



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER No: 190

JUNE JULY 2022

Grief,
in its pain and loneliness,
is the memory of a loved one,
no longer here,
but truly never far away.

Darcie D. Sims

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

In loving memory of your Birthday

Today's just one of many days
that always make me sad
for I know it's too late to say
the things I wish I had
You see, I wish I'd told you
far more often that I cared
and that I was so grateful
for the happy times we'd shared

And time's passed since the day you left
but still I'm asking why
you couldn't have stayed for longer
and we had to say goodbye
And now your birthday's here
all there is left to do
is hope that heaven lets you know
how much I'm missing you

TCF/Okanagan
Reprinted in TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Matthew Alexander Birtles	Born 17/6/2004	Claire Benicarke (Mary Schiehsel)	Died 10/6/2004
Richard Cowie	Born 1/6/1974	Stefan Francis Cockill	Died 28/6/1994
Sophie Kate Elliott	Born 11/6/1985	Heath Neil Colina	Died 1/6/2002
Hayley Robyn Galpin	Born 29/6/1968	Matthew William Ross Dryden	Died 24/6/2005
Daniel James Gillies	Born 22/6/1986	Ian Peter Foley	Died 24/6/1987
Robbie Knight	Born 9/6/1975	Allan Stephen Hobbs	Died 27/6/1998
Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Born 25/6/1978	Callum Warwick Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Ross Templeton	Born 22/6/1996	Keryn Sarah Langley	Died 15/6/2006
Brendan James Vass	Born 30/6/1986	Shaun Mataki	Died 27/6/2003
		Jessie Adelaide Neaves	Died 5/6/2006
Mitchell James Beaumont	Born 13/7/1976	Claire Jillian Taiaroa	Died 19/6/1997
Heath Neil Colina	Born 18/7/1981	Melissa Jane TeHuia	Died 21/6/1998
Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Born 2/7/1975	Ben Watt	Died 3/06/2005
Ben Paul Gillanders	Born 13/7/1977		
Matthew David Innes	Born 27/7/1987	Terry Barnfather	Died 11/7/2000
Jake Lucas	Born 10/7/1978	Matthew Alexander Birtles	Died 1/7/2007
Anna Ruth Iris Moore	Born 9/7/1974	Marcus Fitchett	Died 18/7/1996
Brent Allan Stenton	Born 19/7/1974	Te Ahu Aroha Foley	Died 2/7/1975
Julie Barbara Warren	Born 9/7/1961	Vicky Knight	Died 1/7/1980
Timothy James Williams	Born 6/7/1980	Aidan Samiel Konise	Died 23/7/2009
		Sara Loo	Died 19/7/2010
		Robert Shane McLaughlin	Died 4/7/2001
		Kirsten Jane Maydon	Died 23/7/1989
		Marie Anne O'Neill	Died 21/7/1985
		Julie Barbara Warren	Died 14/7/1985

Dear Friends,

Firstly I would like to thank all my Compassionate Friends, all my family and all my other friends who have supported me on this Grief Journey. I don't believe anyone can grieve the loss of a child in isolation and achieve the peace and hope and joy that is possible, despite the devastating loss.

I also feel that being part of Compassionate Friends and being the editor for the NZ Chapter Newsletter has helped me get to where I am. Perhaps it is the thousands of articles from various chapter newsletters, I have read to find articles for our newsletter or perhaps it is knowing that the newsletters help and support others, I'm not sure, but I would encourage anyone out there who feels that they are in a position to offer some support to others, to ask around your area or contact one of the co-ordinators to see if you can help with anything.

As you can see below, Sue Tait, previous Central Otago co-ordinator, has moved on and we wish her all the best for her new adventures. We now welcome Pauline Trotter to our group of supporters.

As the winter weather settles in some people struggle more with low moods and depression. Remember to reach out and talk to people, get out in nature for a walk, snuggle in front of a fire and watch a favourite movie, take a relaxing bath or anything which you know helps.

Take care and stay warm.

Lesley Henderson

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CENTRAL OTAGO

EVERY PERSON'S HEALING JOURNEY IS AS DISTINCTIVE AS THEIR INDIVIDUAL GRIEF.

Hi! Compassionate Friends let me introduce myself as the new Central Otago coordinator replacing Sue Tait who has now shifted out of the area. Thank you to Sue Tait for all her tireless work it was very much appreciated by your Compassionate Friends.

