

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

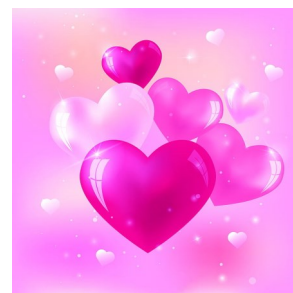
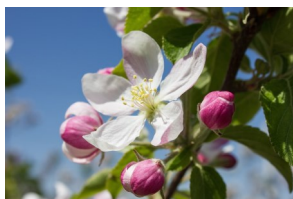
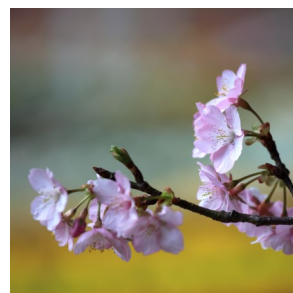
NEWSLETTER No: 203

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2024

I didn't love you.



I didn't love you—
I love you still.
In the present tense.
In the here and now.
In this breath and the next
You are not gone from my heart
Nor will you ever be.
Just because this earth no longer
holds your body, doesn't mean
That our souls are not entwined.
We are mingling every day.
Joined at the horizon of
This world and the next.
You weren't—you are.
You didn't—you do.
You can never be erased.



ullie-kaye
S.O.S. Survivors of suicide—Facebook

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

That Day

Right in the middle of our life, on an ordinary day, the
unthinkable happened. Everything went from ordinary to chaotic
and there I stood, in the mess of it all,
knowing there will now forever be a before and an after.

That day.

Sharyn Marsh—Leave her wild.
Beautiful ramblings—facebook

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young Forever Loved Forever Longed For

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

Dear Friends,

The way we cope with the death of a child or children and navigate the grief journey depends on many different things including our previous experience of death, the circumstances surrounding the death, our relationship with the deceased, our views on religion, support from friends and family, societal expectation, etc. etc.

We all experience a range of thoughts and emotions and although there are differences there are many, many similarities.

One question bereaved parents often search for an answer to is WHY? Why Ben, Anton, Melissa, ??? Why us, why me? And once again different people will come up with different answers. I recently read about a husband who's wife had died, asking this question. Why his beautiful, kind, loving wife had to die. He then concluded that she died so that he would fully appreciate those he had left. Of course he is entitled to believe this and I can't say that he is wrong, however that is not something I believe.

I know that since Ben died, I do have a greater appreciation for my family and loved ones and what is important and matters, but this is a result of our grief journey, not the reason he died. Ben died because he crossed the road in front of a car, in a hurry to get to his friends place, as teenagers often do. It was a tragic accident, nothing more. Of course in the early days, months and years it wasn't as simple as that, I searched for WHY? But after many years of not finding the answer I stopped asking. It was then that I was able to accept that there was no reason, it just was. But I also believe it is up to those of us left behind to try and live our lives in a way which will honour Ben and show that we treasure our life and those we love. Being kind, compassionate and caring to others, offering support and giving of our time as we can.

Of course, all of this is what the Coordinators, Chair persons and others involved in The Compassionate Friends do and many have offered this support for years. You will see on the next page that the local groups are struggling to find people to continue these groups. Our Central Otago group have made the difficult decision to close after 38 years. Jan, Richard and many others have been involved since the start and so many bereaved parents have benefitted from their support and friendship. Thankyou from everyone you have helped and from myself for your support and encouragement with the newsletter.

Wanganui TCF are also finding it difficult to find people to support their various public functions. They have made the decision to continue with the monthly gatherings but will no longer do public functions and workshops.

The way people seek support has changed significantly over the years and more and more people turn to the internet for this support rather than in person and this is making the local groups less needed. Currently there still appears to be support for the newsletter to continue especially as it goes on the NZ TCF website however I am open to suggestions for what people would like to read or see in it or any other suggestions of support which would be of benefit.

I am aware that various places overseas offer support through on-line forums and meetings. Is this something that people here might find helpful? Is this something that younger people would embrace or something that would appeal to anyone of any age?

