



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 178

JUNE JULY 2020

## Someday

**Someday, it won't hurt so bad and I'll be able to smile again,  
Someday, the tears won't flow quite as freely whenever I think of what might  
have been,  
Someday, the answers to "why" and "what if" won't be quite as important,  
Someday, I'll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with  
their grief.  
Someday, I'll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell  
on your death,  
And someday, maybe tomorrow,  
I'll learn to accept the things I cannot change...  
But for today...  
I think I'll just be sad.**

-Steve L. Channing, TCF/Winnipeg  
In memory of Kimberley Susanne Channing  
Lifted 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**  
52 SUNRISE DRIVE,  
SEAWARD BUSH,  
INVERCARGILL  
9812  
NEW ZEALAND

**TO**

# OUR CHILDREN

Children's names appear in this column if parents ask when they complete their annual donation form. You are also able to e-mail, write or phone me to have your child's name included.

This column includes names of those children whose anniversary or birthday occur in the months that the newsletter applies for.

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included.

Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs.

Please contact me on 03 4326004, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail [tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz)



**When you believe in Angels...  
You have friends in high places**



## Our Children ... Remembered with love

**Forever Young      Forever Loved      Forever Longed For**

Matthew Alexander Birtles	Born 17/6/2004	Claire Benicarke (Mary Schiehsel)	Died 10/6/2004
Richard Cowie	Born 1/6/1974	Stefan Francis Cockill	Died 28/6/1994
Sophie Kate Elliott	Born 11/6/1985	Heath Neil Colina	Died 1/6/2002
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Born 29/6/1968	Matthew William Ross Dryden	Died 24/6/2005
Daniel James Gillies	Born 22/6/1986	Ian Peter Foley	Died 24/6/1987
Robbie Knight	Born 9/6/1975	Allan Stephen Hobbs	Died 27/6/1998
Claire Jillian Tairaoa	Born 25/6/1978	Callum Warwick Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Ross Templeton	Born 22/6/1996	Keryn Sarah Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Brendan James Vass	Born 30/6/1986	Shaun Matakai	Died 27/6/2003
		Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Died 5/6/2006
Mitchell James Beaumont	Born 13/7/1976	Claire Jillian Tairaoa	Died 19/6/1997
Heath Neil Colina	Born 18/7/1981	Melissa Jane TeHuia	Died 21/6/1998
Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Born 2/7/1975	Ben Watt	Died 3/06/2005
Ben Paul Gillanders	Born 13/7/1977		
Matthew David Innes	Born 27/7/1987	Terry Barnfather	Died 11/7/2000
Jake Lucas	Born 10/7/1978	Matthew Alexander Birtles	Died 1/7/2007
Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Born 9/7/1974	Marcus Fitchett	Died 18/7/1996
Brent Allan Stenton	Born 19/7/1974	Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Died 2/7/1975
Julie Barbara Warren	Born 9/7/1961	Vicky Knight	Died 1/7/1980
Timothy James Williams	Born 6/7/1980	Aidan Samiel Konise	Died 23/7/2009
		Sara Loo	Died 19/7/2010
		Robert Shane McLaughlin	Died 4/7/2001
		Kirsten Jane Maydon	Died 23/7/1989
		Marie Anne O'Neill	Died 21/7/1985
		Julie Barbara Warren	Died 14/7/1985

Dear Friends,

I think we have all marked milestones and achievements on this journey of grief; the first time we laughed without guilt, the first Christmas that we actually half enjoyed, the first family celebration that we didn't cry at.

This week I have realised that I have reached another milestone—that of realising that I would be very upset if I knew I was dying.

I know this may seem like a no-brainer to people who have not had a child die, but for many bereaved parents, we would happily die so we can be with our dead child especially in the early days. I realised not long after Ben died that I would never fear death again because death would mean that I could be with him again. In fact I used to pray that I would get a terminal illness! Even once I stopped that prayer I still felt that it wouldn't be all bad if I was to be dying.

However this week I realised that I would be seriously upset to be dying. I still have things I want to do, experiences and occasions to celebrate with my living child, and a lot more living to do. That's not to say I no longer want to be with Ben, and I do look forward to the day we can be together again, however, I know that when that happens it will be for eternity so for now, I want to live, I want to be here for my younger son and I want to make the most of every day.

And it's only taken 17 years!

Take care and take time to care for yourselves.

Lesley Henderson.

## Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora everyone,

We are so spoilt to be out of lockdown. Proud to be a New Zealander!

We have missed the opportunity to meet as a group over the lockdown period but there is an invitation now to meet at a mid-winter afternoon tea at Orchard Gardens.

Orchard Gardens are happy to make a special allowance for us to be hosted Sunday 2 August, 2.30pm. No agenda, no cost, just tea/ coffee and yummy food. Time to relax and catch up with each other and give support to newly bereaved families. It will probably be too cold to sit in the garden but Wendy and Dale will make the Tractor Shed available to us. If you have children with you, we can leave the doors open so that they can run "in and out." If you are on your own please feel free to bring a friend.

If you need a ride let me know, or Jan Johnson.

Louise: 027 650 8983

Jan: 03 4488360

Let's hope for a lovely fine day so that our families from outside of Alexandra/Clyde will feel like a drive. Who knows, spring may be around the corner!

Orchard Gardens is on Dunstan Road, between Clyde and Alexandra.

