

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 199

FEBRUARY MARCH 2024

## Sometimes

Sometimes we need a bridge and sometimes we are the bridge.  
No one I know has escaped troubled waters, rough seas and  
challenging, scary days.

There are times in our lives when we could use a little help, and  
other times when we are given the chance to be that help for  
someone else.

It really doesn't matter where you are right now.  
What matters is that you remember we are stronger together,  
and taking a hand is just as important as offering one.

Paul Boynton/ Power of Wordz  
Printed in TCF Focus NSW

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](mailto:tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz)



Goodbyes hurt the most  
when the story was not finished



## Our Children ... Remembered with love

### Forever Young

### Forever Loved

### Forever Longed For

Paul Graham Albrecht  
Yvonne Kay French-Wollen  
Rebecca Clare Halket  
Allan Stephen Hobbs  
Faye Marie Joyce  
Keegan Lineham  
Hughan Scott Norton  
Vaughan Arthur Nuttall  
Logan Scott O'Hara  
Marlene Joy Penny  
Melissa Jane TeHuia

Born 28/2/84  
Born 4/2/64  
Born 22/2/84  
Born 20/2/56  
Born 5/2/61  
Born 14/2/94  
Born 9/2/63  
Born 17/2/87  
Born 17/2/78  
Born 5/2/73  
Born 23/2/72

Glenn Arscott  
Tania Rose Baldock  
Hayley Robyn Galpin  
Ben Paul Gillanders  
Daniel James Gillies  
Krysha Helen Hanson  
Bevan Andrew Hookway  
Kai Klein  
Keegan Lineham  
Simon Blair Marsh  
Nicholas Ian O'Hara  
Brent Allan Stenton  
Jonathon Upton

Died 1/2/02  
Died 6/2/09  
Died 13/2/89  
Died 18/2/77  
Died 18/2/03  
Died 6/2/03  
Died 17/2/08  
Died 20/2/98  
Died 14/2/94  
Died 16/02/08  
Died 8/2/00  
Died 12/2/94  
Died 11/2/02

Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young  
Simon Charlton  
Shane Elliot Davis  
Elliot Evans  
Riki Evans  
Marcus Fitchett  
Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton  
Aidon Samiel Konise  
Sara Loo  
Thomas Craig McDonald  
Anthea Gail McDowell  
Jessie Adelaide Neaves  
Georgia Rose Poplawski  
Quintin Christie Reid  
Callum Robertson

Mitchell James Beaumont  
Kyle David Edwards  
Elliot Evans  
Riki Evans  
Tineke Foley  
Ricky George  
Faye Marie Joyce  
Anna Ruth Iris Moore  
Paul John Nicholaou  
Hughan Scott Norton  
Vaughan Arthur Nuttall  
Quintin Christie Reid  
Trinity Lea Taylor  
Nicole Leigh Templer

Born 19/3/95  
Born 26/3/96  
Born 18/3/82  
Born 4/3/84  
Born 4/3/84  
Born 11/3/70  
Born 9/3/67  
Born 2/3/88  
Born 2/3/92  
Born 3/3/91  
Born 1/3/79  
Born 9/3/90  
Born 30/3/00  
Born 23/3/92  
Born 8/3/82

Died 29/3/96  
Died 4/3/98  
Died 13/3/84  
Died 5/3/84  
Died 25/3/10  
Died 19/3/04  
Died 14/3/94  
Died 19/3/06  
Died 21/3/98  
Died 9/3/01  
Died 14/3/06  
Died 26/3/07  
Died 12/3/05  
Died 30/3/11

Dear Friends,

As the years pass (now over 20 years since the death of our son, Ben), I have been reflecting on how I am going in this grief journey and what has changed since those first few dreadful years.

I guess the big change is that life is once again great, we are happy, all doing well in our various jobs and living life fully. We are more able to talk about Ben without the deep pain and grief which was so hard. Most times now, people who we meet for the first time, do not sense an underlying sadness and emptiness which I feel was often there in those early years no matter how hard we tried to hide it. All in all I must say we appear and are in many ways “Normal”.

But of course for us, as for many families whose beloved child or children have died, this is a new normal and there are still many things which sets us apart from those not traveling this grief journey.

I am still more emotional and tears are closer than before; after 19 years of editing this newsletter, I still shed many tears while reading and selecting articles and I also cry easily when hearing of the death of a child or even watching some TV programmes where this happens.

I still have Ben’s favourite clothes on a shelf in my bedroom and have his toilet bag sitting in the bathroom. Often glancing at these while going about my normal day can make me smile or at other times make me wistful and sad. I’m sure people who are not grieving would think ‘why have them there if they make you sad’ but as I said they just as often make me smile!!

We love listening to ‘Ben’s songs’ several of which we played at the funeral and others which were favourites of his, and I still have solitary times of looking through his photo album which also includes newspaper clippings about his accident and poems from friends after his death. And as with his clothes and toilet bag all these activities sometimes bring smiles and at other times sadness.

Interesting, isn’t it that we do things which may bring sadness. For me I’m thinking it is around doing something which brings Ben to the fore. Although he is always around and in our hearts and thoughts, life is busy and we can’t always be focused on him or our grief so having these things is like having a pause button in my day to quietly remember.