I would love to find a way to reach out to a wider range of bereaved parents and siblings and ask their opinions and suspect that something like Facebook would be the way to go. Unfortunately I am not 'tech savvy' and don't do Facebook but if anyone reading this is willing to help with something like this, please, please contact me .

tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz or lesleyhenderson@hotmail.co.nz

Take care of each other,
Love, Lesley

Kia ora Bereaved Parents & families in Central Lakes area....,

You have probably read in both the ODT and the local Central Otago News that we are planning to windup our service, as no one has come forward to act as Chair person, and my health is too uncertain, to carry on....

As Richard has stated the Newsletters will still be emailed but unfortunately not posted to those for whom we do not have email address.

If anyone would like contact with another bereaved Parent, please contact
Alexandra Community Advice Bureau
Ph. (03) 448 7771

An open meeting will be held at Alexandra Community House, Centennial Ave Alexandra, on Monday 25/11 @ 5 pm

The jug will be boiling, so if anyone would like to bring a few nibbles?!

My heart felt thanks for all your support & friendship over 38 years Please take very best care of yourselves ...

Nga mihi nui
Jan

The Compassionate Friends : Bereaved Parents Grief Support Whanganui Chapter.

Where to from here.

The Whanganui Trust Board met in September 2024 to review our functions and to decide on the future direction of TCF Whanganui.

We are life-time members of the group no-one wants to belong to.

The first NZ group was established in Wanganui in 1982 'til the late 1980s. It went into recess but reformed in 2011.

Not learned but experienced. The group are not trained in counselling, they are ordinary families who have experienced the unimaginable, the death of a child, and are travelling that grief journey.

Since the 1970s life has changed technologically. It is quite a different age. Today the Internet and Social Media are often the go-to for people seeking grief support. We have noticed over the past years that we do not have as many people contacting us.

Grief still happens and we as a group are still here in person.

The Compassionate Friends in Whanganui formed as a charitable trust and has relied on community funding to operate. We ask no fees and all personnel are totally voluntary. With diminishing numbers, the Board met recently to discuss the way forward.

We have decided not to seek more funding at present as we will no longer do the public functions/ workshops - we are a bit thin on the ground for personnel and energy for a fairly poor response.

Future public functions for TCF Whanganui as from October 2024

We will continue our regular monthly gatherings at The Yellow House Café Whanganui for **Coffee Care & Chat**. This is not a group where one gets stars for attendance!

Some will come for a while often at the initial time of grief then may reconnect as they feel they need to or not. Average attendance is 8.

We are always there and... 'you need not walk alone'.

Worldwide Candle Lighting International, in memory of our children - gone too soon. Always the 2nd Sunday in December at 7pm local time, for a 24hour wave of light that encircles the globe in memory of our children. We in Whanganui meet at the Peter Pan statue at Virginia Lake to light candles from 7 - 8pm: then another time zone takes over. This is open to all the public mourning a loss.
2024's event will be on the 8th December at 6.45pm).

Memory Tree: Whanganui's Aramoho Cemetery has two trees dedicated to children and babes who have died. A large magnolia shelters the Children's Area and a newly planted Flowering Cherry is in the Baby loss Area. We meet annually near Christmas to decorate these trees. We met early November 2024 in pouring rain but were excited to greet a new Mum who had seen this on our local paper's Facebook page. Another reminder of how we need to communicate!

Other services we will continue as required:

Memorial cards are sent to families near the anniversary of their child's death to those who have requested this.

People can speak to our telephone friends at any time.

Facebook page is available as a private page but we are considering opening it up.

Specific grief material can be sent to contacts at any time e- mailed or posted with a small charge for copying /postage

TCF NZ newsletter is bi-monthly and is also recorded on our website

We also have a small grief related library.

Our NZ Website can give you more details and grief jottings, events and book reviews. This is currently being updated.

