

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 202

AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2024

Father's Day

Well, as much as I don't like to think about Father's Day, it's kind of hard to ignore it. All of the advertisements are in full swing on social media, websites, tv, radio and everywhere else I look.

It's not that I am afraid of this day, I just don't really know how to handle it. I don't have any living children to spend time with so I generally just spend quiet time with my wife. Most of the time we just stay around the house or go out for lunch. Maybe go for a run or a bike ride.

I don't know what it feels like to spend Father's Day with my children because they died before I got to experience this and other things a parent are supposed to experience with a child.

Very rarely do I hear from anyone on Father's Day. Most people probably don't know what to say or do, I get it. I do want people to acknowledge that I am a dad and that this day is difficult, but I don't like to hear "Happy" Father's Day, because it's not. There is nothing anyone can do or say to make it "happy." That's just the reality of it.

Instead of wishing all of you a "Happy" Father's Day, I am going to say, "I am thinking about you on this difficult day and wish you a "Peaceful Father's Day." Because one of the most important things to me is the feeling of peace. That is not an easy thing to come by after the loss of a child, but once you find it, it's invaluable.

Kelly Farley, Grief Watch

Reprinted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

YOU WILL NOT FEEL THE 'ALONENESS' OF YOUR GRIEF SO ISOLATING, IF YOU REACH OUT TO ANOTHER BEREAVED PARENT

RETURN ADDRESS
72 TOTARA STREET,
NEWFIELD,
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 021 2155279, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

*Life brings tears,
smiles and memories.
The tears dry, the smiles may fade.
But the memories will last forever.*

*Crystal80.
Lifted from Facebook*

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Brian Thomas Booth
Shane Coster
Sashi Coulter
Michael Barry Duke
Kirsten Jane Maydon
Stefan David Maydon
Trinity Lea Taylor
Eddi Te Arihana Tutaki
Peter Gregory Warren
Dan Wells

Born 4/8/57
Born 16/8/77
Born 6/8/91
Born 25/8/68
Born 26/8/68
Born 14/8/72
Born 31/8/82
Born 1/8/74
Born 31/8/62
Born 13/8/86

Brian Thomas Booth
Jason Bradley Burford
Christopher Burke
Shane Coster
Andrew Meldrum Cox
Henare Wiremu Fielding
Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton
Hayden Ivan Pope
Brendan James Vass
Haydon Ross Whitaker

Died 26/8/58
Died 25/8/13
Died 22/8/00
Died 16/8/77
Died 15/8/68
Died 2/8/02
Died 29/8/01
Died 11/8/08
Died 8/8/05
Died 19/8/04

Terry Barnfather
Richard Craig Bell
Jason Bradley Burford
Christopher Burke
Bevan Andrew Hookway
Greg Holley
Erica Kewish
Hollie Jay Kirk
Gordon Legge
Pauline Anne Newall
Cameron Smith
Gary Brendon Thompson
Ryan Ashley Thompson

Born 3/9/1953
Born 11/9/1987
Born 25/9/1993
Born 12/9/1998
Born 9/9/1990
Born 12/9/1978
Born 11/9/1995
Born 11/9/2012
Born 22/9/1976
Born 10/9/1962
Born 25/9/1999
Born 27/9/1968
Born 30/9/1985

Greg Burns
Sashi Coulter
Michael David Cox
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell
Nicholas Evan Hood
Hollie Jay Kirk
Anthea Gail McDowell
Logan Scott O'Hara
Georgia Rose Poplawski
Thomas John Poplawski
David Massey Reid
Cameron Smith
James Wing

Died 21/9/2004
Died 6/9/2006
Died 20/9/1996
Died 22/9/2004
Died 23/9/2004
Died 11/9/2012
Died 2/9/1987
Died 28/9/1999
Died 2/9/2005
Died 2/9/2005
Died 13/9/2000
Died 23/9/2015
Died 6/9/2000

Last night South African time- David Kessler had an open group discussion on Father's day when you have lost a child. If you are interested in listening to David-open up the below video in your browser and listen to the thoughts and comments from David as well as the people who sent in questions.

<https://www.davidkesslertraining.com/father-s-day-grief-2024-replay>



Dear Friends,

Hello everyone and a special hello to all Fathers who will be navigating another difficult day. Editing this newsletter this month always makes me realise how lucky many of us are to have such supportive husbands and partners.

