



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

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APRIL MAY 2019

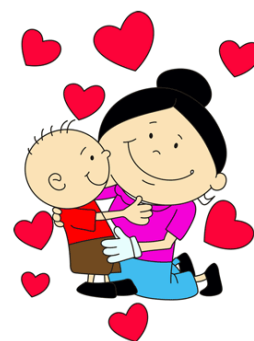
In the Morning

From wherever you are
you smile at me.

“Find life for both of us”
you say.

“Find peace for both of us”
you say.

“Find strength and love and hope
for both of us,
because you are
my mother.”



Sascha

Reprinted with thanks from TCF 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

I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even
in death.

They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision
we make.

Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories.
We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched
by having shared their love.

Leo Buseaglia

With thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Andrew Meldrum Cox
Jack Stephen Dyer
Nicholas Ian O'Hara
Caren Amanda Phillips
Alan Bruce Scoringe
Anthony Mark Staite
Jonathon Upton

Born 16/4/68
Born 24/4/07
Born 17/4/74
Born 16/4/81
Born 26/4/66
Born 5/4/74
Born 15/4/68

Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold
Nicholas Evan Hood
Vicky Knight
Paul John Nicolaou
Cindy Parish
Liam Veters
David Jason Eugene Walker
James Wing

Born 9/5/1978
Born 12/5/1985
Born 21/5/1980
Born 21/5/1964
Born 25/5/1965
Born 1/5/2005
Born 7/5/1993
Born 31/5/1980

Rebecca Elizabeth Arnold
Rebecca Clare Halkett
Greg Holley
Matthew David Hubber
Sally Verone Kitto
Robbie Knight
Jake Lucas
Nikolaas Remmerswaal
Gary Brendon Thompson
Hayden Watson

Paul Graham Albrecht
Michael Barry Duke
Ben Henderson
Erica Kewish
Thomas Craig McDonald
Maryann Gaye Pearce
Wayne Edward Summers
David Jason Eugene Walker
Peter Gregory Warren
Dan Wells
Timothy James Williams

Died 6/4/02
Died 20/4/03
Died 6/4/85
Died 30/4/00
Died 23/4/01
Died 18/4/96
Died 26/4/77
Died 1/4/12
Died 9/4/96
Died 11/4/97

Died 19/5/2004
Died 20/5/2005
Died 15/5/2003
Died 14/5/2014
Died 25/5/2008
Died 27/5/2000
Died 9/5/1999
Died 13/5/ 2000
Died 17/5/1998
Died 13/5/2003
Died 29/5/2005

Dear Friends,

As always, this is the hardest newsletter of the year for me to prepare.

The upcoming Mothers Day, combined with the anniversary of my son's accident a few days beforehand and then the anniversary of his death a few days after Mothers Day makes May a very sad and difficult month.

However we are so grateful for many things:

The years we had with Ben and the many special memories we will always have.

Our younger son, Toby, who we are able to continue to spend Mothers Day with.

Our families who offered so much support and love at the time of the accident and Ben's death and over the months and years since.

Several very close and special friends who have continued to offer love and friendship and a sympathetic ear when it is most needed.

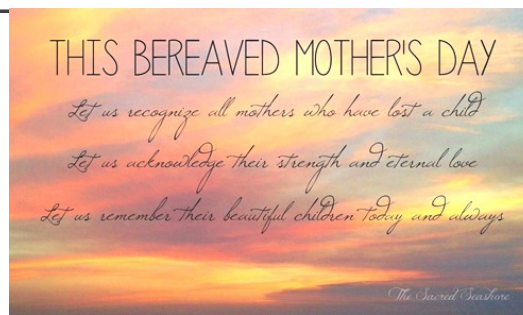
The Compassionate Friends who contacted me in the months following Ben's death and showed me that there was, and is, life after Ben's death and that this life is good and worthwhile.

We are also grateful for the beautiful world in which we live and our beautiful country. Although events in recent times have shaken us and once again reminded us we how vulnerable we are, the response and the love shown since have also reminded us that there are more people with love in the hearts than those who hate.

And it is this love that I wish for you this month, the love of friends and family, the love you have for your child/children who are here on earth and those who now watch over you and the love your children have for you.

May your Mother's Day be filled with this love, sweet memories and the joy that you are and always will be a mum.

Take care,
Lesley Henderson.



Kendra's Life Lessons

As we approach three years since our daughter, Kendra, left this world for heaven, we continue to miss her so very much. Yet her memories will never leave us; nor will her example of how best to live life. Here are some important lessons that she shared with us and many others:

- * **Live life like there may not be a tomorrow.** Kendra lived in the moment and was always ready for new adventures. She was willing to love many people, laugh with others and even at herself. She was enthralled by so many things including listening to music, experiencing nature, and simply having fun spending time with family and friends.
- * **Dream, plan for the future - and just do it.** Even though she enjoyed being in the moment, Kendra was very ambitious and dreamed about the future. She not only dreamed, but also planned and took steps to make dreams a reality. Her successful college career studying for a Speech Therapy career and proposing and winning a research grant were examples of her planning and just doing.
- * **Be the best version of yourself.** Kendra was continually looking for ways to improve herself. She enjoyed expanding her knowledge and trying new activities to make herself better. She spent time learning how to cook old family recipes, play new instruments, focus less on material things, and exercise her mind and body through yoga and rock climbing.
- * **Make others feel good about themselves and you will have friends forever.** Kendra had an amazing ability to make people feel good about themselves, including those she didn't know. Kendra taught us about kindness by being careful with her words, lifting spirits and avoiding hurt feelings by looking for the best in people.