Contacts: Phone Keren 06 3443345

Email marshkandb@gmail.com

NZ Website thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

Whanganui Facebook

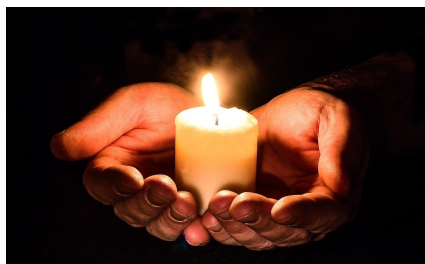
i'm not going to tell you it gets easier
it never gets easier
you will just learn how to carry it better
there will be a place deep down inside you
where you will carry the pain, the love, the grief
where you will carry *them*

*Sharyn Marsh
Leave her wild*

Afterlife of the living:
Ramblings from a Grieving Mom.
Facebook

The Compassionate Friends

28th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting



December 8th 2024

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honour the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

As candles are lit on December 8th, 2024 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

Lights of Love

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

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

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

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

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who knew great sorrow,
But as we remember our yester-
days
Let's light one candle for tomor-
row

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

Dear Friends,

This is a lovely way to start the Christmas period, setting aside some time to remember our loved ones who can no longer be present with us.

There are also some formal Candlelighting services around the country. Please contact the co-ordinator in your area or go to the website www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz for details.

If you are unable to attend a service there are also various online options just google **tcf candlelight service online.**

Whichever option you choose candlelighting provides an opportunity for quiet reflection to remember our beloved children, grandchildren and siblings and know that their memory and our love will continue to shine brightly.

Stop Comparing Grief –

Within this space Death cannot be compared. Grief cannot be compared. My babies' death will always be mine. For as long as I am alive, my miscarriage will always be my biggest loss.

The way I see it, grief is like a snowflake. There are similarities but there is no two the same. Grief is a slow descent; it hits the warm ground melting into a water droplet creating space. But sometimes the water freezes making it difficult to move, becoming stuck like ice. So this is my grief, it's the ice, and it's stuck.

I saw a quote from another grieving mother on Instagram, her name is Ashley Stock. She lost her three year old daughter, Stevie to DIPG, a form of relentless cancer. In an Instagram post she writes, "Pain is not meant to be compared, it's meant to be shared". This struck a huge chord in me because she's right! I have a right to be in pain. It's ok for me to grieve. I don't need permission to be sad over my twins' death. I want to share my story. They mattered, so did their deaths. It all matters when we walked down this path of parenthood that didn't happen on the earthside. We have to stop comparing our grief. For so long, I had guilt about missing my babies and compared my grief to other stories. I buried it. I always wondered, "how can I hang on to pain for so long when I didn't feel them?", "people must think I'm crazy because I talk about them so much", "maybe they're right, I am lucky I wasn't too far along". But then I come to and realize that thinking that way is crap. Complete and utter crap. We shouldn't compare our losses because we should be comforting each other. Comparing a loss is just cruel. It's minimizing life. It's lessening the importance. Regardless, if your miscarriage happened at 3 weeks or 30 weeks, that child is loved, wished for, dreamed of, and so important. I have a right to grieve. It's ok that I will never get over my children dying before me. I should be able to talk about my miscarriage and not worry about comparing another miscarriage and wondering "oh, they had it worse off than me". It's this type of thinking that's toxic and I am over it. I should be able to miss the four hands I never got to hold. The two voices I never heard. The two faces I didn't get to kiss. This is what I miss. It is what I grieve. This is my loss. My story is mine. It is unique.

My hope for you is that you give yourself permission to cry and find the opportunities to miss your child or children. I hope that you grieve your loss as long as you need to. I really hope that you stop comparing your grief. Stop comparing your sadness to mine, to someone else's, or allow anyone to minimize your loss. Your grief and your loss matters. Feel it, embrace it, and heal with it. Use your experience to do some good in our world. This is your story. It is unique.

The Experience Of Loss And Miscarriage On Stop Comparing Grief, August 2020

Gratefully reprinted from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter

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.

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Self care during grief after the death of a child

Lifted from St Jude

In addition to the emotional toll of grief, parents often experience a variety of mental, physical, and spiritual effects. Grief can make it hard to do even the simplest task. Parents may find it almost impossible to take care of themselves in the midst of grief. But, finding small ways to fight the effects of grief is important for moving forward and gaining strength.

