



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated  
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 170

FEBRUARY MARCH 2019

## When I'm gone

Close your eyes and open your spirit and you will feel me beside  
you...

Guiding you every step of the way.

I don't want you to ever forget that even though I am gone from sight,  
our love is not.

I am just a conversation away,  
so talk to me...

tell me your joys and your sorrows,  
I still want to be a part of it all.

Grief Digest Magazine, Volume 13, #2  
Reprinted from Winnipeg Chapter News

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

**RETURN ADDRESS**  
52 SUNRISE DRIVE,  
SEAWARD BUSH,  
INVERCARGILL  
9812  
NEW ZEALAND

**TO**

# OUR CHILDREN

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

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

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

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

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

When the wind blows, I think of you  
 When the stars shine, I think of you  
 When the sun shines, I think of you  
 When the rain pours, I cry for you  
 When the moon glows, I talk to you  
 When my heart aches, I think of you  
 When the morning breaks, I think of you  
 When the day ends, I think of you

Written by Sibling's Leader Maree In memory of her beloved brother TCF/NSW  
 Reprinted with love from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

## 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

Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young  
 Simon Charlton  
 Shane Elliot Davis  
 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

Born 19/3/95  
 Born 26/3/96  
 Born 18/3/82  
 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

Glenn Arscott  
 Tania Rose Baldock  
 Hayley Robyn Galpin  
 Ben Paul Gillanders  
 Daniel James Gillies  
 Krysha Helen Hanson  
 Bevan Andrew Hookway  
 Kai Klein  
 Keegan Lineham  
 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 8/2/00  
 Died 12/2/94  
 Died 11/2/02

Mitchell James Beaumont  
 Kyle David Edwards  
 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

Died 29/3/96  
 Died 4/3/98  
 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,

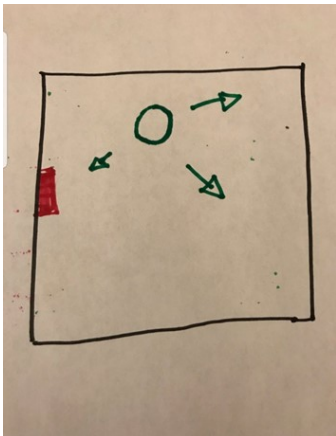
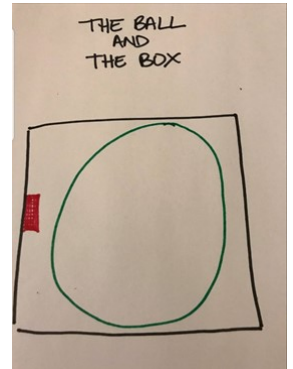
As this newsletter goes to print, we in NZ along with the majority of people around the world are shocked and grieving after the horrific racial attack which has left 50 people dead and many others seriously injured. Talking with friends and family most people felt that down here in NZ we were reasonably safe but we now know this was false. As one newspaper headline read "The End of Innocence". Much like before our dear children died, it was something that happened to others not to us. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those involved and all their families and we hope and pray that this is the one and only attack like this to ever happen here in our beautiful country.

For all of us, moving into another year without our child or children, makes us wonder what this year will bring for us in our grief journey. Hopefully we will be learning every day that this living is still worthwhile. That there is still love, happiness and hope to sustain us on those difficult days. And you know even after 16 years there are still difficult days for me, however I have learnt over these 16 years that the difficult times pass and there are far less of them.

Recently 2 people in one day spoke to me about 'The Ball and the Box' analogy they had seen on Twitter and I thought I would share this with you. This is the link if you would like to check it out yourself.

<http://twitter.com/laurenherschel>

Basically, grief was described as a ball inside a box with a small red button placed on the inside. Initially, the ball is huge, taking up all the space, always pressing that button and kickstarting our grief, the tears, sadness, anger, emotional outbursts. We have less time to recover between events, as the ball just cannot seem to lay off the button.



Eventually, the ball becomes smaller, but as it moves inside the box, it randomly hits the button from time to time, representing those random times we find ourselves grieving the loss of our loved one. There is no telling when the ball will hit the button but it always seems to, sometimes more than once a day. Sometimes the ball misses the button for weeks. Inevitably, the button is activated, our grief is activated, over and over again. It lives with us forever inside that box with the ball.

My hope for you all is that your ball is getting smaller and on those days when that button is hit, that there are people who you can talk to and share your pain and loss with. However if you do find yourself alone, remember the list of telephone friends on the back of the newsletter who are available to talk and listen.

Take care,  
Lesley

## Central Otago Compassionate Friends

Dear Friends,

The beginning of March has been a lovely extension to the summer weather but with some glorious rain thrown in as well. And of course, plenty of fabulous Central Otago stone fruit and berries which I know you will envy. I am mentioning this because our youngest son who is visiting from the USA said that one thing that he has learnt from the death of his dearly loved brother, is to understand that there is plenty of shit in life, but also plenty of beauty to be enjoyed as well. But of course, if you are recently bereaved you will only feel the misery of the shit that has happened. I hope that it won't be too long before you see and feel the beauty in our world as well.

