

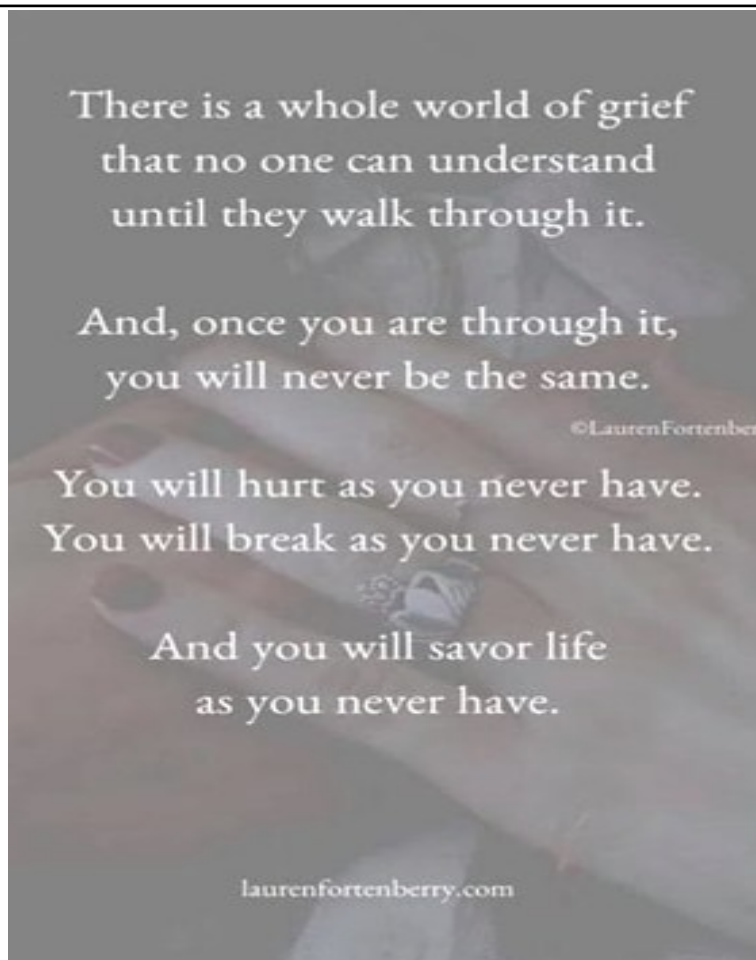
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 208

AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2025



Still standing—Facebook

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

RETURN ADDRESS
72 TOTARA STREET,
NEWFIELD,
INVERCARGILL
9812
NEW ZEALAND

TO

OUR CHILDREN

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

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

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included. Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs. Please contact me on 021 2155279, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz



THERE ARE NO GOODBYES
FOR US. WHEREVER YOU
ARE, YOU WILL ALWAYS
BE IN MY HEART

MAHATMA GANDHI



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
Shane Coster	Born 16/8/77	Jason Bradley Burford	Died 25/8/13
Sashi Coulter	Born 6/8/91	Christopher Burke	Died 22/8/00
Michael Barry Duke	Born 25/8/68	Shane Coster	Died 16/8/77
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

Grief is so interesting

because in that loss, there's a part of you that wants to freeze there. Pause. Not move forward. Rush back if you could. Hold days and people longer if only you knew. Yet in that grief is everything all at once moving forward without that person you couldn't imagine living without. Yet, here you are. And you're living or trying to or just going through the motions overcome with this kind of pain while just existing. Grief does not let you pause even when you'd like to. The end of someone is this eerie and painful reminder that life goes on. What you realize is you're going to carry them everywhere you go. You're also reminded that love goes on too. And they are life's greatest most beautiful example of unconditional love.

@kirstencorley/@mindsets

Southland Report.

Kia ora e te Compassionate Friends Whanau,

Fingers crossed the winter blues are behind us. The days are getting longer, slightly warmer, the lambs and daffidols are popping out.

Last Sunday a group of us met up at 'Main Street' for a lovely lunch and a good chin wag.

After having a break it was decided that we would have a Christmas service of remembrance again this year. This will look slightly different from previous years but there will be more information posted on our Facebook page closer to the time. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1493888227582838>

Big hugs n love to the dad's on Fathers day. We see you, we support you, we appreciate you.

Noho ora mai rā - take care

Vanessa Young.

Southland Chapter

Dear Friends,

As Spring starts for us let us remember and celebrate our Fathers on their special day.

All Fathers; those who are lucky enough to have all their children here with them, those Fathers who have had a child die, those Fathers who have had all their children die and those Fathers whose little one only lived in their Mother for a short time.

Let them know you remember them, let them know that they are loved and needed.

To all you wonderful Fathers, I hope there is something in this newsletter which will bring you hope and peace and reinforce that you will always be a Father.

We know it is often hard for you to talk about your feelings and loss but remember we are here for you and we are happy to listen, to hold you and together we can remember the love and joy that our child/ children have brought us.

Take care,
Lesley Henderson.