Effects of Grief on Cognitive Health

Grief can also affect cognitive function, or the ability to think, remember, and process information. Cognitive symptoms of grief often arise immediately following loss. Parents say that they are in a “mental fog” in the early days and weeks of grief. Cognitive symptoms common during the grieving process include:

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Short attention span
- Confusion
- Inability to process facts and details accurately
- Forgetfulness and problems with memory

Many of these symptoms will go away on their own. When possible, parents may want to avoid making major decisions during this period. Take care when driving a car, operating any heavy machinery, or doing other potentially dangerous activities that require concentration. Find ways to help memory by using lists and reminders. Break up tasks into smaller steps to make it easier to focus. Ask for help from friends and family.

Effects of Grief on Physical Health

Grief also can manifest itself physically in the body. While grieving, it is common to experience a variety of physical symptoms such as:

- Fatigue or exhaustion
- The desire to oversleep or difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Susceptibility to illness and infections
- Muscle tension
- Pain such as headaches and backaches

There are a number of ways to counteract some of the physical symptoms of grief:

- Eat balanced meals
- Avoid junk food
- Be physically active
- Limit intake of alcohol
- Practice regular hygiene
- Get enough rest

Effects of Grief on Spiritual Health

During grief, it's also common to experience spiritual challenges including:

- A crisis of confidence in religious or spiritual beliefs or questioning faith.
- Anger that this was allowed to happen.
- Difficulty understanding the meaning behind the loss.
- Struggles processing the idea of life or life without the child.

Parents can address spiritual concerns in a variety of ways. Some people may choose to seek religious or spiritual counsel from a spiritual leader or mentor. Writing in a journal, prayer, meditation, music, and art can also offer an outlet for spiritual issues. Books on grief that incorporate faith can also be helpful to give parents a perspective from others who have been through a similar experience.

Ideas for Self-Care

Grief touches every aspect of life. Coping day to day is challenging, and small steps are key. Finding practical, doable ways to take care of oneself provides hope and healing, little by little. Here are some ideas for self-care that parents have found helpful:

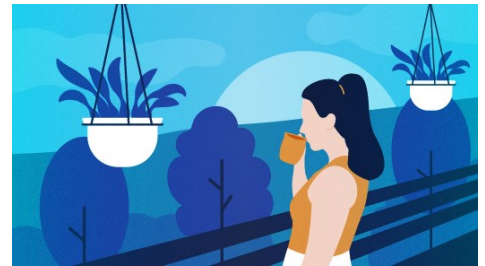
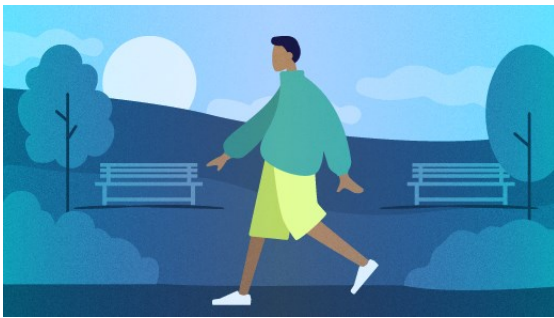
- Take a warm bath. This can be soothing and help with physical symptoms of grief and stress.
- Keep a journal with feelings and memories of the child. Continuing to express love can be therapeutic.
- Find a regular afternoon or evening to do an activity or spend time with a friend.

- Do something creative or something that allows you to use your talents and provides a sense of self.
- Buy a gift for yourself or a loved one, and have it wrapped.
- Wrap up in a warm blanket with a favorite tea or warm drink.
- Listen to music.
- Ditch “to do” lists. Instead, make a list of what’s been done over the course of the day.
- Take care of a plant or pet.
- Practice deep breathing, meditation, or yoga.
- Spend time in nature.
- Take a walk.
- Join a support group.

Importance of Support

No one should go through grief alone. While time helps many of the symptoms of grief, the support of another person provides additional strength. It can help to talk with a trusted family member or friend about the symptoms of grief and ways to manage them. Mental health professionals are also available to listen and provide encouragement and resources

Gratefully lifted from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter



“Should Haves” and Regrets

“There were things we could have done after David’s death, like have a special service of celebration. But we didn’t. I’ve never regretted that decision, nor any of the others. Thankfully, we made a commitment to each other to live with our decisions and not regret what we should or could have done.”

