



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 165

APRIL MAY 2018



Heaven and Earth may separate us today but nothing will ever change the fact that you made me a mum.

yourtribute.com



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

I promise to find hope through the heartache, to find joy through the sadness, to find strength through incredible weakness, to love even when it is hard, to live freely and bravely, even when I'm scared, to make the most of my days... to live in a way that would make you proud.

Scribbles and Crumbs Lovingly reprinted from TCF UK Compassion

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Andrew Meldrum Cox	Born 16/4/68	Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold	Died 6/4/02
Jack Stephen Dyer	Born 24/4/07	Rebecca Clare Halkett	Died 20/4/03
Nicholas Ian O'Hara	Born 17/4/74	Greg Holley	Died 6/4/85
Caren Amanda Phillips	Born 16/4/81	Matthew David Hubber	Died 30/4/00
Alan Bruce Scorringe	Born 26/4/66	Sally Verone Kitto	Died 23/4/01
Anthony Mark Staite	Born 5/4/74	Robbie Knight	Died 18/4/96
Jonathon Upton	Born 15/4/68	Jake Lucas	Died 26/4/77
		Nikolaas Remmerswaal	Died 1/4/12
Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold	Born 9/5/1978	Gary Brendon Thompson	Died 9/4/96
Nicholas Evan Hood	Born 12/5/1985	Hayden Watson	Died 11/4/97
Vicky Knight	Born 21/5/1980		
Paul John Nicolaou	Born 21/5/1964	Paul Graham Albrecht	Died 19/5/2004
Cindy Parish	Born 25/5/1965	Michael Barry Duke	Died 20/5/2005
Liam Veters	Born 1/5/2005	Ben Henderson	Died 15/5/2003
David Jason Eugene Walker	Born 7/5/1993	Erica Kewish	Died 14/5/2014
James Wing	Born 31/5/1980	Thomas Craig McDonald	Died 25/5/2008
		Maryann Gaye Pearce	Died 27/5/2000
		Wayne Edward Summers	Died 9/5/1999
		David Jason Eugene Walker	Died 13/5/ 2000
		Peter Gregory Warren	Died 17/5/1998
		Dan Wells	Died 13/5/2003
		Timothy James Williams	Died 29/5/2005

Dear Friends,

15 years ago, sitting in the intensive care unit beside our son as he lay connected to various tubes which were keeping him alive I realised that there were some things in life which we had no control over. Not only did I not have control but the highly trained medical and nursing staff also had no control over whether our son would survive. Yes they could fix his broken arm but the brain and spinal injuries were unknowns. 'We just need to wait and see if things improve once the swelling goes down' we were advised. And so on Mothers Day 15years ago, we sat around his bed and waited. At one stage, despite being sedated, he opened his eyes. That was a real bitter-sweet moment, so amazing to see his beautiful eyes, but also a moment of reality for me as I realised that if he survived his eyes would be the only thing he would have control over.

Control

- the power to influence or direct people's behaviour or the course of events.

"We live in a world that is beyond our control, and life is in a constant flux of change. So we have a decision to make: keep trying to control a storm that is not going to go away or start learning how to live within the rain."

— [Glenn Pemberton, Hurting with God](#)

"Losing him made me realize that we can't control everything that happens in life. The universe has its own plans and we don't get a vote."

— [Kami Garcia, Broken Beautiful Hearts](#)

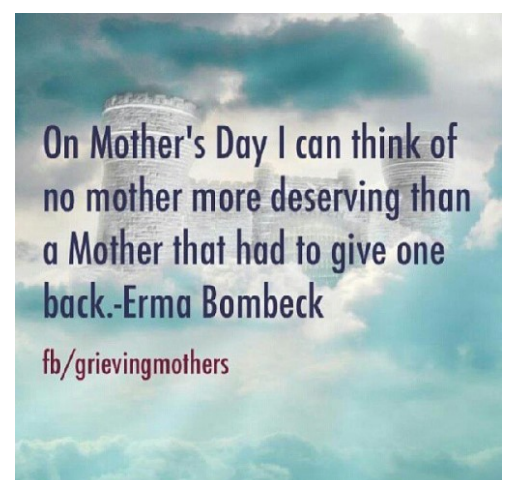
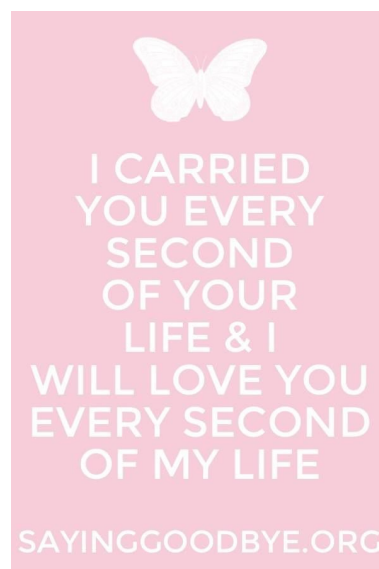
"Things will happen in your life that you have no control over but that doesn't mean you are at the complete mercy of the unknown. You will always have power over your reaction to the outside world. That is your power. It is the power that can change your life if you choose to use it. Never believe that you have no control over your life, you have so much more control over your life than you can even imagine. So be active in changing your life."

— [Avina Celeste](#)

Often the death of a child is the first time a lot of people realise that they are not fully in control of their life and what happens and this realisation is tough and it makes you feel powerless. But remember you are not. You are in charge of where you go from there. Initially taking one day at a time, and simply surviving but in time you will be more able to make decisions about how you deal with your grief. Reading, talking, seeking support. Crying, taking time to care for yourself, making new rituals. Remembering your child and memories of happier times. And always remembering the love you had and will always have for your child.