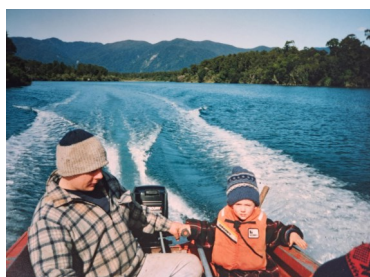
My partner is never home for Fathers Day as he leaves mid-August to head to the West Coast for 3 months whitebaiting. My youngest son and I generally go over for a couple of weeks during the season but it is very uncommon for us to be there for Fathers Day. Of course Guy is the strong silent type and even if we were there he probably wouldn't talk about how he is feeling, however I do know that he grieves and misses Ben as much as I do.

Cascade, where Guy whitebait, was Ben's favourite place to be and until he was about 8 we would join Guy for the 3 months and Ben would do correspondence school. Cascade is a wee boy (and a big boys) paradise. Bush, boats, water, fishing, sandhills and beaches. Ben was a very capable boat driver from the age of 6, first of the outboard and quickly graduating to the jet boat. Ben's headstone is a rock we sourced from Cascade, carrying it a fair distance along the beach to the boat.

Cascade is full of special memories of Ben and it is nice that even if Guy is there without us, he is surrounded by great memories.

To Guy and all fathers I wish you a day of happy memories and family and friends who will be there to support you and acknowledge the day.

Take care,
Lesley Henderson.



Central Otago Compassionate Friends.

Kia ora dear friends,

Father's Day is such a tough one....

Our hearts go out to our Fathers, & in particular those recently, tragically bereaved whilst not forgetting other family members....

We will continue to offer a listening ear over coffee at the Clyde Post office cafe on Sunday first September @ 10.30 , & again on Sunday 6th October.....

Our AGM will be held @ Alexandra Community House, Centennial Avenue Alexandra @ 7 pm, Monday 7th October.
All welcome!!

Do look for the encouraging signs of spring emerging in our gardens!!

Again please remember that I am always available, either on the phone, (027 309 1246) or by email: janpessione@xtra.co.nz

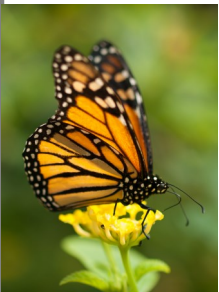
A warm hug winging its way in your direction For you ALL.....

Jan (Pessione) Chairperson.

The Butterflies are Coming It's Spring!

The butterflies are coming.

Many of us at TCF hold the butterfly with utmost regard, for it is a symbol of our child's life after death.



We think of our children being born into a free and more beautiful existence after the drudgery of a caterpillar's life here on earth.

But what about us? Does the butterfly hold an even deeper meaning for bereaved parents? It seems, in fact, we have died also.

We are never the same after the death of our child. But, can we be transformed into a beautiful creature, or are we doomed to be trapped in the web of a cocoon forever?

I believe it is simply a matter of choice.

We can stay in the silken threads which we have spun for ourselves. It's quite safe there. Perhaps if we isolate ourselves with a really tough cocoon, no-one can ever reach in far enough to hurt us again.

But if we take a chance on emerging into a new person, the light of our children's love will have a chance to shine through our newly-formed wings.

It won't be easy. The grief cocoon holds anger, fear, guilt and despair. But we can work through it.

In fact, there's no going around it. All butterflies must work their way through an ugly cocoon.

The butterflies are coming. Won't you join them?

by Kathie Silief - TCF, Tulsa Oklahoma - taken from Johannesburg Chapter, Sept 1998 and reprinted in NSW Focus Newsletter



IT COMES IN WAVES...

For the past 10 days, I've had the joy of actually taking a "real" vacation. I've been on the panhandle of Florida near Pensacola on Navarre Beach. Every morning I watch the sun come up and every evening I've witnessed glorious sunsets. We've watched dolphins greeting us in the early morning as they feed right off shore, found so many seashells as we walk most days. My favourite and most cherished find was the sand dollar. I will carefully carry them with me on the flight home making sure they are safe and in one piece when I return to South Dakota.



As I write this note to you all, I could not help but find many analogies to our grief and how this journey parallels the ocean, the beach and all it teaches us. I've often used the analogy of grief coming in like a tsunami, rip tides that will pull you under and sweep you out where you feel as if you might drown, calm waters that give us respite and peace. The tsunami of grief comes in and destroys all that we know. The death of our precious child is that tsunami. It takes all that we knew to be beautiful, delightful, and loving and leaves us feeling like we will never be the same, life isn't worth living without the one that gave us so many reasons to get up every day and be grateful.

This week, I heard from a family whose son died by suicide. She was desperately wanting support; she found BP USA and reached out for that life line. There is no Chapter near her...perhaps someday she will want to pay it forward and start one. Perhaps when she is at that place where she can move to her "calmer sea", she will be able to rebuild.