As you all travel in this journey, take time to reflect and see where you are and notice ways things are changing and remember your child will always be with you, in your memories, in spirit and in your thoughts.

Take care of yourself and your loved ones,  
Lesley Henderson.

## **NOT GUILT, BUT REGRET**

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not.

When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn’t we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate.

If that word doesn’t feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then.

It’s not guilt that we feel—we feel regret.

- Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN, Survivors of Suicide Group  
Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News.

Central Otago Compassionate Friends.

Kia ora dear friends,

We do hope that the summer has provided some precious family moments to treasure, given that they will also inevitably have meant family gatherings where a precious family member was painfully absent....,yet present always in our hearts....

It was a privilege to host 17 of you for a delightful pm tea at the Packing Shed...(18/3) ...a perfect summers day to enjoy the lovely garden, and, with sincere thanks to Baz and Becs, who looked after us with care & generosity, delicious food etc....

Through attendance at ACROSS meetings, I became aware of useful opportunities for any of you who would like the opportunity to move forward along your pathway of grief, by considering attending the Able Minds base in Ashworth St. Alexandra (Ph.494.262) WWW.able.org.nz

Each Thurs 10-12 am is a drop in session ..."Grief " of any kind..

Each Wed 10-12 "Light Beyond the Shadows "a suicide prevention and bereavement programme with emotional support and information to those who have been affected by suicide.

Two of our Committee have arranged to meet with Able representatives to see how we might be able to work collaboratively in the future.

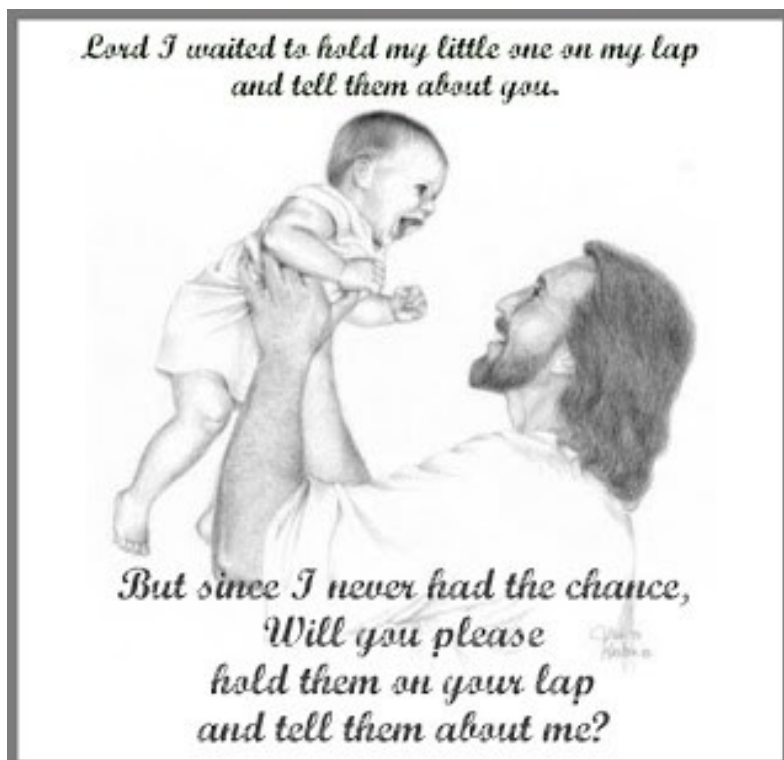
At a recent Committee meeting we tentatively decided to continue on a Voluntary basis in the meantime, however we would work on setting up a monthly drop in opportunity at possibly two cafes where privacy would be possible...Once formalised we will let you know!

Please do not hesitate to reach out should a listening ear be required

Nga mihi nui

Jan Pessione (cell 027 309 1246)

Email:janpessione@xtra.co.nz



You know how new parents look into the window & look at their children at the maternity centre & share with other parents their excitement? What if our angels are gathering around looking down on us, showing us off for being so strong & saying "my mum & dad's awesome, which ones yours?"

Reprinted from  
Focus NSW



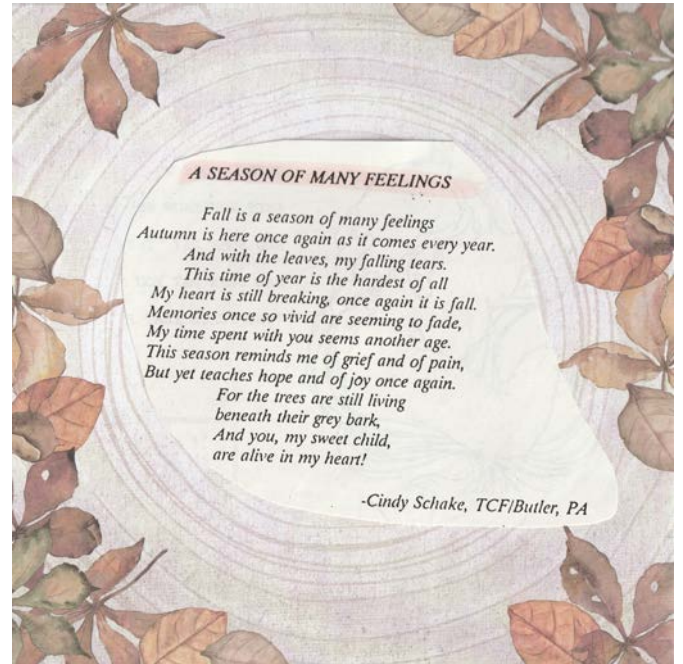
## WANGANUI COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