On this Mothers day I wish you peace and love but also I wish you the belief that you can take control of where you go from here and how your life can be. It is not easy but it is possible to once again achieve a life worth living.

Lesley Henderson, Mother of Ben 6/1/89-15/5/03



Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Kia ora everyone,

It is hard to write without referring to the weather!! Our weather in Central is so variable. Lovely weather over Easter, wintery winds and snow after that, and now warm again. Hard to plan! And I am sure that it affects our moods.

Our next get together will be at the home of Jan Pessione, Monday 23 April, 7.30pm. Jan lives at 8 Bodkin Road, Alexandra. Bryan and Dianne King will tell their story and we will be able to talk over tea and coffee after they have finished. Everyone is welcome. If you need a ride, get in touch with Jan Johnson or myself and we will make arrangements for you. Some of our older members may consider coming out in the autumn cold if you know that you will be picked up??

The following morning we will meet for coffee at Millbrook in Arrowtown , (Tuesday 10.30am). If you would like to indulge in luxury and glorious surroundings, then come join us.

Warmest thoughts to you all,
Louise McKenzie

Brick by Brick: Laying a Path to Acceptance

How do we get to acceptance? Ever since four family members died in 2007, including my elder daughter, the mother of my twin grandchildren, I've grappled with this question. I studied grief recovery then, and continue to study it. Many grief experts see acceptance as a choice we make for ourselves. One thing is certain - our loved ones wouldn't want us to stay stuck in the darkness of grief. They would want us to live our lives to the fullest and be happy. Ten years have passed since my daughter died, and I'm living a new happy life filled with surprises, including acceptance. Now may be a good time to start working on your acceptance path.

According to 'The Power of Acceptance', an article on the Abundance and Happiness website, acceptance is 'based on the quality of consciousness that we choose individually.' Choosing acceptance requires awareness, introspection, and resilience. You need to gather some supplies too, a willingness to change, learn and believe in yourself.

Bob Deit, author of Life after Loss cites steps you can take to achieve acceptance. When I read this section I thought of construction bricks. Each brick is sturdy and when placed with other bricks it forms a foundation. Laying a path to acceptance can be a foundation for the rest of your life.

Brick one: Believe things will get better. The death of four family members made me despairing. My sister-in-law kept telling me, 'You will get through this.' I believed her and kept doing my grief work.

Brick two: Tell your story. Deep in your heart you know you need to share your story. With retelling and the passage of time, you will eventually be able to tell your story without sobbing, and that's progress. As you tell your story remember that it may help someone.

Brick three: Acknowledge your pain. Trying to avoid pain saps energy and cements you in place. You're not going to feel better if you keep trying to avoid it. That's why grief counsellors tell clients to 'go with the pain,' something I've learned to do. In the long run going with pain saves time.

Brick four: Ask 'how' questions. According to Deits, 'Questions that begin with 'how' indicate that you are ready to face the reality of your loss.' He goes on to say these questions help you create a future. I think 'how' questions are better than getting stuck in the muck of 'if only I had' thoughts.

Brick five: Grow from grief. Judy Tatelbaum, author of The Courage to Grieve thinks we need to make something good from our grief. She sees this step as an antidote to despair and this has been true for me. Grief can make us better people.

Brick six: Reach out to others. I'm a bereaved parent, daughter, sister, niece and friend so this idea comes from experience. When I felt strong enough, I tried to help other bereaved people by listening to their stories. Every contact bolstered my acceptance path and made it stronger.

Brick seven: Let yourself laugh. After four family members died I didn't laugh for a year or so. Thankfully my humour returned. I remember my first belly laugh and how good it felt. While creating an acceptance path is an experience we share, each path is different, with its own setbacks, twists and turns.

Add more bricks to your path if you think you need them. When you can see the path you're on the way to the future. When I was putting my bricks together sometimes I thought I could hear my daughter saying, 'You can do it Mum!' And I did. Harriet Hodgson

Gratefully lifted from Spring 2018 - Compassion | www.tcf.org.uk 19



Serendipity and a Mother's Day Card

March and April are restless months for me as the May date of my son's death approaches. I wonder now at the timing of a spring cleaning chore that I tackled in mid-March. Was it serendipity, a happy accident, or something more? Mitch Carmody taught me to think "Definitely, something more!"

I needed something to do one day in early spring. I settled on cleaning a drawer full of old papers. Half way through the chore I found a Mother's Day card that my son Art made in 5th grade. He wrote a long letter with no periods. That was his writing style at the time. It read like a stream of consciousness from a 10-year-old boy. The letter was pasted on green construction paper, folded, with his school photo on top. Art wrote that he knew my love for him would continue even if I died. Those were unusual words for him. I reread that sentence many times. Who knew it would be vice-versa ten years later? In hindsight, I believe he was telling me that we would continue our relationship despite a death between us. I was in job-seeking mode at the time that he wrote the card. The rest of the letter was a persuasive argument to shift my career into sports writing. He thought I was a good writer. (I used periods.) He would help me with the sports stuff since he was good in sports and I would need that, he wrote. It was hilarious! It made me cry. I shared it with my stepdaughter Jessica, Art's sibling.

For many years after Art's death I shut down on Mother's Day. Grief was too strong. Today I view things differently. My stepdaughter Jessica grew up knowing me. She is an extraordinary mother and daughter. My son-in-law Brandon is by far much more than I ever anticipated. They are enormously supportive for each other and for me. I am a grandmother now for their two children, a boy and a girl. For these reasons I will celebrate Mother's Day.