[Jim Nelson, in loving memory of his son, David]

Sometimes we may dwell on the decisions we made around the time of our loved one’s death. We think about what we could have or should have done, playing out each new scenario in our minds. The endless possibilities represent mysteries we can never solve.

Yet regardless of whether our decisions were ultimately the best choices or not, spending hours berating ourselves about the past is not helpful. Our regrets prevent us from living in the present, and may prolong our grieving and intensify the sadness of our loss. We need to forgive ourselves for any decisions or actions we regret, and let go of them.

I will be kind and forgiving to myself. The choices I made were the best possible decisions I could make at the time.

Lifted from Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

Dead Talks Podcast deadtalks.net, Hosted by David Ferrugio

The Dead Talks podcasts is a very popular site I recently came across and they are hosted by David Ferrugio. He has an engaging and real manner and lets his guests do the bulk of the talking. In this episode he talks to Barbara who had lost her adult son to cancer a few months before the podcast but had also lost two brothers in her life as well. The main focus is on telling the story of her son Lyon's life and how he chose to live and also pass. There's a lot here I didn't connect to given the different circumstances Barbara had, but as the host intimates even if the situations are so different there's always something you can pick up from listening to the stories and experiences and views of others. Barbara talks a lot about signs she has received particularly in her case around numbers and rainbows which was interesting. As the sun dips below the horizon There's also a lot of talk about being real and talking about the "elephant in the room" and how she wants to help people feel more comfortable talking about lost loved ones. It also chronicles her experiences as a death doula and death midwife which I had never heard of.. Overall it's a very different perspective on life and loss that Barbara talks about but it is one that is definitely worth contemplating and exploring.

Podcasts reviewed by Wayne Monkleigh (Ewan's Dad)

Lifted with thanks from Focus NSW TCF Newsletter

A Parent's Journey Out Of Crippling Despair

For three months, Rod Kindred drove around in a fog of depression, angry at the world over the loss of his teenage son, Travis to suicide and contemplating the same for himself. He kept notes to family members in his car. He would sometime find himself driving on a road and not know how he got there.

The Vietnam War veteran cannot quite remember exactly how he changed his mind set. "I just one day thought, 'Nah, this is not for me,' Mr. Kindred says. Close to the time of his death, which was more than a decade ago and just before his 19th birthday, Travis was in a minor car accident and suffered job setbacks - the stuff of life. His father told him they would work things out and not to worry.

It took Mr. Kindred years to come to terms with the death, the parental guilt, the "what if's and why's", the effect on the rest of the family. "I sobbed my guts out for three or four years", he says. "Now it is pretty rare, but I believe that the people who do it though, who bellow and weep and cry, seem to reach some sense of settling earlier than others. Bottling it up doesn't work - I could have filled Lake Wendouree".

The burden and the struggle to get out of the quagmire of his own depression have meant that Mr. Kindred takes antidepressants and has had extensive counselling. Now he crusades in Travis' name, through the self-help group, The Compassionate Friends, to help others come to terms with losing a child by any means and at any age. Helping parents cope with guilt feelings is a big part of the process. "I know there isn't a parent who doesn't wake up every morning wanting to be anything other than the best parent they can be, but for the first three to five years your head is full of what you should have done to make it better - if you didn't tell him off, he would be alright and still be here. No they wouldn't. But you need to have that conversation with somebody", he says.

Lovingly lifted from Johannesburg TCF 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.

I missed you quietly today. So quietly
that no one noticed.

I missed you as I climbed out of bed and
as I brushed my teeth; when I waited at
the lights on the drive into work and as I
heard the rain outside my window.

I missed you as I ordered lunch and as I
kicked off my shoes when I got home; as
I switched off the lights and climbed into
bed for the night.

I missed you without tears or noise or
fanfare.
But oh how I felt it.

I felt it in the morning, at lunchtime, in
the evening and at night. I felt it as I
woke, as I waited as I worked. I felt it at
home, on the road, in the light, in the
dark, in the rain.

I felt it in every one of those moments,
each one sitting heavier and heavier as
the weight of me missing you kept
growing and growing.

Yes I missed you so quietly today.

But it felt so loudly.

Becky Hemsley
Many Phases and Faces of a Mothers Grief—
Facebook.