Our annual afternoon tea meeting at Orchard Gardens was again a most pleasant occasion. We were blessed with a warm, fine day, comforting friends and a beautiful garden environment. And who does not enjoy being waited on hand and foot and served scones, cream and jam, and other delicious goodies?

Our next get together will be in April. We will meet in the home of one of our Compassionate Friends family. Jan and I will let you know the details closer to the time.

Arohanui ki a koutou,  
Louise

## Southland Report

The AGM was held recently with most people continuing in their positions. Only the Coordinators position has become vacant with the official resignation of longtime coordinator Linda Thompson. Linda has been involved with Southland Compassionate Friends for many years and we value and appreciate all the time and energy she has given our group. Thankyou Linda. It looks like there may be someone putting up their hand to take over this position so hopefully it won't be vacant for too long.

At the AGM it was decided that we will continue to meet for a social gathering 3 times a year and also hold the Candle-light service as usual in December.

We have a facebook page so for members who are unable to attend meetings please feel free to contact us. This is a closed group so permission is required.

The Compassionate Friends of Southland. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1493888227582838/>

Vanessa Young

**'You look sad today'**

**'Hm... I'm sad every day  
I just didn't have the energy to hide it today**

Reprinted with love from TCF UK newsletter

There is always a guiding light no matter how great the storm

Friends who travel through grief Who hold your hand and show you the way.  
Until you are ready to go on and be that light for someone else

Thank you for being my guiding light

Orange County, CA Chapter  
Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News



## With Whom Can We Share our Feelings?

For many of us, there are few people with whom we can share our innermost feelings; yet these very feelings may be nearly exploding to get out! Perhaps for the first time in your life you are really angry, angry at God? At your dead child? Or just angry? Are any of you bereaved parents going about your daily routines, appearing to those around you to be “doing well”? Yet in your “alone moments” you hurt so badly you think you may never feel better again? Or perhaps you’re not even resuming a routine, lack motivation, are barely functioning.

Many bereaved parents have shared these feelings with each other. Who would understand if you told them you started sobbing when you passed your dead child’s favourite food in the grocery store?...Or that you want to yell at the crowds nonchalantly walking in the shopping center, “Don’t you know my child has died?” Another bereaved parent probably would understand. To how many of your friends could you tell that you kept some of your child’s clothing “handy” and experienced a bittersweet feeling when you smelled these clothes? Another bereaved parent would probably not think this is unusual.

How fortunate you are if you can share these and other feelings with your spouse, family members, your minister, or good friends. However, many times these people from whom you would expect the most support aren’t equipped or can’t handle your normal feelings of grief.

One of the benefits mentioned most often of Compassionate Friends, whether it’s by attending the meetings, using the available listeners by phone or through the newsletter, is hearing that your feelings are not unusual after all. It is also most comforting to hear from bereaved parents for whom it has been 3, 6, or 7 years since their child died that they experienced many of these same feelings, worked their way through their grief and can now say, “I don’t feel that way anymore. I really laugh and don’t feel guilty. I’m leading a productive life again. I may think of my child almost every day, and still miss him/her, but I no longer review details of the accident or illness, or circumstances surrounding their death. I’m no longer angry or feel guilty. Most memories are pleasant memories.”

This is why we “old-timers” continue to attend meetings, remain available by the telephone and try to meet peoples’ needs through the newsletter.



Carolyn Reineke TCF/Fort Wayne, IN Gratefully reprinted from  
Winnipeg Chapter news



Grief is a passion to endure. People can be stricken with it, victims of it, stuck in it. Or they can meet it, get through it, and become the quiet victors through the active, honest, and courageous process of grieving.

Bereaved Parents of the USA, Baltimore, MD, August 2008

Signs—From Shelley Bordian.

I've been meaning to respond to the question in a previous edition of Focus on whether anyone experiences signs/communication from our children who have passed.

I began to experience signs almost immediately when my son died. At first I didn't know what they were but I certainly noticed that some strange things were happening.

Things to do with electricity for instance. An unusual noise came from the stereo while I was listening to a CD my son had composed, lights going on by themselves, the 'on' button started flashing on the dishwasher when no one had been near it, the control panel of our home security system spontaneously reset itself when no one had made any kind of adjustment to it, a digital clock would start flashing as if there had been a power outage although there was no problem with the power at all.

There are so many different examples of signs that I've experienced since my son died 11 years ago that I wish I had started a diary to record each and every one. It would have been nice to go back and reflect over time to see how the signs have changed along with the frequency of them.

The most spectacular experience I had was about 6 months after Chance (that's his name), died. I was sitting on the end of his bed looking out the window feeling the most indescribable emotional pain I have ever felt in my life. Feeling so desperately and deeply shattered and in immense pain by his death and the grief I was feeling was overwhelming. I turned to see a little glass angel that had been given to me as a gift by a work colleague when Chance died, flashing like a little Christmas light does. I was astounded because I had no idea this glass ornament had the capacity to do such a thing! Then my home phone rang. It was one of my sisters from Canada calling to tell me she was worried about me and that she felt she needed to call right then. She explained that she had an extremely vivid dream where Chance told her that he was very concerned about me and that I needed some help/support.

