



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 185

AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2021

“You ask what you can do for me
Say their name, share a story
Don’t rush me, hurt with me
Allow me to feel what I feel
For as long as I need to feel it”

Alan Pedersen

Reprinted with thanks from Winnipeg Chapter newsletter

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

RETURN ADDRESS

72 TOTARA STREET,
NEWFIELD,
INVERCARGILL
9812

NEW ZEALAND

TO

OUR CHILDREN

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

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

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

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

Please contact me on 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

“The life of the dead is placed on the memories of the living.
The love you gave in life keeps people alive beyond their time.
Anyone who was given love will always live on in another's heart.”

— Marcus Tullius Cicero

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Brian Thomas Booth	Born 4/8/57	Brian Thomas Booth	Died 26/8/58
Sashi Coulter	Born 6/8/91	Jason Bradley Burford	Died 25/8/13
Michael Barry Duke	Born 25/8/68	Christopher Burke	Died 22/8/00
Kirsten Jane Maydon	Born 26/8/68	Andrew Meldrum Cox	Died 15/8/68
Stefan David Maydon	Born 14/8/72	Henare Wiremu Fielding	Died 2/8/02
Trinity Lea Taylor	Born 31/8/82	Sharyn Maree Jones-Sexton	Died 29/8/01
Eddi Te Arihana Tutaki	Born 1/8/74	Hayden Ivan Pope	Died 11/8/08
Peter Gregory Warren	Born 31/8/62	Brendan James Vass	Died 8/8/05
Dan Wells	Born 13/8/86	Haydon Ross Whitaker	Died 19/8/04
Terry Barnfather	Born 3/9/1953	Greg Burns	Died 21/9/2004
Richard Craig Bell	Born 11/9/1987	Sashi Coulter	Died 6/9/2006
Jason Bradley Burford	Born 25/9/1993	Michael David Cox	Died 20/9/1996
Christopher Burke	Born 12/9/1998	Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Died 22/9/2004
Bevan Andrew Hookway	Born 9/9/1990	Nicholas Evan Hood	Died 23/9/2004
Greg Holley	Born 12/9/1978	Hollie Jay Kirk	Died 11/9/2012
Erica Kewish	Born 11/9/1995	Anthea Gail McDowell	Died 2/9/1987
Hollie Jay Kirk	Born 11/9/2012	Logan Scott O'Hara	Died 28/9/1999
Gordon Legge	Born 22/9/1976	Georgia Rose Poplawski	Died 2/9/2005
Pauline Anne Newall	Born 10/9/1962	Thomas John Poplawski	Died 2/9/2005
Cameron Smith	Born 25/9/1999	David Massey Reid	Died 13/9/2000
Gary Brendon Thompson	Born 27/9/1968	Cameron Smith	Died 23/9/2015
Ryan Ashley Thompson	Born 30/9/1985	James Wing	Died 6/9/2000

Finding Hope Again

Finding hope is crucial. With some losses, it can seem to disappear. Our hearts are so wounded that we can't even imagine it. Healing in any shape, form, or fashion seems impossible.

As we move through our grief, things begin to change over time. Our hearts begin to beat again. Our souls slowly wake, as if from a coma. Colour gradually returns to the dull, grey world we've been living in. And one day we sense something we haven't felt for a long time. Hope.

The truth is that hope didn't take a hiatus. It's always been there, but our shattered hearts couldn't see it, much less take it in. As we process our grief in responsible and healthy ways, more space opens up in our pain-riddled hearts. We sense hope's presence again. Our loved one has become more a part of us. They have settled into their always-place in our hearts, though they are no longer physically present in our daily lives. Hope, like a gentle breeze on a stagnant day, begins to blow through our souls again.

And suddenly we realize an important fact: we're going to make it. We're going to survive this. We will live on, honouring our loved one along the way.

Granted, at any given moment we may not feel hopeful at all. Many of us are still in the heat of the emotional battle, bouncing from sadness to anger to fear to anxiety to depression and back again. We may feel forlorn and empty. Exhaustion might be the current state of our existence. But it will not always be so.

Grief is a long and winding road. It meanders over many hills and through multiple valleys. As we travel, the landscape is forever changing, as do the people around us and our circumstances. We trudge on, one small step at a time, leaning forward as best we can. It is a journey through uncharted territory. Eventually, calmer terrain greets us. The sun shines a bit more. The air grows lighter, fresher. Even some flowers begin to appear along the side of the road.