### A Child Of Mine By Edgar A. Guest

I will lend you, for a little time,  
 A child of mine, He said.  
 For you to love the while he lives,  
 And mourn for when he's dead.  
 It may be six or seven years,  
 Or twenty-two or three.  
 But will you, till I call him back,  
 Take care of him for Me?  
 He'll bring his charms to gladden you,  
 And should his stay be brief.  
 You'll have his lovely memories,  
 As solace for your grief.  
 I cannot promise he will stay,  
 Since all from earth return.  
 But there are lessons taught down there,  
 I want this child to learn.  
 I've looked the wide world over  
 In search for teachers true.  
 And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes,  
 I have selected you.  
 Now will you give him all your love,  
 Nor think the labour vain.  
 Nor hate me when I come  
 To take him home again?  
 I fancied that I heard them say,  
 'Dear Lord, Thy will be done!'  
 For all the joys Thy child shall bring,  
 The risk of grief we'll run.  
 We'll shelter him with tenderness,  
 We'll love him while we may,  
 And for the happiness we've known,  
 Forever grateful stay.  
 But should the angels call for him,  
 Much sooner than we've planned.  
 We'll brave the bitter grief that comes,  
 And try to understand.

A Child Of Mine By Edgar Albert Guest,  
<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/a-child-of-mine-by-edgar-albert-guest>

Read by Kathleen 1/2024



## Lisa K. Boehm Child Loss, Grief & Secondary Loss after a Child Dies

### The ripple effect of child loss...

As if the death of a child wasn't enough, parents who have lost a child have to deal with a lifetime of losses, or secondary losses. Loss of a child is the primary loss and everything after that, or the ripples, is secondary loss. These are the reminders that there will be no happily-ever-after for us, or our kids.

No one can prepare us for this because it's a gradual unfolding as we live our lives. We realize we have to endure the loss of more than just our child. Everything changes after our child dies. Secondary losses are part of the reason why grief lasts a lifetime. Not only are we faced to live a life that isn't the one we intended to live, but the reality is that we will face secondary loss for the rest of our days.

I think this is an important thing for our supporters, friends, and family to know as well. This collateral damage generally unfolds over time and is often unanticipated. You don't think about it until you have to face it. Some things may seem obvious, such as living through all the annual events that our kids should be here for. Examples are birthdays, Christmas, and family holidays. But the secondary losses go way beyond those times. Here is a list of some of the secondary losses you might face on your grief journey:

1. **Loss of identity.** No matter how many children you have, losing a child changes your identity. I am now seen as a mom of one (even though I always say I am the mom of two). I'm also 'labelled' as the mom whose child died. Maybe you are too. I'm sure no one means any harm by that, but sometimes I feel like that's what I am most known for.
2. **Loss of friends/changed relationships.** Death makes people weird and awkward. Sometimes people avoid us because they don't know what to say or do. We are any parent's worst nightmare and we make child loss a reality that no one wants to think about. If it can happen to us, it can happen to anyone. If people avoid us, they avoid acknowledging that they could lose a child too. And some people.... well, they just get tired of hearing about our loss. Personally, I don't have the time or energy for that, so those relationships fizzle.
3. **Loss of sense of safety.** If my daughter could die in a car accident on dry roads, in the absence of alcohol and drugs, and without cell phone use or distracted driving, certainly anyone could die any time. My sense of reality changed the night my daughter Katie died. There are no guarantees. When the front door closes behind someone, it could be the last time I see them. I don't like living in fear, but this is a by-product of loss.
4. **Loss of family structure.** In my heart, we will always be a family of four, but on the outside we are a family of three now. There is a huge, gaping hole in my family, in my house, and even at my kitchen table. Coping with the question "how many children do you have?" nearly brings me to my knees some days. At restaurants, I have caught myself answering 'four' when the hostess asks "for how many?".
5. **Loss of my child's future...and mine.** Not only are the birthdays, Christmases, and family holidays mourned, but so is the wedding my daughter will never have, the family she will never get to begin, and all the milestones that every parent looks forward to. Graduation season continues to be a struggle for me. Katie was an academic and a fashionista. She was looking forward to graduating grade 12 with so much anticipation. I am reminded every year that she will never get past grade 12. I will never get to be the mother of the bride and help Katie with her wedding and I will not get to hold her children. When other people share updates about their children, there is nothing to update about Katie. There are no photos and no new memories with her.
6. **Loss of mental wellbeing.** Gone are the days that I could live carefree and gone are the days where mental health struggles belong to someone else. Every single day involves self-care - mentally, physically, and spiritually. Every day, I check in with myself and do the work. I keep my head above the water, but I'd rather not contend with the challenges of managing anxiety, depression, and the suicidal thoughts that once plagued me.