My name is Pauline Trotter and I am married to John. We have two sons Ben our eldest who is married to Bex with their two children. Our youngest son Andre (25 years) was tragically killed in a car crash 16th JAN 2016. We farmed in Woodlands just out of Invercargill sold up and brought a high country station in South Canterbury. After we sold the station we brought a five star lodge which we sold before covid. After Andre's death our son moved down to Wanaka to be close to us.

We are now living in Wanaka and our son and daughter in-law farm on the outskirts of Wanaka. I have studied psychology and sociology and worked with birthright. I was also the supervisor for Ef. for overseas students working with placements into families and doing the pastoral care for the students. Hopefully I will get to meet you all at Compassionate Friends as it is only people like ourselves that truly know the part of sharing our grief and helping each other through this journey.

WE WILL BE TRAVELLING TO MILLBROOK ON THURSDAY 25TH AUGUST TO HAVE LUNCH OR COFFEE, TEA WITH ARROWTOWN/QUEENSTOWN FAMILIES EVERYONE WELCOME

OUR NEXT GROUP MEETING WILL BE AT WANAKA COMMUNITY Hub 34 McDougal Street Wanaka. SUNDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER (FIRST DAY OF DAYLIGHT SAVING) Please join us everyone. Please feel free to bring a photo, poem, or share a story about your daughter, son, sibling, grandchild.

Any enquiries, please ring me or text Pauline 0273960611 or email centralotagocf@gmail.com



Matariki – Maori New Year -- has been celebrated for hundreds of years. 2022 is significant as the NZ Government has now recognised it as a Public Holiday.

"Matariki will be a distinctly New Zealand holiday; a time for reflection and celebration, and our first public holiday that recognises Te Ao Māori," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.

Matariki is the [Māori](#) name for the cluster of stars known to Western astronomers as the [Pleiades](#) in the constellation [Taurus](#).

The word *Matariki* is the name of both the star cluster and one of the 9 stars within it: Each star is named and has a traditional meaning in Maori culture.

In the Maori Lunar calendar the Matariki stars can be seen in the early morning sky during June/July and brings the past year to a close and marks the beginning of the new year. It is also a time of harvest. Historically, the stars of Matariki were also closely tied to planting, harvesting and hunting. If the stars appeared clear and bright, it signified an abundant season

- **Matariki** is the star that signifies reflection, hope, our connection to the environment, and the gathering of people. Matariki is also connected to the health and wellbeing of people.
- **Waitī** is associated with all fresh water bodies and the food sources that are sustained by those waters.
- **Waitā** is associated with the ocean, and food sources within it.
- **Waipuna-ā-rangi** is associated with the rain.
- **Tupuānuku** is the star associated with everything that grows within the soil to be harvested or gathered for food.
- **Tupuārangi** is associated with everything that grows up in the trees: fruits, berries, and birds.
- **Ururangi** is the star associated with the winds.
- **Pōhutukawa** is the star associated with those that have passed on.
- **Hiwa-i-te-rangi** is the star associated with granting our wishes, and realising our aspirations for the coming year

Mātauranga Māori (ancestral knowledge and wisdom) is at the heart of celebrations of the Matariki public holiday and it will be a time for:

Remembrance - Honouring those we have lost since the last rising of Matariki,
 Celebrating the present - Gathering together to give thanks for what we have.
 Looking to the future - Looking forward to the promise of a new year.



Pōhutukawa



- This star is the star associated with those that have passed on. It is also a beautiful native tree known as the New Zealand Christmas Tree as it flowers brilliant red during our summery Christmas.

On a personal note - last Friday was the first anniversary of my brother Peter's death. He would have chuckled over the fact that the country had a public holiday to mark it - the 24th June. It was very meaningful to me as his favourite tree was the Pohutukawa and the star with the same name is the one associated with those we have lost over the past year. At his outdoor funeral in a scene very like the picture above(except the tree wasn't in flower), we were all given a piece of Pohutukawa to farewell him.

Another connection to me was the star Ururangi (Merope) It was on the good ship Merope that my great grandmother travelled to NZ as a nine year old with her family in 1875. I guess association with the wind was good for a sailing settler ship.

Let's remember with fondness and love our children who have gone too soon and look towards a New Year.
Keren Marsh Whanganui TCF June 2022

Including Your Absent Loved One in Family Celebrations Holidays and special days can be especially difficult for those coming to terms with the absence of a loved one. Even if you wish to pretend otherwise, the person who died will be on your mind — and on the minds of others — on special days such as holidays, birthdays and anniversaries.