My sister said this dream and the sense that Chance was there was like no other type of dream she has ever experienced before.

I described to her what had just taken place with this little flashing angel and we both knew it was a sign from Chance in the spirit world. He was showing me that his spirit was still with me and that he was only really gone in the physical sense.

I knew in that moment that our souls truly are eternal, that there is a spiritual realm we all go to no matter what we call it or what different religion we may belong to, that my connection with him was still there and, most importantly, that he could still communicate with me.

This experience was life changing for me. It gave me the strength and ability to carry on knowing, without a doubt, that love is stronger than death, that our loved ones in spirit are with us always giving us love, Guidance and support.

I discovered later, when I examined the glass angel more closely, that it had this little round dial on the very bottom, underneath, which I turned to find that you could turn this flashing light on and off by turning the dial. However, I had no knowledge of this prior to this event.

I did have further occasions after this where the angel would begin flashing on its own, sometimes in response to a question I had asked my son (in my head) but deliberately directing the question to him and asking him to respond to me this way.

11 years later I still have the angel. It sits atop the beautiful marble container that contains my son's ashes in his bedroom. The light no longer flashes (I'm pretty sure whatever type of bulb that's inside has reached its life span), but the special meaning that glass angel represents will never diminish.

My wish for any parent/grandparent/sibling who has experienced the loss of their child/grandchild/sibling is for them to understand what I do.....that our loved ones are always with us, that our connection with them remains and that we can communicate with them, albeit, now in a different way.

Thanks for asking the questions to allow for this topic to be discussed and shared. It's an important aspect, I believe, in the journey of grief and the ability to heal, accept and continue to live a full and happy life - although a life that has been forever altered.

Warm regards,

Shelly Bordian

Focus TCF NSW Chapter Newsletter



Grieving allows us *to heal, to remember with love*  
rather than pain.  
It is a sorting process.  
One by one you let go  
of the things that are gone *and you mourn for them.*  
One by one you take hold  
of the things that have  
become a part of who you are *and build again.*

~ Rachel Naomi Remen

Lifted with thanks from Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



## BORN STILL: A MISUNDERSTOOD GRIEF

I find myself writing this maybe because I hurt, maybe because I feel the need to educate others, maybe because I just have to.

I am just two years bereaved, and have belonged to TCF for about a year and a half now. My son died when I was full term with him. In my search for help to assist me through my own grief (have tried to help others understand what it is that we who have lost a baby - a child at birth - feel.) Sometimes it is very difficult to explain my feelings, because Sean never lived outside my womb. But because he was vibrantly alive inside of me for nine months I grew to know him as he developed.

Sometimes I think back and try to remember the happy memories of the time with my son. He loved fettuccine alfredo, but it had to have broccoli or shrimp in it. I think about the kind of music he liked, and of the songs he liked me to sing to him.

Sean liked me to rub him to sleep. I remember that he hiccupped so often it sometimes drove me nuts! Oh, how I miss those days. But because of those days - even through this intense pain - I also have joy. I have joy because I had my son at all; because I loved my son, because I mothered him.

When I was first bereaved, I looked at people who had "time" with their children and thought to myself, "Well, at least you had them for (however long it was). I know other grieving parents look at me and think, "Well at least you didn't get to know him". I know now how wrong I was, and also how wrong they are. No matter what amount of time we have with our child, we all feel the same pain of loss.

We should never have to bury our children.

I have pain because Sean died, because I had only ten minutes with him outside my womb, because I never saw his eyes open, never saw him smile, never heard him make a sound. The silence in the delivery room was deafening. I have pain because he lay in a morgue for days, waiting to be buried. I have the pain of seeing my son in his coffin, seeing that coffin closed, having a funeral, putting him into the ground, saying goodbye. Pain because I now must visit him at a cemetery. I grieve his loss terribly, and feel a crater burned into my heart. I feel the emptiness that will never be filled, I feel the loss of my future, my life.

You see, I feel what you feel. Our experiences may be different; you may have had your child longer than I did, but our pain is all the same. Losing a child is a life-altering experience. Things will never be the same. I will never be the same, and I don't want to be!

Kathy Evans, In loving memory of my son Sean,  
Lovingly lifted from Manhattan Newsletter and reprinted in Winnipeg Chapter News

### Tiny Little Footprints

Little footprints on a paper,  
Tiny footprints stamped on white.  
No smiling pictures of your bath time,  
No running or flying a kite.

Such sparse memories I have of you,  
Sweet, beautiful, babies mine.  
No keepsake rattles or no bronzed shoes,  
No treasures for me to find.



Just tiny little footprints,  
That I look at every day,  
My memories of two little boys,  
That the Angels took away.

We will make a million memories,  
When Daddy and I get there,  
Oh wait, we'll make it two million,  
After all, you are a pair.