There is one more reason to celebrate. I received a Mother's Day card. It was a gift that I had forgotten long ago and found again on a restless spring day. My son is still with me, still nudging me, still sending me gifts with love.

Monica Colberg, Art's Mom TCF Minneapolis MN

Lovingly lifted with thanks from Minneapolis Newsletter

The Prisoner in My Mind

I live in my mind now. Mother's Day is this month. My child's birthday is the following week. I remember 35 previous Mother's Days. Happy occasions, my son spending time with me, bringing me gifts he made, treasures that I have always kept on display.



Every advertisement I see brings tears to my eyes. I dread the arrival of Mother's Day. On the second Sunday of May I set out each card my child gave me. Cards are covering my piano. I remember each year, each gift, each wonderful moment. I softly sob. Oceans of tears flow silently down my cheeks. Red-eyed and miserable, I fall into a dreamless, drugged sleep.

Down I drop into the prison of my mind. I think about my child's birthday. How would he celebrate this year if he were alive? I mark the occasion with silence and tears. I think of the day he was born, his first birthday, his happy childhood, mellow teen years and busy college days. I think of him as the admirable man he became. I remember the look on my son's face when my Dad unexpectedly arrived at his 30th birthday party.

He is with Dad now; they are celebrating together. I am alone, trapped in my mind, focusing on all that has been lost. My child's birth changed me. His death imprisoned me inside my mind.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX

in memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

Mothers' Day

In all my grief on the first Mothers' Day without my daughter, I forgot to call my own mother. Just before bed that night four years ago, I remembered that I still had a mother. A mother who was worried about me. A mother who had lost a granddaughter and was grieving herself. So I guess my tip for newly bereaved mothers would be to call your mom. If your mother is no longer alive, do something in her honour and be happy she didn't have to go through what you are going through. And then be good to yourself. Because that's what your kid would be doing on this day. Be kind to yourself FOR your son or daughter who died.
~Robin B

We lost Patrick the week before Mother's Day. I dreaded the day, but dread doesn't keep those days at bay. Time passes the same with or without your child. Early in the day, Patrick's 12 pall bearers, all very close, rang my doorbell. They presented me with a James Avery bracelet, from Patrick and them. I've never taken it off. It's my permanent Mother's Day gift. I suggest that you purchase something that you wear everyday that reminds you that you're still a mother to someone in Heaven. Dread is a poison that can ruin every month, every holiday of the year. I find that the dread is more painful than the day itself. I do acknowledge that there is a great deal of power in a holiday, for grieving people. But, I simply refuse to let it steal my entire life. Yes, I battle with special days, but I always win. My proof? It's my 4th Mother's Day. I may not like it, but it hasn't taken me down. The Monday after, I will still be standing...I'm a survivor, scarred and battle-worn, but still standing. ~Patti B.

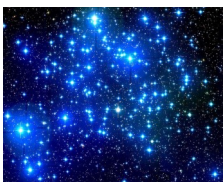
When my son died, my thoughtful sister in law made ribbons for us to wear to the memorial service from his blankets. With this energy, I can take him with me everywhere. On Mother's Day, I pin this ribbon over my heart, and in spirit, he joins us in the celebration. ~Jennifer R.

Since I have other children I feel like I need to let them have the day. I spend time alone in the morning before the day starts and remind myself I am creating memories with my surviving children. ~Pam

Give yourself permission and grace to NOT celebrate if it doesn't feel right. Mother's Day for a bereaved mother is not the time to bow to the expectations of others. ~Amy

Make time for grief. If I don't do this and just keep pushing it off. The grief will seek me out and make itself known with no warning and usually at the most inopportune times. It is ok to be...angry, happy, sad, frustrated, depressed, fatigued, passionate, etc. Grief takes so many different shapes and sizes. No two are the same. ~Jenna

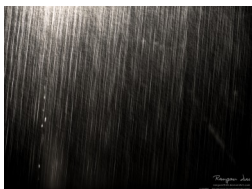
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter



The Shadows of the Night

I sit alone in the shadows of the night
Looking up at the stars that shine so bright
I think of you somewhere far up above
I remember all the laughter, happiness, and love.

The full moon shines bright in the sky
Staring at the full face,
I start to cry
From the face of the moon above the tree I see your face staring back at me.



Then it starts to rain and the sky turns gray
I remember what happened two years ago in May
It continued to rain the whole night through
I think that the rain meant that you were crying too.

Lisa Johnson, TCF/Baltimore, MD Winnipeg chapter news

What Grieving Moms Want for Mother's Day?

TheComfortCompany.net Offers 10 Simple Ways to help Moms Cope When Mother's Day Hurts

Acknowledgement is what grieving mother's want most for Mother's Day, suggests a survey by www.thecomfortcompany.net, a website that specializes in meaningful sympathy gifts. The online survey asked "What can others do to ease your pain on Mother's Day". Over 80 percent of the 200 respondents answered, "Recognize that I am a mother".

"While Mother's Day is generally considered to be a day of celebration, for many women it is a day of pain and loss" says Renee Wood, former social worker and founder of The Comfort Company. "It's important to remember those moms who have had a failed pregnancy or who have lost a child at any age."

In response to the survey results, thecomfortcompany.net has issued a list of ten simple ways to reach out to a grieving mother on this difficult holiday.