Father's Day After a Child's Death

"Fathers be good to your daughters; daughters will love like you do. Girls become lovers, who turn into mothers, so mothers be good to your daughters, too." -John Mayer

When life progresses according to the human laws of the universe, much beauty can be discerned from that progression. This quote from singer/songwriter John Mayer illustrates this in a powerful manner. Acts of unconditional love from father to daughter help to ensure that love will be reciprocated and freely given when daughters themselves become mothers. Love is truly a powerful force.

But what happens when life does not go according to plan? What if an event so catastrophic occurs, that it alters the natural laws of the universe and changes the way that we view the world? What if that event also causes us to question the values and assumptions that we once held so near and dear to our hearts? I am one of many parents in our country whose life plan has been altered by a catastrophic event.

During early grief, holidays were particularly difficult for me to manage. My memories became more frequent during the days leading up to the holidays, and as a result my pain became more intense. The holidays could never go by fast enough.

Father's Day was in many ways my toughest holiday to endure. In the beginning of my journey, Father's Day was associated with many raw and painful triggers. Father's Day was a constant reminder of many experiences that we would no longer share. Father's Day was not bittersweet; it was just bitter.

Today, I do not dread Father's Day like I did early in my grief, nor do I experience the raw emotion associated with it. I believe that one of the things that has helped is my realization that I can still have a relationship with my child. That relationship has been strengthened in part by the signs I have been given me of continuing presence. I have learned that the signs we receive are usually a product of what is happening with us in the present moment.

What has also helped soften the pain of Father's Day is the conscious decision I made to embody the best qualities of my child in my own daily life. Doing this has allowed my child's essence to become a part of everything I do and every holiday that I celebrate, thus softening the pain that the physical absence can bring. Maintaining a relationship with my child by embodying the best of who they were has also allowed me to stay connected.

Because of my change in perspective about life and death, Father's Day (as well as other holidays), no longer brings me to my knees. Here are some other suggestions for activities that can be helpful for fathers to stay connected and to honour the legacies of their deceased child on Father's Day. I believe these suggestions can also apply to anyone dealing with the challenges presented by the death of a loved one during any holiday:

- Plan a family gathering to share stories and memories of your loved one. Our loved ones come alive through the stories that we share.
- Plant a tree or start a garden.
- Volunteer at a local organization that had meaning for both you and your loved one.
- Release biodegradable balloons or sky lanterns that contain messages from you, family and friends to your loved one. You can do this alone or in the presence of others.
- Find some old magazines and invite family and friends to make a collage of pictures and words that remind you of your loved one.
- Light a special candle.
- Make a donation to a favourite charity or cause in memory of your loved one. The amount does not matter – even a small amount towards a meaningful cause can be a wonderful gift.
- Perform a random act of kindness for somebody. The act can be as simple as holding a door open, or letting a car in front of you in traffic. The warm feeling that you get from doing this may put a smile on your face and give you a brief respite from your emotional pain.

The activities that you choose to honour your deceased loved ones on Father's Day and on any day of the year should be those that uniquely connected you to your loved ones during their life on earth.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

WERE YOU

By Brad Benton from his blog A father's grief

I never realized what an impact these two words would have on my life after Lindsay passed away. I wrestled with them on a daily basis for many months and it is still a daily battle. Two words that are put at the beginning of a sentence to ask a question about something that once was.

Before Lindsay passed away people would ask, "Are you Jarrett and Lindsay father?" My response would always be, very proudly, "Yes I am." After losing Lindsay many people would ask me, "Were you Lindsay's father?"

At that moment it hit me, how do I answer this question? If I say, "Yes I was" it makes it past tense, I was her father yesterday but not today. Almost as if I had sold a car or a house, I was the owner yesterday, but not today. That word makes it all in the past, never to be again, history.

I was her father the day she was born and I will be her father until the end of everything that will ever be. Just because she is gone will never change the fact that I am her father.

So many times, after a parent loses a child, the words people use mean so much but, they have a totally different meaning when you are grieving. Words spoken that were never meant to cause harm, never meant to be unloving, never meant to offend now hit you like a 10 pound sledgehammer. Most of the time you take the pounding and just smile, because you know in your heart that there was no ill will meant by the person speaking to you.

As I have said before a parent that has lost a child lives in different world. They walk in a different lane, they hear with different ears, and their heart will always be sensitive to certain words and phrases, that before their child passed away, meant nothing. The one thing I have come to realize, I am the proud father of a son who worked very hard to complete his collegiate career and continues to make me proud to be his father. I am also the father of a daughter who left this world way too soon and walks the clouds of heaven with grace and flare. Knowing that I have two children, and will always have two children makes it easy to answer that question with, "Yes I am."

Lifted with love from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter

*The hardest part
of missing you is that, I can't
stop my mind from thinking
about all the things YOU would
be doing now if YOU were
here right now. 🥹💔
I miss you. 🥹*

By Crystal80

The Old Yellow Truck

Several weeks ago I sold my old, rusty yellow pickup truck. I placed an ad in the Baltimore Sunday paper which read: For sale—1978 Toyota pickup truck, 119 K miles—as is \$450. Call. Someone called, paid me \$400 and drove away, all in the same day.



I should have been happy to get rid of it; but instead I ended up feeling depressed.

