that's a lesson that you are going to have to learn for yourself. You'll get things into perspective after a while, be calmer, and then you'll forget and slip back into the abyss again. That's just the way it goes. Don't set the bar too high.

You are going to find out very rapidly that you've caught some horrendous disease and that it is 'contagious'. A lot of people that you currently consider to be friends are really no more than just acquaintances, that much is true. They are going to abandon you. You know what though, you don't need them. They are that piece of chewing gum stuck on your shoe, and now you can scrape them off.

But to compensate, there will be other friends that you are going to lean on and they will stand with you, shoulder to shoulder. You will see that some of them are amazing people that genuinely care for you. They are going to show you that they care deeply about you, and when the darkest times come, they can be called upon. They can't take the pain away, but they will listen to you when you need to talk, and will tell you the truth when you need to hear it, no matter if you want to or not. Listen to them.

At some point quite soon, guilt is going to slam into you, making you feel like you don't deserve to be alive, when Evie is dead. But you will figure out that you need medical help and that will give you the capacity to focus again. Don't be afraid of asking for professional help, both medical and for counselling. It isn't an admission of failure, it's reality. If your body is ill, you go to the doctor, so why is it any different if your mind is ill? The trauma of Evie's death is going to affect you in ways that you can't yet imagine, but at each step you will find a way through.

I won't lie, at times it will be tough going, but with the help of friends, you will find a way. A way that you have to find for yourself, because this journey is one that you are going to have to travel alone. Patsy can't help you because she is just as lost as you are and is travelling on her own journey. I would counsel now that you don't try to 'make her better', because that is impossible. It doesn't matter how much you want to help. I know that you would give anything to take on her burden, but you can't. There is no cure for this level of grief, no vaccine, no book to read with all the answers. Your usual behaviour of pushing hard to help her will have exactly the opposite effect and you will be wasting your time. Just be there for her. Listen, listen again, and listen some more. What works for you will not work for her. Time will not heal you. Time will remind you that there is a gaping hole in your life. The person that made you whole has gone. Time is cruel. But time will show you that, if you write down how you feel, that as each month passes, things do change. They evolve. They aren't 'better' but they are different. They can become more manageable. You can look back at what you wrote and see how things have changed.

The best that you can hope for is that after enough time has passed, you will be at peace with Evie's death. You won't 'accept' it. You'll never 'accept' it. 'At peace' is as good as it gets. Whoever wrote about the stages of grief and put acceptance as the last stage, clearly didn't have the faintest idea of reality. But you'll live with it.

The path to that place is long, and I can't tell you how long it will take because so many things change, and just when you think you've reached it, something will kick you in the face and send you back into oblivion. But you'll come out the other side, wiser and a little stronger each time.

Those significant days of her birthday, Christmas Day and the anniversary of her death will be bad. But nowhere near as bad as the days leading up to them. Don't fight it. You need to experience it, so that you are ready for the next one. Contrary to what you might expect, they won't get easier, but you will know that you've got through it in the past, so you can get through it again.

You will have to find a number of ways of coping because some won't work when you expect them to. There will be days when you need a large drink and that's okay. There will be days when you just want to sleep and that's okay. There will be days when you rage at the world, and at God, and at anyone that happens to be in range. And that's okay too. There are no right and wrong answers, just what is. But the biggest warning I can give you is that this journey, this pain, is yours and yours alone. Only you can work through it, but the love of a wonderful wife and your friends will help you. You are going to have to be resilient, to accept that some days you will just wish it was all over, and others when you are almost normal. The things that you had accepted as 'right' or 'normal' have changed for you now. Your boundaries and values will change, your attitude to life and others will change beyond belief. You will lose the colour in your life; everything will become black and white.

In the coming dark weeks and months you are going to feel utterly lost. You aren't going to feel numb, just becalmed. You are going to have to create a direction for yourself, to force yourself to have a goal, something artificial. But you know that, because it's your default position, but what you don't yet realise is that those goals need work, and will need to be refreshed every now and then. You don't solve these problems, you just make them quieter for a while.