Kind regards,

Louise

## Book reviews for Newsletter

During Lockdown I have had so much time to catch up with admin for TCF and with the weather so nice I have spent most of my time in the garden.  
I did catch up with a couple of books that are worth a read.

### **Death expands us: An honest account of grief and how to rise above it.**

by Stephanie Harris.

Stephanie is a professional grief coach based in Auckland.

She has experienced great loss in her own life and writes honestly of her experience. Life will always go on after a death but we will be changed and will learn how strong and capable we really are. The book offers tools, strategies and inspiration for taking care of ourselves and build up our fortitude in grief.

Some chapter headings :

In the wake of the storm : Feeling sad isn't bad : Longing and pining : The quest for answers : Clearing out the closet : Finding peace and freedom

I found it easy to read, I tended to dip into it at times, rather than read it from cover to cover.

[www.StephanieHarrisCoaching.com](http://www.StephanieHarrisCoaching.com)

(Published by Lioncrest

ISBN: 978 0 47338817 1 :

E book available 978 1 619615601

Also....

A children's picture book

**Everyone walks away** by Eva Lindstrom published Gecko Press

ISBN9781776571864

Gecko Press is a reputable NZ publisher that find the cream of children's books from around the world. They translate them and make them available to us here. This title was originally published in Sweden.

Frank is alone and lonely and very sad. Friends walk away from him. He cries his tears into a pot and boils and sweetens it. A sad statement about a sad event. This book has few words and a rather open-ended finish, but evokes real emotions and in an eloquent way offers room for imagination and discussion about grief.

Keren Marsh

## Southland Branch of The Compassionate Friends

My name is Wendy, from Invercargill and I have been a member of TCF for over 23 years when I learnt about the organisation from a friend who gave me a pamphlet, after my son died in an MVA when he was 15. Back in 1997 we didn't really have the internet for support and going along to a group was pretty much the only option to be with people that really understood. Over the years I am still in contact with these people and one in particular has been a life line on many occasions as life throws things at you. June, lost her son two months after I lost my son and she lives in Nelson now but is still on the end phone whenever I need someone to understand and even now there are the times that it still hits home.

I have been printing the newsletter since 2014 after Lesley does so well at compiling it. When our chairperson Linda took over I think she was sending out more than 200 copies. At the present time I am printing around 30 copies per newsletter. Most chose to get it by email these days.

Our group does not have the monthly meetings but do have social get togethers about three or four times a year and that meets the needs of the members. I think we have only had one new member in the last five years.

Last week we had an overdue AGM with seven ladies present. Most were happy to continue with their roles. It was great to see a newer member take on the roll to send new bereaved parents the newsletter. It certainly helps that everyone does a little and not one person has too much to do. We also had to move with the times and go to online banking.

I look forward to contributing some reports for the newsletter as we all continue to support our fellow bereaved parents and siblings.

Yours with love,

Wendy Smith

Dear Bereaved Parents,

Since hearing about your unspeakable loss I have felt compelled to write you a letter. I hope you do not mind but I have often thought of you all over the last month as you struggle hourly to come to terms with your forever changed reality. Everything continues around you because you have been transported to another land where only grief exists. You are walking in territory which you have never seen before and I offer you and your family my sincerest condolences on the sudden loss of your precious child.

I am no expert on grief but I have and am still walking my own very difficult road. Our beautiful son Steve passed away suddenly in his sleep in August, 2010. He was 18 years old and the autopsy revealed an undetected heart defect. I understand now that there are no words which will in any way offer you any comfort at this time. The shock is so massive and intense, but at the same time it is nature's way of protecting and shielding us from trying to desperately understand, believe and absorb what has changed your entire future in a single moment. No two people will ever navigate this unknown path in the same way. Every loss is unique and the truth is, the worst loss is the one that is happening to you and left you struggling to put your life back together. The loss of a child is totally overwhelming, immobilizing and the pain goes far deeper than anything you will ever have experienced in your entire lives. All I can do is try and share a few things with you in hindsight as I look back over the last two and a half years.

I was unable to care for myself physically and emotionally in the beginning and my husband and daughter were drowning in their own grief so it was impossible for them to help me. People surrounded me with all the love, care and support they could muster and angels were placed into our lives to literally help us put one foot in front of the other. So many people wish to help in the smallest way possible, and let them. For a long time in the beginning I experienced confusion while listening to so many well-meaning and beautiful people trying with all their might to say and do the right things. I soon realized that people who have not walked this unknown path can never be expected to remotely understand this road of unspeakable anguish and horror. Since Steve's passing I myself have needed to ask for forgiveness from those people whom I may have unintentionally upset. As I reflect back, I only know tremendous gratitude to countless people who were prepared and willing to enter into my suffering and to remain beside me as I plunged into the darkest of waters. They held me when I believed that I would never see the light again. Grief compels us to feel in the depth of our beings the magnitude of our loss, but we do not have to do it on our own.

My angels have stood by me in my greatest hour of need and my wish for you is that you also be surrounded with those who are able to care for you and above all to help you learn the deepest meanings of hope, possibility and peace. Looking after yourselves may not be a priority as you struggle to make some sense of this devastating and allconsuming journey of grief, but it is probably the wisest and most courageous thing you need to do for yourself. Short walks, long baths, soothing music, nutritional supplements, lots of water and as much rest as possible will help keep your energy levels stable. I never realized how a massive loss depletes one's energy levels and stamina. You will feel now that grief is an impossible task - it is not quick and it is not easy but it is possible.