POEM FROM THE GATHERING 2015

**Written under the skillful guidance of Mick
Wilson in his Creative Writing group**

Grief without God

I used to envy people who had a religious
faith
I wished that I could believe that I would
see Lucy again
Unfortunately that is not for me.
I am on my own with my grief, or am I?
Here are readings, music, candles
and ritual,
Love and compassion regardless of faith
or situation.
Maybe this is my church, my faith,
Perhaps I am not alone?
This is our community
As valid as that of any church.
Kindness is what saves us from the
abyss.
That is faith enough for me.

Claire Phillips
Reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter



Hope after the storm

I have a strong character. I'm not sure about my Higher Power these days, but I do have a Light inside of me that urges me on to healing, even during those days when my eyelids are too swollen to lift them up to Heaven. I vacillate between great days and very low days, but mostly, I function well, and there will always be a vein of sorrow that runs through everything I do. Maybe there was a time when I thought it would hurt less if my life came to an end, but I never thought about taking my own life. I just didn't want to hurt anymore.

Grief is grief. Grief is something that we must go through. Grief is harsh at best. I don't want grief to be an impetus for self-destructive behaviour, and I think that months and years of chronic lament are self-destructive, at least, they are for me. I've been sad lately, but I've managed to smile, laugh, work at my relationships, and carry on. I will never be the same, of course, but I've managed to navigate my life after the storm.

Moving forward after the loss of a child is a true feat of courage - in spite of the pain I feel in my heart, and in spite of the way that grief distorts my brain from time to time. Death is not fair. The hole that death leaves in our lives is forever, and it knocks the air out of us a few times during our day, and sometimes for many days. I just don't want my life to stop because of the pain that comes in waves and, sometimes, in tsunamis, that threaten to push me deep into the rip currents. Drowning in my sorrow is not what I want as my life's purpose.

I want to sit in the fresh air after the storm, smell the fresh earth, the renewed and refreshed trees, hear the birds singing gratefully for the rain that provides a food source for their survival, as I heal myself and work toward my own. I know the pain intimately that others feel, and I know there are times when it feels like the pain will never end, and, maybe it never will, but I want to always strive toward the hope of wholeness.

I will miss my son for the entirety of my remaining days. I have no illusions about this, even as I force each step toward the rest of my life, one day at a time, one bittersweet memory at a time. The tears will come unexpectedly - and sometimes they will come at the most inconvenient times; I know this. I also know that as I create each next moment in my life, that my son will accompany me in some way, shape, or form. Each note of every song brings a pang in which I feel his absence profoundly.

I know that grief is unpredictable in its visitations; it is unkind, but it is also a call toward healing. Grief is the time we are most in the Present Moment, and that is all we really have. My son had 32 years of Present Moments, and I was so fortunate to share in a multitude of them. I am honoured to have been his mother. Things become clichés for a reason, mostly because there is truth in them, and so let me just say, my son will live on in the deepest part of me, when the sun shines on my face, when a gentle wind cools me on a hot summer day, when I am alone with my thoughts of him, when tears or laughter grace my life in honor of his.

Grief hurts, but it also catapults us with intensity toward the hope that healing is possible. Trust me, tears are rolling down my cheeks as I type this, and I am feeling equal parts hope and sorrow, but the day will proceed and I will immerse myself in it, and remain a member of the living, because "I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep."

1 1 Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, Robert Frost

Sherrie Kolb-Cassel Grief Digest Magazine, 2017
Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

LAUGHING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

I hadn't given much thought recently to the idea of laughter in this bereavement journey, but just the other day I was surprised by laughter from the inside out. Looking out of my kitchen window into the back lane, I saw a young dog on a leisurely morning ramble. He was all alone, looking so dapper in his shiny black coat, white socks and chest, ears at the alert and a tail that no doubt could clear a coffee table in one swipe!



He was the image of a long ago dog who was the pride and joy of our two youngest sons, Kent and Kenneth. The boys named their dog TC which was short for Thunder Cloud, which because of his black coat they thought he resembled. TC was a joint birthday present for the boys' eighth and ninth birthdays. I still remember that joyful reaction, "Oh mum, this is the best birthday present we've ever had!" TC gave so much joy and laughter to the whole family with all his antics and loving ways. Even though TC's life was not a long one, he left us with such memories and unforgettable stories.