We carry our loved one with us, inside us, to greet the next portion of the journey. Which way the road will turn, we don't know. But we do know we love them, and that we will live to honour them any way we can. We will walk on, telling their story, for it is our story too.
Love endures. It always has. It always will

Lifted with love from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter

Dear Friends,

As I start to organise this edition we are hearing news of 5 young teenagers killed locally yesterday evening in a car accident. Tears are very close as I imagine the parents and families of these boys receiving the news. Such a tragic waste of lives and a lifetime of pain and grieving for many, many people. I hope and pray that the families and friends of these young teenagers receive the support and love that we did following Bens death.

And now as I prepare to finish this edition, we are nationally in Level 4 Covid restrictions. So hard for many people, especially those who have loved ones in hospital or whose loved ones have died and they are unable to hold the farewell that they desperately want to hold. Our thoughts and love go out to all struggling at this time and we hope that very soon life will return to the normal that we have all become used to over the last year.

As this is the Fathers Day edition I have once again included many article written by Fathers. Our Fathers are often seen as the 'strong one' there to support their family and at times their needs are overlooked. Please fathers know that we appreciate all you have done, and are doing to support us but we also hope that you are able to express your thoughts and emotions and seek the support and help you need. We love you and thank you. May this Fathers Day be a time that you can remember some good times and happy memories.

Dance before the music is over. Live before your life is over.

Make the most of every day as if it was your last and every breath as if it was the same.

Take care and stay safe, Lesley Henderson.



Oyster and Grief : A tale of resilience.

*Resilient..... Yes we are
We have experienced the worst
Yet we keep on
A little bit like Oyster.....*

Unwanted invades *Oyster's* shell.... a bit of grit irritating and microscopic trapped within it's mantle folds.....
.....just as *Unwanted* Death invades ours.

Oyster cannot make *Unwanted* go away... can never forget... always reminded, daily aware that *Unwanted* is there.

Oyster coats *Unwanted* with layers of nacre (or mother of pearl) repeatedly covering *Unwanted* until a unique, strong, iridescent, beautiful, lustrous jewel is created, protecting the pearls sensitive flesh.

This is a natural defence mechanism to *Unwanted* that has appeared in *Oyster's* shell. Then comes a *Pearl*, perfect in shape and colour - priceless.

A pearl is a metaphor for something rare, fine, admirable and valuable - all colours, white, black and every colour between. Maybe like our grief.

(Pearls are a traditional mourning jewel for Royal funerals)

The more numerous the layers *Oyster* makes, the finer the lustre of the pearl which forms inside the shell protecting it from the threatening intruder *Unwanted*.

Oyster spends from 6 months to several years to produce a gem, years of resilient patience. Wild natural pearls are genuine and with a quality and iridescence of their own, of much greater value than cultivated farmed (cultured) pearls in which man has a hand.

Perhaps we can deal with *Unwanted* in our lives. Our child has gone but let's coat *Unwanted* with gentle warm *Memories* in our parental folds 'til it grows to beautiful, priceless memories..

This will take a life time - not restricted to months or years like *Oyster*.

A perfectly round pearl is very rare like a perfect grief.

Imperfect Pearls (baroque) are not always round or perfect they can be misshapen bumpy and irregular - a bit like our *Unwanted* Grief.

Tear drop pearls are the next most valuable pearl Such tear drops we have all known.



Keren Marsh TCF, Whanganui NZ. 2021

Father's Role in the Loss of a Child - By Amy Newman

While many fathers may put on an outward display of strength, inside they are as heartbroken as any parent would be over the loss of a child. They experience the same stages of grief as anyone else, even if they do not always express it. Society often focuses on the mother, but fathers also need support while being allowed to grieve on their terms.

How Men Grieve While women are generally open with their emotions, men often keep theirs bottled up. A father may not outwardly show any sadness over the loss of his child, either because of societal pressure to be strong or the feeling that he must be there to support his wife.

Grieving Silently Many men have been taught that they should not share their emotions or reach out for support. They are raised to be strong in times of trouble, thus they often grieve silently. This does not mean he is not grieving - it just means he is doing it differently.

Grieving Physically Men often express their grief physically. A grieving father may throw himself into work or projects around the house, or he may take up a hobby to keep himself occupied and avoid dealing with his emotions. He may turn to physical activity, such as playing basketball or going to the gym, to get the anger out. He may avoid contact with his wife because he doesn't know how to deal with her emotions on top of his. Whatever form his grief takes, a father must be allowed to process his feelings in his own way.

Helping a Grieving Father Society often neglects to care for the grieving father, showering all its support on the mother. Yet fathers need support as well, and he may not wish to turn to his wife for support, who is working through her grief. If you know a father who has recently lost a child, here are some suggestions for helping him work through his grief:

Be supportive: He may need help with funeral arrangements, including driving him to the funeral home, picking out a casket or selecting flowers.