If I could have advertised the truck in our TCF Newsletter, the ad would have read: For sale (regretfully), 1978 Toyota pickup truck used by college student when he was home for weekends and semester breaks. Provided safe transportation through a snowstorm on his last New Year's Eve. Four-speaker stereo radio with rock music stations preselected. Ashtray clean except for old bank receipts. Truck used by father for hauling things while thinking about son. Priceless. Don't call.

It has been 18 months since my son died, and yet it is still difficult to part with certain things—even things that did not belong to him. This is a problem with which we are all faced. What to keep? What to let go? The practical side of us says these things are no longer needed, so we should get rid of them. The heart says my son owned these things or used them; they bring back memories, so we should keep them.

There is not a right or wrong answer as to what we keep or what we let go. I reassure myself by noting that these memories of my son didn't leave with that old yellow truck. They will remain locked in my heart forever.

Gary Piepenbring, TCF/Penn-Maryland Line Chapter, Maryland
Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News

MY SECRET

Within days of my son's tragic death in a helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through the contents of every drawer, cabinet and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to do with his clothes, his video tapes - even his toothbrush - made my head swim.

Although I gave many of his things to his roommate, other friends and family and "Goodwill," I kept the "special" things for myself - school yearbooks, pictures, certain items of clothing ... and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his foot locker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the t-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the foot locker with my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the foot locker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine. Then I would take the unwashed t-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel for just a moment that he wasn't really so far away. "What a perverse thing to do!" I thought. "I'm sure no one else would ever understand my doing such a thing - they would surely think I had gone off the deep end." So I never told anyone about this strange behaviour - and the odd comfort it gave me.

Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose baby had died suddenly and how she refused to wash the soiled shirt it was wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all." Since this experience I have discovered that this is not as uncommon as I had thought.

The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand or the tenderness of a kiss. There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. If it were not for the Compassionate Friends, I might never have known that my actions, rather than strange, were perfectly normal. Another example of the many ways the Compassionate Friends helps us through this difficult journey.

-Carole Ragland, TCF/Houston-West, TX

Helping grieving fathers and brothers

Everyone's grief is unique. But there are some general ideas about the grief of men that differs from how women grieve. This list is not universal or exhaustive but may help you to understand how our fathers and brothers grieve differently and what we can do to support each other.

Men feel the need to be strong Even in the face of tragic loss, many men in our society still feel the need to be self-contained, stoic and to express little or no outward emotion. It is very much in vogue today to encourage men to openly express their feelings, but in practice few men do so. The outward expression of grief is called mourning. All men grieve when someone they love dies, but if they are to heal, they must also mourn.

Men feel the need to be active The grief experience naturally creates a turning inward and slowing down on the part of the mourner, a temporary self-focus that is vital to the ultimate healing process. Yet for many men this is threatening. Masculinity is equated with striving, moving and activity. Many grieving men throw themselves into their work in an attempt to distract themselves from their painful feelings.

Men feel the need to be protectors Men are generally thought of as the "protectors" of the family. They typically work to provide their spouses and children with a warm, safe home, safe transportation and good medical care. So when a member of his family dies, the "man of the house" may feel guilty. No matter how out of his control the death was, the man may feel deep down that he has failed at protecting the people in his care.

It's OK for men to grieve differently We've said that men feel the need to be strong and active in the face of grief. Such responses are OK as long as he isn't avoiding his feelings altogether. It's also OK for men to feel and express rage, to be more cognitive or analytical about the death, to not cry. All of these typically masculine responses to grief may help your men heal; there is no one "right" way to mourn a death.

Triggers Men may have a difficult time during special occasions like Father's Day and other significant days, such as the birthdays and the anniversary of the death. These events emphasize the person's absence. This pain is a natural extension of the grief process.

What Can Help? A "safe place" to mourn, being listened to when you want to talk. It's OK to express whatever feelings such as sadness, anger, guilt, fear. Be reassured that you don't have to be strong.

Adapted from Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt, centerforloss.com
Lifted with thanks from TCF NSW Focus

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.

Over five years IN

It has taken me a long time to come around to the perspective Alan Pedersen so eloquently shared with me, “Don’t be angry at those who say, ‘Get over it.’ Rather, be happy for them that they are blessed to have never experienced loss like yours, so they simply don’t understand.”

It is an evolved perspective, filled with grace, achievable only through tremendous love for our fellow human. I am pleased to say that I am probably 90% there. Of course, that leaves me with a healthy 10% of reflexive, jealous, bitter anger when I hear someone offer up one of those empty, careless platitudes. I am working on it. I swear. Really, I am.

My 10-year-old son, David, died in 2009, but he is with me as much today as he ever was. “Normal” life has resumed for my wife Leslie, daughter Abby, and me. We live our lives and pursue our dreams, building a future of hope and love. There are no outward clues to the nightmare we navigate. In fact, even if people come into our home and see David’s baseball cap wearing urn, and the variety of pictures of him on the piano and on our walls, most are afraid to ask.

I’ve come to the understanding that death, especially the death of a child, makes people uncomfortable. Apparently, the thing most people fear is asking questions that risk reminding us that our child has died. I don’t know a bereaved parent who ever forgets that their child died.