Thank you, Kendra, for these life lessons that anyone, no matter the age, can use to continue to learn and grow! We love you forever, Dad Tom, Momma Terri & Brother Cole

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Lifted with thanks from TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

Whanganui TCF NEws

Having to think about May already ! A month I dread as it includes Mother's Day.... but for the last seven years there has been a bright spot in our home as we celebrate our first grandson's birthday. Bruno was born on the 6th, never far from Mother's Day date.

What joy he brings us as does his 3year old brother Aksel.

Neither met their Uncle Simon, but they love to play in Simon's room even with some of his old toys (which are a real novelty to them) Both talk fondly of Uncle Simon and understand in a very matter of fact way that he is now in heaven with Amber (their cat) and Cosmo (Simon's dog) who is buried in our garden. Recently on a visit Bruno asked for a spade and stated he would "like to dig up Cosmo to see what he looked like" Nana had to do some fast thinking. I told him Cosmo had turned back into dirt now and I'd show him a photo instead. I thought I had done well 'til the next time he had a cat story at home which reminded him of his cat and he burst into tears saying "Amber is just dirt now".

May May 12th be a time of happy/sad memories for all our Mothers. Remember it is OK to not feel like 'celebrating' Mother's Day.

We continue to meet in Whanganui, monthly for our Coffee Care and Chat times at a local Café. Each month we have a focus January – Grief: February – Valentine's Day: March - Books : April – Teardrops for Christ-church: May – will be a Pamper for Mothers.

Can you help? The TCF website has produced requests for contacts in Auckland and Nelson. Neither place has a TCF group that I know of. If anyone can help please contact Keren Marsh or Lesley Henderson.

Dear Friends

Mothers' Day is one of the sweetest anniversaries of the year. Motivated by the wish to honour motherhood, its lapse into crass commercialism has not dimmed its original inspiration. For TCF mothers the day throbs with hurt. We long for our dead sons and daughters and this in no way distracts from our delight in the loving care of our surviving children. For those who lost only or all their children the agony is indescribable. Delving into my treasure chest of memories I recall three incidents which meant the world to me and which I'd like to share in the hope that they will resonate with you too.

That first dreadful Mother's Day after Lionel died I dragged myself from bed, exhausted by a sleepless night and endless tears. Why I should have rooted in the back of a cupboard I don't know. There I found a forgotten briefcase. When I opened it I saw the last hand-written, humorously drawn Mothers Day card Lionel had made for me. Of course I howled but these tears were different. Mingled with the anguish of loss was a realization of the permanence of love and the miracles that life can still yield.

Another year a friend brought me a gift on Mothers Day. Shed heard a voice saying "She's still my mother", and just knew this was a message from Lionel. Ignoring her own distress, for she too is a bereaved mom, she rushed to get me something to remind us that "once a mother, always a mother".

Some years later I was able to absorb the fact of Mothers Day without disintegrating. My husband was busy and I took myself off for movies and a meal. Naturally all the restaurants were full of families celebrating together and here was I, sitting on my own, I was asked if I was waiting for someone. I silently shook my head and then placed my order. Minutes later a large glass of wine was before me. "I didn't order this", I said. "I know", answered the waiter, "but you deserve it." I've never forgotten that kindness from a sensitive stranger, one more proof that compassion thrives.

May you be blessed this Mothers Day with love and kindness, memories and miracles.

With love Taken from the book "A String of Pearls" Rosemary Dirmeik

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

Letters from the heart

Arlene Priest wears an etched gold pendant around her neck, capturing her then 21-year-old son, Marc. At the time the engraved photo was snapped, her son was a talented musician who never picked up a saxophone he didn't love to play. He was kind, and as his mom says, "Marc was always the one, if there was a broken issue between friends, he was the mediator. He would tell people that life was too short."

For Marc Priest, life was indeed too short. Six months after his 21st birthday, he was stricken with a case of viral encephalitis and never recovered. "Marc was a pallbearer at my mom's funeral and 30 days later, I was standing at his grave," Arlene says. The year was 1983. It was just weeks before Marc was set to start his senior year at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. "He was complaining about aching all over," Arlene says. "There was a flu going around Billings and so we thought Marc just had the flu. I was begging him to go to the doctor. He just said to me, 'Mom, I will go to the doctor tomorrow if I am not feeling better.'" Arlene pauses and says, "These things are so vivid in my mind." Later that night, Arlene was getting ready to turn in when she heard a loud shaking noise followed by moans. When she rushed into Marc's room, she says, "He was in the fetal position, his eyes were open. He had suffered a seizure." After calling 9-1-1 and checking into the hospital, the prognosis wasn't good. While Arlene was talking to the physician about what would be done to help her son, Arlene says the emergency room doctor told her, "'I'm not sure you are hearing me. We are not sure he will make it through the night.' It was like knives piercing my heart." Marc lived in the intensive care unit for 22 days before another seizure left him brain-dead. "I knew it was going to kill me," Arlene says. "Then, when it didn't kill me, I was mad because the pain was so unbearable."