While this post may seem rather dark and not my usual style of blog, I think it's important that we talk about and validate secondary losses. Sometimes just knowing that other people struggle with these things can bring a level of acceptance to our lives. Acknowledging secondary losses and the pain they leave is the first step to managing them. Then make sure to build your tool box of coping skills and use them regularly. I do this daily. And make sure to reach out to other mothers who are on this path. Only they can truly appreciate what you are going through. All of this takes time and buckets of patience. There is no replacement for the grieving process. It's something we have to figure out and live with. There's no short cut.

Walking beside you, Lisa



# TIME



Time a small word with many meanings, I say this as a bereaved Mom who is now into the fourteenth year since my eldest son Darren died leaving me, his Dad and his two brothers changed forever.

I have thought how do I feel now?

Yes I am feeling differently each anniversary - whether it's Darren's birthday or the date of the accident, or 2 weeks later his death, and a week later his funeral, Christmas, Mothers Day, Easter. So much time!! So many occasions. I will always have the pain in my heart but each anniversary it seems to be a little softer - easier to bear. The sadness; you can never know when or how you will react.

Some years it's the lead up and not the actual day he died, and other times you have an awful day going over and over what the past years could have been, but the best part is the anger has gone.

I know by having wonderful friends at TCF and one very special close friend, also a bereaved Mother who is so valuable and precious to me. I am able to speak anytime about Darren on how I am feeling and coping. I know that my friend is really happy for me to do this because she is genuine and cares about me and completely understands my every word. My other very close long time friends who still have all their children and grandchildren have no understanding how much I hurt at these times and get uncomfortable when I speak about Darren so I don't bother now and do finally say to myself "after all these years that is OK", even though at times when I see them all with their complete happy families I am just a little envious.

Yes it's good to know that as the years pass it definitely hurts less and we learn how to celebrate without feeling guilty that Darren is not with us except in spirit. I feel this and it gives me great comfort when I speak with others who are 20 years without their child or children and see that we all travel this long hard road with many ups and downs but can come out and enjoy the lives we now have.

I used to hate when people would say "Time heals" but now I can say part of this is true and it is because we learn how to cope in different ways to reduce the pain and sadness over the years.

If you are recently bereaved whether one, two or more years without your beloved child/children, they are forever in our hearts.

Pat Burns, Mother of Darren (dec) Rod and Paul TCF/Vic, AU  
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter 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.

## Forever changed - [https://www.buddhanet.net/r\\_share.htm](https://www.buddhanet.net/r_share.htm)

As people who have been blessed with the capacity to give and receive love, we are forever changed by the experience of grief in our lives. We, as human beings, do not 'get over' our grief but work to reconcile ourselves to living with it. We hope eventually to find some meaning for these sad happenings in our lives, to heal and to grow.

Life is not fair. Life is a series of tragic losses but we cannot lose something unless we have first had it so the magnitude of each loss becomes the measure of life's gifts. Memories made in love can never be taken away from you. If your memories bring laughter, let yourself smile, if memories bring sadness, let yourself cry. If your faith is important to you, express it, and remember to love yourself.

How to deal with your grief – a summary

These points highlight a few important matters to consider during bereavement. Each person is different, so beware of ready-made solutions. The following are suggestions to consider; they may or may not fit your situation.

Psychological – Everyone needs some help – don't be afraid to accept it.

- While you may feel pressured to put on a brave front it is important to make your needs known by expressing your feelings to those you trust.
- Often numbness sees us through the first few days or weeks. Don't be too surprised if a let-down comes later.
- Many people are more emotionally upset during bereavement than at any other time in their lives and are frightened by this. Be aware that severe upset is not unusual and, if you are alarmed, seek a professional opinion.
- Whether you feel you need to be alone or accompanied – make it known. Needing company is common and does not mean you will always be dependent on it.
- There is no set time limit for grieving. The period will vary from person to person.

Physical

- It is easy to neglect yourself because you don't much care at a time of grief.
- You are under great stress and may be more susceptible to disease.
- It is especially important not to neglect your health. Try to eat reasonably even if there is no enjoyment in it.
- Although sleep may be disturbed, try to get adequate rest. And please, no grog or sedatives.
- If you have symptoms, get a doctor to check them out.
- If people urge you to see your doctor, do so, even if it doesn't make sense to you at the time.

Social

- Friends and family are often most available early in bereavement and less so later. It is important to be able to reach out to them when you need to. Don't wait for them to guess your needs. They will often guess incorrectly and too late.
- During a period of grief it can be difficult to judge new relationships. Don't be afraid of them, yet it is usually wise not to rush into them. It is hard to see new relationships objectively if you are still actively grieving, and this kind of solution may only lead to other problems.
- No-one will substitute for your loss. Try to enjoy people as they are. Do not avoid social contacts because of the imperfections in those you meet. Someone who is not close to you but who is willing to listen may be particularly helpful.

Economic

- Avoid hasty decisions. Try not to make major life decisions within the first year unless absolutely necessary.
- In general, most people find it best to remain settled in familiar surroundings until they can consider their future calmly.
- Don't be afraid to seek good advice. Usually it is wise to get more than one opinion before making decisions.
- Don't make any major financial decisions without talking them over with experts.
- Having a job or doing voluntary work in the community can be helpful when you are ready, but it is important not to over-extend yourself.