As time slowly passed grief did begin to loosen its grip on me, I began to trust again in the beauty of life, love and faith and most importantly glimmers of acceptance began to emerge. I do feel that I will never disembark from this journey. Within time the future which I once imagined for myself and which has now been shattered, will slowly and in God's time become something new and extraordinary. Trust in the sacredness of tears - they are a mark of power and messages of overwhelming grief and inexplicable love. I never realized what depths of human emotion were possible - feelings, expressions of grief which need to be released if healing and recovery is in any way possible. I kept a journal in the first year which allowed me to express freely and with total abandon so much anger, feelings of total despair and internal struggle. Now, two and a half years later as I re-read the notes I have to acknowledge how far I have come and what strides I have taken towards a new future. Believe in the power and miracle of grief - you will one day look back and be in awe of your courage and resilience. Darkness has descended upon you but please, no matter how daunting a task it may seem, you will be given the grace to survive. You will laugh again, you will find joy in special moments again, and your cherished memories will bring you happiness and not only deep pain.

My heart goes out to each and every one of you as you learn to navigate and find direction amongst your unbearable pain. May you all be given the strength and will to keep moving forward one tiny step at a time. *Jenny Bailey, TCF/Kamploops*

*Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News*

## **Grief and Gratefulness:** <https://stillstandingmag.com/2016/07/01/grief-andgratefulness/>

I never understood grief before, as naturally, no one truly should. I never understood the depth of pain a person could feel. I never understood the uncanny, subconscious ebbs and flows that can incapacitate the griever at any given moment. I never understood how draining sorrow felt, because the griever never takes a break from exerting emotional energy, whether it's living in the throes of early loss, or whether it's trying to reemerge to the land of the living.

However, the strangest phenomenon I never understood about grief is this: that gratefulness and sorrow can coexist within a broken heart.

The day after my son died was the first day I experienced this. When I kissed him goodbye for the last time, a tsunami of emotions engulfed me, and I helplessly succumbed, letting them wash me away. I was filled with deep sorrow, my limbs were stiff from shock, my heart felt cold, dry, suddenly forgetting how to beat. I walked and breathed and moved mechanically, on auto-pilot, in a heavy fog of darkness.

And yet, in the midst of the darkness, there was more, a concurrent experience of searing pain and quiet gratefulness.

The day after he died, I sat on the beige carpet of my tiny apartment, pictures of him strewn on the floor around me. My best friend beside me, piecing them into frames and collages, tears softly falling off my cheeks. We went about our work silently, as you often do in situations where all words fail.

Every picture told a story, and I was the only person in the world who could recite it all. My mind recollected, and as the tears fell, little smiles spread across my face. I broke through the hush and told her story after story. It was as though the dark curtains slowly were pulled away for only a moment, and joy joined heartache on the main stage. I was overwhelmed with pride in mothering a little boy who lived every day of his life exerting all the strength within him, sharing more joy than should be possible in someone suffering from sick lungs, and in being the recipient of that same boy's love.

I was the one who stole his adoring gazes. I was the one who made his face light up when his eyes locked with mine. I was the one who held him closely, his head gently resting on the nape of my neck. I was his safest place. I was his person. I am his mother.

Thankfulness brewed within me as I thought about the six months and seventeen days, I was able to hold his hand in this messy, beautiful world. Exactly two hundred days. Two hundred days, and my entire life was wrecked, hopelessly. And yet, as much as I wished that I could trade the shoes I was now filling, the shoes of the bereaved mother, I knew with utmost certainty and greatest conviction that I would never trade the role of being his mother: the only mother my son would ever had. And I was the only woman in the world to be given that privilege.

I hated my situation, and yet, I simultaneously felt like the luckiest woman in the world to know and love my son—the son whom I could no longer hold.

It's been over a year since he's been gone, and throughout this year, I've become intimately aware of the sacred dance between despair and gratefulness. I refuse to allow the tragedy of his death to negate the beauty of his life, the depth of his impact, and the sheer joy with which he lived his days. I refuse to allow the dark, necessary sides of grief to entirely overshadow the quiet whisper of gratefulness, appreciation, and gentle perspective that my son gave to me. Like anything in life, grief is not one-dimensional. It's complex. It's not one thing or the other, it's a coexistence, a powerful display of the deepest sorrow and the deepest love known to mankind.

Though we grieve, we do not have to be consumed. Deep pain and loss doesn't have to paralyze us. It doesn't have to embitter us or ruin us or sideline us forever. We may face irreplaceable losses and feel irretrievably broken so that the wholeness of our personhood is seemingly gone, and yet, adversity, loss, and heartache can carve us into gentler, more compassionate, more loving humans.

To be grateful and in grieving? I never understood it could be possible, and never, until loving and losing and still loving the one I can no longer hold.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg newsletter

## Now I See: Grieving and Raising My Grandchildren

You're coming home with us,' I said. My husband and I and our twin grandchildren were standing by the hospital emergency entrance. Nine months ago, their mother (our daughter) died from the injuries she received in a car crash. Now their father was gone, killed in another car crash.

The life I had known stopped and I was engulfed in darkness. Like the words of the famous hymn, 'Amazing Grace,' I was blind and couldn't see. The twins (one boy and one girl) were orphans and we were GRG, grandparents raising grandchildren. Would I have the energy to raise grandchildren? Could I grieve and stay upbeat for the twins? What would become of me? These questions haunted me and all I could do was put one foot in front of the other and keep going. For me, 2007 was a year of death. My daughter died, my father-in-law died, my brother died, and the twins' father died. I felt like I was lost in a dark, dense and brambly forest.