I can however, offer a different perspective to those who cannot comprehend the extent of a bereaved parent’s grief. What follows is a chronicle of my thoughts in a typical day, five years after David’s death. Hopefully, it will also serve as a reminder to all of us still struggling to move forward, that we do not walk alone. Your grief is not abnormal or strange, and the fact you think of your deceased child all the time is completely and totally normal.

6:05 a.m. - My alarm goes off and I reach for my iPhone to turn it off. I rub away the last of the dream images as I bring the day into focus. It’s Tuesday. I need to get Abby up for school. Gotta let the dogs out. Catching my breath...I remember...David is still dead.

6:08 a.m. - I turn on the lights in the kitchen, unlock the back door, and try to quiet the yapping dogs so they don’t awaken the neighbors as they run out to do their business. I turn around to go upstairs to rouse Abby, and see the pictures of the trip we took to Yosemite in 2007 hanging by the basement door. I’m standing on a riverbank in my tie-dyed camping best, with David and Abby. We’re holding fishing poles. It wasn’t a great day of fishing but it was a great day of fun and laughter. I had so much more to teach David.

6:15 a.m. - I turn on the morning news. I make a cup of tea for my wife, as I listen to the local TV news anchors bantering about the local NFL franchise, and the millions of dollars being paid to a star athlete. David died at football practice. I wonder if he would still be playing now. I wonder what he would look like. I wonder if he’d be taller than me yet.

6:20 a.m. - I remove some bread from the pantry, and open the fridge to get sandwich fixings to make lunches for my beautiful ladies to take to work and school. Turkey, cheese, mayo...No wait, not mayo. Abby likes honey mustard...it was David that like mayo.

6:30 a.m. - I yell upstairs to Abby again to get her butt out of bed. Some mornings she is harder to get moving than molasses on a frosty winter morning, just like my wife. David was more like me - he used to hate getting up in the morning, but he’d always get right out of bed and get started with his day. It would always help when David got moving because it would get Abby moving, but...he’s never getting up again.

6:35 a.m. - I let the dogs inside from the backyard. I tell the big dog, “Go get Abby”. She runs upstairs and jumping on Abby’s bed, licking her face with that horrible “breath” she has. I gaze at the photos of our Yosemite trip, and smile, and then my eyes wander to the plaque above the basement door. It has one of my favorite quotes on it by A.A. Milne, from Winnie the Pooh. I was unfamiliar with the quote until David’s cousin used it when she spoke at David’s funeral. “If ever there is tomorrow when we’re not together...there is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we’re apart...I’ll always be with you.” And then...that familiar feeling of tears begins to swell behind my eyes. I feel the rising wave of grief and sadness threatening to disrupt my day. I redirect those tears to pool in a special compartment in my heart for a time when it’s more “convenient” to wallow in my sorrow. It’s a well-honed skill I’ve acquired these past five years.

I have been awake on this typical weekday morning for a staggering 30 minutes, and the reminder that David has died has gone through my mind a minimum of six times. He's been dead over five years. We no longer live in the same state. The dogs that run about the house never knew him. My daughter, who is three years older than he ever lived to be, wears braces and lives on her smartphone texting her friends about boys. David was still totally unaware that girls even existed.

In these five years we have done a great deal of healing, but we have not gotten over it. Abby has discussed with me how it feels disrespectful, knowing that some of the good things she has in her life may never have happened if David had not died. I always hug her and assure her that it's okay; it's all part of the life we are fortunate to still be living. David would want us to be happy and enjoying all the good things he no longer can.

David is with me always, and always will be. A big piece of my life now is helping others through my non-profit organization Healing Improv. I would not be in a position to help others if David had not died; it's simply not a path I would have taken. It is incredibly rewarding, but, and no offense to any of you reading this, I'd trade it all to have him back. If you're a bereaved parent you understand that. You too, are on the same journey of survival and life. We do not walk alone. Peace, Light, and Laughter to you.

Bart Sumner is a professional actor/screenwriter/teacher. His 10-year-old son David died in 2009 during a football practice. Bart is the creator and founder of HEALING IMPROV, a nonprofit that provides no cost Comedy Improv Grief Workshops for those struggling with grief. He has presented Healing Improv Workshops around the country for different grief organizations. He writes a blog at www.healingimprov.org and is the author of HEALING IMPROV: A JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF TO LAUGHTER which chronicles his personal grief journey, the founding of Healing Improv, and includes some of the games HI uses in their workshops.

Bart Sumner We Need Not Walk Alone, Summer 2015

Strength

In the early days of my grief,
a tear would well up in my eyes,
a lump would form in my throat, but you would not know...
I would hide it, for the strong do not cry...

And I am strong

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall that I had attempted to go around,
as an ever present reminder of a wall yet unscaled.
Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the strong will survive...