- Relationships with family and friends should not be sacrificed in an effort to keep busy.

### Spiritual

- Personal faith is frequently a major source of comfort during bereavement.
- For some, however, maintaining faith may be difficult during this period of loss.
- Either reaction may occur and both are consistent with later spiritual growth.

I say unto you: a man must have chaos yet within him to be able to give birth to a dancing star.  
F. Nietzsche

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

### **Making a difference - How campaigning helped me after my son's suicide** by Joanna Lane

Our son Christopher killed himself 15 years ago, when he was 31. I still think of him every night when I can't sleep, and sometimes I dream about him. I wonder how his life would be if he was still with us, whether he would be married and have children, be happy. I whisper into the dark 'I'm so sorry, so sorry, my darling' for all the things I missed.

This doesn't sound as if I have come to terms with it, maybe nobody ever does. And I'm not sure if I ever grieved 'properly' in the sense of reaching acceptance. But some good things have come out of his death and I am grateful for those. What happened was this.

After he died we found letters between him and his girlfriend, who had left him five years before. They showed that he'd never managed to have full sex with her (which she confirmed). My sister was convinced that a bad head injury he'd had falling from a tree aged seven, could lie behind this. She googled, and found research that showed that after head injury there could be 'multiple anterior pituitary hormonal deficiencies' that could interfere with growth and puberty, make a girl's periods stop, and rob people of their sex drive. And all this could start to happen years after the injury.

It seemed to fit Chris's story. We had no proof, but her electrifying news gave me something to do. I felt that everybody who'd ever had a head injury, and their families, should be warned. If we'd been warned we could have asked the right questions, made sure he had the right treatment, somehow saved him.

So this is how I've spent the past 15 years. I have written endlessly, obsessively, to newspapers, to MPs, to consultants, to medical organisations, to brain injury charities, to chat forums. And slowly, although I never imagined that one person could make much difference, I have had an effect, or so I believe.

I have seen the annual figures for the diagnosis of hypopituitarism triple (though they are still much too low.) I have learned so much, discovering along the way that pituitary damage after head injury can not only make you impotent and chronically fatigued, but also cause serious depression and suicidal thoughts, as it did with Chris. I have met so many people who have not been tested properly, have been told instead that their many symptoms are caused by ME, CFS or fibromyalgia, and abandoned to live miserable half-lives with no hope of ever getting better. I have helped people to get diagnosed and treated, and seen the change in them. Some of these people - generally youngish men - have stayed in touch and let me know what they are up to, rather as sons would. This is what I value most.

I think I was difficult to live with, while I was campaigning so desperately. I certainly think it caused the autoimmune disease which I now have. Maybe it is better to mourn properly and quietly, not plunge into hectic activity as I did? But this is what I felt compelled to do, for better or worse, and on balance, for me and for others, I think it was for better.

Lifted with thanks from UK Compassion Newsletter

## What I Wish I had Known

My eyes were squeezed shut; nobody told me what a recently stillborn baby looks like at full term. Eventually I slightly opened my eyes enough to see my husband on his knees sobbing by the bassinet, the midwife had carefully placed her in. I wish someone had told me that these few memories would be the only things I would have of my daughter and that I should cherish them.



My midwife told me I should hold her; I was too afraid of touching her because I didn't know what she would feel like or how it would make me feel; instead I had her kept in her bassinet in my room, my perfect little baby that looked like she was going to wake up at any minute. I wish I'd known how much I would ache to hold her for years to come.

The hospital worker took a few photographs for me, the flash made her skin look pale, not at all the memory I had of her. They cut a few locks of her hair and took her handprints for me to keep in a special memory book. I wish someone had told me that there were organisations that were trained to come and take photographs and memories of sleeping and unwell children.

I was ashamed of letting everyone down, for failing as a mother. I chose not to have any service to acknowledge her passing, leaving her in the hospital was so incredibly difficult and I didn't think I could handle another goodbye. I wish I had known that it wasn't just me that needed to say goodbye, it was her grandparents and sister too.

My doctor felt that after four weeks, I should be showing less symptoms of grief and put me on antidepressants. He suggested me talking to a counsellor which in my mind was absurd, there was nothing a counsellor could do to make me see things differently or fix me, my child had died and I was mourning her. I wish someone had told me that I was normal, that child loss is a long and difficult journey.

My grief remained and the world kept on moving. Friends and family seemed to have forgotten my grief or acted like I should have moved on. I began to feel trapped, like the suffocating weight of grief would never end and I would be in this pain for the rest of my life. I wish someone had told me about The Compassionate Friends so I could see I was not alone.

The months went by and eventually I found support with people who had lost children. I connected with other parents who had lost babies and were trying again to conceive. After a lot of fear and worry, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Initially I fussed and panicked about every tiny noise she made but my new friends reassured me that it was normal and this time I did not feel guilty about my emotions. I wish I had known that last time I doubted myself.