1. Recognize that they are a mother: Offer a hug and a "Happy Mother's Day". Send a card to let them know you remember they are a mother even though their child is not with them physically.
2. Acknowledge they have had a loss: Express the message, "I know this might be a difficult day for you. I want you to know that I am thinking about you."
3. Use their child's name in conversation: One mother responded, "People rarely speak his name anymore, but when they do it's like music to my ears".
4. Plant a living memorial: A tree or rose bush, like memories, will grow in beauty as the years pass.
5. Visit the grave site: Many mothers felt that it was "extremely thoughtful" when others visited their child's grave site and left flowers or a small pebble near the headstone.
6. Light a candle: Let the mother know you will light a candle in memory of their child on Mother's Day.
7. Share a memory or pictures of the child: Give the gift of a memory. One mother wrote that the "greatest gift you can give is a heartfelt letter about my child and a favourite memory with them".
8. Send a gift of remembrance: Many mothers felt a small gift would be comforting. Suggestions included: an angel statue, jewellery, a picture frame, and a library book or toy donation in the child's name or anything personalized.
9. Don't try to minimize the loss: Avoid using any clichés that attempt to explain the death of a child. ("God needed another angel.") Secondly, don't try to find anything positive about the loss ("You still have two healthy children").
10. Encourage Self-Care: Self-care is an important aspect of the "healing the mind and spirit effort" according to several mothers. Encourage a grieving mother to take care of herself. Give her a gift certificate to a day spa or any place where she can be pampered.

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Gratefully lifted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter



*Mothers
hold their
children's hands
for a while,
but their hearts
forever.*



MOTHER'S DAY: A Father's view—Al Bolt TCF Cleveland Ohio

In our house as in all bereaved parents households, Mother's Day comes with mixed emotions. Setting aside a day to honour Motherhood is only right. Mothers do tend to be taken for granted. I remember childhood joy of getting Mother a special gift, even if it was only a crayon drawing. As an adult, buying gifts for your mother and the mother of your children still brings back happy memories.

But this changed when Erin died. Looking through the cards at gift shop only reminds me of this irony. Cute, humorous sweetly sentimental cards await the bereaved father shopping for his wife. I can't find a card that will comfort my wife on this day, and even worse, I'm afraid that I'll buy her a card that will bring back only painful memories of the child she lost.

I realise this day, because it's widely celebrated, can even years later take my wife back to the grieving that she thought she was "through with". I can never do enough on Mother's Day, maybe I try too much. I know of course that all the cards, gifts, flowers and the messy breakfasts in the world can't make up for the loss of our child, but I still do these things. She deserves them.

The unfairness of our daughter's death will always be there. I know I can't change that with a card, but I can remind her she is a great mother. A loving mother and most importantly she is still the mother of the child we lost. If she's happy on Mother's Day I try to keep her there. If she's depressed cheer her up as best I can even though I'm not very good at it.

Please be as happy and proud as every Mother today. No one can dispute the fact that you brought your child into the world. Although that child is no longer with you, the love you had can never be taken away from you. If you should be depressed may there be family and friends there to remind you of this and comfort you.

Lovingly lifted from TCF East London Newsletter.

What Mothers' Day Feels Like After Stillbirth

I want to be honoured as Genevieve's mom by Sarah Muthler

Motherhood, and Mother's Day in particular, is supposed to be a jubilant, messy affair. Commercials show vibrant bouquets of flowers, crayoned cards, and joyous brunches at fancy restaurants. Everything is external.

For those of us who have lost a baby to stillbirth, Mother's Day, just like motherhood, is internal. I cannot imagine going out to a restaurant or celebration surrounded by people whose experiences were so much happier than mine, but this day is still for me. My daughter died, but I am still her mother.

This vision of motherhood looks nothing like what I expected and hoped for. I do not tote an overflowing diaper bag for her, but I still quietly carry her with me every day. I see a little girl the same age as Genevieve would have been and feel my throat tighten. I pore over recipes trying to find the right birthday cake for a toddler who isn't here – maybe lemon.

The question is not whether the mother of a stillborn baby should be acknowledged on Mother's Day, but how. Directness is best. Ask the mom how she will spend Mother's Day. This gives her a chance to say whether she prefers to ignore the day or be quietly honoured. One of the greatest gifts for me is when others acknowledge that I continue to be Genevieve's mom. Rather than a Mother's Day card, a blank card with a simple message fits perfectly. "I was thinking about you and Genevieve because it's Mother's Day." It's good to hear other people say that they wish my daughter were here and know that I'm not alone in missing her.

I'm always grateful for the chance to talk about her. Most women get to talk about their children every single day. Those of us who have lost babies seldom do, even though we too think of our children every day. For someone with a recent loss, ask about the baby. Who did he look like? How was her name chosen? Always use the baby's name. Choosing a name is one of the few normal things parents of a stillborn child get to do. For someone whose loss was longer ago, ask whether there are any new plans to honour the baby, such as planting a tree or donating to charity. Also, ask how the mother is doing with the grieving process. Many people stopped asking about my wellbeing a few months after my loss, but it takes years to adapt.

Mother's Day is confusing and painful for those of us who have lost a baby, but small gestures from friends and family can help ease the sadness. The root of motherhood is a woman loving a child unconditionally.

And we do. We should be honoured for that.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF SA Chapter Newsletter

Accommodating Grief

Well, here we are: the holiday onslaught is now officially over.