Far better to create a time, a ritual or a ceremony that recognizes your loss and allows the expression of grief. Whether it's with a prayer or a toast, lighting a candle or sharing fond memories, take time in the midst of these special days to acknowledge your loss and remember and celebrate the legacy of your loved one. This can be done alone or with others, and can be especially meaningful for children.

Marty Tousley

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter



SO YOU THINK YOU'RE LOSING YOUR MIND

BECAUSE YOU FIND YOURSELF READING THE OBITUARIES SINCE YOUR CHILD DIED - SEARCHING FOR NAMES AND AGES OF OTHERS WHO HAVE DIED TOO YOUNG?

Well, if this is a sign you are losing your mind, you have lots of company. Some are drawn to the obituaries. Is it because we seek to know we are not alone in this seemingly endless maze? ...that there are others out there who know the horror of losing one of their children, and we need to identify with them. Not everybody has this need - but many do. It may be bothersome to your spouse because he or she may feel it is a sign of abnormal grief and is morbid. It isn't for some. You may do it for a time but eventually most people stop having the need. Don't worry about it.

BECAUSE YOU HAVE A BAD TIME WITH THE TIME OF DAY AND THE DAY OF THE WEEK ON WHICH YOUR CHILD DIED?

There again in the beginning you may find this a problem. It may seem that if you can stop that particular time of day or that day of the week from coming, you will be able to stop the death from having happened. We fail - but it doesn't stop us from having a go at it the next week. This, too, will eventually stop bothering most people, and one day you will realize, that particular day and time have come and gone, and you have made no note of it. You may find it hastens the process if you make an effort to do something that day that keeps your mind occupied and that changes the scenery - maybe nothing more than a window-shopping trip to the nearest mall.

BECAUSE YOU FIND YOURSELF GOING OVER AND OVER IN YOUR MIND WHAT YOU IMAGINE YOUR CHILD FELT OR THOUGHT AS HE OR SHE FACED DEATH?

This seems to be a particularly bad problem for those whose children died accidentally or as a result of suicide or murder. You may feel it is almost a compulsion at times to try to picture and imagining the thoughts and feelings your child may have had. It really is a universal problem, and you may have more trouble putting this one aside. You will, as a rule, get better about it, and later on it will not occupy your thoughts as much as in the beginning. It is normal. Some find it helpful to find out from anyone connected, or who may have witnessed the death, as much information as possible. Others have no desire to know the details. It is an old story - but we all do it differently, and the way that fills your needs is right for you. Just know that it is normal to have it on your mind.

BECAUSE YOU FIND YOURSELF THINKING THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO JOIN YOUR CHILD IN DEATH THAN TO GO THROUGH THE PAIN OF LIVING WITHOUT HIM OR HER?

The telephone friends hear this from lots of bereaved parents. They get so tired of the hurt. It frightens the parents that they are entertaining suicidal thoughts, but it must be a normal reaction for some to consider this as an alternative. Many parents, as they talk, are quick to agree that they would not actually consider this as an answer. There are people who love and need them. They realize they could not purposely put someone they love through the very hell they are seeking to escape. They are able to realize that it is not an answer. Should you have these thoughts and are not able to put them aside, you would be wise to seek professional help.

BECAUSE YOU KEEP SEEING SOMEONE WHO REMINDS YOU OF YOUR CHILD?

Well, many of us do - you may even find yourself following along behind - just to make sure! The impulse may be to take that person home with you. It may be all a part of the denial process, but I suspect it is just because we miss our child so much.

BECAUSE YOU NEED TO GO TO THE CEMETERY EVERY DAY?

There may be members of your family, some friends or neighbours who will imply that going to the cemetery every day is morbid and perpetuates your grief. Don't you believe them. What they don't understand is that we cry and think of our dead child whether we go to the cemetery or not. It comforts some to go every day, some only feel a need to go now and then and still others never return to the cemetery after the funeral. How often you go has nothing to do with the intensity of your grief; it is just another example of how differently we all react.

BECAUSE YOU CAN'T LOOK AT YOUR CHILD'S PICTURES YET?

This is one area where there doesn't seem to be a middle ground: either you take great comfort in having pictures surrounding you, or you don't want any on display at all. There is nothing wrong with either reaction. If pictures are a problem for you, time may be the answer. A few special pictures may then offer comfort. Trouble may arise when there are conflicting needs

within a family. It is important that a parent who needs the pictures on display understand that those same pictures cause pain for another. It in no way connotes not caring or wanting to forget. It is, rather, just the opposite; the pain is there because there is so much love and caring. Try to be flexible in those areas of direct conflict.