My pain never went away but I learnt how to cope with it better. I began to volunteer with The Compassionate Friends WA and met this beautiful group of people, all with stories of their own who had overcome the initial pain of grief and turned it into strength to help others who had lost a child. I wish I had known about the amazing healing power of connecting with other bereaved parents.

Tricia Jancovich (Mother of Katie Samara Jancovich 22-06-2010)

Reprinted with love from TCF WA 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.**

## Happy Valentine's Day To You

This year my Valentine for you is loaded...  
It is loaded with hugs until my arms ache  
and you beg me to stop squeezing you so tightly.  
It is loaded with kisses -  
just so I can get close enough to smell you once  
again.  
It is loaded with "I Love You's",  
for all the times that I didn't say it, but thought it  
It is loaded with candy and chocolate,  
without any regrets for eating as much as you want.  
It is loaded with hearts...and balloons...  
and fluffy teddy bears...and X's and O's.  
But mostly, my Valentine is loaded with love -  
a love so incredibly strong that it hurts.  
Forever my heart is loaded with love for you. . .  
today, and every day.  
Happy Valentine's Day, my sweet child.

Love always, Mommy.  
Written for Jayme, by Jane Ono, 2008 TCF/Coquitlam  
Reprinted in TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

## WHEN WE REALISE

When we realise that it is not possible  
To turn back the clock.  
And we accept, however hard  
that this is now our life  
Without them.  
Then we open a door as the other shuts,  
A door to giving back.  
And somehow it seems as if our child  
has beaten us there,  
greeting us just inside that new door,  
Welcoming as if to say,  
"How could you have taken so long  
to find me here?  
We have work to do.  
You and I."  
And in the accepting,  
the giving up of the old reality,  
Now no longer real,  
Somehow we find ourselves  
And find again our children.

Carolyn Salter  
Reprinted with love from TCF Focus NSW

## Charlie's Wave

I see you surfing the stardust  
A million light years away,  
Wisps of hair curled around meteorites,  
Adrenaline-filled eyes  
That don't see me watching.  
I see you swimming in the ocean abyss  
Conversing with rays and starfish  
A subterranean dialogue I can't understand.  
Your voice disappears in the black waters.  
And I see that you have superpowers now.  
You shoot fire from your fingers and turn  
invisible And take on the bad guys  
With Ironman at your side.

But I don't see you  
In your room

With scattered Legos, video games.

Dirty t-shirts crumpled in the corner.  
A goldfish, A hamster,  
Items of an earthly American boyhood.  
No more birthday candles.  
No more bike rides to the bookshop.  
No more sandcastles.  
No more.  
Boy, I loved you hard.  
I thought you were mine,  
But you slipped into the multiverse.  
And, boy, you don't ever visit my  
dimension  
Not in my dreams,  
Not even to sail away with the gypsies.  
I never got to teach you to fly.

- Danielle Kubasko Sullivan We Need Not Walk Alone

## Helpful Insights to Self-Care in Grief

I have just passed the 26th year of missing my son, Adam. He was a pilot and died while giving a lesson to a student. He had an engine problem and could not survive when they landed. Adam was only 23 and married just three short months. He was the kind of kid that everyone loved the moment they met him.

I would like to share some insights that I have learned over the past years and hope there is something that helps you on your grief journey.

First, I learned that I wasn't crazy when I couldn't remember the smallest things that first year, and beyond. I called it "cotton brain." What helped me was to start writing in a journal. When sleep wouldn't come, I would write to Adam. I poured out my heart about how much I missed him, how angry I was that the plane failed to perform to keep him safe. I told him about my day, all the insignificant things that I would have told him if he were sitting next to me. And most of all, I told him over and over that I loved him and missed him.

Another thing was to acknowledge my grief, give myself grace to grieve my huge loss. I could not worry about what others thought if I showed my sorrow. I had to let go of the "advice" I received from others. I also found that some of my friends were not able to handle being around someone so sad, so they left. I needed to find new friends that "got it." The Compassionate Friends was a particularly valuable resource.

A friend that had a couple of years into grieving the death of her daughter gave us invaluable advice. She told me, "You can't lean on a broken fence when you and Mark (my husband) are broken." That is when we began looking for a grief counselor to help us navigate through our grief rather than expect help from each other. I highly recommend doing the same. It is a huge relief to be able to share anything in your heart with someone and not be judged, but instead just be listened to. Not everyone finds the one that will work for them right away. I think that if the first one does not work out, keep looking until you find one that does, like trying on a pair of shoes! You rarely find the right ones that fit with the first pair you try on.

Soon I realized how important it was to take care of myself, not only mentally but physically too. In those first months I could have cared less about my wellbeing. But I knew from resources that I read that if I did not, I could become a statistic that affects so many because of the impaired immune system. Illness can be one, also accidents increase causing some nasty physical consequences, sometimes for a lifetime. Did you know that when we experience a death of a loved one, it is a brain injury? Because of this, we do not think rationally when it comes to taking care of ourselves; however, our traumatized brain needs us to. Going for a walk is a great stress reliever or take some "me" time to just sit outside and listen to the birds. It can give a much-needed break for your mind and body. And sometimes we just need to have a good cry. It releases the tension that builds up.