Don't pressure him: If the father refuses to talk about his child's death, don't try to force the issue. Let him know that if he needs to talk, you'll be there to listen.

Listen: When he is ready to start talking, just listen. Tell him how sorry you are for his loss. Use his child's name. Do not throw clichés at him, such as "Your child is in a better place", or "Now you have an angel to look after you". Not only are these not helpful, but it may make him feel that expressing his emotions is making you uncomfortable, which may cause him to stop talking about his grief.

Help him with daily tasks: Find out what needs to be done, show up and just do it if you ask if he needs anything, he will likely say no. Tell him you will be at his house at a specific date and time to do the laundry or mow the lawn, or that you are dropping off dinner. If he has other children, offer to take them to the movies or the park to give him and his spouse some time alone.

Invite him out: He may decline, but keep inviting him. Even if he never accepts, sometimes just knowing the invitation is there and that somebody cares is enough to get through a bad day. Often friends fade away after the loss of a child because they don't know what to say. He needs to know that you will not abandon him. Support If you know someone who has lost a child, or if you are a father who has lost a child, take time to get some help. There are organizations devoted to helping parents through the loss of a child, and they have local chapters with support groups for mothers, fathers, and both parents.

Resources Oftentimes the best comfort comes from reading about others who have been through the loss of their child and survived. Books written by fathers who have lost a child can help eliminate the feeling that nobody understands your pain. Look for these books at your local bookstore, library or at Amazon.com. *Books About Fathers & Loss* *A Grief Unveiled: One Father's Journey Through the Loss of a Child* by Gregory Floyd shares the story of the author who lost his son when he was playing in the front yard and was hit by a vehicle. The author touches quite a bit on his religious faith, and how that kept him going through the pain. *The Other Side of Suffering: The Father of Jon Benet Ramsey Tells the Story of his Journey from Grief to Grace*, by John Ramsey shows his emotional journey through not only the well-publicized death of Jon Benet Ramsey but also through the death of his oldest daughter and of his wife. *Written in Tears: A Grieving Father's Journey Through Psalm 103*, by Luke Veldt shares how one father turned to the Psalms for comfort after the loss of his child. *A Father's Grief: A Collection of Poems*, by Mahlon David Kellin shares the poems of the author written during the first month after his son's death. Raw and unpolished, his grief in the poetry is palpable. *The Way Men Heal* by Tom Golden explores the various ways men use to cope after the death of a child. *Grieving Beyond Gender: Understanding the Ways Men and Women Mourn* by Kenneth J. Doka may be helpful for women and men as they seek to understand their partner after the loss of a child. The authors say that gender is only one factor in how people grieve.

Path Towards Healing There is no one way to grieve and no quick answer to the pain a parent feels after losing his child, regardless of the circumstances. Grief is a process, and it's important to let each individual experience that grief on their own terms. Grief counselling is often helpful for people who are struggling through the loss of a child as well.



Father's Day



Marie Curie - 11 things you can do to cope with grief this Father's Day.

The run-up to Father's Day, and the day itself, can be a tough time if you've lost your dad, or a child. Whether their death was recent and you've been grieving in isolation, or many years ago, you're likely to feel upset at a time when many will be celebrating. To help you cope, we asked experts for their tips for getting through Father's Day without a loved one.

1 Accept you are grieving It's normal and natural to find the days and weeks leading up to certain times of year difficult. Accept this and recognise that you might be feeling more sensitive than usual in the run-up to Father's Day.

2 Make some changes If there were things you always did with a loved one at this time of year, it might help to change those plans. Try making a new tradition that feels meaningful to you.

3 Don't push yourself It's OK if you don't feel like jumping on a Zoom call with friends or family around this time. Taking some time out and remembering your loved one by looking through a photo album or just quietly reflecting might help you feel a little better.

4 Go outdoors, if you can Getting outside into a garden, if you have one, can be healing. Using your daily exercise to walk in a green space nearby could help clear your head. If you can, it might help to plant a tree or flower which you can return to as it grows, providing a comforting reminder of your loved one.

5 Tell others how you're feeling Even if you can't talk face-to-face at the moment, the people closest to you will want to support you in the way that you feel most comfortable, so don't be afraid to tell them what you want to do. Whether that means continuing an old family tradition, beginning a new one or simply not marking the day, let them know.

6 Be kind to yourself Your physical and mental wellness is very important when you're grieving. For example, allow yourself to have an afternoon nap if you've had trouble sleeping. It's to be expected that you're not feeling your best, so take time to look after yourself.