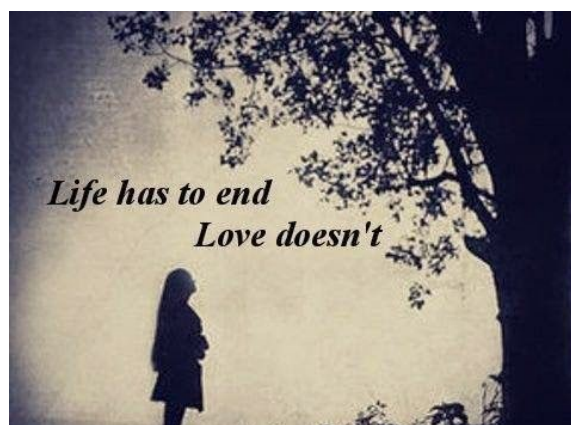
The doctor I see every six months or so for my rheumatoid arthritis always fusses at me. One of the routine questions is, "How's your pain level?" I usually say, "About a three." And then she looks at my hands and my feet-at the swollen joints and twisted toes-and shakes her head. But here's the deal: sure they hurt, sure I can't do all the things I used to do, sure I have to do many things differently than I did them when my hands and feet were unaffected by this disease – but I'm STILL moving and doing what needs to be done. I don't really know how to do anything else.

And that's how it is with this grief I lug around-it's heavier some days than others-but I'm STILL moving and doing what needs to be done. This is not the life I thought I would be living, but it's the life I have. So I make accommodations for my sorrow just like I make accommodations for my hurting hands and crooked toes.

- I try not to over-schedule my days. If I have an appointment I mark it on the calendar and refuse to pile other commitments on top of it. That way if I'm wiped out I have some built in down time.
- I prioritize what needs to be done. Whether it is for a week or a day, I jot down a list (still using paper, but a phone would work) and then decide what are the two or three MOST important tasks that must be done in that time frame. If I find myself running behind because it's a hard grief day (or week), I can quickly make choices that ensure the needful things are done and the others laid aside for when I have more energy to do them. I'm less anxious about what I don't get finished because I know I did the most important things first.
- I build rest into my days. When I'm overtired, I'm more susceptible to grief attacks. I pause every now and then to sit or take a quick walk outside or simply change my work from detail-oriented to broad strokes. I have more flexibility because I work at home but even in an office it's possible. My husband walks every day on his lunch hour-sunshine and physical activity make his afternoons easier to bear.
- I ask for help. When I'm drowning in grief, I reach out for a lifeline. There's no shame in asking for help. I have a good friend that I can text or call anytime I need to and ask for prayer or a listening ear. I belong to a couple of online grief groups and they are full of people who understand my pain and will lift me up in prayer and encourage my heart when it feels especially broken.
- I accept my limitations. My toes don't allow me to wear beautiful shoes anymore so I've learned to wear what fits instead of what's in fashion. I am not the same person I was before I buried a child so I'm learning to live with the new me. I don't like crowds. I don't like unexpected change. I feel anxious in unfamiliar places and around strangers. I make choices that limit my exposure to those things when possible.
- I shake off the really awful day. I can't help that some days take a nosedive into terrible as soon as I leave the bed. I admit that grieving is hard, that it will continue to be hard. But I won't let my worst days be my only days. I am not in control of everything, but I can control some things. I would not have chosen this life for myself, but I can make choices that help make it bearable.

Melanie – "The Life I Didn't Choose"

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Queensland Newsletter



How we grieve differently

My husband Glen and I had been married twenty-four years when our seventeen year old son Nathan was killed by a drunk driver. Nathan was our third son to die. I was twenty-six and twenty-eight when Jimmy and Ethan died. I did not sense their deaths challenged our marriage quite as much as Nathan's death did. We had only been married six and eight years when the babies died. Perhaps because we were young or perhaps because we had two other small children, we were so preoccupied with our remaining responsibilities we didn't notice the attacks to our marriage that seemed so prevalent when Nathan died.

Somehow we survived his death and our marriage survived as well. We have now been married 46 and a half years, and most importantly, we still like each other! How did we do it.

We were already aware of our differences in personality. Glen faced problems very methodically and logically. I faced problems like a bull in a china closet - head on, with very little logic.

Glen faced Nathan's death in his typical methodical style. I now know he was devastated, but he didn't know how to show his sorrow. He went to work every day and appeared to be functioning normally.

I cried and howled. I felt so much rage that anyone who crossed me in any way was a potential victim. I could not think; I bucked my normal routine, and missed as many days of work as possible. My roller coaster emotions kept everyone at arms' length. I often locked myself in the bedroom and refused to talk with anyone. Glen very patiently slid notes under the bedroom door, assuring me of his love. "You are the love of my life," he wrote and spoke those words to me until I would finally open the door and sob and sob as he held me.

At first I viewed his quiet manner as weakness. I wanted him to confront the justice system and set everyone straight who questioned my style of grieving. His consistent behaviour finally made sense to me. Logically he felt certain the DA would not listen to him, and he knew others didn't understand our grief, so why exert the effort in trying to change them. I saw that his predictable behaviour also meant he loved me before Nathan died and he wasn't about to change any time soon.

One night he sat in front of me, got my attention, and said, "I don't care what you do; I'm not leaving!" And he meant it! If he wasn't going to leave, I decided I needed to learn to understand him.

As we talked we began to realize the best thing we could do to honor Nathan's life was to learn to love each other even more deeply.

We now realize our differences are not weaknesses; they can be viewed as strengths. Thank goodness Glen is a peacemaker. If he weren't, I question anyone would still be speaking to us. Often I speak without my brain being in gear.

Glen has learned I have the ability to size up a situation quickly. I can make decisions fast. I may not always be right, but I'm fast. I have a sensitive side that probably causes my tears to flow often, but my sensitivity also helps me know when others are in need. Glen has learned to trust my sensitive intuition.

We have learned that "different" doesn't mean one of us is wrong. It just means we are different, and different is OK.