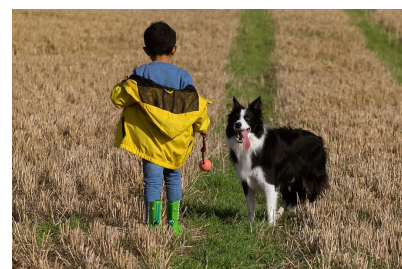
The young dog in the lane mesmerized me for quite some time. The neighbourhood was quiet, the sun was shining and the air was still. He and I were alone in the world, I the silent watcher and he the happy wanderer. Birds and butterflies caught his attention, he would leap and twirl in his pursuit of them, a butterfly here, oh, a bird over there, chase one then the other! He didn't seem to care that he didn't catch any of his airborne prey. He leapt and bounded in the most unfocused and carefree way.

As I stood there in rapt attention, I could feel something growing; it bubbled up from somewhere deep inside, unbridled delight, a laugh from the heart that grew until it came rippling out and plastered itself in smiles all over my face. I could even feel it beaming out of my eyes. It was one of those rare moments when somehow you are at one with the universe and every sense is turned to joy.

When we were struggling with our grief for our son and brother Kenneth, smiling and laughing seemed to be something we did for appearances sake. An obligatory curling of the lips, a polite little ha, ha, to keep the world outside and mask our feelings. Our eyes were dull and the chill was still there inside. I don't know how long it took to genuinely experience involuntary smiles or laughter, especially without the guilt, it's different for all of us; when we do at last have the experience it is a moment to savour. This must be what C.S. Lewis meant when he wrote about being surprised by joy. I could imagine Kenneth joining me in spirit that day, grinning at the antics of the TC lookalike and sharing in the joy of the moment and all the good memories; he had a way of laughing from the inside out.

Arleen Simmonds, TCF Kamloops, B.C.
In Loving Memory of Kenneth 30/10/64-11/8/88

Lifted with thanks from Summer compassion TCF UK





Sibling Page



Grief & Bereavement for LGBTIQ+ Youth

In supporting LGBTIQ+ youth through grief and loss, it is important to remember the unique experience of these individuals. While it is not unusual for all youth who have experienced a loss to feel alone, a lack of resources and/or support for LGBTIQ+ youth can lead to further feelings of isolation, which can make healthy grieving difficult.

In acknowledging the experience of LGBTIQ+ youth. It is important to also understand this population's vulnerability to depression, social isolation, as well as the experience of multiple losses. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth aged 10 to 20, however, youth who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual are five times as likely to attempt suicide that their heterosexual peers. Additionally, LGBTIQ+ youth experience a disproportionate amount of discrimination, hate crimes, and violence. Events such as the PULSE massacre (Orlando, Florida, 2016), also lead youth to experience a greater level of death as a community and therefore a disproportionate amount of community -level bereavement. The LGBTIQ+ community faces other unique losses such as the possible rejection of family and friends when coming out, which can lead to further feelings of isolation.

Acknowledging these factors when supporting LGBTIQ+ individuals through grief and loss is essential. The following tips may be helpful in supporting LGBTIQ+ youth who have experienced a loss:

Create a safe, affirming relationship Creating a sense of community through grief can be a powerful tool for healing LGBTIQ+ youth have often been in situations, sometimes even within their own family of origin, where they feel unsafe or rejected . Cultivating a safe, affirming relationship is imperative to supporting LGBTIQ+ youth who are grieving.

Be a Listener Many times, LGBTIQ+ youth and other marginalized populations are forced to remain silent about their experiences. Creating a place where individuals can be listened to and heard is essential to supporting their resilience. View yourself as a learner, remember that LGBTIQ+ youth are the experts on their own experience.

Acknowledge the Experience of LGBTIQ+ Youth Recognize that LBGTIQ+ individuals have faced a history of institutional discrimination and social stigma, which impacts not only their experience of grief, but the ability to develop healthy coping. Acknowledging and attending to the range of challenges that LGBTIQ+ face while grieving will be an important way to support their healing.