Another significant help is to laugh. It is natural to feel like we should not because we are somehow not missing our kids if we do, but it is not at all the truth. Nothing could make us miss them any less. Try tuning in to a classic Carol Burnett show. It's so good for the soul to laugh even for a moment. I learned I needed laughter as much as feeling the grief of missing Adam to have healthy healing.

And my final insight and the most important one for me was to not only look at my loss, but also count the blessings that our beautiful children left us. The most wonderful way to honour them is to go on living. To say their names and to share our stories. If we do that, we could be helping another hurting heart because we "get it."

I look back at those first entries in my journal and see how far I have come and know that although I did not believe I would survive, I did! I miss my son and always will, but I have found joy in life again. I can talk about Adam now and smile at the precious memories that we shared.

By Linda Triplett, 25 October 2023 lovingly lifted from The Compassionate Friends USA



# PIANOS

We've all had that piano land on our back.



We are walking down the road fine minding our own business when we hear a song, catch a smell, see someone in our child's favourite outfit BAM! That piano drops. Unfortunately, especially in the early years, the sky is full of pianos.

I found out early I cannot walk around looking for pianos. Looking for pianos I was missing life. Afraid of old memories I was not building new memories.

I could lie and tell you the pianos quit falling. They don't. The past has the power to cause pain, but the past also offers unlimited pleasure. Matt and I can go sledding in July. Matt can be any age. I choose ten or twenty. Together we set out on an adventure.

If I open myself up to Matt we do things that I normally wouldn't like hustling Broadway tickets in Times Square. I don't have to be afraid of failure or rejection. Matt is always there and always ready to go.

Pain is real and the price we pay for love, but joy is also real and the reward we reap with love. Don't deny yourself joy because you are afraid of pain.

Matt and I used to read a book that ended with "Come on. Come on. There is more to see." So I'm coming Matt. Give me a minute to get this piano off my back.

Keith Sweat, Central Iowa Chapter  
Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News



## Stars

They twinkle, they shine, we wish upon them.

All the while, they are really just a huge ball of gas held by gravity. They're extremely hot, producing energy that makes them glow. Most stars are between 1 billion and 10 billion years old.



We often look to the stars for guidance. And hope.

When you live in a big city like I do, the stars rarely shine as the city lights block them. They are there, but can't be seen. Away from the city lights, the stars provide a light show that dances into our hearts.

The heat, the twinkle, the wishes.

All reminds me so, of what we experience when someone we love dies.

The heat of grief can be felt as our hearts burn and yearn for our person, while thoughts and memories we carry, continue to shine. We wish for so many things; re-do's, words left unspoken, to understand the "whys".

Stars, like grief, last for a lifetime. Stars, like our memories, light up the cracks that remain in our hearts. Stars, like wishes, can be what provides the hope we deeply yearn for, as we miss our someone, with all of our heart.

Taken from: "griefandgrits" on Facebook  
Focus NSW







# Sibling Page



## The Decade Difference

In the beginning I didn't know how I was going to survive to the next day, my first thought when I awoke was oh, no, my brother is dead. The physical heartache, tears, lethargy, fatigue, loss of concentration; my body even forced me to stop eating gluten and dairy. There was a deep heaviness within me and how I saw the rest of the world. Some days it felt like a depressive cloak over me that I couldn't remove.

As time moved forward, the 22nd Chris' death day protruded out in my mind and on every calendar, I looked at. The anticipation of another month or year of my brother not being in my physical life. How could this be? Chris has been gone 3 months, 9 months, 4 years and now 10 years and 9 months to the day.

The difference in a decade; I decided in order for me to move from survival into some form of thriving, I had to be a more active participant in my own grief process. I went to local grief coalition meetings. Attended the monthly TCF chapter meetings. I started back in individual therapy. I became certified as a grief specialist and grief educator. I learned the language to help advocate for myself and other grievers too.

The difference in a decade; when I felt well enough to give back to the same organizations that had given me compassion, understanding, validation and allowed me to find my voice again in my early YEARS of grief. Actually, I was able to remove the depressive cloak through being an active participant in my own grief journey. I no longer feel the debilitating heartache because of the death of my brother. Of course, I get sad. Of course, I will miss him to my last breath. This is the difference in my first decade without Chris.

It will be interesting to see what my second decade of grieving my brother looks like. I know one thing; he is always within me, encouraging me from beyond.

*In honor of Christopher Daniel Bauer, who died by suicide August 22, 2012. Written by his little sissy, Maggie Bauer, April 22, 2023. Maggie Bauer Maggie's beloved brother Chris died from suicide in August of 2012. Chris was Maggie's older brother and only sibling. After the shock, numbness then intense pain decreased, Maggie moved back home to Minnesota where she found more resources including the Grief Recovery Institute and became a Grief Recovery Specialist. Maggie attended TCF Minneapolis Chapter for 5 years and is now on the steering committee and the sibling loss facilitator. In the almost 11 years since her brother's death, Maggie has spoken to hundreds of people about the loss of a sibling and general grief and in 2022 received the national Karen Snapp award for her advocacy as a bereaved sibling. Her goal is to help people get a grip on their own grief so they can live a full life again.*