Marilyn Rollins TCF/Lake-Porter County, IN  
In Memory of Reece and Andersen

Gratefully reprinted from Winnipeg Chapter News

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## Grieving the Loss of A Child to Suicide March 19, 2012 Sharna Olfman

Today is the fourth anniversary of the suicide of my only child. Since Toran's death, I have been involved in 9 government enquiries into the circumstances that led him to end his life including an inquest that spanned 3 months. During the inquest I learned techniques for numbing myself. I had to. How else do you survive listening to a pathologist describe what happened to your child's body and brain when he hanged himself? How do you not become homicidal when a psychiatric registrar smirks at you and says that two weeks after he prescribed your child Prozac, when told of the suicide, couldn't recall your child's face or name? Despite this ability, the tributes posted to my son on Facebook this morning and the text messages of love and support left me curled up and wailing like a wounded animal. As I write this, I am in so much pain I can barely breathe.

I want to write it though because one of the things I must steel myself against today are the well-meaning but illinformed comments I will receive from friends and supporters. I am speaking on suicide tonight at a meeting of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors too and while I know they will be kind I also know they will make all sorts of judgements based on the DSM and grief literature. Suicide kills over one million people every year. That means that it is likely that anyone reading this blog will have had contact with someone bereaved by suicide in their personal lives and some will be involved in supporting suicide survivors professionally.

Here are some things I would like you to know about the impact your responses to grief may have on someone who has lost a loved one to suicide.

I wonder how many of you use the phrase committed suicide? This is of course a relic of the quite recent past when suicide was a crime. For many families this term is really offensive and upsetting. Saying 'died by suicide' is much more sensitive and much more accurate.

On days like today, people often tell me how proud they are of me for doing so well. I'm not. I'm not doing well at all. When they say this, I experience it as minimising the pain I experience and rendering my pain invisible. Often the people who tell me this are those I have learned it is not safe to be honest with. The people I put on a brave face and pretend for. It's much better to ask me how I'm doing than to tell me what your take on it is.

Please, please don't talk to me about recovery. I will live with my child's suicide for the rest of my life. I will never be 'healed' or 'recovered.' My right arm has been cut off, my heart has been ripped from my chest. No one will ever call me Mum again. My son will never get married to his beautiful girlfriend or have a daughter as he planned.

Don't talk to me about closure or moving on. Where would I go without my child? How would I close off the part of my life that my son lived with me?

Don't tell me everything happens for a reason. My son's death was the most senseless event in the universe. Nothing good came out of it. It served no purpose. I am not a better person because of it nor is the world a better place because his death led me to do the work I do. What might I have accomplished with him alongside me? How might he have changed the world? His death is a tragedy, the senseless loss of a beautiful young life, please don't try to define it as anything else.

I read a piece of research on grief and suicide survivors recently which said "The majority of survivors spoke about needing and wanting to find meaningful ways of continuing to love the deceased youth" and "maintain healthy and continuous bonds with deceased individuals. This is my reality. You do not stop loving your child because they die. You don't stop wanting and needing to be their parent and have them in your life. You just have to find different ways of doing it. This is not an adjustment disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, complicated grief or major depressive disorder. Don't pathologise my grief or characterise my response to it as some kind of personal deficit.

Telling me to let go of my son and the relationship I have with him is like telling me to let go of myself and my life. I loved him before he was born and it would take more than death to sever our bonds. I long for his physical presence. What I have now is so much less than that but it is something and I can't imagine letting go of the little I have left.

I know you have read that we feel angry with the child who died and that we feel guilty for feeling this anger. You are being kind when you say you understand our anger and urge us not to feel guilt over it. The thing is though that I have never felt a moment's anger at Toran. How could I be angry with a child who ended his life to escape the torture of prescription drug induced akathisia? How could I be angry that he did the only thing he felt was possible at the time?

Don't avoid talking about my child for fear of making me cry. I'm crying not because you reminded me he's dead (like I could forget that for a minute!) but because he is dead. Giving me the opportunity to talk about him is such a gift and sharing your memories of him with me is the closest I get to Christmas. I want and need to talk about him and need you not to be afraid of my tears.



My experience of my child's suicide is not a universal experience although the issues I have raised strike a chord with most of the families I work with. Others will undoubtedly want and need different things from their friends and family and the professionals involved in supporting them and have a different 'don't list.' My plea is not that you adopt this list of don'ts as definitive or representative and change your response to suicide survivors accordingly, but that you challenge your own beliefs around grief and suicide and allow your responses to be guided by those who have experienced this loss, rather than by the DSM or grief literature which doesn't include survivor views. Ask us how we feel. Tell us you don't know what to say. Understand you can't fix us. And that we will resent your attempts to try.

Gratefully lifted from Johannesburg 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.

Below are 2 poems from 'Voices'

#### The Journey

I was unprepared for it,  
Suddenly, my whole world  
turned upside down  
inside out  
tumbling tumbling  
out of control

Things to be done  
arranged;  
everywhere  
loose ends

No Last Goodbyes  
So much Unfinished  
So much Unsaid

A different road for me now;  
no landscape stretching  
away into the distance;  
No Tomorrows filled with  
anticipation and hope for the future;  
a lonely road down through  
the years without continuity

Will this Journey ever end?  
this unbearable Journey  
along this seemingly  
directionless path?

*Sandie Legge*

#### The Tide

The surge and ebb of grief.

I should have known.  
We will never know.

I should have known.  
We will never know.