Like I said right at the start, there's no cure, so don't waste your energy looking for one. Get used to uncertainty, indecision, and a lack of motivation that will scare you. But know now that each time when you slide downwards, it will eventually stop, and you will crawl back up again. I can tell you that you have the toughest finger nails in the business. You are going to have to ride it out each time, don't try and fight it.

When a wave of sadness comes, let it break over you and it will pass.

Sadly there will be people that try and take advantage when you are at your lowest. Again though, you'll figure it out and rid yourself of them.

Finally, the feeling that you have had about your marriage will be proved right. I say 'feeling' because you've never worked together, so you've never seen it in action. Together, you are greater than the sum of your parts. $1 + 1 = 5$. Together you will overcome a staggering amount of pain. Learn very early on that because you were so different before Evie fell ill, it shouldn't be a surprise that you are different after she died. But that means you have different strengths, different skills and together, you can deal with anything.

So I guess what I am trying to tell you is that I can't help you to avoid the bear traps, those painful times, because they will define how your grief changes. You are going to have to go through it regardless. Just don't try to go through it alone. You don't need to. Ask for help, because it will be there when you need it.

Me x June 03, 2020

walkingoneggshells.squarespace.com/blog/a-letter-to-me

Bryan's book Eggshells is available at www.tcf.org.uk/books

Gratefully reprinted from Autumn 2020 - Compassion | www.tcf.org.uk

Getting “Better”

As I write this, the fourth anniversary of my son’s death is days away. Every year when the calendar turns to October my thoughts turn to all the “lasts” we experienced with Chris—our last Parents’ Weekend, our last family celebration, his last visit home, our last hug good-bye. October is painful; it represents the moment in history that divides my life into the “before” and “after.”

Life “before” was good, our family was happy, the future was bright. Life “after” had been a struggle to survive unspeakable pain, reestablish a new normal, and face a future that is littered with shattered dreams, assumptions, and expectations. The person I am now barely resembles who I was four years ago. I have gained an acute awareness of suffering and a heightened sense of empathy yet I have lost the ability to dream, the luxury of lightheartedness, and what it feels like to experience joy. The best of times I have a tenuous peace with sorrow; in my worst moments I am consumed by a profound sense of emptiness. At all times I ache with missing him, an ache I expect will never cease. How could anything or anyone fill his place in my heart, my mind, my soul? It is his space, his and mine; it is sacred.

And yet, as I recently admitted to a select few, I have begun to feel “better.” Better does not mean I am “moving on” without Chris, that I am “getting over” the loss, or that I am regaining my former self. For me, better means learning to coexist with the sorrow and letting go of the “why?” There isn’t an answer to the why that could possibly satisfy me that could make me say, “Oh, so that’s why he died. Now I understand. I’m okay with that.”

Learning to live with mystery is akin to admitting that there is little in this life that we actually control; the only thing we do control is how we react to life’s experiences. In the case of losing a child, the option to choose is very slow in coming because the shock is disabling and prolonged. Eventually the opportunity to choose comes, but it is not easy or simple or even obvious. To choose to let go of the blackness is a choice that needs to be made each and every day—consciously, actively, and repeatedly. Feeling better is a journey not an endpoint. I will never stop loving Chris; never love him less than completely and wholeheartedly. For the rest of my life I will regret that he is not here to share, to love, to experience, to be. Despite all the pain and heartache, I thank God every single day that I had him for 21 years. I wanted more—for him, for me, for my husband and girls, for everyone who loves him. It was not to be. I am grateful for what I had. Perhaps that is what “better” is all about.

Sue Dudek (We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2009 The magazine of The Compassionate Friends)

Lend Me Your Hope

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily,
Pain and confusion are my companions.
I know not where to turn:
Looking ahead to future times does not bring forth
Images of renewed hope.
I see troubled times, pain-filled days, and more
tragedy.