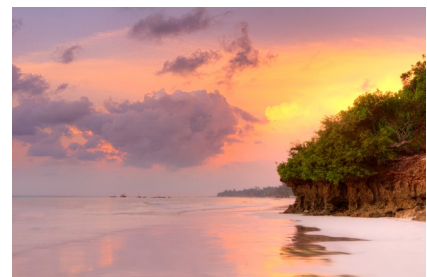
I thought also about the beautiful "sugary" sand that I walked in these past days. I could be walking along and it sometimes felt like cement and then it would be washed away by the waves and my footing didn't feel so secure. I would then move closer to the berm away from the pounding surf. The sand was deceiving there as well. It appeared to be easy to move forward but there again, I found that it was a struggle. It was sometimes hard work to move forward.

I know that our grief journey is also like that. We struggle every day to find our footing. To get out of bed each day...meet the demands of life without our children. In my early days of mourning, I would say to those around me (if they really listened), "the sun comes up every day and sets in the west everyday". "The world didn't stop the day my world ended". "When will this thing I hate most ever go away?" "Will I ever have faith again?" "Will I ever experience joy again?"

My dear friends, this much I know to be true...the answer is "Yes". It has been 13 years this December 24th since my son was killed. Early on, I would never have believed that after my tsunami and all it destroyed in its wake that I would find treasures left for me under the pile of wreckage. Each one of you that I meet, speak with through emails, telephone calls and letters are my treasure". You are precious to me; I wrap each one of you up and carry you just as I will my precious sand dollars.

Delain Johnson, BPUSA Board President

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg hapter Newsletter





Father's Day

Grieving Dads

What is traditionally a day of celebration (socks and jocks as presents) takes on a whole different meaning for grieving dads. It is truly a day of conflicting emotions. On one hand there is the joy of getting presents from my daughter on behalf of herself, Zac and Sean. On the other hand, there is the sadness that my sons are not where they should be.

In my experience, when Zac and Sean died, I entered a state of existing in the moment. I had to handle the here and now as this was all I could cope with. There was no guarantee of the future as this could change in an instant, so there was no point thinking that far ahead. I did the things I was socially expected to do, like plan the funeral. Like many men I focused on what I was expected to do not what I needed to do. Societal convention told me that, as a man, I am the protector of my family. I was not able to protect my sons (as one grieving dad said to me: I fix things, but this is something I cannot fix). However, I needed to protect and support my wife with her grief.

I like to call this the stoic husband syndrome: We set aside our own grieving as best we can (suck it up/harden up/drink a cup of concrete) and focus on our wives because this is what social convention says we should do. We kid ourselves by saying that they are the ones that are suffering more and need to be cared for or protected. As many men do, I went back to work, not because I wanted to, but because I had to. Grief does not pay the bills. In public I put on the "I'm OK face". I honestly don't know why as no one was going to approach me if I broke down or really ask me how I was coping. In a strange way some people treat grief and the death of children as a disease. That in some way they might get infected by speaking to me, or they fall back on "I don't want to say anything as it might upset you". I became very good at compartmentalizing my grief. I would put my grief or bad feelings into a box and place it in a well inside me and this allowed me to function each day (or so I thought). Like many, I filled the day or space with things to distract me on how I was truly feeling. Eventually though the boxes in the well will break open and the well needs cleansing. It was sort of like if I pretend for long enough that I'm OK and that everything is normal then the grief would go away.

I work as a secondary school teacher and in the past we have had staff and students die. So as a school and workplace we have had to deal with significant grief situations. We have had the education department crisis team visit us (to provide counselling) and the focus has always been the same: "Let's keep the students and staff routine as normal as possible". So that's what I did, tried to keep things normal.

I now realise that this does not work for those directly affected by the death of a child and it often causes more harm. I do not expect others to continue to grieve with us. However, it is wrong for others to expect that after a short time our grieving should be over and we should return to the person we once were. This is never going to happen. We will forever be grieving parents. We do not move on, we change. Sometimes these changes are for the better, other times for the worse. There is no complete solution to dealing with grief when your children die. In a strange way grief becomes part of our connectedness to our children that are no longer physically with us.