I should have known.  
We will never know.

I should, I wish, I could  
have saved him.

I should, if I had known,  
I would never have left him alone.

When the emotional tide recedes,  
the only certainty that remains:

we will never know  
what could have saved him.

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**Margaret Gillanders**

## **When Grief Takes Work And Time** Lindse Dennis

The old adage is that "Time heals wounds," as if time itself holds some sort of healing powers. Any woman in grief would tell you it doesn't. Time may cause the experience of grief to ebb and flow, but it does not in and of itself heal the wounds that have come out of the pain of losing a child.

Grief takes work. It takes facing our pain not ignoring it, walking through the intense emotions not avoiding it and finding a way forward. And that takes time. Sounds fun right?

After I lost my second child, the intensity of my grief was so deep I chose the route of my friend. I threw myself into a full schedule and tried to avoid the pain as best I could. But the reality was I couldn't avoid the pain yet when I tried to engage with it I felt stuck. I began to realize in this season of grief that I needed counselling. I needed someone to help me get unstuck and navigate the muddy waters of grief. My counsellor was amazing and constantly encouraged me to do the hard work of grief.

But what was that 'hard work'?

Many days it was simply choosing not to ignore or stuff down the emotions that were surfacing when I didn't want to face them. Some days it was the conscious choice to look at my husband and say, "I'm really sad and missing the girls deeply right now".

I don't know why, but as time has gone on I have been less and less inclined to invite other safe people into my pain, yet it is when I do invite others in and especially, invite God into my pain where I feel a release in my soul. I have not always done the work well, and to be honest have avoided some of the work that I know is necessary for my continued healing.

Nearly a year ago, my counsellor encouraged me to begin the counselling technique of EMDR. Simply put, it is used for those who have experienced trauma to enable them to work through that trauma and become unstuck in it. I wasn't ready to step into that so I waited. But I had seen over the past year as different triggers elicited an uncontrollable response to grief in me that I needed to begin to deal with this part of my grief. "Time was not healing my wounds," and though I was learning to live with the triggers, I realized I needed to not just live with them but develop healthier responses to them.

It was uncomfortable and felt quite wearisome but I finally realized if I didn't do it then, I probably wouldn't at all.

So I made an appointment with my counsellor to begin the new season of working through the grief and pain of the loss of my first two daughters. I was hopeful that it would be another step in the process of my heart healing, but I was also nervous. I was nervous about the emotional reserves it would require and yet I knew that I must continue to do the work of grief because if I didn't I knew every time I had avoided engaging with my grief, grief had done a work on me. And I'd prefer it to be the other way around.

It has been four and three years respectively since I lost my daughters and I'm grateful that the work I've needed to engage with in my grief has ebbed and flowed and was not heaped upon me all at once. I have learned to be gracious with myself in the process and not put a timetable on when I need to engage in new areas of my grief and in that I have also begun to learn to be more aware of when in fact I do need to engage with my grief more. EMDR has been hard work, but I have seen healing in this season as well. Grief work I wasn't ready to engage with three years ago but have become more ready and able to step into as time has gone on.

So my encouragement to you in whatever season of grief you are in is to engage with your grief, in however big or small ways and allow the time that passes to be healing time and not just time that passes.

Gratefully reprinted from Johannesburg Chapter 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.**

## Memories

The certain special memories  
That follow me each day,  
Cast your shadow in my life  
In a certain way.  
Sometimes the blowing wind  
Or the lyrics of a song,  
Make me stop and think of you  
Sometimes all day long.  
Memories are good to have  
To share and keep in my heart,  
Just knowing that you're still inside  
Makes sure we'll never part.

Collette Covington TCF/Lake Charles, LA

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg  
Newsletter

## TIME MACHINE

I came across a picture  
of you and I today.  
The tears just started falling  
but I couldn't turn away.

I closed my eyes and I was there,  
that day so long ago...

I saw your eyes still shining bright  
alive and so aglow.  
I'd swear I heard your laughter  
as I gazed upon your face;  
that golden and contagious sound  
that nothing can replace.

It brought back such sweet memories  
of how life used to be.  
Each picture's now a time machine ...  
that brings you back to me.

Lovingly lifted from TCF/Queensland,  
AU

## The Scent of My Baby

*When we think of babies,  
we think of that certain scent.  
The scent that newborns seem to have, for  
me – that came and went.*