Recognize Community-Level Bereavement Oftentimes when youth experience community-level bereavement, or loss that occurs within the LGBTIQ+ community, it may be invalidated by others as it wasn't "personal" to the youth. However, compounded losses due to things such as hate crimes experienced within the LGBTIQ+ community create a ripple effect which impacts grieving. Acknowledging the impact of these losses when supporting LGBTIQ+ individuals who are grieving is important.

The emotions and experiences young people face through their grief journey can vary drastically; however, what every individual who experiences loss needs is a space to feel understood, accepted, and supported.

Lifted with love from TCF/Vic, AU

Letter to Nat

24.01.2019

Dearest Nat,

It's now gone 7 years, coming on to 8 since you tragically passed away on September 2nd 2011 after feeling as though you had no way out but to end your suffering and so you chose to end your life on the evening of August 18th 2011.

I will never forget this day or this evening, as I was at an all-day Professional Learning Development day in Sandringham at Family Life, a service you once had some involvement with, and there I was learning all about social and emotional wellbeing and how to improve the mental health of young people. Little did I know that on that night you were going to end your own life. Had I have known on that day or the evening before when I was actually scheduled to come over and see you but things got cancelled, what dark thoughts you were having I would've done absolutely anything and everything in my power to try and intervene in the hope that you might still be here today. But sadly I didn't know what you were thinking at this time and I never would've thought in a million years that life would've ended for you like this. Even today this is still hard to believe and accept, and even then as you lay in hospital in the ICU unit 15 days post your last living, breathing day, I still couldn't believe, accept or imagine coming to grips with you ending your life and what life would be like after you were gone.

Not a day goes by where I don't feel like something, someone so significant in my life is missing. My only sibling, my youngest sister, you. Maybe I didn't tell you enough how much I loved you, or just how much you meant to me, or how much I needed you here, or how sad or heartbroken I would be if you were gone. Maybe I didn't do enough each time you had an episode, a breakdown, ended up back in hospital, countless medication changes, countless times you'd expressed your deepest depression in various ways. Maybe I didn't show you how much I cared for you, how much you mattered and now sadly it's all too late because you aren't here. I grieve for you every day, every birthday you miss, every year you're not here I am aware that I lost my only sibling to suicide and the pain this causes is endless.

Life. Somehow it goes on and I've had to learn to live around you not being here but each and every time I'm asked if I have any siblings I'm always caused a great deal of pain by this because the answer is always YES, I do, but sadly she's no longer here with us. Sometimes it ends there and sometimes I share more, depending on whom I'm with and the situation. But this isn't easy and I'm reminded constantly of what I'm missing; a sister I was meant to grow up with, a sister I was meant to share the journey with; the highs of celebrations and milestone, the lows of parents getting older and struggles of life when things don't work out. But you are gone; no longer here, no longer in pain or suffering but the pain that's left from your passing that pain never goes away. Maybe it eases somewhat over time but it always resurfaces at various points in life; on milestones, birthdays, special occasions or whenever I just stop and think of you and your 23 year life that I believe was sadly cut much too short. But then I also stop and think about how much you went through, how much you suffered, how much you were pained. But then also how much you achieved and succeeded in life and best of all the most amazing legacy you left behind, giving birth to your beautiful daughter Georgia, my gorgeous niece who will be 11 years old this year.

Sadly you aren't here to see your daughter or to watch her grow, in to this most amazing little being she is becoming. She's blossoming in to this beautiful girl and growing up so fast, and I know you'd be so proud of her. I promise that I will try my best to share you and speak of you and remind her and tell her about what an amazing mum she had.

You were a great sister and maybe I didn't tell you that enough. Your mental health struggles and various medications often clouded you and hid who you truly were inside and I often struggled greatly to understand you and at times even just get along with you. But Nat I loved you very much with all my heart and all my soul and I love you still today, always and forever. My sister you're forever in my heart, eternally sketched in my memories, the 23 years of life we once shared. I miss you and I love you always and I'm sorry if I didn't say this to you enough.

Love always and forever,

Your sister,

Annette Matov Bereaved sister of Natalie (23) TCFV



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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