Years later, I could see the path, the steps I took, and the journey from darkness to light. You may be raising your grandkids and my tips may help you:

1. Eat dinner together. Mealtime isn't just about food, it's about family values, sharing news, and learning how to cope and solve problems. We expected our grandchildren to eat dinner with us. I'm a made-from-scratch cook and my grandchildren appreciated this, 'I love your salad dressing more than the salad', my granddaughter exclaimed.
2. Support school activities. We cheered our granddaughter at gymnastics and applauded our grandson's trumpet playing at concerts. Sometimes the twins asked me to help with their homework and I was glad to help. 'I'm only proofreading', I assured them, 'and won't change your style.' The twins appreciated my help and I was impressed with their writing.
3. Set new goals. Making it to the next hour was my first goal. Once I could do that, my next goal was to make it through the day, then a week, and then a month. Step-by-step, I inched my way along the recovery path. Though I took several detours, I kept moving forward. Setting goals gave new purpose to my life.
4. Practice self-care. Writing is self-care for me. Friends advised me to give up writing to care for my grandchildren. What a terrible idea. Giving up writing would feel like another death in the family. A week after my daughter and father-in-law died, I sat down at the computer and poured out my soul in words. I'm still writing. Put self-care on your To Do list.
5. Embrace silence. Like many who are grieving, I feared quiet times, the pain of these times and the disturbing thoughts I would have. But in silence - a few moments of meditation each day - I found a well-spring of strength I could tap again and again. Instead of avoiding silence, you may choose to make it part of your day.
6. Believe in yourself. 'I will survive this,' was my mantra and you can make it yours. Attitude has a lot to do with how we approach life and I gave myself frequent 'attitude adjustments'. When a negative thought came to mind, I balanced it with a positive one. This took practice, but the more I did it, the better I felt.
7. Trust life again. My grandchildren's trust in me enabled me to trust life again. A dozen years have passed since the twins moved in with us. Their energy and interests changed my life forever. Instead of me saving my grandchildren, they saved me. Both twins graduated from high school with honours. The ceremony was an emotional experience. A friend of our daughter was there and took a photo of the twins. He emailed the photo to me. Every time I looked at the photo I cried, yet I couldn't stop looking at it. What was going on? I studied the photo and realised I was crying because, for the first time, I saw hope in the twins' eyes. When I began this journey, I was blinded by sorrow. Today, I am living a new, happy life and immensely proud of the twins. My grandson is a senior at the Mayo Clinic School of Medicine. My granddaughter is an independent photographer and the mother of a new adopted 'greatgrandchild' - a darling boy. Death made me appreciate life. I'm a stronger person than I used to be. Most important, I know every breath, every moment, and every day are miracles. Just as the hymn says, 'I was blind but now I see'.

Harriet Hodgson Lifted with thanks from TCF Malta Journal.

Lifted with thanks from Compassion Spring TCF UK

## Week 272 by Maria Ahern

“So mum. I’m almost afraid to ask but erm... how was your weekend?”

James I fell off the stage!

“Yes I know.”

I banged my head and needed stitches.

“Yep, I know that too.”

And you also know how much I hate hospitals and how much I hate being unwell.

“Yep, all stuff I know very well. So then what happened?”

Well, the gathering that had been meticulously planned to the last minute all got thrown into disarray before it even began. I mean James, really, all 250 people were in their seats and I was just about to welcome them all to the beginning of the event when BANG. I’m falling backwards and cracking my head open.

No... before you ask... Not a drop.

“Heels?”

Nope. Flats.

“Nooooooo!!!! So then what happened?”

Well, I lay on the floor for a couple of hours while I waited for an ambulance and people were holding my head so that I didn’t move my neck in case I had broken it. And there was blood pouring from my head and people were looking after me and holding my hand and assessing me until the professionals arrived.

“Very dramatic mum. Trust you.”

I didn’t plan it James. It wasn’t the way it was meant to be.

“Just like life mum. Very unexpected. So what happened then?”

I was taken to the hospital, assessed, stitched up and then went back into the world, I mean, back to the gathering.

“You said ‘the world’.”

Well yes. Because it was kind of like...

“... kind of like the last 5 years?”

Yes exactly. So this is what came to my mind. I fell off the stage. I literally couldn’t move. I couldn’t talk either.

“Bonus.”

Ok cheeky. That bit didn’t last long. Anyway, it took me back to when my world collapsed five years ago.

“Yes, I see why you would say that.”

And as I was lying there, on the floor, obviously your dad was there so he was looking after me and there were some friends there too but also I was being cared for by people who were complete strangers to me.

“The paramedics?”

No, before that. People who were at the gathering and who had medical training and knew what to do.

Checking my vital signs, holding my head still, holding my hand and talking to me, keeping me warm. All that stuff. Giving me support and comfort while I was unable to function.

“And then?”

And then I got stitched up and came back to where I was before it happened.

“Were you ok?”

I was ok enough.

“Ok enough”? What do you mean, ‘ok enough’?”

I got back from the hospital and went to bed and the following day I carried on with helping host the gathering.

“But?”