I find this to be significantly true for men who have had a child die before or soon after birth. Put simply, we do not have many memories to fall back on. When I reflect on what has worked for me they fall into two main categories:

- a) Finding/reading resources where other fathers share their experiences and thoughts (online or in print media). I found Kelly Farley's book "Grieving Dads- to the Brink and Back" and his website grievingdads.com very helpful. This book/website includes a lot of stories by real dads and their experience when a child dies. They do not purport to offer a specific solution; however, there is comfort in the fact that the ranges of emotions you are experiencing are shared in common with other dads. I think Kelly's book and website appealed to me because it gives men their own voice. Many of the very good resources dealing with the death of a child are often written by women. These do not always connect with fathers. Kelly's book often explores some very dark places. He sums it up well when he says: "this book is not about butterflies and rainbows" or "this isn't an Oprah book club book"

b) Sharing thoughts and experiences with others when the rare opportunity presents itself. This tends to be through articles like this one or in the 'local', participating in the PEP (Parent Enrichment Program) weekend offered by SIDS and Kids, speaking with counsellors that have specific knowledge and experience in dealing with bereaved parents, or talking with other bereaved parents. In some ways the talking to other parents gives me a chance to talk about my boys. All parents love to talk about their kids. Unfortunately the majority of society, including family, finds this conversation too confronting, so they remain silent.

I should explain that as I live in a remote rural town in Victoria the opportunity to share experiences with other dads occurs very infrequently and the availability of a variety of specific support services are poor. Like other men I have good, bad and very bad days. On these days I am likely to get Kelly's book out or visit the grieving dads website. Readers will note that I have not used the word lost. Personally I dislike the word. I have not lost Zac and Sean. I know where they are. They have died and I feel this better expresses the true tragedy of what has happened.

Wayne Bandell

Reprinted from NSW Focus

If you've never lost a child please don't try to placate me, for you'll never understand.

The heartache and pain never leave you, your love for your child will never die. Time does not heal you, you only learn to exist the best you can. I know I'll never be the same. A large part of me is missing and is not coming back. Memories are all I have, and although I'm glad I have them, the pain of remembrance is sometimes overwhelming.

Did you walk your daughter down the aisle and see her marry someone she loves? I never will. Are you holding your precious grandchildren? I never will. Does she still say I love you Dad? Words I will never hear again. All of her dreams and mine for her will never be realized, all yours were. I have no choice but to react with anger to the fools who expect, after three months, for me to be over it. I can only pray you never lose your child and feel the anger I feel toward you for **your** insensitivity and ignorance.

A father who lost his precious daughter like yesterday. - Derek:
Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg

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.



Losing My Son: Reflections Ten Years Later by Jon Meltzer, Lovingly lifted from www.allianceofhope.org/ten-years/

Ten years ago, our 39-year old son Robert took his life. Ten years since our hearts were smashed into pieces, our world ripped apart, and we joined an exclusive club no one ever asks to join. The shock and pain that followed I do not need to describe. You who are reading this already know those emotions all too well.

Ten years later, the tidal wave of grief that ripped loose the footings of our lives has receded.

The pain is still there but manageable, and the fog of fresh grief has been lightened by the clarity of time.

For those of you whose grief is fresher, I write this – hopefully, to offer something that resonates and makes traveling the grief highway just a bit easier.

That first year was absolute hell. The pain was so acute at times I literally could not breathe. I managed to get through the first couple of weeks by focusing on making the funeral arrangements, cleaning out Robert's apartment, settling his affairs. Afterward, back in our new reality, it was a different story. The warm cocoon of caring relatives and friends went back to their lives, the world moved on. We cried every day, and every night, and when we finished crying, we cried some more. Finding a skilled grief counselor and a support group at Friends for Survival was a godsend. I needed to pour out my heart; my friends from "before" cared but could not understand what I was going through. Being with people who knew firsthand what it really is all about made all the difference. I learned that with suicide, too many of us tend to chomp down on our feelings, to squeeze off the tears. We try to bravely soldier on and tell everyone we're fine.

Don't. Ignore your emotions, and your grief will just fester until the inevitable day of reckoning. When things got overwhelming, which was pretty much every day, I climbed on my exercise bike, determined to ride till the pedals or I fell off, whichever came first. If that did not unbottle things enough, I would listen to the most tear-jerking, rip-my-guts out music I could find. I also started journaling like crazy when I was awake and whenever I woke in the night – which was often.

By the second year, the grief was duller but just as painful, maybe even more so as the numbness wore off. It would have been all too easy to shut down and just go through the motions, to just shout, "I'm not here anymore and I'm not returning!" And like many of us, I kept trying to find out why, to recreate Robert's life in the months leading up to his suicide. I talked with his friends, read his text messages, scoured his bills. Did it help? Perhaps, but it did not change the reality that my son was dead. And it opened way too many futile 'what ifs and if only's.' Birthdays and holidays were a challenge, particularly the first ones. Holidays can be grim sentinels bearing harsh witness to all we have lost. So, we found new ways to commemorate, if not celebrate, those days.