We Need Not Walk Alone

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



## My whole life has been coloured and impacted by a sibling's loss

Joanna Moorehead, The Tablet, 19 October 2023

Imagine a large pane of glass: it's smooth and wide and, most importantly, intact. And then it smashes, into a thousand pieces. The glass shattered for my family more than half a century ago, but sometimes I come across a sharp shard down the side of my chair. It slices into me with ease:

I am back to that day in 1972 when my sister Clare, aged three-and-three-quarters, died. She was the youngest of the four children in our family, and I – aged nearly 10 – was the eldest. There is no hierarchy of awfulness when it comes to the loss of a child, but the loss of the baby of the family, the child everyone tries to look after and protect, seemed somehow the most unthinkable disaster of all. And we had no warning, no time to prepare: one moment Clare was the sweet-natured, sunny little girl she had always been, skipping along a pavement; the next, she was lying fatally injured on the road.

On the day she died, I remember being absolutely certain that I – that our entire family – never could and never would be happy again, we'd never laugh, we'd never smile any more. The joy had been sucked out of our home so comprehensively, it seemed impossible that it could ever return.

I was wrong, of course, but I was right to know that nothing would ever be the same again. In the early times we simply couldn't reach one another. My parents, desperately grieving themselves, were expected somehow to go on trying to look after their other children. And yet that gave them the only thing worth living for: that they still had three children. We were still a family, but everything was wrong: we were the wrong number of people, and we were all desperately lonely. Or at least, I'm assuming everyone else was lonely; all I know is how lonely it was for me.

Back in the 1970s there was no grief counselling or psychology appointments. We were all supposed to go back to how we'd been, minus her. How we moved forward was by simply papering the whole thing over, by ignoring it, by never talking about it, by never saying her name. It wasn't anyone's fault, and I'm not even sure it was a bad idea, because the truth is that the pain, the loss, the appallingness of what had happened were so bad. The only way we could even begin to keep going was to lock it inside us.

No one knows how to behave around a family that's lost a child, including those within the family itself. We rail against the loss of a human being who had so recently come into the world, and who had such a long life ahead.

Seamus Heaney talks about this in the poem where he describes a family tragedy uncannily like my own. Heaney's brother, Christopher, was four when he was run over and killed; Heaney was slightly older than me, 13. I remember that similar day in my own family, and being beside my father as he called our parish priest. His words, which I've never forgotten, were: "I'm so sorry to have to tell you that Clare, our youngest daughter, died today." He said it in a way that made me realise he was genuinely sad for Fr Lee. So sorry to have to tell you; the unbearable, unbelievable sadness which was his and ours. I still feel that: because even at a distance of 51 years, this is a tragic story. If Clare were alive today, she would be 55 – still a relatively young woman, barely halfway through the lifespan she might have had. Dealing with Clare's death, and working out what part of me it occupies and why, has been one of the big tasks of my life. For many, many years I left the experience in a locked box inside myself, but as time went on it seemed to become heavier, not lighter. There's not much I can't or don't talk about, but for decades I never mentioned Clare. When we bury experiences within ourselves, we bury part of ourselves as well. Sometimes that's the only way to proceed. But there's always a longing to be whole. In my early forties I found the space, time, and will, to unpack the box that was Clare's loss.

It was tough – much more painful, demanding and further-reaching than I'd imagined. It's been a hugely life-enhancing experience, one more thing I have to be grateful for – especially to Clare, whose short life this is all about. It will never be over. My mother believes Clare is our guardian angel, which is a lovely idea. For me, it's a bit different. I feel Clare is part of myself, just as she's a part of all of those she left behind – even the people she never met because they were still to come, like my youngest brother, born 14 months after her death, and my four daughters.

I feel, too, that my life is about living Clare's life as my own: even the drabest, most ordinary day is a day to celebrate, because I'm lucky enough to be here, to be alive. I feel her spirit, and that's an important part of my own belief system: believing in my heart that Clare is still somewhere means that, rather than reducing my sense that there's another realm, I'm convinced of it.

I have learned, too, how far a child's death stretches, out into the community, and down through the years. I look for opportunities to remember her. A few months ago, on a trip to Assisi, I realised that this was a journey Clare – named for the two most important inhabitants of this town – would undoubtedly have made. So I felt it was a pilgrimage for her, as well as for myself. How would my family be different, if Clare hadn't crossed that particular road, at that particular moment?

On the morning it happened, I woke up like every other nine-year old, and like every child should: safe and sure and stable. By the time I went to bed I knew the fundamental truth about the world: that nothing is, or ever can be, safe. That everything we know and love can be swept away.

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Reprinted with thanks from Focus NSW Newsletter



## 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	Jan Pessione (Chairperson) (16 yr old daughter, accidental) <a href="mailto:janpessione@xtra.co.nz">janpessione@xtra.co.nz</a> (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	027 309 1246
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 <a href="mailto:lorraine.driskel@gmail.com">lorraine.driskel@gmail.com</a>
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 <a href="mailto:marshkandb@gmail.com">marshkandb@gmail.com</a>
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 <a href="mailto:atsilvester@atrix.co.nz">atsilvester@atrix.co.nz</a>

[www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz](http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz)

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