7 Don't be afraid of difficult conversations Talk to the people you're closest to about how you're feeling. Many will avoid talking about grief because they feel awkward or are worried about upsetting you – so broach the topic yourself to get the support you need.

8 Take time out to reflect Think about what you and your loved one used to enjoy doing together. Did you always visit the same place or enjoy eating a particular meal? It may be that doing those things brings you some comfort.

9 Feeling good is fine, too Don't feel guilty if you find yourself feeling happy or enjoying yourself. These fleeting moments of joy don't mean you are forgetting about your loved one.

10 Share your happy memories You can remember a loved one by talking about your favourite memories. If you want, you could do something symbolic like lighting a candle beside a photograph of them.

Lifted with love from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter



Forgive Until Forever

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss. Yet, grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent within us?

We learn to forgive our children for dying and ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe. We start to forgive relatives and friends for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behaviour.

I believe we must be open to the balm of forgiveness. Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word, or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again that which has not died. It is the beginning of release from the dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing those that we have lost, but from lacking the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a whirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only lightly.

Let us heed the quiet message heard softly in the maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, forgive, and forgive until forever. Let love enfold our anguish, helping us to grow and strive beyond this hour to a right tomorrow. —

Don Hackett, TCF/Hingham, MA

Lifted with gratitude from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

Margaret and Sandie have given us 100 copies of VOICES to sell
with all proceeds to go to TCF.

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

C/- Lesley Henderson,
76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D.,
Windsor
Oamaru

I have personally found that many of my friends and family have appreciated reading this book
as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.

The bereaved Parents Guide to surviving Mother's / Father's Day (and Other Terrible Occasions)

Posted by Kellyn Shoecraft on April 30, 2019 Retrieved from <https://hereforyou.co/blogs/news/the-bereaveds-guide>

Spring is a hard season for the bereaved. After my dad's death, the transition from winter to spring was the the most unexpectedly difficult period of my 'year of firsts'. There is no greater indication that life is moving forward than the landscape coming alive with sunshine, buds, and bird calls. Spring's warmth infuses the general public with happiness and smiles.

But back in 2004, the hopeful weather was the antithesis of my mood. I would have happily stayed in winter for that entire year, but I was forcefully pushed forward into a world I where I felt like I didn't belong. Spring also holds Mother's Day and Father's Day. Of my 35 Father's Days, I have now been fatherless for 15 of them. That particular Sunday in June no longer feels like a spotlight highlighting my father's short life and my half-orphan status, but I really struggled with Father's Day, and other holidays/anniversaries for the first 5-7 years after my dad's death.

As a kid, I found Father's Day to be more of a nuisance than a celebration (my dad was born on June 27, and I was always at a loss on how to celebrate these two occasions so close together). Now I want to yell at that whiny child with tangled hair and stained sweatsuits, because I know how lucky I was to have a person to celebrate. Now I wonder why I never thought to just ask my dad what he'd like to do for Father's Day. At the time I hadn't yet learned the lesson that celebrating people didn't have to be about buying things they didn't want. My poor dad got stuck with a series of BBQ utensils that came in a fancy case, a 3" plastic trophy that said, 'World's Greatest Dad', a series of cards with ties on them, and a black mug with orange lettering that read, "Dad is always right." And then in smaller letters at the bottom, "(except when he disagrees with mom)." I didn't notice the mom part until the night before Father's Day when I was wrapping up the gift on my bedroom floor. I gave it to him, anyway, hoping he wouldn't notice (he noticed, and he wasn't a fan).

If you are newly missing your child, mom, dad, stepparent, or parental figure, these two days of celebration can be stabbing daggers. Marketing materials celebrating the child-parent relationship are everywhere — written on the classy and colorful balloons-on-a-stick at the supermarket checkout, floral arrangements advertised on radio, or restaurants with big window signs, encouraging you to make reservations for Sunday brunch. Perfectly posed and artificially highlighted parent-child photos bombard our social media feeds.

You are not alone if you are dreading these holidays. When miscarriage and stillbirths are included, 19% of adults have experienced the death of a child (excluding miscarriage and stillbirth, that number changes to about 10%). For children under 18, 2% have lost one or both parents. Anywhere between 22-30% of college aged young-adults are within a year of a significant loss (parent, sibling, or grandparent). There are a lot of people hurting.