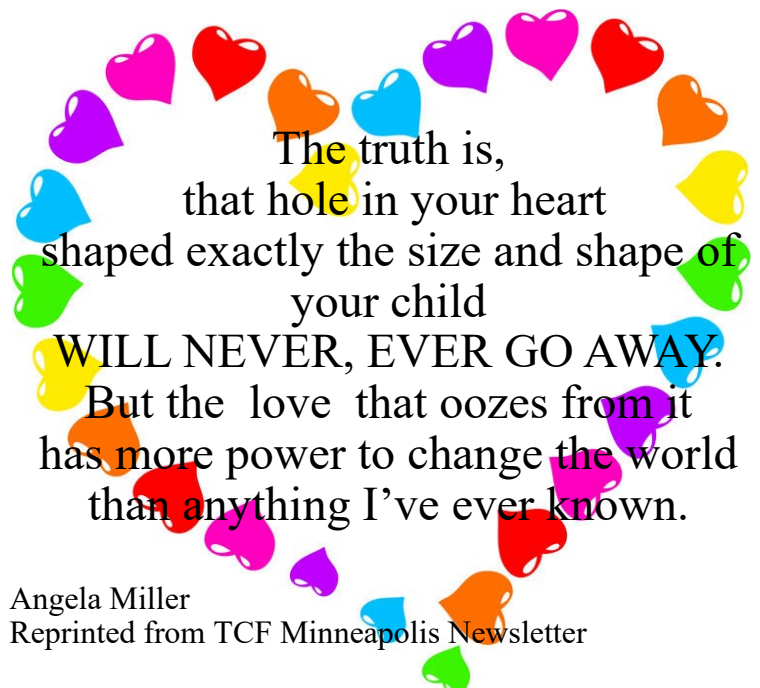
*The scent of my baby is a different one,  
it's not shampoo or baby powders.  
It's not that "newborn scent" but that of  
fresh cut flowers.*

*For God chose my son to be with him and  
leave me down below.  
So the flowers I place upon his grave are  
the only scent I know.*



*So when I smell a flower my son always  
comes to mind,  
and the delicate scent of a flower seems  
to suit my son just fine.*

*For my son touched and brightened my  
life just like a flower may.  
And the true beauty of a flower was my  
son in every way. [Debby Root, Fox Valley]*



The truth is,  
that hole in your heart  
shaped exactly the size and shape of  
your child  
**WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY.**  
But the love that oozes from it  
has more power to change the world  
than anything I've ever known.

Angela Miller  
Reprinted from TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

## Navigating the Ebb and Flow of Grief.

At almost four years after the death of my daughter, I had thought it would be easier than this. In those early days and months when my grief made it feel like I simply couldn't survive this loss, I saw others in support groups who had lost their loved ones many years before, and they seemed ok. They looked almost "normal" again. They told me it wouldn't always be like this. They said you learn to live with the pain, and it would lessen over time. They said you will eventually find joy and happiness again. They said you create a "new normal." And they were right.

I have worked hard for almost four years on working through my grief. I have faced it head on through continual counseling and support groups and still seek out ways to express my pain, so as not to hold it in and let it consume me. Along the way, I have given myself permission to smile once more, and even to allow joy to enter my heart again. I have enjoyed my other children. I have volunteered my time with The Compassionate Friends. I have created my own grief support website. I have consciously tried to focus my energies on remembering my daughter's life rather than only looking at the pain her death has brought.

And yet grief remains a constant part of my life. Grief is fickle. Unpredictable. And indifferent to whatever mood I'm in. Most days my grief lies dormant under the activities of everyday life. Little triggers will continually remind me it's there. A sad news story on the TV. A girl at the park who reminds me of my daughter. But I can go about my regular routines with no interruptions. Other times, the triggers are bigger, and the grief bubbles up and takes over my mood. Tears well up behind my eyes, ready to release at the first opportunity. My patience seems to evaporate and everyday tasks become cumbersome, meaningless, and even difficult. Usually the bursts of grief from larger triggers only last a few hours or at most a few days. But sometimes it lingers and grows.

What I didn't expect is that even coming on four years after her death, I still find myself in situations where grief becomes so overwhelming again that it feels like I've gone right back to the debilitating early days of grief. Feelings of sadness, pain, lethargy, dis-interest in things I normally enjoy. Going to work becomes a struggle. Even taking care of my kids feels like a burden. I know these periods require extra attention and care, and I navigate through the best I can, asking for support along the way. I just wonder if these episodes will ease over time, or if I should just expect them to become a permanent fixture of my "new normal" life? If the death of my daughter has taught me anything -- and it has taught me A LOT -- it has taught me that we have more inner strength than we can ever imagine, and that with time, attention, and support, we can navigate through just about anything life might throw at us.

Maria Kubitz TCF Contra Costa County, CA In Memory of my daughter, Margareta N

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

As long as it takes; that's how long it takes. It's not about forgetting. It's about hurting.

And I know that if I am alive twenty years from now, and I happen to look at a blue sky with puffy clouds and think of my son, Fred—and figure how old he'd be, what he'd be doing and what his children would be doing—I'll hurt.

And know that if I can switch my train of thought from what is not, to what was, a happy memory, I'll be able to smile through the tears.

We don't stop hurting, ever. But so many things occur each day. So many events and thoughts and happenings intervene, that our focus is shifted. The death of our child changes from the main concern in our life, to one of many.

A life may stop; but the loving goes on. To love deeply is to be vulnerable...for all our days.

Joan S. ~ TCF, Central Jersey Chapter Gratefully taken from Focus NSW

## A Candle for My Child

Each night as darkness settles over our home, a little candle begins flickering in the east window of our staircase landing. The tiny light burns until dawn and then silently is quenched with the rising sun. This is my son's light. About a year after Todd died, the leader of our chapter suggested a candle in the window for the holidays, as I had no inclination to decorate. I placed a candle there, and I have now replaced the candle with yet another candle. This is Todd's candle...this is Todd's light.