Marilyn Heavilin

Lifted with thanks from
Winnipeg chapter news



POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

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

My daughter, Beth Bradbury died in a road traffic accident on the 30th November 1991. Beth was 17. A few days later my brother, Dafydd, wrote the poem, I'm a long way from your smile, which still gives me comfort.
Margaret Bradbury

I'm a long way from your smile

Drowning in my feelings afloat in a storm
Drenched with unhappiness.
Oh headstrong child caught between defiance and Life!
Yearning to be independent and so grown up,
Soon to be of age,
Wise without wisdom,
Young without age,
Sage with no experience of what could be
And what cannot be,
Lost to us now through no one's neglect.
Your lust for life your only crime
And that a little fault, easily forgiven.
We weep at our incompetence
Preferring to sentence ourselves for no one's crime.
Our only respite, that yours was a quick taking,
Instant nothingness,
Hopefully and mercifully exiting from this life
To whatever or wherever we will eventually follow.
Bright child go with our blessings!
And may your lightness of spirit or soul drift
Towards the Light that does not radiate
But absorbs and engenders all our levels of spirit.
We are a long way from your smile
And it cannot be measured in units that
We can understand or comprehend.
But we touch each other by being
And having been, we are near and far
Fundamentally close and abiding. Dafydd

Reprinted with thanks from TCF UK Compassion

And If I Go While You're Still Here —

Emily Dickinson

And if I go, while you're still here...
Know that I live on,
Vibrating to a different measure
Behind a thin veil you cannot see through.
You will not see me,
So you must have faith.
I wait for the time when we can soar together again,
Both aware of each other.
Until then, live your life to the fullest
And when you need me,
Just whisper my name in your heart,
...I will be there.

Winnipeg Chapter news

THE SURVIVORS

We who are left behind in the shadow of the
valley of death.
We know about sorrow from the bones out.
We who choose to stay behind and not follow
our loved ones through the portal of death, we
are the brave ones.
We who survive abandonment by children who
left unwillingly struggle through the lonely
night, into the empty day.
We who drink this cup of sorrow need to remember
the joy that carved the cup so deep.

Anna Olson, TCF/Winnipeg, MB In memory of Jennifer.
Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Why I'll Never Have Baby #3 September 22, 2016 by Rachel Lewis

I'd heard the question a million times before — and a million times since. But as I stood there with a stranger, making small talk as I treated her hands to a sea salt scrub, she asked an innocent question I myself used to ask all the time. Today her inquiry blindsided me. As she waited for my answer, she naively scrubbed the oil and salt all over her hands, completely oblivious to my struggle. I internally broke out into a sweat, faltering for an answer and hoping she didn't notice my hesitation. "One," I stuttered out. "I have one child." Liar . . . My conscience screamed. You had two. Why didn't you tell her you had two?

This should be the easiest question to answer, right? Except — it wasn't. Scrub, scrub, rinse. Scrub, scrub, rinse. I finished helping all of the guests with their spa hand treatment, and I never asked a single one of them how many kids they had. Because now I knew how hard that was to answer. No not just hard to answer. Impossible to answer. Three weeks before this conversation, I had lost our little, much-wanted baby due to an ectopic pregnancy. I knew our baby was early, sure. But try telling my heart that. All my heart knew was that a new little baby was growing in me, a baby I loved, and now that child was gone. And I had no idea how to make an account of her existence, her value, her inherent worth to others. To strangers. And how could I — when I didn't even count her in the line-up of my children?

Not telling the stranger about my baby felt like I was failing her. And yet at the same time, it also felt like this stranger didn't need to be privy to the deep grief I was feeling. She didn't need to know how hard it was for me to pry myself out of bed to make it to that event, and how I was barely holding myself together in front of her.

It's been almost five years since that conversation. The one that has changed almost every conversation I've had with strangers. My situation hasn't gotten any less complicated — if anything, it has gotten more complicated. But I have learned the power of a safe, predetermined answer. "We currently have one child . . ." (Or two or three, depending on where we were at in our fostering/adoptive process.) And I learned the safe questions to ask when meeting a stranger at my networking events. "Tell me a little about yourself" or "Tell me a bit about your family . . ." They are open-ended — so they can say as little or as much as they wanted. If they want to disclose how many kids they have in their home, or if they were married they could. But if they want to answer in such a way that I would have no idea that they wanted to be a mom more than anything, but couldn't get pregnant, I'd be clueless about their struggle with infertility. If they wanted to mention their daughter or son in heaven they could — or they couldn't. If they didn't want to have to explain that they were married for 20 years and recently divorced, they wouldn't have to. Disclosure could be up to them. This system has worked for me for the past five years.

Until we got unmistakably pregnant yet again. For as long as I could, I hid my burgeoning belly under loose tunics while out in public. I'm used to being the one eyeing the pregnant stranger in the grocery store, jealous of her swollen abdomen, resenting my four years of trying and five losses. I'm not used to being the pregnant one in the grocery store, inadvertently triggering anyone around her who was dealing with loss or infertility. And so I hid in flowy shirts and loose dresses. For as long as I could. Until the day came that no matter what I wore, my belly was obvious. In my blatantly fertile state, the dreaded question resurfaced, only a little different this time . . . "Is this your first?" Of course, this time it was only asked to me when I was out and about solo. And still, I didn't know at first how to respond. If I simply said no, they'd ask how many children I have. The easy answer would be, "This will be baby #3." An easy answer . . . but also a lie. I have had one live birth, five losses, one adoption, one foster child I consider my son but is no longer in my arms, and one baby on the way. To be true? "Number nine," I would have to say. This is baby number nine. Except, I only have 2 kids in my arms.