Like clockwork, my body responds to the calendar, even when I try to convince myself that a particular trigger day won't bother me this year. I have found that there are things that I can do to help ease the stress of birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. There are also reassurances I give myself to help me remember why I'm feeling what I'm feeling, and that these feelings are absolutely reasonable. Here is what I have learned from 15 years of trigger days:

Tip 1: Anxiety My first tip is not actually a tip but an acknowledgement. The anxiety leading up to the day is almost always worse than the day itself. This, of course, doesn't help in the days leading up to the day when your anxiety is in the red zone, but it most certainly can be helpful to know that the terrible feelings won't necessarily explode on the second Sunday of May or the third Sunday in June. I often feel a release of tension and anxiety when the day concludes. Grief comes in waves, and the build-up is part of the experience.

Tip 2: Plan something to look forward to Can you get away that weekend? Do you have someone in your network with a similar loss? Could you get together with them on Saturday (specifically not on Sunday in a place where you might see families out celebrating). You can do anything. This year, on my dead sister's birthday, we went to SkyZone, last year it was LEGOLand. Sure, these aren't dream destinations, but they were fun and it helped me and my family get through the 24 hours we were dreading. Do you want to paint pottery? See Roller Derby? Eat at a food truck? Build a fort out of cardboard and paint it in neon colors? Watch comfort TV on Netflix? Do whatever might bring you lightness (but be sure to keep it legal).

Tip 3: Stay off social media It's best not to even bother — you will be seeing a lot of posts from others celebrating their parents or children. Maturity and reason should tell us that it is not a personal attack when a friend or relative posts a photo with their beloved mother, but it certainly feels like a sucker punch to the gut. I admit that I've often thought that it was reasonable to expect everyone else to stop being happy because I'm grieving, or at least keep their joy hidden behind closed doors so I wouldn't have to see it.

to the gut. I admit that I've often thought that it was reasonable to expect everyone else to stop being happy because I'm grieving, or at least keep their joy hidden behind closed doors so I wouldn't have to see it. If you're like me and staying off social media is hard because you love the drama in your neighborhood Facebook group (and don't want to miss the never-ending complaints on errant sidewalk dog poop and gas-powered mowers starting too early in the morning on a Saturday), consider unfollowing all of your friends. This gives you the benefit of not seeing happy photos when you're not feeling up to it. You can always re-follow in the future and your buddies are none the wiser. I unfollowed everyone (that's right — every. single person.) after my sister's death and I have no plans to change my social media feed in the near future. Unfollowing is pretty liberating.

Tip 4: Pass along kindness This year, on the anniversary of my dad's death, I tipped 100%. I am so cheap and this was completely out of character for me, but my dad was extremely generous. After adding the tip, I wrote a note for the server with a little info about my dad. Sometimes doing something for someone else can bring you the feel-good feelings you're searching for. Perhaps on that Sunday you want to volunteer, donate blood, pick up trash, or leave \$20 on a park bench. Kindness tends to magnify when you are enveloped in sadness and doing so might give you just what you need on a really hard day.

Tip 5: Embrace your anger It is ok to be angry. Really angry. Do not feel guilty about being angry. It is unfair and not right that you are missing your person. I'm so sorry, I wish they were here with you.

Tip 6: Tell people what you need Last year, the first Mother's Day without my sister happened to fall on my birthday. So, not only was it the first year where I wasn't conspiring with her on Mother's Day plans or just having my sibling with my family as we celebrated our mutual parent-child relationship, but it was also the first time I aged up while she remained at 37. It was very hard for me to get texts from people that only spoke to the superficial joy of the day. "Happy Birthday!" or "Happy Mother's Day!"

There was no happiness on that day, and these messages alienated me from my friends and family.

[Disclaimer: When I share statements like this, the responses typically fall into two camps: 1. "You're so ungrateful! You're lucky that people text you to say happy birthday or wish you a happy Mother's day. At least you are healthy and had another birthday and at least your child is alive and healthy. Who cares what they say, they said something and that's all that matters. You're being too sensitive" or 2. "I get it." (because they've been there) or "thank you for telling me," (because they haven't been there but they are open to learning how to support someone in pain). I recognize that it is an honor for people to think of me on these days (or any day), and that as of right now my family is healthy and health is something I never want to take for granted. But, that gratitude doesn't cancel out the difficulty of the mismatched experience between what I need and what people give.]

I chose to not respond to those celebratory texts, but in retrospect, I wish I had used social media to make a post a few days before. Something like, "This weekend will be hard without Alison. I ask that you take a moment to think of her on Sunday." There is a huge disconnect in our grief culture, and the burden of teaching almost always falls on the bereaved. It is totally understandable why someone in the throes of grief would have no interest in or energy to tell people what they want, but at the same time, we can't expect people to know what we need if we don't tell them. Think of what you might need or want from people and put it out there a few days in advance. Perhaps you'd like your friends who knew your mom to toast her on Mother's Day, or you share your dad's favorite meal in case anyone might like to think of your dad the next time they enjoy it. Maybe your son loved a particular playground, and you request family and friends to consider making that destination a part of their Father's Day celebrations.