BECAUSE YOU ARE NOW QUESTIONING YOUR FAITH OR OLD BELIEFS?

There are some honest, decent, loving human beings who believe the very goodness of their life affords them protection and shelter from all harm. Others, who have suffered more than their share, believe this to be their bulwark against future tragedy. Again, there are those who, having entrusted their family's safekeeping to God, are angry at what they perceive to be His failure. It can be shattering for those whose faith has sustained them in the past, and who found comfort in their religion, to feel themselves suddenly cast adrift. They begin questioning their faith. They may have been able to cite verse and scripture for every belief they ever had, but no longer have that kind of assurance. Losing a child can't be compared to any other crisis. It may take some time for you to sort through your emotions and in the process your religious beliefs may undergo a drastic change; they may become stronger, more realistic. Conversely, you may find you are unable to make peace with your God. This is a place where your uniqueness will make itself known. No other person can decide what you will feel. Know that it is normal for some to question and reevaluate. Admit it and talk about it to someone you trust who is nonjudgmental. If your religious faith was once a part of your support system, how sad it would be if you are unable, eventually, to include it in your life; otherwise, you have suffered another loss.

Mary Cleckley, TCF/Atlanta, GA

Buried Heart

My heart stopped
the day you died
I put it away
in a heavy, metal box
Away from laughter and sunlight
I buried the box
Beneath guilt, regrets
and the pain of not saying goodbye
Deeply buried
under the pain of missing you
I went searching for you
In forests, mountains and jungles
In deserts, meadows and beaches
Searching for a look, a trace,
a glimpse of you

But you came looking for me
In strange, unexpected places
You'd show up
for a brief moment
when least expected
Bringing me a bird,
a song, a sign
Unmistakably you
To show your love for me
To comfort me
To sustain me
until we embrace again

-Karen Howe, for Claire
We Need Not Walk Alone
Winnipeg

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

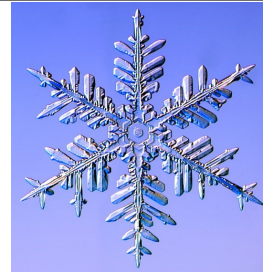
I have personally found that many of my friends and family have appreciated reading this book
as it explains so well the many feelings and emotions

I have experienced but been unable to explain.

Thank-you Margaret and Sandie.



Snowflakes



Have you ever stood outside, with your head tilted back and your mouth open wide, trying to catch a snowflake? Snowflakes fall everywhere—on your hair, your chin, your eyelashes, even your nose, and some even manage to land on the very tip of your tongue, only to vanish before you can really get a taste. Each snowflake is a completely different design and pattern. No two are ever created exactly the same. It is a mystery that continues to delight “snow catchers” everywhere. There are very few things that can be so lovely, so delicate, so perfect, so different and disappear so quickly, never to be reproduced in exactly the same pattern again. Sometimes it seems as though people are like that, too. Those we love are so lovely, so delicate, so perfect, so different and they disappeared too quickly, too. Each of us is as unique as those snowflakes. We each have a unique look, sound, smell, touch. We are cut from unique patterns, assembled in an endless variety of shapes, styles, combinations. We look, sound, talk, think and act differently than anyone else. There are no identical matches just as there are no perfectly identical snowflakes.

We know this, but when it comes to grieving, we often demand that everyone grieve the same way. Some of us will talk our way through the iciness of our grief, while others prefer more solitude. Some want to read everything they can about grief, while others wish to submerge themselves in work. Some cry endlessly, while others never shed tears. We are as unique as snowflakes drifting from the sky.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve, although there are some ways that are a bit less dramatic. Just as the snowflakes find their way to their destination, so too will each of us find our own way through grief. Frozen hearts and numb minds do, eventually, thaw. Icy memories that chill to the bone can grow warmer as we begin to move through our grief. Whatever hurt we are carrying begins to weave itself into our very being and eventually it becomes a part of our history. We begin to become the sum total of all our experiences. Our unique pattern begins to reflect our unique journey.