Somewhere around the seven-year mark, I had pretty much forgiven everyone else, except for one person – me. Robert and I were good friends as adults, but I was not the father I should have been when he was growing up. I wondered if God was punishing me for when I had been insensitive to others, too self-centered to notice that someone I loved was hurting. I truly believe, though, that God does not hurt others to punish us for our own misdeeds, and that the first heart to be broken when my son killed himself was God's. If I was really going to heal, I needed to forgive myself – a work still in progress. In the interim, I've managed to negotiate a truce with myself.

This is what I have learned ten years later: My grief was not only for my lost son but also for what I lost of myself as well. A loved one's suicide is not something we get over, nor even get through, rather it is something we come to terms with over time. By accepting our grief and loss as part of who we now are, we gradually heal. Our 'new normal' does not mean that we are doomed to a lifetime of just going through the motions; we can re-engage in living fully. We discover that the hole in our heart can hold both joy and sadness, laughter, and tears at the same time. There are no shortcuts – the only way to come to terms with grief is to grieve. Be patient with yourself – let time do the heavy lifting of healing. There is no timetable; every person's grief is unique, so do not let anyone else tell you when grieving should be over.

This Father's Day, when we visit Robert's grave, there will still be tears, our hearts will still ache. But there will be smiles and laughter as we remember our Robert and the light he brought into our lives.

The sadness of his absence will be joined by a calm acceptance holding us tight. Remember to be gentle on yourself, my fellow traveller, as you walk this road. Your family needs you; you need you. Sometimes it will seem you are not making any progress, just going in circles or even backwards. Be patient and stay the course. It will be the hardest work you will ever do, but I promise you with all my heart there will come a time when the road levels off, when the dark gives way to light, when laughter and joy return, and you realize within yourself is a strength you never knew you possessed.

Reprinted from Compassion TCF UK

Rolling Along like a Bent Penny

"How are you doing?", the most common question that I get asked. As my Grandad used to say, my answer is now, "Rolling along like a bent penny!"

That one little phrase describes quite accurately what it is like three years after Evie died. It is rare to find something so simple that sums up something so complicated. It's all down to the imagery that it conjures up. Most of my days wobble along but generally head off in the intended direction. Never straight or swift, just drifting along, gently meandering about a bit. Every now and then, the 'penny' hits a speck of dust and wobbles quite violently, but it doesn't quite fall over. The oscillations can be quite disturbing for a while, but soon enough it goes back to the random wobbles. Every now and then, the penny diverts and performs a small loop or even heads off in a new direction for a bit. It is almost as if the penny has a mind of its own. Sometimes though, the wobbles become so bad that the penny falls over completely. But unlike 3 years ago when Evie died, and even for the following 2 or 3 years, somehow, and I have to confess that I have absolutely no idea how it happens, the penny is back up again after a short interlude and carries on rolling along its wobbly way.

This is the biggest change in my life. The getting back up part, happening almost without me noticing. Periodically, it seems as if the penny is taken off to a workshop or smithy and given a bit of a pounding to try and get it back into shape. But just like a car panel that never looks new after a bump, so the penny is back to its wobbly ways soon enough. That's what post-child-death life looks like. And if that's as good as it gets, then I suppose that's good enough. I've learned to carry the pain, to live with it and recognise that it is what I look like now. Bruised, dented and prone to falling over every now and then. But ... I get back up again because I have survived the worst that this world can throw at me and I wobble off into the future. I tried running from the pain, but the pain is part of me, the pain honours Evie and it forms the wobbles. It knocks me down occasionally.

It is who I am.

Bryan Clover tcf.org.uk/news/guest-blogs/rolling-along-like-a-bent-penny/

Reprinted with love from NSW Focus

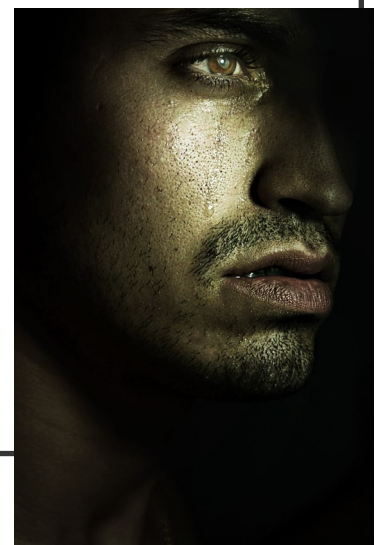
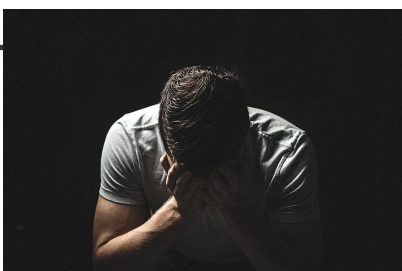
Tears were streaming down Roland's face, and she sensed his anger at being seen like that, stupid anger, as if tears made him less of a man and less of a baron.