Tip 7: Find Community You may not have friends or peers in your community with similar losses, but they are out there. Now it is easier than ever to find an online group of people who have a similar story to your own. Connecting with these people, though they may be strangers, can bring an enormous sense of comfort. We recently passed Siblings Day (which I didn't even know was a thing until after my sister died). I loved this post where many surviving siblings shared beloved memories of their sisters and brothers. Reading and learning about other people's losses helps me feel less alone. I tend to lean towards more untraditional ways of honoring my dad and sister, but there are certainly endless ways to incorporate your beloved people on trigger days. Visiting the cemetery or the place where their ashes were scattered, attending a service, leaving a chair open for them at the table, giving a toast...the possibilities are endless.

Do what feels right. It is also totally reasonable to pretend the day isn't happening and treat it like any old day. What works for some won't work for everyone else. But what works for me may work for you. I hope that you find something that makes the day just a little easier.

Lifted with thanks from TCF Victoria Chapter Newsletter

Awkward Silence

I wish that someone would say his name.
I know my feelings they're trying to spare,
And so we go through the charade, the game,
Of dancing around the ghost that is there,
Trying to avoid evoking a tear,
Or stirring emotions too painful to bear.

That he be forgotten is what I fear,
That no one will even his presence miss,
As if there were no trace that he was here.
By referring to him, my purpose is
Not to stir pity or keep things the same,
But my heart will simply break if his
Memory will die like a flickering flame.
I just wish someone would say his name.

a poem by Richard Dew, M.D., TCF, Knoxville, TN

Gratefully lifted from TCF Minneapolis Newsletter

Everytime I see a rainbow
I think of all the joy that filled my
heart
I had my beautiful young daughter
never thinking we'd soon part
She made me feel loved and needed
I felt just so alive
Existing now without her each day
I fight just to survive
I know she'd want me to be happy
until we meet once more
I must try my best to please her
till I reach that far and distant shore

Derek Watt...Melanie's Dad
Always in my heart and on my mind

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Winnipeg
Chapter News

I Heard Your Voice In The Wind

I heard your voice in the wind today,
and I turned to see your face;
The warmth of the wind caressed me,
as I stood silently in place.

I felt your touch in the sun today
as its warmth filled the sky;
I closed my eyes for your embrace
and my spirit soared high.

I saw your eyes in the window pane
as I watched the fallen rain;
It seemed as each raindrop fell
It quietly said your name.

I held you close in my heart today
it made me feel complete;
You may have died...
but you are not gone
you will always be a part of me.

As long as the sun shines...
the wind blow's...
the rain falls...
You will live on inside of me
forever for that is all my heart knows.

Tim Edds, Upper and Lower Cape Cod

Taken with love from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

How long have you been standing
there in the shadows?
So close to me that if I reach out I
can touch your hand

A surge of happiness envelopes me—
Because you are in my presence
again.

One brief moment of majestic
Ecstasy is mine.
A lifetime rolled into a scant
millisecond.

Was it real, were you there or but
A mirage, a dream...
Only to scold my selfish, aching heart
For asking too much?

Dave Ziv, TCF/Warrington, PA

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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.

Giving voice to my grief, my thoughts and fears

In the first year after losing our son, Liam, I think I coped, or pretended to, by keeping super busy, at work or with charity fundraising in his memory. A year on, with the horror of an inquest approaching, I hit a wall and my wife suggested I should perhaps use writing to give a voice to my grief, my thoughts and fears. I love to write anyway, but it is primarily about football and barring silly comedic rhymes, certainly not poetry. However, most of this writing therapy did take the form of poetry or open letters to an unknown audience, and certainly one going through similar pain and anguish. I think I have over 20 so far and here are two of them. I hope in some small way they resonate and help a little ...