We carry souvenirs of our hurts, each stored away until time to add them to the next hurt, thus piling up one hurt after another, all to be carried forever in our being. These hurts leave scars, some big, some small, but all significant in their pain. Each scar must have a place in our being. We become a carefully organized mass of layers, as delicate and intricate and individual as a snowflake. Sometimes, especially in the early months and even years of grief, all we can remember is the pain and horribleness of our loved one’s death. Pain seems to overshadow everything. These shadows seem to make every day harder, and in winter the shadows seem longer, deeper, darker. The snowflakes seem small, less beautiful. The magic of winter’s decorations only leaves us cold and barren. If we begin as frozen beings, the journey through grief becomes a process of thawing. And each of us will defrost in a pattern as unique and individual as the snowflakes that drift across the windowpane, leaving little icy streaks of memory on the heart.

So, be patient with yourself this winter season. Recognize your own unique emotions and hurts and learn to identify the tracings of your own snowflakes of grief. You will survive these winter days and this winter season. You will begin to defrost eventually and it will be far less painful if you will begin to cherish your differences rather than use them as weapons and yardsticks of judgment.

Darcie Sims Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, Ct, GMS, a bereaved parent and child, a grief management specialist, a nationally certified thanatologist and pastoral bereavement specialist, and a licensed psychotherapist.

Reprinted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

“Just as it is impossible to explain child birth to a woman who has never given birth, it is impossible to explain child loss to a person who has never lost a child”

Lynda Cheldelin Fell Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

The Brain, Grief and Music

Listening to music may not sound like much of a coping skill, but music is a wondrous thing when applied properly. We wrote a post way back when about creating music playlists, inspired by the book *Love is a Mixtape*. We have a volume one and volume two on songs about grief. But what we haven't really explained is just WHY music can be so helpful.



So today we're tackling the connections between the brain, grief and music. We have a pleasure centre in our brain where all sorts of feel-good neurotransmitters make us feel really good when we do certain things. Sometimes we resort to negative coping to stimulate that pleasure centre - things like sugary and fattening foods, drinking alcohol, comfort shopping, and gambling (Las Vegas pretty much relies on our brain's pleasure centre to stay in business). But it turns out music is connected to the pleasure centre of our brain too. This is why music can be such a great coping tool; it allows us to release feel-good neurotransmitters without resorting to wine and Ben and Jerry's ice cream. In addition to music causing pleasure and improving mood, there is research that shows certain types of music can even help with memory and concentration, something that feels almost impossible while we're grieving. It can help us work more efficiently, make better decisions, boost energy and reduce stress.

Researchers at Stanford University, University of Miami, Mayo Clinic, and Harvard University all agree. When our mood is improved it has a cascade effect in our brains that improve many other areas and there is a slew of research that backs that up. In one study, researchers found that after listening to happy music people who were shown a neutral face would interpret it as happy (the reverse was true too—sad music resulted in people interpreting a neutral face as sad). You may wonder why people will want to listen to sad music if it makes us feel sad or see the world as a sad place. But it is clear from the hundreds of sad songs out there that people don't always listen to happy music. This study determined that when we listen to music, we can actually perceive the emotions in a song, but then derive pleasure from appreciating the music itself. In this way, we can actually enjoy sad songs. Not to mention that I believe sad songs make us feel less alone.

Though it involves a lot more motivation and sweat than music, another way to boost mood is exercise. For those of us who prefer the couch, music can actually be a great motivator for exercise and help us work out longer and harder. This research study demonstrates that music can increase stamina and help people push through exhaustion when exercising. And this study showed that we actually exercise more efficiently when we exercise to the tempo of the music.

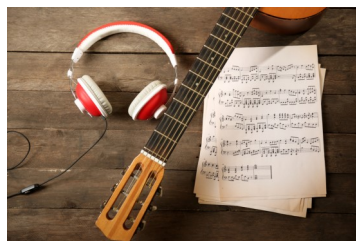
The value of music is not just in listening to music, but also in creating music. This small study done in 2012 demonstrated that song writing as part of grief therapy improved grief processing scores in 12-18-year-olds. Playing music has its own benefits for the brain, including significant impact on the developing brain.

There is still debate as to just why we evolved to have such a connection to music. Human beings are the only primates that can move to the beat of the music, and some speculate that evolutionarily music became pleasurable to bring humans together through a shared enjoyable experience. And though we are the one primate that can rock out to a beat, we are not the only animal that can.

When it comes to stress, anxiety, and relaxation there have been multiple studies showing that music can reduce people's subjective experiences of stress and anxiety, as well as reduce physical symptoms like high blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol rates. One study showed a significant decrease in anxiety and hypertension among patients going into surgery who listened to music. Another study found a similar reduction in cortisol levels among surgical patients exposed to relaxing music.