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Hold my hand and hug me: listen to all my ramblings,
Recovery seems so far distant.
The road to healing seems like a long and lonely one.

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Stand by me,
offer me your presence, your heart and your love.
it is so real and ever present.
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting
thoughts.

Lend me your hope for awhile,
A time will come when I will heal,
And I will share my renewal, hope, and love with
others.

Anonymous

Reprinted from Autumn 2020 - Compassion |
www.tcf.org.uk

Just let me be sad

We live in a world where—if you have the means—pain and suffering are to be avoided at all costs. We are always looking for the next “quick fix” to alleviate discomfort with the least amount of effort required. In many cases, this means treating the symptoms while ignoring the root cause of the problem. In the United States, we live in a society so uncomfortable with emotional pain that when someone dies, society expects the outward mourning period to end once the funeral is over. When the bereaved do not cooperate with these prescribed time tables, they are often accused of “wallowing” in their grief. They are indignantly told to “move on” and “get over it.”

Do these statements mean prolonged outward grief is a sign of weakness? Maybe self-pity? Perhaps it means they think the bereaved secretly enjoy the pain, and the attention it brings? For those of us who have lost someone dear to us, we know that it could not be further from the truth. If we could, we would give ANYTHING to not feel this pain. The hidden meaning behind these statements is that our outward projection of sadness is an unwelcome reminder of all the negative emotions they’ve managed to stuff deep inside until the pain went away. I see it kind of like “out of sight, out of mind.”

So which is healthier? To bury the pain, only to have it lie dormant until some tragedy unearths it again—but this time stronger and more painful? Or to acknowledge that there is no quick fix to alleviate the overwhelming pain of losing someone you built your life—and in some cases, your identity—around?

I would equate the first option to following the latest fad diet to lose weight without exercising or changing your eating habits. Maybe you’ll pop some appetite suppressing pills and lose weight in the short term, but the chances of you keeping the weight off are slim, and the reality is that the next time you try to lose weight, it will likely be harder than the time before. The second option would mean facing the harsh reality that transforming your body to a stable, healthy weight requires permanently changing your eating habits and amount of regular exercise. It probably even requires you to readjust your expectations of what your ideal body should look like (sadly, most of us will never look like supermodels or pro athletes). In other words, the second option is HARD WORK, but it has the greatest likelihood of becoming a permanent reality.

But if I’m being honest here, I have to admit that given the opportunity, I would have gladly chosen to bury the overwhelming pain when my daughter died. Suppressing pain and emotions is what I had done my whole life until that point. The fact is that the pain of losing someone I loved MORE than my own life was too much to bury. I reluctantly—and resentfully—took on more pain than I could bear. I did so because I had no other choice.

For the first time in my life, I learned how to slowly take small steps with that unbearable load on my back. I learned that by sharing my story and my pain with others—whether it was support groups, counseling, or with other bereaved individuals - the load was reduced, even if it was only a very slight amount each time. By reducing the load over months and then years, it became easier to carry. I have since come to understand that the load will never fully go away, but I have learned how to balance it with the rest of my life. And as time goes on, the balance will become easier still. That is not to say that occasionally, the load won’t suddenly feel nearly as heavy as it did when my grief was new. And when it does, I’ll remember how to go back to taking small, careful steps until it feels lighter again.

To all those who cringe in discomfort when they see me experiencing outward emotional pain, I say this: just let me be sad. My intention is not to make you feel uncomfortable. I don’t expect—or want—you to follow in my footsteps. But I do expect you to respect the path I have been forced to take on my journey through life. I truly hope you never have to carry this load yourself.

Maria Kubitz, TCF/Contra Costa County, CA In Memory of my daughter, Margareta

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

The harvest of your grief work

“It isn’t right! I go a month sometimes and don’t cry. I actually get involved in something and don’t think about my daughter for hours. I had fun at the company picnic last week.” “I feel so guilty. Am I forgetting my daughter?”