But no matter how hard I try to convince myself otherwise, I can't bring myself to say, "This is baby #3." So I've settled for: "We have two girls at home." It is a safe answer. Enough info to let them know this baby isn't my first. But not so much that they would ask about my complicated history. I can't count my kids. I don't even want to try. And if I'm really honest, I'd tell you I'm tired of being asked to. The truth is — my history is complicated. But it's not just me. Families today in general are complicated. Dang complicated.

**There's infertility.*

**There are embryos you transferred in IVF that didn't make it.*

**There's early miscarriage, late miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death.*

**There's, "My kids, your kids, and our kids" in blended families.*

**There are children you fostered forever, loved as your own, and had to return.*

**There are failed adoptions.*

**There's the step-child you raised, then lost access to when you divorced.*

**There are the children you are taking care of for others, but have no legal rights to.*

**There are children you are estranged from.*

**There's the apparently 'childless' mom who has had to say good-bye to every one of her kids.*

There are a million ways to count our kids — the ones in our arms and the ones in our hearts. And so I'm making a public plea to all you well-intentioned lovely strangers who are trying so desperately to be polite and follow the example of millions before you. When you encounter a mom, or a woman you think might be a mom, and you feel the urge to say something . . . don't ask her to count her kids. If you are just passing by, and feel you must say something, a simple "You have a lovely family" will do just fine. And if you need to start a conversation, the best way to go would be, "So — tell me a little about you . . ." That way, she can tell you as little . . . or as much . . . as she wants.

Lovingly lifted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

When a child dies by drug addiction.

Ben was an addict.

That declaration is enormously painful and takes even more courage to write, than Ben died at age nineteen. He was an honor student, football captain, neighborhood skateboard star, altar server, little league all-star, and lead singer in a punk rock band; he was handsome, popular, kind, and gentle. He was my first born, my only boy. He was an addict and heroin killed him.

When Ben was in the throes of his disease, I would jolt awake, stare at the blank ceiling, feeling my blood turn to ice. With my hands slipped under my lower back and my fingers spread so my body heat could radiate through my arms, hands, and fingers, I'd say the Lord's Prayer, trying to obliterate the swarming fears.

Obsessed with this prayer, I studied Emmet Fox's *Around the Year with Emmet Fox* before bed each night. Reading and dissecting the prayer by phrase, I studied each word on every page, searching for an answer to my never-ending question. "How can I save Ben?" I also wrote in journals, pouring out my heart to empty space. Addiction is lonely and isolating, and it leaves a trail of "Whys?" and "Could haves?"

I'm still haunted by the idea that some kind of trauma or horrible encounter unleashed a beast within my son. Why didn't I see it? Why didn't Ben feel safe enough to tell me? Was the disease so embedded in his DNA, that there was nothing anyone could do?

Did I fail him? That is the hardest question of all: Did I fail him? I sometimes wish Ben had died of cancer. People understand the disease. Addiction carries an insidious stigma, casting out its victims and relegating them—and their families—to society's margins. There is no respect attached to such conditions. Police officers don't touch the brim of their hats in homage, and no other fanfare takes place to mark the grievous occasion of loss.

There is only mourning...and those damn unanswerable questions.

Joni Norby, Quakertown, PA

Lifted with love from TCF Minneapolis Chapter News

When someone asks me what The Compassionate Friends is, I tell them it is a club that nobody wants to be a part of. It's a club you don't know exists until you suddenly find yourself a member. It is a club where background, age, religion, skin color, geographic location makes no difference.

There is a common denominator among all, a grieving and broken heart. We don't know each other but we do. We are thankful for this organization and the hundreds of thousands that have been helped. We share our children, our stories, our tears and our memories to help make the way a little softer for ourselves and others.

Karen Cantrell, TCF/Frankfort, KY
Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

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Sibling Page



Suicide Bereavement: A Lonely Journey

Being bereaved through suicide can feel very confusing. An insect and even a blade of grass fight for survival. The want to end one's life is clearly an unnatural finish that is incomprehensible for those left behind.

Why? Why did they do it? Why couldn't I stop it? So many questions and so few answers. We try to search for some kind of peace and understanding to make sense of what has happened. Sometimes we have been left with notes, letters, and like in my case, we knew our loved one was terribly unwell. Sometimes there aren't any obvious signs, no goodbyes.

Is it recklessness? Is it impulsivity? Risk-taking behaviour? What can lead someone to end their life? I agonized over what to write here. I've written about suicide so many times. It shattered my life and I've had to rebuild it piece by piece. One of the heartbreaking issues we face as siblings and suicide survivors is the fact that not only are we the 'forgotten mourners' of the family, but we are not allowed to publicly grieve in the way others are. People are scared of suicide. It makes them feel uncomfortable. There is a long standing myth that talking about it makes it more likely to happen. Cancer - that can be made sense of. Not the reasons for it, but the reason a person died. They didn't want to go. But they were medically and terminally ill.

Illness of the mind is impossible to make sense of. It isn't tangible. There is no physical treatment like surgery or chemotherapy. There may be pills but their effect is still relatively unknown. I didn't feel that I could tell people how my sister died for a long time. I felt like it was too much for them to handle, and for me to handle if they didn't react in a way that was kind and compassionate (sometimes through no fault of their own).

I found a book called *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One*. There are countless stories in there of people's experiences of bereavement through suicide. Reading these made me feel a little less alone. Forums and Facebook pages have made me feel a little less alone. This book talks about letting go of the silence. While I would like to review this book in greater detail, I will say that on a personal level, letting go of the silence is a breakthrough for me.

I remember my father holding a suicide bereavement group a number of years ago. People told their stories. I told mine and said "for the first time in my life I can say, 'I had a sister, and she died by suicide.'" I broke down in tears but felt the most free I had since the day we lost her. So I encourage you to speak up.