And I am strong

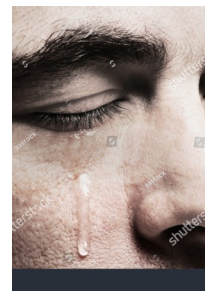
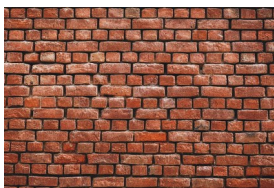
In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall,
step by step, remembering, crying, grieving.
And the tears flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over.
The way was long, but I did make it...

For I am strong

Near the resolution of my grief,
a tear will well up in my eyes, a lump will form in my throat,
but I will let that tear fall...
and you will see it.

Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care...

For I am strong



LETTER TO THE NEWLY BEREAVED

Dear Ones,

Though I don't know you, my heart breaks for the loss of your child. It doesn't matter how old he or she was, or how he or she died, or whether death was sudden or long in coming. Your son or daughter is gone forever. There is no pain like the one you're feeling. You are now in the club no one wants to be a member of: that of parents whose children have died.

I'm a member too. As I write this, it has been over two years since our son's death from chronic illness. They have been the worst of my life. Although we saw his end coming, we couldn't prepare for it or imagine what it would be like. When it happened, it felt just as sudden and shocking as if he had drowned or been hit by a car. His death anniversary is iconic for us, the day everything changed forever, the moment that has divided our lives into two halves: before he died, and after he died.

I had always read that the death of a child is the leading cause of divorce. It turns out that this is a myth. An out-of-order death strains a marriage terribly, because it's hard to comfort your spouse when you're in agony yourself. Tragedy can open up fissures in a relationship, but a child's death by itself doesn't split couples up. In our many years of being married, my wife and I have never been closer than we are now. This is because we've walked through together, and are still walking through, the worst thing that can ever happen to parents, bar none. The shared experience of unimaginable grief can yield — sometimes sooner, often later — a sense of having found resilience together. A new chapter in our marriage has arisen from the ashes of our child's death.

While thankfully I have never felt suicidal, I can understand parents who do. I didn't want to end it all, but I sure felt like curling up in a fetal position in bed with the covers pulled over my head, and never coming out. There were days when I'd come to, sitting at my desk, and couldn't remember how I got to work. I was in a fog, going through the motions of a life, not feeling anything until an aperture opened and the searing grief hit me like a runaway train. Then the aperture would close, and I'd go back into the fog. It was like this for a long time. But hurting myself would have put my family through a double tragedy. Being deeply depressed may provoke the feeling that family and friends would be better off without you. Try hard to see that this is a response to dreadful pain and suffering. You didn't do anything to deserve this, even if you were the cause of your child's death. If you're feeling self-destructive, please call a psychiatrist as soon as possible — today — because there are things he or she can do, right now, to help you.

To fathers: When you feel angry about your child's death, or guilty that you didn't/couldn't save him, try to see that this is self-destructive behavior too. In hindsight I perceive things I could have done to interrupt, if not prevent, the unique sequence of events that led to the death of my child. I can't do anything about this now, and blaming myself won't bring him back. My heart fills with a special sadness for the fathers who directly caused the deaths of their children through some awful mistake, or had to watch these deaths happen, unable or not knowing how to help, as I did. These are very hard things to live with. Yet we have to forgive ourselves. We must be warriors and find the strength to carry on.

Watching my wife suffer has been especially difficult. I'd take on any agony to spare her even a moment of pain. A coping skill I used in my darkest hours was to do some small service for her that I knew she wouldn't notice, like refilling the tea kettle after using it. It took me out of my own misery for just a moment. It reminded me that when things are at their worst, when all means of comforting myself fail, the best thing I can do is to find some way to comfort her. This has helped the healing.

In all this you will find out who your friends are. There are people in your life who will melt away, and others who will step up. Ignore the former, and resolve never to waste on them the limited hours you have left on this planet. Those who sit with you quietly as you sob, who ask you how you are and want a real answer, who bring food and take out the trash, are messengers of all that is good and kind in this world. Hold on to them. Now is the time to accept help.

Life will never return to normal, but it will get to a new normal that is not as painful. For many months, I didn't think of my son every day – I thought of him every hour, sometimes every minute, of every day. It isn't that way now. I still find myself fighting tears when I'm in an airport waiting for a plane, and see a family with small children. I remember what a little sprite our boy was, full of energy and promise, delightfully alive. Recalling that this life is now extinguished still makes me fall apart sometimes. I think it will always be this way, more or less.

In the coming months and years, there will be a lot of bad days, and increasingly, good ones. Know that there are many of us walking through the pain you're feeling, never coming out the other side but still moving toward a place where most of the time, we can remember our children without breaking down. We will find ways to honor their memories. We will tell stories about them to the next generation. We will wake up one day and find we are stronger and tougher than we thought we were. And we'll know that our children are somewhere out there in the universe, smiling, waiting for us.