Dave Seager

The Answer is there are no Answers
Do I want to recover from his loss?
Do I want things to be as they were before?
No and No
Grieving is not a condition with a cure

I don't want to recover
I don't ever want to lose the love in my heart
The answer is there are no answers
No reboot; switch off, switch on and restart

I don't want to stop loving my son
I don't want our journey to end

The answer is there are no answers

Just stay in the heart I can't mend
Leave Nothing Unsaid...
Grief, a constant reminder of the fragility of life
Understanding that existence sits on the edge of that knife
If that knife's keen edge has cut short the life of one you held dear
Of the many hard lessons to learn, one is abundantly clear

Cherish those you love every day and leave nothing unshared
Don't be left with regrets or doubts if they knew how much you cared
Share the love in your heart and the warm thoughts in your head
Leave not a single positive thought, however small, left unsaid
Treasure your time with those you love and spare not your effusion
Never knowing when your life's journey will reach its conclusion

Lifted with love from UK Compassion



The Hard Truth About Staying Married After Losing a Child:

Heather Spohr,

It's no secret that many marriages fall apart after the death of a child. I completely understand why. The death of a child completely shatters you. You're the same people, but at the same time, you're really not. Everyone changes throughout the course of a marriage, but it's rarely so sudden and complete. So you have to get to know each other again in one of the most harrowing circumstances imaginable.

No two people grieve the same, even when they're grieving the same loss. One partner might be very vocal about how he or she is feeling, while the other is quiet. One might express grief in "traditional" ways (crying, etc.), while the other does things his or her partner finds odd. You're also rarely grieving on the same "cycles," so to speak. Sometimes you resent your partner for bringing you down when you're having a good day. Sometimes, you feel guilty for bringing your partner down.

There are times in grieving when you want to be -- need to be -- selfish. You don't want to consider somebody else's feelings, only your own. You want to be taken care of, and you want to believe what you're going through is the worst and no one can possibly understand how much you hurt.

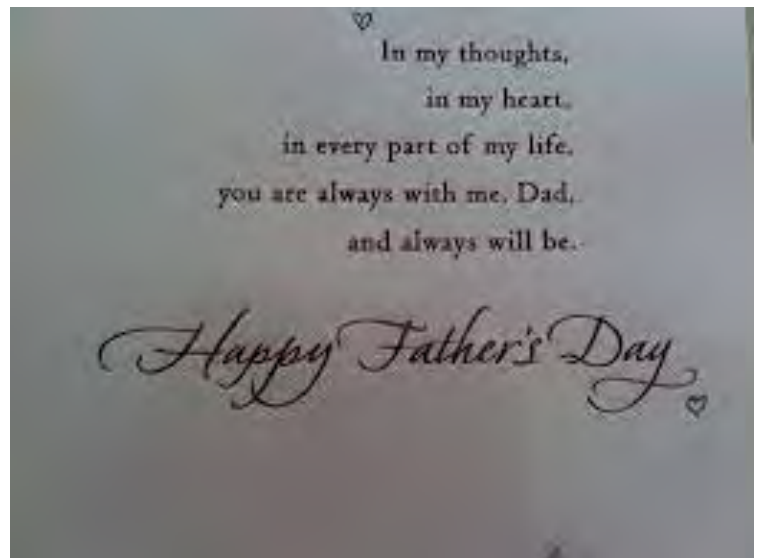
But you do have someone who understands, and it's both a blessing and a curse. A blessing not to have to walk the path alone. A curse because some days it's all you can do to help yourself survive, let alone someone else. Shutting down and shutting out becomes a defence mechanism. You're also forced to address difficult situations and emotions that you might otherwise be able to ignore. It would be easy to ignore the complicated things if you were grieving solo -- you could just say that no one understands, and leave it at that. But with a partner in grief, you're really forced to examine painful concepts and memories if you ever want to possibly rebuild your life. Sometimes you have to do that at someone else's pace, and it's frustrating.

I asked my husband Mike why he thought our marriage survived after our daughter Maddie's death, and he paused and then said, "I don't know." I don't either. We didn't love each other more or better than couples whose marriages ended. I think it helped that on the days we couldn't bear to speak to each other, we could write how we were feeling and decide if we wanted the other to read it. In the beginning we realized that the best way to take care of us, the couple, was to take care of us, individually. We allowed each other to be selfish, but we worked on keeping our communication open and honest. When one of us needed more, we tried not to let it fester.

We still work on that. We give each other space when we need it and we hold each other when we need that. We went to therapy together, but we've mostly gone separately because we preferred it that way. We've had to figure out our comfort zones and what works for us, and that's constantly changing. We rely on the "drowning" analogy a lot -- that a drowning person will sometimes pull his or her rescuer under. When one of us is having a bad time, we'll say, "I'm drowning," and we'll tell each other what we need to feel "rescued" that day without pulling the other person down.

Losing a child is the hardest thing a couple can go through. We still have our struggles, and, as anyone who's suffered loss can tell you, you never know what life is going to throw at you. We try to focus on our kids, each other, and ourselves, and not on what could have been or might be coming. And it's hard. So hard.

Reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter



To all our Dads
We honour you as Father's Day rolls around.



Sibling Page



Support surviving siblings

Darcy Krause reminds us that, even in families, grief can be lonely. Bereaved siblings can feel left out or experience survivor's guilt that they're still alive while their sibling isn't. They sometimes feel pressure to take on the deceased sibling's role in the family.

Pay extra attention to siblings and help them feel nurtured and loved. Plan a special outing with them after Father's Day: a trip to the aquarium, an afternoon of arcade games— anything that makes them feel cherished.

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

Playing in the Shadows

We grew up together
 Big sister, little brother.
 I took care of you
 Until you were old enough to care for yourself.
 Though you didn't say it,
 I knew you loved me.
 We played in the sunlight,
 you and I;
 Remember the games of
 Mother-May-I and Hide and Seek?
 Sure, we had our fights
 As all siblings do.
 But through it all we never lost
 Our love for each other.
 Now you're gone
 I'll never see you again
 Except in the memories of those sunny days.
 You will forever be sixteen
 - Far too young to die.
 You had your whole life to live.
 I'll always grieve but I must go on.
 Still, without you,
 I play alone in the shadows.

Gratefully lifted from TCF Focus NSW



Till we meet again.... somewhere over the rainbow. Tina Viju Siblings

- Forgotten mourners – don't forget to ask how they are

When you lose a sibling there are many emotions to sort through, apart from the obvious sorrow that wafts in the empty air. The most difficult part of losing a sibling was seeing the pain in my parents' eyes and having the ability to comprehend its crushing depth. It physically hurt to lock eyes with my mother. Just standing in her shadow, her pain permeated me.

There's no greater pain in the world, they say, than your child dying before you. It goes against the very law of nature. And so, understandably, many people's immediate thoughts went to my parents. "How are they doing? Be strong for them, take care of them, help them heal," people advised me. That's what I planned to do to the best of my abilities. I held it together and never cried in front of my parents. I became their spokesperson so they wouldn't have to deal with all the questions from relatives. I shielded them from all the upsetting details of my brother's death and made the funeral arrangements.

But people apparently didn't get the memo that I, too, had lost a family member. Few asked how I was doing. I was, after all, just the sister. My loss was not significant in the world's eyes. Adult siblings are often called the 'forgotten mourners' because our grief is often overshadowed by the grief of other family members, such as the parents, spouse, or children. Our grief is insufficiently recognized.

Surviving siblings are also suddenly thrust into a new role in the family, bringing added stress and anxiety. My mother became obsessed with me, my health, my life, my kids even the cobwebs in my house. If she didn't get a call from me, she would become paranoid. I couldn't blame her; she had lost a child. An earthquake had shattered her foundation. In her eyes, now everything rested on me, the only surviving child.

Needless to say, this created a lot of stress. I felt the invisible pressure to be a perfect daughter. How could I cause my parents any more pain in the dwindling years they had left? This is an impossible burden to carry. Knowing my personality, I will mess up sooner or later. Guilt is forever constant.

I was also angry at my brother for dying, even though I knew it was not his fault. He had left me with a lot of painful responsibilities to shoulder alone. Who would I call if my parents got sick and I had to make painful decisions? In all probability, they would die before me. One day, I would have to bury them alone with no sibling at my side to share the grief with. My relationship with my brother was not all sunshine and rainbows. We had our fair share of disagreements and grievances with each other. Yet, he was the only person in the world who had walked the same landscape of my childhood, who had points of reference from our shared lives. Now that landscape was eerily desolate. Who would I rant to when mom and dad are getting on my nerves? Who would I talk to about that common childhood friend we used to make fun of?

And what about my own family? I grieved for my kids. They would never have an uncle/aunt or cousins on my side of the family, no one to be at their weddings or graduations and cheer them on. There would be no one to share any good or bad news with. My brother's number on my phone could never be reached again. Loneliness was now my new sibling.

It was a month after my brother's funeral when I realized that I hadn't really mourned his loss. I had all along been mourning my parents' pain. Deep inside I felt I wasn't even entitled to grief when my parents were the ones who had suffered the ultimate loss. When people asked only about my parents' well-being, it minimized and invalidated my feelings. The loss of a sibling is a blow on many levels. Don't skip over that grieving sibling and beeline to the parents or spouse. Spend time with them also. They are hurting just as much. Acknowledge their pain and ask them how they are doing too. Their grief matters too. When a parent dies, you lose the past. When a child dies, you lose the future. When a sibling dies, you lose the past and the future.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg 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
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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