This single mother who watched her only child pass from this world felt that unbearable grief until she found herself walking into a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, a support group for parents who suffered the loss of a child. "I don't know how I ever got there," Arlene says. "That was another God thing. Somehow, I must have heard about it." After quietly listening, Arlene says, "I thought, you know, I am not going crazy. There are others who feel this way."

Within a year, Arlene found herself leading the group. She found a new purpose. But outside of the friendships she developed there, she found a passion that would sustain her for more than 35 years. It started with a simple letter to a parent after she spotted a child's obituary notice in the paper. What started with one letter grew to another and another and another. "I felt their pain when I would read the obituary," Arlene says. "I would write, you do not know me and I do not know you but I know the intense pain that you are feeling." She would share a bit of Marc's story in the hope that the family knew they weren't alone in their grief. "I would tell them my heart aches for you and cries with you." Arlene would also be sure to share that there was a support group full of caring parents to help them process their grief. "It's amazing how when someone would walk into the meeting that night, just from writing to them and knowing the ages of their children, I would know who they were."

Over the years, Arlene has also been instrumental in getting memory bricks helping families to honor their children at Rose Park. She pushed for a memorial floral garden to be dedicated at Rose Park so parents had a place to go to remember their child. A bronze angel sits in the center of it all. Arlene has started a handful of Compassionate Friends chapters and secured funding to make sure the group's newsletter always reached parents in need. "We don't charge for our newsletter because the price a parent has paid is already too great," Arlene says. As Arlene shares the story behind her letter-writing ministry, she can't count how many notes she's dropped in the mail. "I probably send out 40 to 45 care notes a month," she says. "I have written for years and years and years now. Many still write back to tell me that the letter meant so much. Others will say that their family doesn't even mention it." Arlene says, "One of my sisters might think, 'Well, I would like to call Arlene to let her know that I am thinking about her, but she'll cry.' Well, I cry anyway." She makes sure to include her phone number on every handwritten note, just in case. At 92, she's not sure how many more years she'll be able to write those heartfelt notes by hand. "I am so passionate about this. If you just help one person or make it so they can get through that day, what a blessing," Arlene says. "This is my life. I do it as a way to pay tribute and honor Marc."

Lifted with love from TCF Queensland Chapter Newsletter



Mother's Day



Mother's Day Manifesto For Grieving Mothers by Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

<https://www.centerforlossandtrauma.com/mother-s-day-manifesto>

We are Mothers. I am a bereaved Mother. My child died and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path which I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the dark places which scare me.

Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me. Say nothing. Do not offer a cure, Or a pill, or a word, or a potion. Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me. Please be gently with me. And I will try to be gentle with me too. I will not "get over" my child's death, so please don't urge me down that path. Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am able to smile again, the pain is just below the surface. There are days when I feel paralysed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and sometimes I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognise myself anymore. Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't feel better by now. Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged, so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more—hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice towards her young child—or an elderly person struggling with the door. There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan." This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child in to a safe, warm bed at night. Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers—and fathers—and grandparents—and siblings won't wake up one day with everything "okay" and life back to normal. I have a new normal now.

As time passes, I may gain gifts, and treasures, and insights, but anything gained was too high a cost when compared to what was lost. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not for a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence. No matter how many years lurk over my shoulder, don't forget that I have another one, another child, whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything.

My child may have died; but my love—and my motherhood, or fatherhood—never.

Being the Mother of a Child Who Died — On Mother's Day

I am the mother of a child who died. And that makes Mother's Day very hard.

Recently I was talking to a mother whose child had just died. "What about Mother's Day?" she asked, through tears. It was hard to know what to say, because it's a terrible day for those of us who have lost a child. Other days of the year you can maybe make it a few hours without thinking about your loss; other days of the year you can pretend that you are an ordinary person and that life is normal. But not on Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day it's in your face that your child is gone forever. On Mother's Day you can't pretend you are ordinary or that life is normal. All the hoopla, all the Hallmark hype, the handmade cards and flowers and family gatherings, make it almost excruciating.

Our town has a Mother's Day road race for which I am eternally grateful—especially because, in a demonstration of grace's existence, the start and finish are next to the cemetery where my son is buried. On my way I can visit his grave and say what I need to say and look yet again at the name we chose for him carved into stone. At the end of the race, they give all the mothers a flower; on my way home, I go back to the grave and lay my flower there. And then I move forward with the day.

See, that's the real challenge after losing a child: moving forward. It's almost impossible to envision in that moment of loss; how can life continue after something so horrible? But life does continue, whether we like it or not. There are chores to do and bills to pay; morning comes, again and again. So pick yourself up and you live, but you are never the same.

At first, we are different because of our raw sadness. But over time, the sadness moves from our skin into our bones. It becomes less visible, but no less who we are. It changes into a wisdom, one we'd give up in a heartbeat to have our child back. We who have lost children understand that so many things just aren't important. All that is important is those we love. All that is important is each other. Nothing else.