This mother was two years into her grief. She was doing good grief work—leaning into the pain, talking out feelings, expressing emotions and attending Bereaved Parent’s meetings regularly. But she was hurting less. When parents begin to reap the harvest of their grief work well done, they fear they are losing their children. The truth is they are just reaping the harvest of their grief work done well.

In the first couple of years, pain ties us to our children. During that time we equate pain with love. By the time we are beginning to resolve our grief (and that is what is happening), pain has been our companion for so long we feel lost without it. This is one of the few places in grief where our mind needs to take over for awhile. We need to look at the illogic of prolonged grieving. We need to see that we are beginning to reach the goal we hoped some day to reach.

Self talk can help us rid ourselves of this illogical emotion. Ask yourself: If you believe to keep your child in your heart for the rest of your life, you must hang onto the pain. Will your prolonged misery make your child less dead? Does the fact that your child is dead mean that you must die also? Does your prolonged misery accomplish anything? What purpose does it serve? Will hanging onto your pain make you grow and change, or will it make you unhappy and bitter? What effect will your prolonged grief have on your marriage and/or surviving children? Do you really want to stay in the pit indefinitely? Will your continuing grief honor your child?

These questions can help you see that beginning grief resolution is as healthy and normal after a couple of years, as allowing yourself to enter fully into your grief in the early months after your child has died. Rethink your reactions. Let yourself get to the other side of your grief. Let yourself appreciate the peace and comfort that is beginning to be yours. Most importantly, let yourself feel the joy of remembering your child without the deep searing pain you have felt for so long.

Margaret Gerner, Bereaved Mother St. Louis, MO

Taken from Bereaved Parents/USA WEBSITE, the National Newsletter,
A JOURNEY TOGETHER. www.bereavedparentsusa.org.

Reprinted in Minneapolis newsletter

People are forever changed by the experience of grief in their lives. We, as humans, do not “get over” our grief, but work to reconcile ourselves to living with it. Anyone who attempts to prescribe a specific timeframe for the experience only creates another barrier to the healing process. —Alan Wolfelt

Why We Will Never Get Over It

Child loss is never over.

It is a loss that spans a bereaved parent’s entire life.

This is why we will never, ever, get over it.

Because “it” is our precious, irreplaceable child.

There is no getting over it.

There is only love (and pain) to be bravely and courageously carried—for a lifetime.

—Angela Miller

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg

PLEASE, SAY THEIR NAMES

The time of concern is over. No longer are we asked how we're doing. Never are the names of our children mentioned to us. A curtain descends. The moment has passed. Lives slip from frequent recall. There are exceptions: close and compassionate friends, sensitive and loving family. Still look. Still ask. Still listen. Thank God for them. For most, the drama is over. The spotlight is off. Applause is silent. But for us the play will never end. The effects on us are timeless.

What can be said, you ask? Please say "their names" to us. Love does not die. Their names are written on our lives. The sound of their voices replay within our minds. You may feel they are dead. We feel they are of the dead and still they live. They ghost-walk our souls, beckoning in future welcome. You say, "They were our children"; we say, " They are". Please say "their names" to us and say "their names" again.

It hurts to bury their memory in silence. What they were in flesh is no longer with us. What they are in spirit stirs within us always. They were of our past but they are part of our now. They are our hope for the future.

Please understand we cannot forget. We would not if we could. We know that you cannot know, yesterday we were like you. Understand that we dwell in both flesh and spirit. We do not ask you to walk this road. The ascent is steep and the burden heavy. We walk it not by choice. We would rather walk it with them in the flesh, looking not to spirit worlds beyond. We are what we have to be. What we have lost, you cannot feel. What we have gained you may not see.

Please say "their names" for they are alive. We will meet them again, although in many ways we've never parted. Their spirits play light songs, appear in sunrises and sunsets. They are real and shadow, they were and they are. Please say "their names" to us and say "their names" again. They are our children and we love them as we always did. We love them more each day.