With deepest, warmest sympathy, David

David E. Wood is a devoted husband, father and grandfather, whose son Galen died at age 29. Lovingly lifted and abridged from TCF USA

And reprinted with thanks from TCF Focus Newsletter NSW

He Lost His Baby Too

He may not say it, he may not show it, he just isn't programmed that way
 But his heart is broken, and he too carries the grief, through every moment, of every day
 He lost his baby too
 He wipes away her tears, then when no-one's around he sheds his own
 He'll grieve in his own way, in his own time and often, he'll grieve alone
 He lost his baby too
 He says he's ok, he's fine, keeping busy, just tired
 As if creating that false pretence is an act to be admired
 He lost his baby too
 He'll try to be strong, because that's a rule of masculinity, right?
 He doesn't know it's safe to show emotions, so he keeps them out of sight
 He lost his baby too
 He had envisioned a life with his child, visions that never came
 He didn't physically carry their baby but, he carries this absence all the same
 He lost his baby too
 He'll go back to work, probably before his mind is in the right place
 And people will think he's doing better because he's gone back but, that really isn't the case
 He lost his baby too
 He won't say if he's struggling and, 'how is dad doing?' isn't something that people generally ask
 He doesn't know how to respond so he hides behind his armour, hides behind his mask
 He lost his baby too
 He's become a master of hiding, he's perfected that disguise
 But you'll see unspoken pain, if you look deep into his eyes
 He lost his baby too
 So to all the dads grieving, rest, take the time you need to take
 What you feel is completely normal, you're safe, it's ok for you to break
 You lost your baby too,



2024 Sands 2024

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Focus NSW

C The Good by Bill Horton, Carter's Grandfather © larauhryn/stock.adobe.com

Is the length of someone's life an indicator of their value in society, their achievements their contributions or legacy? Well, I guess it can be, but in the case of the short life of grandson, Carter Robert Couch, the duration of life meant none of those things. See, because in only two and a half years he pursued, accomplished and fulfilled goals that many of us will ever get to.

At his young age he became a teacher to all of us. He showed us the way to look at life differently and to proceed with a greater purpose. Starting on November 14, 2019, I was on this journey as a new grandfather and I had no idea what to expect but after he arrived on that Thursday morning he started teaching.

At first he taught us love but then later he taught us much more. This little boy stole my heart and I fell for him like nothing I had ever imagined. See, having a child or grandchild is a deep primal love that is totally out of your control. It is freeing to love something so much more than yourself.

The acronym called SUDEP took him. SUDEP is the sudden, unexpected death of someone with epilepsy, who was otherwise healthy. We all have our own stories and my heart breaks for everyone, but lifting him up and honoring his name became my mission. I was never affected by anything like this, so had no clue, but realized that there is no right or wrong way to grieve and as humans we are all different, have our own beliefs and our own way of moving forward. Finding a path became my main goal.

For months I wallowed in the deep void of grief. I had to do something. I mainly looked for a way communicate my loss to thrust me forward and create a positive. It soon became clear that my way involved action.

Almost immediately out of the ashes a beautiful, loving support system of friends, acquaintances, neighbors and people that we didn't even know grew and would help us realize that it's all about people.

Our minds began to sift through the wreckage of grief and it became clear to us that we had to find ways to give back to honor our grandson. I am not sure of its true origin and am unable to take credit for it, but "C The Good" was developed became and still is how we honor a little boy who left such a beautiful mark on all of us. My daughter said it best. "Carter was a ball of energy who loved every aspect of life. He was caring, empathetic and the sweetest boy with a unique way of connecting emotionally with every person he came across. He did everything with a smile and a contagious laugh that would immediately brighten your day. He was deeply loved and showed his love to others by giving hugs or high fives". Carter loved giving more than receiving so finding ways to "C The Good" is our focus and we know that it also makes him happy.

See, grief doesn't begin or end, it just changes form so for us to find ways forward has to be our mission. We all miss and yearn. That will never stop. I know he misses us as well. I envy him sometimes, most times. He would do anything to be here with us but he was called. He is free and happy, he does not struggle. He is free from time, from any hurt or sadness, from evil and inadequacies of others. There is some comfort in knowing that he will never have to endure these things, bad things. Things that one should not have to endure. He had a beautiful soul and had room in it for everyone. I can't see you but I feel you and I know that you are prompting and urging us to not only "C The Good" but to also love each other.

As a grandfather and as a parent, Mother's Day took on a whole new meaning. I have a daughter who is a mother and is now a new mother to nine-month old, Hudson Hope (yes, that is his middle name), but also a grieving mother who lost a son, so I have to stumble through watching her in this role. I hate it for her, my heart aches for her, I grieve myself and I also grieve for her.

Finding a new perspective in all of these uncertain times became my goal and is still key for my survival.

Something that I can possibly understand. A way to grieve that is at times tolerable and this is it. My way is through giving and loving others through service and helping.

I also realized that our grandson lived a PERFECT life and he gave us all so much. When I say PERFECT life, I mean a PERFECT life. He knew no pain or suffering, had two unbelievable parents that loved him and a great family. Then he was gone. So weird and so hard for us to process but what a cool thing to have had a PERFECT life and am kind of jealous to an extent.

He impacted so so many. He liked everything and saw the good in everything and everyone. In a way what a blessing to of seen NOTHING bad in your life. He loved all of us and I know that he loved me because those words were his last to me. "I love you grandpa". He saw the good now it is our turn. Make it your mission to find your own clear perspective in your own journey. He loved ladybugs and the color purple so when things get tough in your situation turn to Carter and "C The Good".