It can feel very lonely, being the parent of a child who died. Especially on Mother's Day or Father's Day. We feel so different from those around us, all those happy people with children the same age our child was, or would have been. But over the years, I've come to understand that I'm not alone at all.

There is a wonderful Buddhist story about a woman whose son gets sick and dies. She goes to the Buddha to ask him to bring her son back to life; I will, he says, if you bring me some mustard seed from the home of a family that has not known loss. She goes from house to house but can find no family that has not lost someone dear to them. She buries her son and goes to the Buddha and says: I understand now.

That is what I understand now. It doesn't make me miss my son any less, or Mother's Day any easier. But it helps me make sense of it; loss is part of life. There are no guarantees, ever. Our children, and all those we love, are gifts to us for however long we have them.

I understand now too that we are together in this, all of us in joy and in loss. It's the connections we make with each other that matter—it's the connections we make that give life value and help us face each morning. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "We are all in the same boat in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Years ago, I chose words to say each time I go to my son's grave. It makes it easier to have a ritual. And over the years, the words have come to mean more to me. They aren't just about grief anymore. They are about who I am, what I have learned, and what I can give.

"I will always love you," I say. "And I will always be your mother."

Claire McCarthy, M.D. BP of USA Coeur d'Alene
Winnipeg Chapter News

A Mother's Chorus: Grieving a Child on Mother's Day

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/grieving-a-child/>

“What’s Your Grief” reached out to their readers and asked for their help writing a post in anticipation of Mother’s Day. Specifically, they asked mothers grieving the death of a child to share one thing they wanted people to know about their grief on Mother’s Day.

They took all the responses they received and put them together in a letter. This letter is not written by one bereaved mother, but an entire chorus of mothers. Their words are not at all the same, but their message blends together to create a mournful, harmonious, and beautiful song.

Dear Friend,

I miss my child every day. This grief of mine will never leave me, and honestly, why should it? I love my child more than I ever could have imagined, and yes, I do mean present tense “love”. It is excruciating knowing that my child will never return to my arms. However, a mother’s love for her child doesn’t require physical presence; this can be proven by the fact that most mothers love their children well before they are even born. I will love my child forever, and therefore, I will grieve my child forever. This is just how it goes.

I know it’s difficult for some people to understand my ongoing grief, I guess because they want me to “get better” or return to “normal.” However, I actually am normal. I’m just different now. I believe those who say they want to support me on difficult days like Mother’s Day, but part of this is accepting me as a grieving mother who will always love her deceased child. Again, this is just how it goes.

My grief is like the weather. Some days it’s calm, quiet, maybe even a little sunny. Other days it’s a devastating storm that makes me feel angry, exhausted, raw, and empty. I wake up in the morning and wonder – “Am I even alive at all? And if so, how am I supposed to make it through this day?” This is why when you ask me how I feel about Mother’s Day; all I can say that it depends. Of course, I’m going to try my best to cope with the day, but while you’re hoping that your Mother’s Day picnic doesn’t get spoiled by actual rain, I’ll be praying that the grief storms stay at bay.

Like many things in a grieving mother’s life, Mother’s Day is bittersweet to the nth degree. On the one hand, I feel immense joy because I was blessed with my child and I feel gratitude for every moment I was given with them. On the other hand, the pain of missing my child – my greatest happiness, my life’s purpose, and my best friend – is intense.

Bereaved mothers live with so many of these confusing contrasts. They are like undercurrents that tug at and toss about our hearts and minds. I am a mother to a child who is not alive. Perhaps a child who you’ve never met. You can’t ask me about their school year, or how they’re liking piano lessons, or whether they’ve chosen a major in college. In my mind, I’ve imagined my child doing all these things. People don’t realize that I grieve each of my child’s milestones, knowing they didn’t get the opportunity to experience these special days.

Most people don’t know how to validate my child’s place in the world or my ongoing role as my child’s mother. This is a difficult concept for others to grasp. Heck, sometimes even I grapple with the answers to questions like “Do you have children?” and “How many?” I know many bereaved mothers, like me, long for these questions to have straightforward answers.

Sadly, mothers who have experienced the death of their only child may even wonder whether they get to call themselves a mother at all in broader society. So, in addition to the pain of grief, these mothers have to cope with a sense of being left out, forgotten, and ignored. Can you imagine how that might feel? I think it must be like being stabbed through the heart and when you turn to others for help they say “What blood?” “What knife?”

Then, for mothers who have surviving children, there is this gem of a comment – “Don’t forget, you’re lucky to have other children.” Please let me assure you, a mother does not forget any of her children. This mother loves each and every one of her unique and special children in unique and special ways, but one of her children has died and so her love for this child looks a little untraditional. Mothers do not have a finite amount of love to be shifted, divided, and spread around depending on the number of children they have on this Earth. So please be careful with your comments, because it’s difficult enough for grieving mothers who often feel torn between feeling joy and happiness for their living children and grief for the child who has died.

All that said, you asked me what it’s like to grieve a child on Mother’s Day, so here’s what I have to say: This day will forever be hard for me. I live with an emptiness that no one can fill; so I may be sad, I may be unsociable, and I may need to take a break to be by myself in a quiet place. Whatever shape my grief takes on this day, please allow me to feel the way I feel and please follow my lead.