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears. If you are really my friend, let me hear the beautiful music of their name. It soothes my broken heart and sings to my soul.

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Queensland Chapter Newsletter

The Well

Living life without your child is like falling, quite by accident, into a deep, dark well in the wee hours of the morning. At first your entire body is underwater. You can't breathe. But that's okay, because if you don't breathe, you will die. You're not sure you want to live anyway. After all, dying means you will be with your child.

Then, without willing it, your body's natural buoyancy brings your head above the water. It's your body's survival-mode kicking in. You're able to breathe, but treading water is hard work. The water is bone-chilling cold, and you think it just might be easier to give up and drown. Even that is a scary proposition. Living isn't easy, and it's just too darn hard to die!

Outside the well, the sun begins to rise, and you catch a glimmer of light. Hope! Hours pass, and the sun is now high in the sky. With the added light, you notice a ladder for which to climb. But it is slick with slime. You attempt to scale the ladder multiple times in search of the bright sunshine. Sometimes, you only make it a few steps and fall. Then, there are times when you successfully climb nearly to the top, only to make one false move, and plummet into the frigid waters once again.

Climbing the ladder, like your grief journey, is a large, arduous process. Sometimes, it's one step forward and then two backwards. But eventually, you find your way out of that deep, dark place. Still, the memory of falling into the well will forever haunt you. I wish I could tell you that you will never find yourself in that well again. But sadly, if you are a fellow traveler, I can tell you that it does happen. An unexpected event, a memory or comment takes you back to the early days of your grief, where you miss your child to the depths of your soul.

But there is good news. Those days grow less and less. The sun begins to shine more often. When you fall into that deep well, you have become more adept at crawling out. You are stronger and braver. You find more joy than sorrow in your life, and for that, you are grateful!

Anne Lloyd Grief Digest, Volume 16, #2

Page 13 TCF Otago October Nov 2020

Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News



Sibling Page



It's Never Too Late to Grieve

How do I make peace and forgiveness with myself for not grieving and mourning my sisters Margie and Jane for 30 years? It is more the regrets, of years lost, of memories forgotten, of a soul missing, of dreams shattered, of a hole in my heart.

Was the pain too hard? I got used to being so alone and having no one to share my grief or my sisters with. I had no one to walk with me on a path so complex and confusing I did not know how to navigate. I also lacked understanding of being my own advocate and my own voice. In our 20s, our lives are so precarious, evolving our own course of growth. In 1981, at age 25, I had been thrown a tidal wave of loss. What do you do? How do you know what you need or how to ask for help? I can remember there would be times driving in the car and a tsunami of sobs overcame me for no reason. I cried uncontrollably. I guess a part of me did not believe or did not want to believe Jane and Margie's deaths were real. I felt completely crushed. Is this my life? How could this have happened?

My memories are fragmented at best and one stands out vividly. One of my mother's friends said to me to not be upset because you will forget what your sisters look like and not recall their voices. That always horrified me. I never wanted to forget.

Suppressing the grief for 30 years impacted this nightmare. As I began the process of remembering and reached out to Margie and Jane's friends, my heart warmed that after so many years, Margie and Jane are not forgotten. Their friends share stories that I am now ready to hear. I only wish I reached out to them earlier. The funny, the sad, the hard, the challenging, all of it, no more secrets, encompassing the sum of my beautiful sisters and part of me. I need the entire picture to feel whole. Jane's friend told me how they used to go through my room and how adamant Jane was that they put everything back just how they found it. I find this so funny as I always thought Jane did not think of me cool enough for her and her friends. A friend of Margie's shared with me with how Margie took her to an event that changed her life and career in a positive way. Other stories not so colorful and enchanting but still part of the total package about who my treasured sisters were.

A part of me is distressed that I cannot recall what were my sisters' favourite colors? What did we fight about? Laugh about? What were their favourite foods? Their favourite games? Our best kept secrets?