No matter what your situation I hurt for EVERYONE of you.

Bill Horton is retired and resides in Dallas. He is grandfather to Carter.

Reprinted with love from UK TCF Magazine We need not walk alone

BOOK REVIEW

Finding Mac: A Journey of adoption, love and loss by The Reverend Richard Sutcliffe

reviewed by Henry Whyte

This 260-page book is an illustration of the desire of countless bereaved parents to preserve and honour the memories of their dead child.

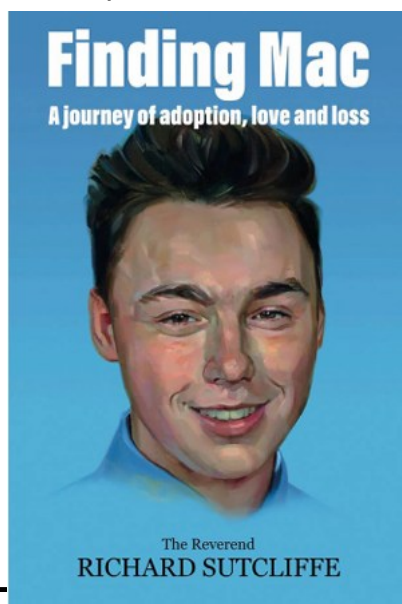
Richard Sutcliffe, with a chapter from his wife Swee, tells the story of how they came to adopt 8-year-old Mac. He lived with them for 8 years until his untimely death. He was killed on his motor-cycle in an accident in which he was completely blameless.

Finding Mac is a book almost entirely about his adoption and his life from small boy at that time to towering teenager at the end. It was not a straightforward journey for him or his parents who had already experienced the "bereavement" of being unable to have a child of their own. They are honest about Mac's struggles such as his need to change school because of problems that arose. That is only one side of the coin; the other is the story of how Mac grew into a fine young man.

There is a lot in the way of small details here. For example, more than a tenth of the book is taken up with what happened where and when on family holidays and on Mac's trip to Uganda. It is such detail that brings Mac's story to life. Again and again, they show us the huge and growing love Richard and Swee felt and showed for their son.

It is a heartwarming and compelling read. When this reviewer sat down intending to read through the first chapter he found that he went on to read the whole book in less than 24 hours! There are no doubt countless books on adoption but far fewer about adopted children dying too young. Although Mac's death and what followed are not really mentioned until near the end of the book they are somehow present throughout, as a dark cloud getting ever nearer. The words of the subtitle "A Journey of adoption, love and loss" sum it all up very well and part of its message that love is never wasted will help and comfort many. Do bereaved parents who adopt grieve as much for their children as much as biological parents? Of course they do.

Lifted with thanks from TCF UK Compassion



Firstborn Son

Your birth was my first delivery. Your wrinkled pink body was handed to me, swaddled in a blue flannelette receiving blanket. Gazing at your wee face, I wondered about your future.

There were red roses back in my room.

Three years later your body was handed to us again, this time encased in a steel canister, welded shut. "Don't open it," they said. "Don't look."

There were white roses on your casket.

Your death was my first delivery from innocence.

Michael Frank Lawrence January 8, 1965 – May 1968
Lifted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg CVhapter Newsletter



Sibling Page



‘Evelyn’- Breaking the Code of Silence, The Stigma Around Suicide

An excerpt from an article by Jonathan Heaf, who met with filmmaker Orlando von Einsiedel to discuss his brother Evelyn’s death by suicide.

Orlando von Einsiedel is waiting for me, perched on a stone pillar, his legs swinging in the air like a boy waiting to be picked up from outside the school gates. We’ve arranged to meet at London’s Southbank, the brutalist concrete labyrinth of nooks and walkways that grips to the inside edge of the Thames’ most central bend. Although peaceful this afternoon, at weekends it’s a log jam of lethargic tourists and Mexican food carts, couples strolling hand in hand, taking selfies of Big Ben or kissing under the city’s giant Ferris wheel.

Orlando’s younger brother Evelyn took his own life on 2 September 2004. The brothers – full of love and competition while growing up; they also have a younger brother, Robin, and a sister, Gwennie – used to come here at the weekends to skate. The Southbank skate park is a beloved and much campaigned for institution among the city’s most loyal skate community. Orlando, now 38, and I are here to talk about Evelyn and Evelyn, a film he made last year, out now, which, if not the most dangerous project this Academy Award-winning documentary maker has been involved in, then without question the most personal.

Our plan this afternoon is to walk from the Southbank to his childhood home in Forest Hill, a walk due south that should take us just over two hours. It was at this destination, a large, three-storey, detached house with fading white-washed walls and a large sprawling garden at the back, where his brother, aged just 22, took his own life. We are walking because that is precisely what Orlando and his family did last year for the documentary, one of several walks across the UK that were filmed over the course of five weeks.

They walked – with a camera lens discreetly poking out the back of a rucksack – in an attempt to talk, for the very first time, about the death of Evelyn 13 years before. They walked as a means to confront the issues, rather than confronting one another. Walking while engaging in difficult conversation can do this. They walked themselves out of the silence of Evelyn’s suicide.