Beyond that, acknowledge me as a mother. It makes me feel forgotten and as though my child has been forgotten when people act as though my child never existed. Also, I can sense that people feel uncomfortable talking about my child and I constantly feel like the elephant in the room, but it doesn’t have to be this way. Honestly, I find it really comforting when someone talks about my child. I love hearing their name spoken out loud! I love hearing stories about them. Maybe you know a story I’ve never heard, or maybe I’ve heard it a hundred times before, but it really doesn’t matter to me. Your acknowledgment alone is one of the greatest Mother’s Day gifts you could give me.

I guess while I’m offering my two cents, I also have something to say to my fellow bereaved mothers. No one has it all figured out, but I’ve learned a few lessons along the way. If you’re worried about Mother’s Day, you’re not alone. Try not to get overwhelmed or wrapped up in anxiety. You may actually find that the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. You may want to plan a whole day of activities just to stay busy, or you may feel like doing nothing at all. There is no “right” way to handle Mother’s Day – but do try to plan ahead a little. You may want to reach out to others who are struggling with the day and, if you can, it always helps to face the day with people who love and support you.

Whatever you do, believe you will make it through the day. With time, the grief storms will grow smaller and less frequent and you will find a little more balance and room to breathe. Believe you will be okay and have hope that in the future you will find yourself in a place where you can grieve and celebrate on Mother’s Day all at the same time.

Let’s take care of each other, M

Thank you to all the women who offered their honest and genuine words of wisdom. Our hearts go out to all those grieving on Mother’s Day. We’re here.

Reprinted with thanks from TCF 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

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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.

February 18, 2011 will be forever in my memory as the worst day of my life. It is the day our daughter Elsey died quite suddenly and unexpectedly.

Some people said we should be glad that we had 11 years with her since she had been born with congenital heart defects. I am sure there are some people today who think that we should be 'over it' by now.

Those of us who have lost a child know that we will never 'get over it'. This journey we are on has a feeling of a 'double edge sword'. Yes, the grief has softened quite a bit in 8 years. A day never passes where I don't think of Elsey or miss her. Initially the pain was beyond anything I could have imagined when Elsey died. I felt lost and without direction for many months. I didn't know about the shock that follows a child's death. I find now that many memories of Elsey have become fuzzy with the passing of time. I wish I filled the pages of the book a friend gave me to write those memories into. Not unlike those baby books that are given to a new parent to record all the wonderful things the baby does. We get busy with life (because it does go on) and forget the details of the ordinary moments we had with our child.

What would I tell my newly bereaved self from this perspective of 8 years?

- Elsey will always be my daughter. She will be a part of every day of my life.
- Grief is an expression of love.
- Accept help from those who care (I had no idea that I wouldn't want to cook for months).
- Be good to yourself.
- People really do mean well despite all the stupid things they say.
- There is no right or wrong time to do many tasks after a death, such as cleaning out their closet.
- Grief is a life long journey that will soften with time.
- It is okay to talk about Elsey even though she has died.
- Write down memories as they come to you.
- Talk with your other children about their feelings even though you are in terrible pain.

Today I am very thankful that Elsey lived in our family. Someday I know that we will be reunited. I know that it was all worth the chance to love you, Elsey.

Mary Jo Peterson, Elsey's mom TCF Minneapolis, MN

Gratefully reprinted from Minneapolis Chapter Newsletter

If Only One More Time

To hear your voice loud and clear;
to see your image as if you're here;
to feel your warmth like you are near,
if only, one more time.

To hear you call, "Mom, I'm home,"
to keep me company when I'm alone;
to watch you run and grab the phone,
if only, one more time.

To watch you sit quietly and read;
to buy you things you say you need;
to see you do a thoughtful deed,
if only, one more time.

To find a note written by you;
to walk upstairs and trip over your shoe;
to comfort you when you're feeling blue,
if only, one more time.

To feel your arms in a soft embrace;
to see that smile upon your face;
to understand when you needed space,
If only, one more time.

Vicki Richey, TCF/Orange County Chapter, CA
Reprinted wot thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

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

SOMEONE ASKED ME

Someone asked me about you today
 It's been so long since anyone has done that
 It felt so good to talk about you
 to share my memories of you
 to simply say your name out loud
 She asked me if I minded talking about
 what happened to you
 or would it be too painful to speak of it
 I told her I think of it every day
 and speaking about it helps me to release
 the tormented thoughts whirling around
 in my head
 She said she never realized the pain
 would last this long
 She apologized for not asking sooner
 I told her, "Thanks for asking"
 I don't know if it was curiosity
 or concern that made her ask
 But told her,
 "Please do it again sometime – soon"
 ~ Barbara Taylor Hudson

Focus NSW Newsletter

Touched By Gold

I was thinking how different life is for me
 And about the things that will never be.
 To watch you grow into that fine young man
 For me, is now, not part of the plan.

I realize my life will never be the same
 Even though I carry on with life's little game.
 I can't go back to where I was before,
 That part of my life is now a closed door.

But in spite of the pain I must endure
 I want you to know one thing for sure.
 I wouldn't trade places with any other on earth
 And I'm proud to be the one who gave you birth.