You never know what kind of impact it can have, on you and those around you.

by Alexandra Lovingly lifted from TCF/Victoria, AU

The Unique Aspects of Sibling Grief

From the shadows we come, the surviving siblings. We are all ages: younger, older, twins and subsequent children. We have our own story to tell, one that is often brushed aside in the concern for our parents, the spouse, and even the children of our sibling. We are grieving, experiencing the same intensity of pain, but not always acknowledged by others. When a child dies, a future is lost; when a parent dies, it is the past which is buried. The death of a sibling is the death of a friend, a rival, an antagonist, a confidant, and perhaps a co-conspirator. It is important to help give siblings a voice as we struggle in the shadows, searching to find light in the darkness.

My mother would tell you that when my brother, Big A died, "the world went dark and silent. No longer did life seem worth living. The sun grew cold and the music died. There were no happy sounds in our house anymore and the sun cast only shadows of sadness." When Austin died, we all thought the sun had left forever. But much to our dismay, the sun kept coming up and we had to keep going, even though we didn't always know where we were going! My mom used to tell people that the only reason she got up after my brother died was because I needed cereal. There is a little more to the story.

It is true, I was hungry. But what she didn't tell you is that at first, she moved the cereal down to a lower cabinet, to make it easier for me to reach. And then she put the milk in a smaller container so I didn't need help pouring it. Then the TV was moved to a shorter shelf so I could turn on my own cartoons. By now, all the possible accommodations had been made for me to be "self-sufficient," — mind you, I was 4. But every day I came back, needing something else. Finally, my mom, exhausted and looking to grieve in peace, asked me what more could I possibly need?

I told her that I needed my brother back. We cried together while she explained patiently to her 4-year-old daughter for the thousandth time that he could not come back. Then I asked her when our family would be fixed, "unbroken." I didn't have the words then that I do now, to say that I was hungry for more than cereal. I had lost my brother...and we were at risk of losing so much more...

It was then, in the early hours of a Saturday morning, that we came to realize that in our own unique struggles to find a way to breathe in those early days, we had lost each other. We didn't lose my brother, he died. But we were at risk of losing the support of our little family. This was the spark for us, the start of our commitment to find a way to reach through our differences in our losses to find some common ground.

Our story is not unique. One of the most difficult parts of being a bereaved sibling is the loss of the family we knew. Our parents are consumed by their own grief and while we certainly understand why, our experience is that none of our supports are the same. Siblings are the people who have known us and our family the longest. Our friends may not know how to help, and may shy away. Extended family is primarily concerned with our parents, and the family that we knew is shattered seemingly beyond repair.

How can you help a bereaved sibling?

Acknowledge that sibling loss is devastating - often sibs feel we are the "Forgotten Mourners." We may be asked how their parents are handling the loss. Many times, we feel that our loss is not given as much weight by supportive others. Take the time to ask surviving siblings how we are doing.

Encourage us to seek and accept emotional support for ourselves - sometimes we feel driven to support our parents. Many siblings report putting their own grief on hold to care for parents or out of fear that their grieving will make things worse for their grieving parents who "have enough to deal with." This can result in siblings feeling isolated and alone within their own families. We may need reminders and permission to grieve and to accept our own support.

Allow us to grapple with our guilt - the truth is that all sibling relationships are not perfect and even great ones come with some not-so-hot moments of rivalry or ugly words. Grief has a unique quality of playing back newsreels of the worst moments between us and our siblings when we are feeling down. Remind us of memories where we were kind to our sibling. Help us put into perspective our normal sibling relationships. It would be weird if every moment we had with them was actually perfect. We may need you to help us to remember this.

We are surviving siblings. We face many challenges, sometimes alone. But with support and a lot of grief work, we can emerge from the shadows. We can claim our roles, and live the legacies we have chosen of our loved ones with pride (colored with sadness).

Am I Still a Sister? You bet I am! And just as my little family learned in the wee hours of a Saturday morning, crying over breakfast cereal, I hope our TCF family can find that we are all bereaved, we are all hurting, we are many things, BUT WE ARE NOT ALONE. Together we can become a family circle, broken by death, but mended by love.

Allie Sims Franklin, LICSW (Big A's sister) We Need Not Walk Alone

Allie Sims Franklin, LICSW is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a grief management specialist, and the big sister of Austin Sims. She is the author of *Am I Still A Sister?* and a contributing author in *Dear Parents and The Dying and Bereaved Teenager*. She co-authored *A Place For Me: A Healing Journey for Grieving Kids*, *Footsteps Through Grief*, *The Other Side of Grief* and *Finding Your Way Through Grief* with her mother, Darcie D. Sims. Allie is currently serving as the President of the Board of Directors for TCF and is the Executive Director of the nonprofit crisis lifeline, Crisis Clinic, in Seattle, WA.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organisation offering friend-ship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief experienced upon death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers and professionals to be supportive.



Do you need to talk? Our telephone friends are willing to listen.. **Telephone Friends**

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
QUEENSTOWN	Arlette Irwin	03 4510108
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
CENTRAL OTAGO	Louise McKenzie (David, 14yr, accident) Central Otago Co-ordinator	03 4486094 louise.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz
INVERCARGILL	Linda Thompson. (Ryan, 16yrs, Cardiac Failure. Dec 2001) Southland Co-ordinator*	03-2164155 027 390 9666
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	04 9387212 lorrained@paradise.net.nz
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)	
WANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yo, car accident)	06 3443345 wanganui@thecompassionatefriends.org.nz
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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