Male suicide has, quite rightly, garnered a great deal of attention and examination in the media of late. Yet despite recently released figures showing male suicide rates in the UK have fallen to their lowest levels in more than 30 years – in 2017, there were 4,383 male suicides and the rate was 15.5 per 100,000 men, down from 20 in the late Eighties, according to data from the Office For National Statistics – death by suicide remains the biggest killer in men between 15 and 35 in the UK.

Overall, men, shockingly, still make up three-quarters of those who take their own life in this country. What a film such as Evelyn does is put real lives – real voices, with all the terror and sorrow that goes along with that – out in front of cold statistics. To understand suicide, and to understand the impact of suicide within families and communities, we must be willing to break the stigma around mental health issues, especially in men, and around a subject that has touched, directly or otherwise, every man, woman and child in this country. Evelyn, beautifully, does just that.

Taking up our route past Waterloo station, leaving the city’s dark river undulating behind us, Orlando begins by explaining how the film project first came about: “When my brother died I just completely buried it,” he begins. “Evelyn’s death left a void that never properly healed. Of course, we all talked about it the days after it happened and there was the immediate aftermath of collective grief – his funeral, meeting up with friends, a lot of crying, anger and confusion – but once that was all finished, though still terrified by it all, I went back to university and blocked it out. I couldn’t even say Evelyn’s name out loud. I just didn’t want to talk about it at all and neither did my brother and sister. The pain was just too much to confront.”

The walk has taken us through some of South London’s greenest patches. Although autumn’s approach is tweaking the colour palette, the breeze is warm and gentle. We have a good trot on. We’ve snaked through Southwark, where my parents live, in fact, and as we head into Peckham, closer towards Orlando’s mother’s house, I ask about how his brother’s illness first materialised.

“We didn’t know he was ill at first,” he says. “Evelyn was always so bright. He wanted to be a doctor, an ambition he held on to right until the end. But around 17 or 18 something happened.”

In the film, Orlando’s mother calls this moment, or period, in Evelyn’s life “a terrific downfall”. Orlando explains to me how he saw a change in his brother after he came home from a trip to Nairobi, where he was staying on a farm as part of a work placement with a German family. “He came back very thin, but a few months after this he’d put on a lot of weight. He just started being, well, sort of awful really. Not doing any work, just shutting down, being belligerent. At first, confused, I called Evelyn out on it: ‘Look how upset you’re making Mum. You’re being so selfish.’ We were totally in the dark as to what was going on. We had no idea about any mental health issues.”

Evelyn’s parents, however, especially his mother, Harriet, found his behaviour increasingly hard to deal with. As she explains poignantly in the film, “Evelyn in the next two or three years, darling angel, became a monster that we couldn’t understand. But it was so not Evelyn to be who he was being. After tests, they decided it wasn’t depression; it was schizophrenia. And that diagnosis nearly finished me off.”

Such diagnoses can devastate a young person, eviscerate all their dreams and the life they’d hoped to lead. As Orlando explains, “Deep down he knew what it meant, or thought he did. In the letter they found on his body, he wrote about his disappointment of never being able to become a doctor.” Such clarity of thought at the end of a life seems especially heartbreaking.

At the end of our walk, we reach Wood Vale in Forest Hill, Orlando’s mother’s house, a house now occupied by art students, friends of the family. Orlando takes me through the kitchen and outside to the garden, all the way to the back. He stops and turns to his right, where several large, yawning trees sway in the late August breeze. We both stand silently for a moment. Attached to one particular tree is what looks like a dream catcher, or eye, made from sticks wrapped in a crimson thread. “I was at university on the day it happened. I just remember my mum calling me, she said, ‘He’s done it. He’s killed himself.’ And then she hung up.”

Orlando and I sit together in that garden, in the late August sunshine, and talk about what he hopes his tender film will achieve. “It was terrifying to do,” he says of the documentary, “and it will never take away the pain of losing my brother. I still miss him. But now, my family can talk about it. It has brought Evelyn and all the good memories back into our lives. It’s not a solution but a start, or an end to the silence. If I want anything to happen it’s for this story, Evelyn’s story, to show how talking about these things can only be a good thing, as hard as it is – to talk and to enable others to talk and reach out to those that might need help.”

This article was first published on GQ-magazine.co.uk. Do check out the trailer for the film Evelyn – it looks brilliant <https://imdb.to/2RKQVyE>

Reprinted with love from TCF SIBBS UK newsletter

No one warns you that loving deeply means,
one day, you may grieve just as deeply.
That it will be worth it, but it will also
break you. That the same heart capable of
holding immeasurable joy will one day
have to hold unbearable sorrow.
And yet, here we are.

-Jameson Arasi

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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 Lelenoa (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngair Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental) janpessione@xtra.co.nz (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	03-4487800
CENTRAL OTAGO	Pauline Trotter (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611
INVERCARGILL	Josie Dyer Vanessa Young (Jaylene 6yrs chemical poisoning) Southland Coordinators	0276321742 0273562271
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	021 688504 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
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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