I live with tragedy and sorrow, that's true
 But also a great love have I shared with you.
 For you've touched my heart as no other could
 And in your memory there will come some good.

For you've left a purpose for your Mom and Dad
 To let others know of the son we had.
 I want you to know your story will be told
 And others will know I've been touched by gold.

Carolyn Bryan, TCF Orange Park/Jacksonville, FL

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg newsletter

For All Bereaved Mothers

I wish you a gentle Mother's Day
 For I know what you feel
 I know how you miss your child
 Your heart I wish I could heal
 For those who lost an only child
 I know your pain today
 For I once walked in your shoes
 My tears fell like rain
 I know your hearts so very much
 My heart feels the same
 We'll always miss our child
 On every Mother's Day
 God Bless each and everyone of you

Sharon Bryant, Andy's mom

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

"The death of a child is so painful,
 both emotionally and spiritually,
 That I truly wondered if my heart and
 spirit would ever heal.
 I soon learned that I could help myself
 best by helping others."

~ Barbara Bush

The Unique Grief of Losing Your First Born to Stillbirth

July 2, 2014 Still Standing Magazine

My first-born was stillborn at full term. We went to the hospital expecting to give birth to our baby girl who was four days overdue and who we felt move that evening before we went to sleep. Arriving at the hospital, we soon learned that her soul had somehow slipped away that night. Since then, I have given birth to our second daughter who was born 16 months after our first.

Looking back and reflecting on these past months of parenting a dead child and now a living one, I feel there is something unique about entering parenthood with a dead child as your first experience. When we become pregnant for the first time there is something that forever changes in us, a switch to a light that gets turned on and no matter what happens it can never be turned off again.

I didn't really understand this until when four months perfectly and innocently pregnant with my first daughter a co-worker of mine came into my office and sat down on my couch as she excitedly told me she was also expecting and just found out. I of course congratulated her and asked all the ordinary questions, "When are you due? Have you told anyone yet? How do you feel?" And with the last question, she paused and stared at me wide-eyed as she replied, "Scared." Taken aback by her answer, I inquisitively asked, "Why?" Her reply still stays with me today, "I'm a mom. My life is changed forever. No matter what happens I'm a parent now, there is no taking that back." I paused as she said this, placing my hand on my just blooming tiny baby bump and let her realization become mine as it sunk in that her truth also was mine. From that point forward, I was a mom. In that moment, my identity changed and my role in life shifted. I could only go forward on the road to parenthood as there was no going back. Until there was.

When my daughter died, it was as if my identity as a parent died too. Well, my anticipated identity. I soon came to learn that there are different ways to 'parent' your dead child just as there are different ways to parent a living one. We parent through letter writing, tending to their graves, celebrating anniversaries, and giving back in their name. It wasn't what I had in mind when I thought of becoming a parent for the first time, but in my book, it was parenting just the same. My grief in parenting a dead child in this way is not unique, but the grief of losing my identity as a 'real' or traditional parent is.

Moms and dads are born when their children are born as the great spiritual teacher Osho states, "The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new."

So what happens when that child dies before she was even born? Well, I'll tell you, it's as if the mom and dad die too. At least their role as a parent does or that is what it feels like. You feel lost. One minute you are growing into this new identity and role as a parent as your belly is blooming with life and in the next, it is gone. Poof! Almost as if it never happened. This is unique. I had no living children left to my name and how soon the world forgot that we were once parents. Amongst the grief of losing a child and not having any living children, a struggle with identity takes place within your mind and soul. You ask yourself questions that no one else has to ask, "Am I a parent or am I not a parent?" or "Was I ever a parent or was I just hoping to be a parent?" These questions feel absurd to you like asking a man who has use of both legs "Do you have legs or don't you have legs?" He answers with, "Well, of course, I have legs, there they are." You think the answer should be that obvious to others but it's not because your legs can't be seen. Your child is nowhere to be found except for in a few photographs taken after her birth and some of you smiling innocently while touching your bulging baby belly. And there is one other factor that makes this grief so unique. It's that if you do go on to have other children and even if you don't, as a bereaved parent of your first-born who died from stillbirth, you never know the concept of parenting to include a time of joy uninterrupted by legitimate fears. You always parent through this lens of anxiety and bittersweet joy that is clouded by the idea of death lurking around the corner. You think thoughts that every parent thinks, "What if she stops breathing in the middle of the night?" and others might reply, "The likelihood of that happening is a low probability." And you think to yourself, "Ah, but I am one of those low probability numbers. I know first-hand how close one can come to this being you." And you start off parenting again knowing you can no longer push away concerns as other non-parents do and foolishly think "That won't happen to me. That happens to other people." Because it did already happen to you.

Parenting after the death of your firstborn to stillbirth is like riding a fine line between death and life with death being on your mind and you never had the privilege to know otherwise. It's hard to explain this distinctive grief. Maybe I'm not doing the individuality of the complexities this unique grief of losing your first-born to stillbirth has over a parent. But hey, maybe that is

because, in truth, all grief is unique and complex. Because all of the children we have lost are unique and complex souls themselves. And oh, I think I would have to argue with the spiritual teacher Osho. Maybe it's because he was a man (but I think most loss dads would agree with what I am about to say too) or maybe it's because, from my knowledge, Osho wasn't a bereaved parent. But in my opinion, a mother isn't born when a child is born. A mother and father are born when the dream of a child is conceived. That's what makes this grief so unique I guess, because I lost so many things the day she died. I lost her along with my motherhood, my innocence and my dreams.