But I was in a lot of pain and my head was stitched up. While I was at the hospital the nurse who was stitching me was saying things like, “Sorry, this is going to hurt a bit,” and I said, “Oh it’s ok,” but to myself I thought, Hurt? You have no idea what real pain is mate. This is nothing compared to real pain. And then he said, “It’s ok, at least it’s on the back of your head where no one will see the scar,” and I thought, Yeah, so now my head will match my heart.

“Wow, very poetic mum.”

But it’s true, James.

“And what about your speech?”

Well, I had to change it. I had to make adjustments and change the narrative because what I had planned to say didn’t work anymore. I now had a new story and it couldn’t be ignored. We do too much of that I think. Try to pretend things didn’t happen and just avoid the truth. I didn’t want to pretend. Wanna hear some of it?

“I already did.”

Ok, clever clogs. Humour me. Just some little bits.

“Oh, sorry mum, I’m being a bit slow. Yes, of course I want to hear some bits again.”



Good. Ok so: 'I fell off the stage... I think you will all agree that it was a pretty spectacular beginning to our weekend. It wasn't what I planned. But life doesn't stick to the script.

'What happened when I was lying there waiting to begin my recovery? An extraordinary thing happened; total strangers held my hand. Actually held their hand under the gaping wound in my head, got covered in my blood, and did their best to comfort me. Remarkable. As I have said many times before, strangers become friends very quickly on Planet Grief. And that is the essence of what we are here to commemorate this weekend.

'If this gathering is an analogy of life, then that is exactly what TCF did for me when the wound was in my heart rather than in my head. 'What happens when you fall off the stage? You assess. You accept help. You take advice and you adapt.

'This wasn't what I planned to be talking about. I had a whole different thing planned. But it happened, you all saw it happen and it can't be avoided. So, I made some changes and I adapted to the situation. Just like you all did when in turn you all fell off the stage and had to adapt to life without your children. 'Assess, adapt, adjust and acclimatise.

'Then what? Well, quite simply, you reclaim your place on the stage. Yes I'm in agony. Yes I'm finding it difficult to move around and yes, my hair is a complete mess. From the front I look fairly normal. Look, I can even smile, but when I turn around, you will see that I'm hiding a great big wound stitched together and covered by a bandage. That's what our life is now. Smiles and bandages. But I've made adjustments and I'm on the stage. Why? Because while I might be wounded, I'm a survivor too and I'm well used to living with pain. And also because to do otherwise would mean that I will miss things. The opportunities that present themselves in this gathering, just like in life, will be missed if I don't climb back on the stage and look for the rest of my story.

I can't predict how I will feel later. It doesn't matter. I just have to take each moment, each event, each day, one at a time and continue to assess, adapt adjust and acclimatise. Life and gatherings never go to plan do they?

'Retreating to my room was never going to be an option for me. There is too much to learn and too much to give in equal measure. I don't want to miss the rest of the gathering and I certainly don't want to miss the rest of mine and James' story out in the real world. I don't want to hide my beautiful boy and he needs me now more than ever to show him off to the world. We are both curious to know how our story continues and for both of us and for all of you, the story is not yet finished.'

There was some more James but that's the bit of which I'm most proud. You see, I've come to realise that I really do have the strength to carry on and be the mum that you were proud of.

"Am proud of mum. Present tense if you don't mind."

Ok. Present tense. I know that there will be days when I fall off the stage again. Figuratively I mean. The headaches like the heartache will, on occasion, make me feel like giving up. But I won't son. I won't say, 'It hurts too much,' and I won't give up. I will carry on doing whatever I set out to do and I will carry you in my heart while we continue our story.

"Well mum, now I'm lost for words."

Bonus.

"Ok, cheeky, it won't last long."

Haha, still a chip off the old block then, son?

"Yep, and a tough old block at that. Good job mum. You just keep on keeping on and please try to rest a bit while your head recovers."

And my heart?

"You leave your heart to me toughie. I'll look after that one."

Ok Son, it's all yours. Help me stay upright though will you please?

"I'll try mum."



## Sanjai

It was Monday June 9th, 2008, a hot summer's day, I left for work as usual. Sanjai was fast asleep after a late evening shift. He had 2 days off work.

I remember I had a horrible day at work & couldn't wait to get home. When I got home my 'ex' partner was in - he said Sanjai had gone kayaking, he'd given Sanjai a lift to his friends after Sanjai had cooked brunch for the two of them. Sanjai was never one to sit at home doing nothing. Not once in his 19 years did he ever say he was bored. He embraced life and all it has to offer.

As I started on dinner the doorbell rang, I opened the door to 2 policemen asking if I was the mother of Sanjai Chauhan. When I answered yes, I was told that Sanjai had been reported missing and that I needed to go with them. I wasn't even thinking about the fact that he had gone kayaking, I was just puzzled as to how my son would be missing. I got into the back of the police car, my ex sitting next to me as we were blue lighted to where Sanjai was last seen. I was constantly calling his mobile but his phone just went to voicemail. I can still remember sitting in the back of police car, the sirens going and feeling sick as the police car sped through the traffic and round the bends at high speed. Finally we parked up at a dead end and I was told we needed to wait for the local police who would tell us what was happening.