She heard him mutter 'Can you take away this grief?'

'I'm sorry,' she replied quietly. 'Everyone asks me. And I would not do so even if I know how. It belongs to you.'

Only time and tears take away grief; that is what they are for!

From: I Shall Wear Midnight, by Terry Pratchett.
Reprinted from UK Childless parent newsletter



Fathers of Loss Support Series: Rory's Story

Fathers of Loss Support Series:

Meet Rory, proud dad of three beautiful boys, Leo, Sonny and Bodhi. Sadly, Leo was stillborn in 2018 at 34 weeks gestation. Leo was his first child with wife Bel. Rory is best known as the Former Captain of the Adelaide Crows, and as the co-founder with Bel of Lion Warrior.

One of the most heartbreaking moments I've ever felt was watching our son be taken away to a funeral home before he'd had a crack at life.

I always wanted to be a Dad. We had a little trouble conceiving, so we ended up going down the IVF route.

When we were pregnant with Leo, we had a little ritual of me talking to Bel's belly each night. It was a pretty cool feeling. But that night, we couldn't feel him. We were never too concerned. We just thought Leo might be sleeping. But we rang the obstetrician who told us to head to the hospital, but even they weren't worried as we'd had a scan only six days earlier.

When we got there, we were told he'd died. From there, we had so many decisions that needed to be made. We went from deciding how Belinda was to give birth to our son to organising funerals and what to do with his body. I remember sitting there and watching Belinda push and Leo's head coming out. And there was just silence. I've never been more happy and sad at the same time. I was so happy to finally meet our little boy, but to not hear him cry and to feel how cold he was. It was heartbreaking. It was a weird range of emotions.

I was flat and angry for the coming days and weeks. We had no answers and didn't know why. Not having answers at all made it hard not to feel angry.

How I feel now Now that time has passed I feel happy. We have a beautiful little angel who looks over our family. Of course I still wonder what he would have been like playing with Sonny, how he would have grown up. I wonder what type of big brother he would have been. But if Leo wasn't stillborn we probably wouldn't have had our Sonny and Bodhi.

Grieving process I wish I'd known how to grieve properly before Leo died. We did find our own way at the start. Bel helped me grieve, and I helped her and we leant on each other. Our family and some friends coming to meet Leo was massive for us. It was good for our friends but it really helped us to have them understand how important it was to treat him as our child. Using his name and talking about him was so important to Belinda and myself. One of Belinda's friends brought in a polaroid camera and we have some beautiful photos and we made sure we took lots of them.

I wish I had known it was ok to grieve in different ways. I was angrier than Bel, and I was trying to help cheer her up when all she probably needed was a cuddle and for someone to say, 'we'll get through this together.' I think I just tried to fix things too early. Spending time in my own emotions helped me. I spent a lot of time surfing.

Belinda was obviously physically and emotionally drained after what her body had gone through. But when you've been carrying a child for 34 weeks, physically you've gone through the whole birthing process, but there's no baby there afterwards. I wish I had been more patient with our grief instead of trying to rush it.

Advice for other dads and their friends To other dads, make sure you talk. Share your emotions. We had help from a counsellor and that helped us to normalise our feelings and to understand what each other was going through. For friends and family make sure you acknowledge that their child was here and born. Use their name. It's simple but so helpful. If you can and they want them there, go meet the child. Make sure you keep checking in and ask how they are going. Don't avoid speaking about the situation and their feelings. The thing that helped the most was people reaching out to us. Especially people who had gone through the same thing.

Remembering Leo We have plenty of rituals to remember Leo. We still have Leo's ashes and the whole family says goodnight to Leo every night. After the stillbirth of Leo, Belinda and I reached out to Red Nose to create Lion Warrior. We wanted something positive to come out of losing Leo. Lion Warrior raises funds in Leo's memory. With funding going to reduce the stillbirth rate in Australia. We also created a documentary called Lion Warrior which tells the story of our beautiful Leo

Rory Sloane. From rednosegriefandloss.org.au Reprinted with thanks and love from NSW Focus 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.

A Peek Inside

I am in a dark place.

I look to escape,
But unseen walls contain me.

I hear a little boy crying,
But I cannot find him,

I cannot help him.
I start running
Trying to get closer,
Trying to get away,
I am going nowhere.

I can sense his presence,
Reaching out to touch him,
Trying to feel him,
Straining to caress him,
I long to hold him.

I cry out for help,
But no one can hear me,
No one can help me,
I feel so alone here.

I have somehow failed him,
In some mysterious way,
I should not be here.

I must continue searching,
Whatever it takes.

I am in a dark place.