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

A Different kind of Love, A Different kind of Grief

I thought I knew what love is. I learned about love early. I adopted a kitten. I knew I 'loved' my mother and my father... but I really, really loved my Grandma...nobody made potatonik like she did. When I was 12 I fell in love with a boy at school. I thought that was love until I fell in love flavoured with lust in high school and ultimately fell madly in love with Phil. I was pretty sure by then I had it all sorted out and knew what real love is. Then I had Peter. Love took on a whole new meaning.

I thought I knew about grief. When I was a young child I lost a precious toy. I was inconsolable. When I was 10 my best friend moved away. When I was a teenager my grandma died. As a young adult my boyfriend dumped me. In college I failed Spanish. In my thirties my father died. I thought I was having a nervous breakdown. In my forties my mother died. I realized I was an orphan. It was a life changing moment. For several years I longed to talk to her. I grieved daily. It took years until I accepted the loss and managed to move beyond the acute pain that loss caused. Having suffered so many of life's disappointments and losses, I knew that life goes on and time would restore me. Then Peter died. In the world of loss and grieving, nothing comes close to this.

How to describe this. Shock, disbelief, despair, anguish, physical pain, devastation, confusion, anger, impossibility, wonder, frustration, paralysis, hopelessness...the magnitude of pain is beyond description. There is simply no language that is sufficient. My mind shut down. Trying to reference past experiences that might help to rationalize this reality was impossible. I was in uncharted territory. And so was Peter. I suffered for him too because I just knew he was as upset as I was on the other side. I knew when he discovered he was dead, his despair was as acute as mine - not only discovering he was on the other side, but more, knowing he had left me here. I suffered doubly knowing my child was in such pain. I was falling down a black hole. There would be no end to this forever.

While my world was crumbling, those around me made pitiful attempts to comfort and assure me of my survival. They didn't understand that I had no desire to survive. Truth was I was sure I wouldn't survive. That was the only thought that comforted me. I would be with Peter soon. I had only limited time to get my life in order before I joined him. Remembering those early days, knowing now how universal that devastation is to every newly bereaved parent, compels me to reach out to every new parent that lands disbelieving and devastated into our world. It pains me to think anyone else must live through this.

I'm still here. Though Peter has preceded me into that great unknown, I am sure that we will be together again. I long for him still. I still cannot believe he is not in this world. But this indescribable love we share is ongoing. We are cosmically connected. He is my son and he is invisible. He taught me what love is and I love him still and always. As long as I live, he will live...in my life, and in the lives of all I have come to know and will continue to meet for all the years that remain.

Marie Levine Lovingly lifted from Manhattan Newsletter Reprinted in Winnipeg Chapter News



Sibling Page



Helping Yourself Heal When an Adult Sibling Dies

by Centre for Loss | Dec 15, 2016 | Articles by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

“To the outside world we all grow old. But not to brothers and sisters. We know each other as we always were. We know each other’s hearts. We share private family jokes. We remember family feuds and secrets, family griefs and joys. We live outside the touch of time.” —Clara Ortega

Your brother or sister has died. I am truly sorry for your loss. Whether your sibling was younger or older, whether the death was sudden or anticipated, whether you were very close to your sibling throughout your lives or experienced periods of separation, you are now grieving. To grieve is to experience thoughts and feelings of loss inside you. If you loved your sibling, you will grieve. To mourn is to express your grief outside of yourself. Over time and with the support of others, to mourn is to heal.

Consider your unique relationship. Brothers and sisters often have strong and ambivalent feelings for one another. Sibling relationships tend to be complex, characterized by a mixture of anger, jealousy, and a fierce closeness and love. What was your relationship with the sibling who died? I’ll bet it wasn’t entirely simple. Sibling relationships are so complex because while we are growing up, siblings are both friends and enemies, teammates and competitors. We play with our siblings, and we fight with them. We share our parents’ love, and we compete for our parents’ love. We enjoy being part of a family, and we struggle to become individuals. Sometimes we carry our childhood rivalries and differences into adulthood, and our ambivalent feelings toward our brothers and sisters remain. Sometimes we separate from our siblings completely as adults. And sometimes we become very close friends with our grown-up brothers and sisters.

Yet no matter what your present-day relationship with your sibling was, his or her death is a blow. You shared a long history with your sibling. Your stories began together and were intimately intertwined for years. Know that sibling grief is important. The loss of an adult sibling is often a significant one. I have had the privilege of companioning many sibling mourners, and they have taught me that they often feel deep pain and a profound sense of loss. Yet our culture tends to under-appreciate sibling grief. When an adult dies, the myth goes, it is the parents, spouse, and children of the person who died who suffer the greatest loss. We seem to think that siblings are affected less. Yet the truth is, the more deeply you feel connected to someone, the more difficult his or her death will be for you. And siblings—even when they have not spent much time together as adults—often have profoundly strong attachments to one another. Yes, your grief for your sibling is very real. And it may be very difficult for you. Allow yourself the time and the support you need to mourn.