After what seemed like forever my ex turned and said "Mala, the way the police are dealing with this something serious has happened". I looked at him and suddenly it hit me. SOMETHING SERIOUS HAS HAPPENED TO MY SON

Finally the chief of Essex police came, I cannot remember what exactly he said to me, but when he led us to where Sanjai had capsized, the second I approached the water my heart knew Sanjai was there in the water. We were then taken to a nearby bridge away from the search party. I remember standing there in a state of numbness. There were all these people around me, yet I was alone with the silence in my head at the fear of my son being lost forever. I can't start breathing or think about anything until Sanjai is found and I can see he is safe and in front of me.

The night was drawing in, it was getting darker and darker and still no news of Sanjai. Then the chief of police walked up to me and said they had no choice but to call off the search and start again in the morning.

How can I leave my son alone in the water and go home????

How?

How is a mother supposed to do this?

This is the moment when life as I knew it was gone forever. This is the day Sanjai died and this is the day I stopped living.

Family have abandoned me (apparently I should have moved back to Birmingham if I wanted support) . Friends have slowly gone because they don't understand or have time to understand the magnitude of a mother's grief.

TCF is now my new family. Bereaved parents are now my new friends. So I thank you TCF for always being there and for all you do to help me cope with my new life.

Sanjai was love, he was joy, he was laughter, and he was my reason for living. But most of all he was and always will be my one true gift of life. He was my compass star and I am now forever lost without him.

Mala, mum to Sanjai

Gratefully reprinted from Newsletter for Childless Parents | [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

# POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

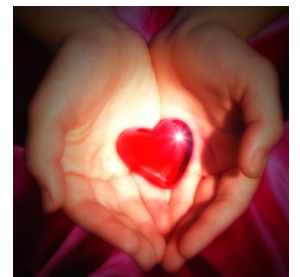
**You are all invited to submit poem's, in memory of your child/children. These may be original poems or one that you have read which means something to you and your loved ones. Please remember to add the authors name if known.**

I was working in casualty in a London hospital in the 1980s when a seven year old girl was brought into hospital after drowning in a swimming pool. I helped care for the parents and was deeply moved as they held their precious child in their arms. It was one of the worst situations I found myself having to cope with as a young student nurse and I wrote this poem, Forever Young. It brings tears to my eyes as I type it out, having lost my own son just before Christmas 2014 aged 22. He was hit by a car while taking his early morning cycle ride. I now understand the unimaginable grief and loss of those parents. The words I wrote then are true for the experience of losing my own child, though I wish I could have held him in my arms. As a sudden accident I never got to say goodbye. He will be Forever Young. Sue Trickey

Farewell,  
my child,  
My precious one,  
My joy,  
I cannot cry for you,  
Tears will not come.  
I will weep for you one day,  
Someday soon  
A pool of tears for you,  
But,  
For now - numbness,  
Overwhelming numbness;  
Gripping me,  
Engulfing me  
I will remember you,  
Always,  
Just as you were,  
You will not grow old,  
In my memories  
You will be forever young.  
My sweet innocent child.  
I will remember Sunny Days,  
Fun,  
Laughter,  
Holidays,  
Happy Days.  
Your smiling face,  
Embracing you

Alone for the last time,  
Cradled in my arms,  
I say my final farewell.  
I gaze at your face,  
Are you not just sleeping?  
Will you not awaken?  
That you would just move,  
Or utter one last word.  
I want to shake you to life,  
But no,  
You are gone.  
To another place,  
To a better place?  
Gone before your time  
Who can accept the death  
Of an innocent child?  
So young,  
So much to live for.  
The bells of Heaven  
Will be ringing  
To welcome you home,  
You will be safe there,  
Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Warm in his love,  
Waiting and watching  
From Heavens windows,  
To an earth below,  
Who is missing you,  
Farewell my child,  
Farewell.

Lifted with love from TCF Compassion UK Newsletter



## The Power of Rituals to Heal Grief

Four questions can help develop a ritual for honoring loss and healing grief.

David B. Feldman Ph.D.

When my mother was only 18 years old, her boyfriend suddenly broke up with her. Like would be the case for most of us, she experienced a mixture of shock and sadness.

Luckily, her brother Richard, who had been through a similar experience, knew just what to do. He picked her up in his late-1960s Firebird and took her to the local A&W Root beer stand. There, they sat together. They didn't say much— just gulped down root beer floats.

When Richard recently passed away at the age of 65, my mom also knew just what to do. In silence, she drove herself, now in a mid-2010s Toyota, to the local A&W Root beer stand. There, she ordered two floats and drank both of them. Rituals are an important way for people to find meaning when they lose a loved one. Everyone is familiar with rituals. Perhaps you've performed them during holidays, in church, or even before ballgames. You may have performed rituals to acknowledge important life changes—graduations, retirements, and even funerals. But, much like my mother's spontaneous visit to the root beer stand, they don't have to be formal.

The power of rituals lies in their symbolism. Consider the ritual of graduation. Walking across a stage and shaking someone's hand is no big deal as an act in itself. We walk all over the place and shake people's hands all the time. But this act takes on special meaning when it's performed at graduation, symbolizing an important transition.

Another symbolic ritual involves wine. Although drinking wine with dinner may be pleasant, the same activity takes on powerful meaning during certain religious services. The symbolism in these rituals can fill us with emotion, give us goosebumps, and punctuate the important events of our lives. Research even shows that some rituals facilitate the body's release of endorphins, which can help reduce anxiety and physical pain.