When darkness comes, Todd's candle begins its nightly vigil...a vigil that will not end until I am dead. Although this is a small gesture, it has deep meaning for me. Sometimes I awaken in the middle of the night and walk into the atrium at the foot of the steps by the light of Todd's candle. Other times in the early evening, I will look into the atrium. Todd's light shines. I feel as if he is with me somehow, in the light of this little candle. I think about him, his life, his joys, his sorrows, and his immense capacity to love and laugh. I feel a deep closeness to my son that cannot be explained to anyone but those who have lost a child. There is such peace and solace in keeping my child in my heart and life and in establishing my own private rituals of remembrance.

Leaving a candle in the window has been an American tradition since the Colonial Era. The candle symbolizes warmth and security of the family home and its message is loyalty to a family member who is not present. So it is fitting that Todd's candle shines each night...reminding all that he is absent from our home, but not our hearts. Each of us has a ritual of remembrance of our child. Some of us have consciously established this. Others have unconsciously done so. But it is these rituals that bring our child close to us, only to us. Our rituals are a very personal choice. I chose not to share my ritual for 2 1/2 years. Then one day a child who lives across the street asked me about the candle. I told her that it is my son's candle. She asked if he was in Iraq. "No", I said, "he's in heaven." A momentary look of fright passed over her face, and then she smiled. "I thought you had kids. You act like a mom."

Her innocent comment about me 'acting like a mom' once again reinforced the fact that we will always be parents. That role has shaped who we are and intensified it more with the death of our precious children. Those who have not lost a child can't understand the feeling and emotions that run so deeply in our psyches and our souls.

When I gaze at Todd's candle, I remember his life, the security he felt within these walls, his growing up years, the love, loyalty and emotional stability he experienced as a child that enabled him to become a man of courage, self-confidence and gentleness in the face of life's worst and best. I think of the other children and the parents they left behind...the sons and daughters of my Compassionate Friends. These children are missed, they are loved and they, too, are kept forever in a parent's heart. We share a common bond. We have lost our precious, beautiful children. We know what pure and overwhelming grief really is. We walk this road together as Compassionate Friends. And we remember, each of us in our own way. Todd's candle is one way to tell him that I love him as only a mother can love...unconditional and forever. And that I will always remember. I will always be Todd's mom. I have found that being a parent is a lifetime journey...even when our children are not with us on life's road. As parents, we define ourselves as interwoven with the fabric of our children's lives. We always remember. There is comfort in that.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, in memory of my son, Todd Mennen,  
TCF/Katy TX Lovingly lifted from  
Madison Area Chapter and reprinted in Winnipeg Chapter News



# Sibling Page



## Grieving the death of a sibling

Source: What's Your Grief ([www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)) Authors: Eleanor & Litsa Article link: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/death-of-a-sibling/>

As a general rule, we hesitate to write about different types of loss. To clarify, I am not referring to types of grief, which we've written about extensively. Instead, I am referring to loss in regards to the type of relationship, such as the death of a parent, spouse, child, and so on. Allow me to share two reasons for our hesitancy:

1. Although commonalities often exist amongst people who have experienced a certain type of loss, grief is as individual as the person experiencing it and their relationship with the person who died. Although some people might be able to relate to aspects of another person's grief, no one can completely understand how anyone else feels. On a whole, we recommend you learn what you can from your commonalities with other grievers, but take differences with a grain of salt. And please, don't try to compare.
2. For some types of loss, like the death of a spouse or child, an abundance of really great resources already exist. However, there are some types of loss where few good resources exist. The other day I asked our Facebook community to suggest resources for people who've experienced the death of a sibling. Although some were able to make recommendations, many were quick to point out their struggle to find help and support for their loss. One reader even said she dubbed herself the "forgotten mourner" after finding sibling grief was so often overlooked in the support world. Now, we can't have that! Obviously, this is just a post and it doesn't substitute for dedicated organisations, movements, or other types of support – but it's a start. Whatever you are able to contribute to the conversation in the comments and on social media, please do. The more voices we have speaking on the subject, the more supported and cared for other grieving siblings will hopefully feel.

### **Feelings and Emotions**

You may be experiencing grief over the death of your sibling if you feel any of the following – shock, numbness, sadness, despair, loneliness, isolation, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, irritability, anger, increased or decreased appetite, fatigue or sleeplessness, guilt, regret, depression, anxiety, crying, headaches, weakness, aches, pains, yearning, worry, frustration, detachment, isolation, questioning faith – to name a few.

Okay, so those things aren't specific to sibling grief, however, the way they are experienced by someone grieving a brother or sister may be. For example:

You feel guilty because... ..you are the sibling that survived. ...you knew your sibling inside and out and yet you didn't know about the struggles or hardships that led to their death. ...you weren't able to protect them. ...there are things you wish you had said, but didn't

You feel anxiety because... ..you know how fragile life is. ...you're worried you may die in the same way as your sibling. ...you're worried others in your family may die.