Accept different grief responses There is no one right way for you to mourn. Neither is there one right way for other family members to mourn. Each of you will mourn differently. If you have surviving siblings, you will find that each will mourn this death in his or her own way. While you might have anticipated some of your sibling’s responses (for example, your emotional sister has probably been emotional), other responses may have surprised you. Try not to let these differences alarm you or hurt your feelings. If your parents are still alive, they, too, will have their own unique responses to the death. You can help by facilitating open and honest communication with them about their grief and yours. Feelings will naturally run high in your family in the weeks and months after the death. The best approach is to be open with one another without blaming. Embrace the healing power of linking objects. Linking objects are items that belonged to or remind you of the sibling who died. Photographs, videos, CDs, ticket stubs, clothing, gifts you received from him or her—all of these connect you to the sibling who died. Some items may bring sadness, some happiness, some sappiness (i.e., when you are happy and sad at the same time). While linking objects may evoke painful feelings, they are healing feelings. They help you embrace the pain of your loss and move toward reconciliation. They may also give you comfort in the weeks and months ahead. Whatever you do, DO NOT get rid of linking objects that remind you of the sibling who died. If you need to box some of them up for a time, do so. Later, when you are ready, you will likely find that displaying linking objects in your home is a way to remember the sibling who died and honour your ongoing feelings of love and loss.

Honour the sibling who died Sometimes grieving families ask that memorial contributions be made to specified charities in the name of the person who died. Consider your sibling’s loves and passions. If he were still here, what would make him proud to have his name associated with? Some families have set up scholarship funds. Some have donated books to the library or schools. Some have donated park benches or picnic tables,

inscribed with an appropriate plaque. Some have planted gardens. You might also choose to carry on with something your sibling loved to do or left unfinished. You will find that honouring your sibling is both a way to express your grief and to remember what was special about him or her.

If you are a twin, seek extra support If you are a twin whose twin brother or sister has died, you may be especially devastated by this death. Twins often report a sense of being halved after their twin has died. Without their twin, they simply do not feel whole. Your grief work may be particularly arduous. I recommend that you seek the support of an experienced grief counsellor if you are struggling. The wonderful website www.twinlesstwins.org and the resources this organization offers may also be of help.

Understand the concept of “reconciliation” Know this: mourners don’t recover from grief. Instead, we become “reconciled” to it. In other words, we learn to live with it and are forever changed by it. This does not mean a life of misery, however. Mourners often not only heal but grow through grief. Our lives can potentially be deeper and more meaningful after the death of someone loved. Yet we only achieve reconciliation if we actively express and receive support for our grief. Find someone who will listen without judging as you talk about your grief. Cry. Journal. Make art. Find things to do that help you express your grief, and keep doing them. I believe every human being wants to “mourn well” the deaths of those they love. It is as essential as breathing. Yet because our culture misunderstands the importance of grief, some people deny or avoid their normal and necessary thoughts and feelings. Choose to mourn. Choose to heal. Choose to live and love fully again.

A final word To be “bereaved” literally means “to be torn apart” and “to have special needs.” When a sibling dies, it is like a deep hole implodes inside of you. It’s as if the hole penetrates you and leaves you gasping for air. I have always said that we mourn significant losses from the inside out. In my experience, it is only when we are nurtured (inside and outside) that we discover the courage to mourn openly and honestly. Remember—you are not alone, and you are not forgotten. No, your love does not end with the death of your brother or sister. You can and will carry your sibling with you into the future, always remembering your past and what he or she brought to the dance of your life.

Lifted with love from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

YOU WERE AND ARE A PART OF ME ALWAYS.

So much was lost;

My parents, would never be the same. Their pain was almost visible, as if a piece of their bodies had been cut out. I had lost myself too, or at least the version of me that was unscathed by tragedy. An innocent version, who walked around in some parallel universe where her brother was still alive, ignorant to the incredible fortune of an entirely alive family.

My brother, my past. Will’s big blue eyes. His loud laugh. He was the co-keeper of my childhood. The person who was supposed to walk with me longer than anyone else in this life. The only other person who knew what it was like to grow up with our particular parents, in our particular home.

The future. I cried for the nephews and nieces I would never have. I cried for my own faceless potential children who would never know my brother. How would I explain him? How would I ensure that his essence wasn’t lost, that he wasn’t lost, that he wasn’t just a figure in old photographs, a handful of stories. And I had to have children someday, right? I was the only person who could make my parents the grandparents they always assumed they’d be.

And all the hard times ahead when my brother wouldn’t be by my side. When my parents began to age. When my grandparents died. There would be no one to share these dark milestones.

And so I had to stay alive, the burden of needing to stay healthy, to stay safe, to stay close.

I felt like our family had been a four-legged table, and one leg had suddenly been torn off. The remaining three of us wobbled and teetered. We felt the missing leg like an amputee each morning waking to the horrible fact that Will was gone.

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Lynn Shatuck, Central Middlesex Chapter

Gratefully lifted from TCF Winnipeg 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	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

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