Mark Miller
Winnipeg

Heartfelt

I held your hand
until it went cold.
Not letting go
of the love I hold.

I held my tears
so you wouldn't know.
How broken I'd be
if I let you go.

I held my breath
so you could hear
That yours was saying
"I'm still here"

I held myself
with your embrace.
Whilst your presence
was my saving grace.

I held my voice
and it's silent words.
So you wouldn't know
that I was scared.

I held your hand
until it went cold.
Then an angel came
and took a hold.

Joanne Boyle—Heartfelt
Reprinted from Facebook.



pt 2024

As Grief Takes Hold Search for Happiness

Losing a child or a loved one unexpectedly, you know immediately that your life is changed forever. So when something like this happens, it shakes you to your core. There is no getting over it; the only way forward is to manage through it. It's like driving into an unexpectedly dense fog on the road; instantly, you can't see anything. You don't know how long it will take to make your way out of the fog; for long periods, you wonder if you will ever see the clear road in front of you again.

Grief is the complex despair that sweeps through you like nothing you could ever imagine. You exit it as a different person when you profoundly loved and lost. When you experience acute grieving and prolonged mourning, the sadness is intense. You look at the intensity of Grief and don't see any light. There seems to be no escape from these feelings.

But the intense feelings and emotions become easier to bear as time passes and you do the right things to heal. A bereaved parent will live in a fog for many months and feel that happiness is no longer possible. When feelings are raw, this is your mindset. When you are in deep Grief, it is so powerful that it is scary. You become reluctant, to tell the truth. You fear that people will think you have lost your healthy state of mind.

So what did I do? I will tell you this. I embraced my Grief, accepted it, and understood that my emotions would emerge unexpectedly. It will pass in time once you embrace it and stop avoiding it. You will begin to feel better.

The second thing that helped me tremendously was to "count my blessings." We are all blessed in many ways. Even though our hearts are broken, many things to remember bring joy. You may have other children. Are they healthy? There are many things to consider, and once you start realizing all your other blessings, it may ease the pain of losing your child just a little bit.

Moving Forward

My belief was not moving on but only moving forward. Moving forward is taking something with you. Moving on indicates leaving something behind. You realize that you will never leave the memory of your loved one behind. These are unbearable expectations. Everyone's journey is unique. It is unhealthy to avoid Grief and suppress the emotion. You accept the wailing and tears. The stages of Grief are not necessarily the same for everyone. There is no time limit, no formula that one must follow. I remember praying for a time limit to my Grief. You want to know when the pain will end. Everyone grieves differently, and there should be no guilt about how you handle the sadness. It takes time to pick up the pieces and start living. No two relationships are the same. Your relationship with your loved one is unique. It gave me peace knowing that I would take all the time needed to survive and get well mentally and physically.

Your bond to your loved one

People close to you mean well, but sometimes you might be offended. It is essential to understand that people mean well. I needed to tell people how close my relationship was with my child. Your attachment to your child and the nature of the relationship is unique. Your bond is exceptional, and the beauty of your relationship is a gift. You realize the joy of your relationship and accept the depth of your Grief. You cannot follow someone's else's roadmap in dealing with Grief. It does not work, and it may not fit you. So I decided to visit my daughter's gravesite on a regular basis. Pictures and videos were my way of healing from Grief to remembering all the special moments. But you can get overwhelmed looking at pictures and videos excessively, to the point of harm. You choose your own path. You can't compare your Grief to another person's Grief. Your time is your own; it becomes a precious thing to embrace.

Expressing your emotions

Expressing your innermost emotions is a healthy way forward. You must believe this is a strength, not a weakness. Appropriately express your Grief and do it your way, whether in private or to a trusted friend or family member. You cannot numb your emotions or run away from deep feelings. You will find that you usually feel better after a good cry. If you suppress it, you may fail in the long run. You will feel much different, and you will see yourself changing.

So how do you see yourself?

You are a bereaved parent now and are not the person you were before your child's death. As a result, people will see you in a different light. That can be good, but you may realize that others may avoid you. Grief scares many people, and it is difficult in our culture for some people to feel comfortable talking about or even acknowledging the death of their child. You will realize that you must carve out a new identity, but it may take time to redefine yourself.

Ronald Ross The pain of losing a child is only compounded by the crushing weight of knowing you must live the rest of your life without them. In author Ronald Ross' debut, *No Greater Pain*, he speaks to parents everywhere who have suffered the devastating grief of losing a child. Ron shares his vulnerable feelings about losing his daughter, and desires to help others who have suffered a similar significant loss through his personal experience, readings and research.