You feel lonely because... ..although you're surrounded by people, you miss the one person who you could truly be yourself with. I could go on, but the important thing is to understand that your feelings are unique and important. Good, bad, or anywhere in-between, your relationship with your brother or sister was different than anyone else's and so you'll experience hurdles, triggers, and hardships that others may not. Your parents, siblings, and other family members may grieve in many of the same ways that you do, but in many ways, their grief may differ. It's important to remember this because misunderstandings can arise amongst family members when people react differently in response to a death. It's also important for people supporting bereaved siblings to keep this in mind so they can help validate and support the griever's feelings and experiences.

### **Overshadowed Grief**

This is just a guess, but I suspect a lack of sibling grief resources exists because sibling grief is often overshadowed. People simply cannot fathom the out-of-order-ness of a parent having to bury a child, so when this is the case their thoughts and concerns often immediately go to the parent's grief. Parents themselves may not be able to effectively attend to their children's grief and outside family and friends may be hesitant to step in and offer support or suggestions.



It might also be true that support and attention are first given to siblings who are younger or who are perceived to be more fragile. In a situation where any or all of these things are true, a grieving sibling may end up feeling as though other people's grief is more important than their own.

This may be confounded by the fact that some people willingly allow their grief to go unnoticed by themselves or others. Raise your hand if you're the sibling who feels like it's your job to take care of and support the rest of the family. After a death, some siblings might quickly step in to take care of their younger children and/or their parents because they feel it's their role or duty. Sometimes this happens out of necessity, sometimes avoidance, sometimes expectation, and sometimes all of the above. It is important for all members of the family to recognize that no one's grief should take complete precedence. Although family members might take turns supporting one another, at one point or another everyone's grief deserves attention and needs to be attended to.

### **Changes in Family Dynamics and Support Systems**

Families – functional or dysfunctional – often operate according to a set of norms, roles, traditions, and patterns. Each person has their place in the family system, so things can get thrown off balance when someone in the family dies. An important person is gone, and those who survive them are sometimes unable, unwilling, or disinterested in filling that person's role(s) or carrying out traditions and patterns as they have in the past. Shifting family dynamics can lead to the weakening of support systems. Parents and siblings who are grieving may be of less, little, or no help. If a person's support system largely consists of family (which is often the case for children and teens), they may find they're facing one of the hardest periods of their life without a safety net. The support system may also be weakened if the person who died was an important source of support for surviving siblings. This may be true at any age, but if the death happens when the siblings are in older adulthood, the person who died may have been one of the surviving sibling's few living family members. For all these reasons and others, it is common for people to have to reassess their support system in the wake of loss and to seek out additional help while coping with their grief. their own.

### **Comparisons and Expectations**

You are special and you are wonderful (come on...you know you are). You have no one to live up to besides yourself, your goals, and your own potential. Okay, I just wanted to say that as a reminder to anyone who feels like they're living in the shadow of a deceased sibling. Feeling compared or overshadowed is common after the death of a sibling, and (although you may be hesitant to admit it) this experience can result in feelings of resentment or anger towards family and/or the person who died. If this sounds like you, the first thing we recommend you do is to ask yourself, "Who is making me feel this way?" If the answer is your parents or other family members, then the next thing you might do is try to communicate with your family about how you feel. This might seem like a scary task because you don't want to rock the boat or make anyone feel worse in their grief. If this is the case, or if you think your concerns will fall on deaf ears, you might want to consider talking to a counsellor about how to approach the situation or enlist the help of a family counsellor to work with the family as a whole. Now, you may find that you yourself are responsible for comparisons and expectations. This might happen for a number of reasons including insecurity, guilt, or the feeling that you need to pick up where your sibling left off. If you think you might be the source of comparison, then some serious self-reflection is probably needed. Acknowledging the truth of the situation is a good start, you're in even better shape if you can identify why this is happening. As you search for answers, you might find it's helpful to spend time in reflection, to journal, or to talk to a trusted confidant, support group member(s), or counsellor.

### **Missed Opportunities**

When a person dies, you are not only robbed of their physical presence in the here and now, but you (and they) also lose the chance to spend your tomorrows together. Your life after their death becomes a filled with thoughts of "if only", "we would have", and "I wish." This is obviously the case for missed opportunities in the future; the happy moments you wish you could have spent together like weddings, graduations, births, adventures, and family get-togethers. However, missed opportunities are also felt when people wish they could make up for all they didn't do while the person was alive. For example, taking the chance to say "I love you", "I'm sorry", "I forgive you" and "I care".

You miss the hell out of them Sibling relationships obviously vary in their degrees of closeness, love, and amiability. Some siblings may be thick as thieves, others wonder whether they're even really related. Regardless, siblings are our ties to family bonds. They have known us the longest. They understand our history and are the people with whom we have the longest running jokes.

They are our bridesmaids and our groomsmen. They are our children's aunts and uncles. They bail us out when we're in trouble, they loan us money, and then we loan it back. They are the most judgmental people we know. They are the most accepting and loving people we know.

Siblings can never be replaced and when they are gone we miss the hell out of them.  
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Victoria Au Magazine





## MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

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



## **D**o you need to talk? Our telephone friends are willing to listen.. **Telephone Friends**

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh ( 22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
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 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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

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