But few people realize the power of creating their own rituals. An acquaintance of mine, Donald, was only 38 when he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was a professional photographer, making most of his living snapping photographs at weddings. Nonetheless, he loved taking photos in a nearby nature preserve, where he could be found on his days off. Although he never shared these pictures with anyone, taking them was one of his great loves. So, shortly after Donald was first hospitalized, his father decided to visit the nature preserve. He brought along an old, 35-mm camera and took photographs that he thought his son would enjoy. Donald loved them, and a ritual was established. Every time he entered the hospital, his father would visit the preserve and show him the pictures. For Donald, this ritual was meaningful because it shared his great love of nature with his dad. For his father, it was meaningful, because it kept a piece of his son alive and well. Eventually, Donald passed away. To this day, however, his father visits the preserve four times a year, once for every season. There, he speaks to his son, takes a few pictures, and doesn't show them to anyone.

Rituals are actions that symbolically connect us to something meaningful. They can be comforting, express feelings, bring about a sense of closure, or keep an important part of the past alive. When rituals are done to commemorate a loss, they honor both the person who is doing them and the person they've lost.

Although most people think of rituals as formal and even complex, creating a personal ritual can actually be simple. Here are four questions to help develop a ritual that will be personally meaningful for you:

### **What is the meaning of your ritual?**

A good place to begin in developing a ritual is to determine what you'd like it to mean. Among virtually limitless meanings, rituals can be used to mark a life change, celebrate or commemorate an important memory, carry on an activity for a person who is no longer present, or connect us with living or deceased loved ones. For my mother, the meaning of her ritual was to connect with her lost brother and provide comfort in a way that was linked to their history together.

**When and where will the ritual take place?** Although rituals frequently take place on important dates, such as birthdays or anniversaries, they can happen whenever and wherever it feels right. You may decide to do them only once or repeat them once a year or several times a year. Although churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious or spiritual places are common settings, rituals can take place anywhere. Consider what settings might connect you to the meaning of your ritual. Although most people wouldn't consider a drive-thru/restaurant to be a "sacred" space, rituals have a way of bringing significance to almost any location.

**Who will be present?** Rituals can involve other people or be performed alone. Consider whether or not having others present will enable you to connect more fully to the meaning of your ritual. For example, a ritual frequently used in psychotherapy to help heal emotional wounds is for clients to write a letter expressing their feelings toward a person who has wronged them. Provided that the wrongdoer is still alive and accessible, a question that often arises is whether the letter should be shared with him or her. There's no right or wrong answer to this question, of course. The important thing is that this decision reflects the goals of the ritual. Sometimes, the ritual needs to involve another person. Other times, it can seem more meaningful to do it alone. Some clients who write the aforementioned letter, for instance, find it most symbolic and healing to do something like burn the letter and scatter the ashes.

**What will be done?** Reflect on what kinds of actions or activities will most connect you with the meaning of your ritual. These can require anywhere from seconds to hours, depending on what you feel works best. As mentioned previously, however, try not to get caught in the trap of thinking that rituals have to be complicated or lengthy. Some are, and some aren't. For my mother, an act that most of us would do mindlessly—enjoying a root beer with a dollop of ice cream—took on poignancy because of the factors mentioned above. Formal rituals like funerals or memorial services are important for many people when they lose a loved one. But sometimes, the most meaningful rituals are those that are more personal and tailored only for you. And a little root beer never hurts, either.

### When My Daughter Is Dead, And It's Her Birthday

Tomorrow is my daughter's second (still) birthday.  
I don't know what to say.

If you're reading this, you probably know what I mean.

How to describe the rippling ache whose circles widen but never disappear?

How to communicate how she is still an important part of my family, my life, even though she is dead?

How to answer those who tell me to move on, that it's unhealthy and uncomfortable, and couldn't I just shut up about this whole dead baby thing already?

How to celebrate her birthday when she is not here to enjoy it, when the decisions I must make of how to remember her are incapacitating?

And how do I describe just how exquisitely and excruciatingly she has changed my life, myself, the trajectory of my days and years and heart?

How do I put words to the love and gratitude I have for this tiny little girl who never breathed?

Tomorrow is my daughter's second birthday.

She died. I birthed her.

I held her body and said goodbye, but it was not goodbye.

It was an end, and a beginning I carry her with me still, her memory and my love for her.

It is impossible for me to do otherwise.

This is not a choice.

It simply is.

Some days it is beautiful to be a mother to a daughter who died, and some days it is an eternal, devouring aching.

Today is one of those days.

I don't know what to say.

Beth Morey

Lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News





# Sibling Page



**What I Still Can't Do** By Kellyn Shoecraft –with gratitude to [modernloss.com](http://modernloss.com), where the article originally appeared.

Ten months after my sister's death, I can laugh and smile. I can sometimes care about other people's problems. I can't listen to voicemails or write thank you notes or stop waiting for the other shoe to drop.