Now as I look at pictures memories are beginning to return. The small details really are not important, what is important is who my sisters were and how much love we shared. Thirty years is a long time. My daughters are about that age, longer than my sisters lived, half of my life, but never too late to grieve.

Will I ever make peace and forgive myself? I am working on it. The process is incredibly difficult. I think a piece of me will never forgive myself. I do need to have compassion for a young woman who at age 25 and 33 faced tragedies and challenges alone yet preserved her life as best she could. My life forever changed. I changed. My relationships changed. Is this what I dreamed of, of course not. This is me, my life, who I am. Change can define a new outlook, new beginnings, reconnections, and a deeper empathy and compassion for self and definitely for others.

Written by Judy Lipson

Lifted with love from TCF Queensland Chapter 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.

From the Ashes of Grief

In the early morning fog of a spring day,
The sunlight drifts slowly across the lake
Lifting the dark shadows of night.
The honking geese frolic in the early morning Rays
of sunshine
While the birds sing of promises yet to come.

Through the dark clouds of grief,
Slivers of sunlight filter down.
The pain and fear residing in my heart
Is starting to give way
To the hope of finding joy once again in my life.

The warmth of the sun flows through my body
And now I feel and see flickers of that joy.
It is but a fleeting moment in my thoughts.
But it fills me with the hope of perhaps
Finding peace once again.

The forever tears cleanse my heart and pain.
They pave the way for love and laughter
Once again in my life.

My heart will forever be empty from the loss
Of my precious child.
But the sparkling sunlight spreads light around
that hole in my heart.
Gentle healing is beginning; springing anew
From the Ashes of Grief.

Lana Golembeski, TCF/St. Paul, MN

Winnipeg

I'm Caroline, Mum of Lance, who died two years ago at almost ten months old. We put to bed a happy and healthy baby boy but in the morning he was almost gone. He died from sepsis after a very short spell on life support. Lance has a brother called Austin who is five and we are expecting another baby in May. It was a very difficult decision and I'm full of worry but we feel we still have a lot of love to give. I didn't know what to do with myself on Lance's anniversary this year and found myself writing this poem.

Empty Chair

I sit here in silence; there's an empty high chair.
I'm so full of love but there's nobody there.
Silence is amplified; there are no squeals of joy
No screaming for lunch, no bashing your toys.
There is no mucky face to lovingly clean,
No sticky fingers, No baby to wean.

Much as you're gone, I still feel you here
Amongst all the silence, amongst all the tears.
Sometimes the silence is broken a bit...
A bird in a tree or the heating might click.
It's an odd situation when life must go on.
The world keeps on turning, there's stuff to be done.

As hard as it is, we are so glad you came.
We don't go a day without saying your name.
Your brother still loves you, as we do too.
How lucky we are to love both of you.
The silence has lessened, it's windy outside...
Reminding me of you watching the washing dry!
I would park you under the washing line
And you'd laugh as the sheets blew high in the sky.

Our hearts are still broken as they always will be
But sometimes I feel your strength in me.
It seems to be reserved for the most difficult days
When I look for you in so many ways.
The love that we shared can't be taken away;
The chair might look empty but the memories remain.

We promised you we'd do our best to stay strong,
To look after your brother and to just get along.
Know that you're with us in all that we do....
There is NO forgetting the wonderful YOU!!

Caroline Bignell

Page 15 TCF Otago October Nov 2020



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 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

COPYRIGHT

We are grateful for permission given to use material from other T.C.F. chapters, for our own, The Compassionate Friends (Otago Chapter) Incorporated, Dunedin New Zealand. All material is copy right to "The Compassionate Friends" and all is marked with it's Author and origin (if known). Copyright, All rights Reserved. Permission to use anything from this issue or other issues, must be sought in writing by contacting,

TCF c/- Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru. New Zealand. e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz Or by ringing Lesley Henderson, 03 4326004