We Need Not Walk Alone

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

A message from NSW Chapter President Chris Hardwicke—NSW Focus Newsletter

“Unable are the loved to die, for love is immortality” - Emily Dickinson

I am so very grateful to the group of volunteers that spend endless hours searching, proofing, and adapting articles for this magazine. I have not met anyone yet within the membership, that hasn't found value within these pages, but the work in creating such a publication is huge. My limited involvement might mean I cull various lengthier articles to fit within the word count of each page – but at the same time, it gives me the opportunity to read so many inspirational stories of survival from parents, siblings, and grandparents who have lost loved ones and are prepared to share their experiences, in an attempt to help others. Each and every one appears resilient, at least that was the word that comes to mind – but is that the reality, is that my reality, have I become more resilient after my loss? And I'm not sure that I have, or that the word “Resilient” truly encompasses how I feel.

In the face of grief, we often hear words bandied around like, “Resilience” (a strong, speedy return to the original, after being bent or compressed), “Overcome” (to get the better in a struggle or conflict, to prevail), “Recover” (to get back, to regain) and “Control” (to maintain influence or authority) – suggesting that grief is a monster that we should fear, battle, fight against and ultimately prevail.

But grief is more: it is adaptive, it is an injury to the psyche and the soul and as painful as it is, it is the way our psyche can heal. Just as a wound to the body heals via the new generation of tissue, so grief is the natural yet anguishing mechanism and allows and invites the deepest part of ourselves to heal and to grow – albeit with the scars to tell the story.

So instead of terms like resilience, overcome, recover and control, I consider that my own story might incorporate other words, words like “Fortitude” (mental and emotional strength in facing difficulty, adversity or danger, especially over a long period), “Bear” (to carry and endure), “Courage” (to have the mental and moral strength to deal with something that frightens you), “Transform” (to change in form, appearance or character).

This feels closer to my reality. I am a very different man and grief has changed me. Changed me to a point that old friends now see something very different, that they don't recognise or know how to deal with, whilst others understand and accept – without question or need to try and recapture. It's a long journey for each of us, but a journey that we share together and can understand. I hope that my thoughts resonate with some of you and that you're reassured that for each of us, the journey may take different paths, but each of us tread on the same squelchy ground.

Hugs to all, Chris

Gratefully reprinted from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter



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 night-mare.

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.

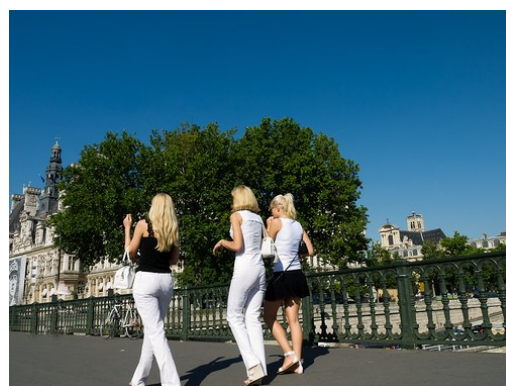
Jane's friend told me how they used to go through my room and how adamant Jane was that they put everything back just how they found it. I find this so funny as I always thought Jane did not think of me cool enough for her and her friends. A friend of Margie's shared with me with how Margie took her to an event that changed her life and career in a positive way. Other stories not so colorful and enchant-ing 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' favorite colors? What did we fight about? Laugh about? What were their favorite foods? Their favorite 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 Queensland

Reprinted with love from TCF Queensland Newsletter.



I Am The One

I am the one who heard my mother's terrified screams
 I am the one who ran to the house
 I am the one who watched the twins
 I am the one who saw my dad cry for the first time
 I am the one who had to hold my sister
 I am the one who held my sobbing grandmother
 I am the one who could not sleep at night
 I am the one who told my mother it would be alright
 I am the one who thought their life was coming to an end
 I am the one whose brother was murdered

He was the one who was always there for me
 He is the one who made me laugh
 He is the one who made me cry
 He is the one who had a shoulder to cry on
 He is the one who all my friends thought was cute
 He is the one who always stood up for me
 He is the one who lifted my spirits when I was down
 He is the one who always talked my mom out of grounding me
 He is the one I ran to with my problems
 He is the one who was murdered

Jennie Walker ~In Memory of My Brother Shane~
 Angel Moms Newsletter, July 2002
 Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News





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.



o you need to talk? Our telephone friends are willing to listen..

Telephone Friends

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngair 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	Jan Pessione (Acting Coordinator) (16 yr old daughter, accidental) janpessione@xtra.co.nz (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	03-4487800
CENTRAL OTAGO	Pauline Trotter (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611
INVERCARGILL	Josie Dyer Vanessa Young (Jaylene 6yrs chemical poisoning) Southland Coordinators	0276321742 0273562271
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	021 688504 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
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



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