As I am writing this, it's been about 10 months since my sister's unexpected death. A short enough time that I can think back to a year ago today when life was significantly better, but a long enough time that it feels like I never had a sister. Within days of her death, it kind of felt like she had been gone forever. I have a semi-reliable list of things that help me feel better, or prevent me from getting to a really dark space — things like going outside, accomplishing something (anything!), fun with my toddler and nephew, and visiting a friend are a few such examples. I still get a lot of comfort from reading about other people's grief experiences, even ones that seem very different from my own. I want to know as much as I can about other people's sadness. I read memoirs about pregnancy loss. I follow a widows group on Instagram. (I think widows and surviving siblings are tightly bound because, in some sense, we've both lost life partners.) I attend bimonthly Compassionate Friends gatherings for bereaved parents and adult siblings. I eagerly listen to podcasts that focus on tragic stories. I'm particularly fond of *Terrible, Thanks for Asking*, *Everything Happens*, and *Grief Out Loud*. I find comfort in hearing the voices of people who know this sadness of loss. My emotional state and what I am capable of have changed since she died. I no longer spend a portion of everyday weeping, the raw grief of this loss seeping from my body. I still feel panicked in most social situations, worried about how it might force me to talk about myself, and therefore my loss. I wish that it was easier for people to know what I am capable of 10 months on, and what's still too hard. So here's how I'm doing today — nine months and 23 days without my sister:

What I can do:

- I can reliably take care of myself and my daughter.
- I can be productive for short windows of time.
- I can go a few days at a time without crying.
- I can remember things that I need to do and do them.
- I can smile and laugh.

What I can sometimes do:

- I can sometimes look at pictures of my sister without crying.
- I can sometimes talk about my sister without crying.
- I can sometimes respond to texts/ emails.
- I can sometimes (ok, rarely) return phone calls.
- I can sometimes tell funny jokes.
- I can sometimes engage in conversation and stay focused.
- I can sometimes care about other people's problems.
- I can sometimes feel sad about something that's happened to someone else.
- I can sometimes socialize in large groups.
- I can sometimes be a good partner to my husband.
- I can sometimes go a few hours without thinking about my sister and her death.
- I can sometimes feel happy.

What I still can't do:

- I can't write thank you notes.
- I can't listen to voicemails.
- I can't pick up the phone when it's ringing.
- I can't stop feeling scared for my sister and wondering where she is and if she's ok. (I don't believe in an afterlife, so I feel very confused by these questions.)
- I can't sing songs/read books to my daughter that my sister used to sing/read to her son without crying.
- I can't inform people that my sister died without crying.
- I can't handle thinking about the enormity of this loss. She was 37 when she died. Her son was 22 months old. She will miss nearly everything that would have mattered to her.

- I can't imagine believing that my life is safe and predictable.
- I can't stop waiting for the other shoe to drop.

I don't consider these categories complete or static. I'm not where I was 10 months ago, and I'm not where I will be 10 months from now. There may be some can'ts that transform into cans, and some cans that revert to can'ts — and that's ok, too. Everyone has their own list. This one is mine.

Kellyn Shoecraft has been intimate with grief since 2004, when her dad died after two decades of autoimmune illnesses. She is now navigating life without her sister, who died unexpectedly in 2017. Inspired by these losses, Kellyn is a co-founder at Here for You, a company that delivers thoughtfully presented practical care packages (think toilet paper) for people living through life's toughest moments.

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Focus NSW

## **ON SIBLING GRIEF FOR A GRIEVING SIBLING.**

I am a surviving sibling. Fifteen months ago I was not even familiar with the term . . . Now I am one! How am I doing? What are the guidelines to measure my progress? Why can't I remember when I was told of my brother's death . . . or the days following the accident for that matter? Did I go crazy? Was it yesterday, or was it a year ago? Did I laugh just today when I never thought I would laugh again? Lee, 29, was my little brother. I remember trying to alternately protect or tease him, make him laugh or cry. He was like having a real live baby doll to play with since I was 10 years older than he. (Our mother said he was the cleanest little boy in the neighborhood. I guess having 3 older sisters is the reason for that!!!)

How can I explain the pain I felt on learning of his accident. I wanted to go to him right away to see that he was OK, but our cousin, Judy, said it wasn't possible. I guess that was when I was told that he was dead. . . But I don't remember that. I only remember screaming.

When was it that I began to heal? Probably at the same time that I thought I was going totally, certifiably crazy! Then, someone told me about The Compassionate Friends and what they did. I wondered if they could help me but doubted they could. After all, how could they understand how much I hurt at having lost my precious baby brother or how close we had always been and how he had always helped me. Why should they even care about me? But, you know what . . . they did help. With the help and support of this group of wonderful caring people, I am alive today and working toward a fruitful life. I will never be the same as I was before June 18, 1992, but I truly believe I have become a better person.

While Lee's life taught me so much, his death taught me some invaluable lessons. I have learned to become more aware of life and my own mortality and more attuned to other needs. I no longer take anything for granted. I miss him terribly but take solace in the belief that he is happy in his new world and one day we will be reunited.

Sibling grief takes a tremendous amount of time and work. Sometimes just thinking of my brother, looking at his picture, or hearing his favourite song "God Bless America" reduces me to a teary mess. Sometimes these same things make me smile. But I am surviving and have developed a new perspective on life. I am closer to and cherish my family more than ever and realise how important they are. I am dedicated to helping other surviving siblings work through their grief. I pray daily for peace, not only for myself and my family but for everyone making this journey through grief.

One thing I have found to be most helpful during the past fifteen months of grief work has been to talk about and be honest about my feelings. I encourage siblings (and parents) to try to hook up with a support group such as The Compassionate Friends to talk out your feelings and concerns. After all, we've already paid an extremely high price to join this group . . . the life of our loved one. . . so why not take advantage of what they have to offer. You may even find yourself helping someone else (even though you might not believe that now).

*Sunday Lee Stanton  
TCF/Wyoming Valley, PA.  
Gratefully reprinted 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.

## **D**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	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
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](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz)



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