So, get going on some playlists - one to boost your mood, one to reduce stress, one to pump you when you work out, and one for the days that you just want to listen to sad music and enjoy it.

Litsa Williams, TCF/NSW



Coping with the loss of a loved one

One way to cope with grief is to honour that person's memory with a tradition or ritual. In fact, it's been found that creating a ritual can help lessen the impact of loss. Below are five rituals that include the lost loved one.

1. Cemetery Visit – One of the most traditional ways of honouring a loved one is to visit the cemetery. Some people leave a wreath or flowers. If you're too far to visit the cemetery or if your loved one does not have a traditional resting place, another option is to donate flowers to their place of worship.
2. Candles – Lighting a candle in honour of a deceased loved one is a beautiful way to include them in your traditions. Many will read a poem or say a few words in memory of the one they have lost.
3. Plant a Tree – Planting a tree or starting a memorial garden is a reminder that while the person you love is gone from our lives, they will always live on in our hearts. Once the tree is growing, you can decorate it each year or add plants to your memorial garden.
4. Ornament – Remember your loved one with a special ornament that has a special place in your home. Choose an ornament that best represents the person you love. Some ideas include: A plaque engraved with their name A custom photo ornament An angel A star that reminds you that while you may no longer see them during the day, they are still always with you
5. A message Jar – Fill the jar with notes and stories from your family about the person you all love.

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

GEORGE TSAFTAROPOULOS

I was an only child, born to elderly Greek parents whom I lost very early on in my life. My husband was introduced to me, as was the custom then and we were betrothed, marrying like strangers two months later. It was a very unhappy marriage but gave me three beautiful boys whom I cherished and lived my life through. George was my second son. He was a strikingly beautiful baby in colouring, with strawberry blonde hair, pink skin, and auburn eyes. He was always a very quiet child but loving. We moved to Greece to appease my Greek born hubby and struggled three years in an unfriendly and unfamiliar environment, with particularly difficult struggles with his family. Being the subject of abuse both physical and emotional, I eventually escaped back to Australia, with three kids under ten in tow. The first few months we were sleeping on floors and eating church handouts. My husband came back and then left again several times over the years. I worked, established a home, and put my three boys through school.

It was in high school that my George, at the age of 17, a straight A student and school prefect, first developed depression through stress at school. He was stalked and bullied, his girlfriend died by suicide, and he developed mental health issues. Over the next ten years, he suffered three more major losses, ending with his best friend, John, dying in his arms from swine flu. He hid his mental illness from everyone. He was the captain of the soccer team, the alpha male, accomplished architectural draftsman, well liked, and had many girlfriends. But beneath his façade of happy go lucky party boy, there were cracks and a darkness growing within. After John's death, George was stricken with a serious illness, then got into a very bad relationship with a girl who bled him dry, emotionally, and financially, and bullied him to the point of suicide. I lost my son on 20th March 2012, at the age of 27.

It was a tragic waste of a young life. George took his own life, but he didn't leave me suffering over the reason. He left me fifteen pages in explanations, his will, his eulogy and goodbye letters to his family and friends. His loss caused many adverse reactions, far and wide. His friends, work and teammates needed counselling for their shock. Our family relationships broke down and we were drowning in grief and guilt, eaten up alive with the "what if's" and "maybe's". I didn't lose one child, I lost three. My family couldn't handle my grief and the loss of my own mental health. The shock of what I saw sent me into darkness. I developed PTSD and depression. I was lost and suicidal.

Realizing I needed help, I sought out counselling from psychologists, support groups, compassionate friends, and bereavement counsellors and took medication. I needed something positive to come out of his loss. I started campaigning for mental health awareness, volunteering for mental health organizations, talking to the media, and fundraising for these organizations.

For the past 7 years, I have been giving mental health presentations at high schools to thousands of students. This is my son's legacy and my way of honouring his memory. There is a poem I read out at every presentation:

"I will be your legacy; I will be your voice. You live on in me, so I have made the choice To honour your life, by living again. I love you; I miss you, and I will see you again"

Katrina Tsafaropoulos, TCF/NSW

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.

Tell Me What to Say

You know I've lost a loved one
and you see my grief is strong
You hope to bring me comfort
and you fear to speak no wrong
We've all heard horror stories
of when people say wrong things
And we've all heard testimonies
of the bitterness it brings

It's often someone close to us,
they mean to say their best
But then speak something hurtful
and now they feel distressed
We rehearse the words we want to say
so deep within our heart
But when our turn approaches
we stumble from the start

So let me help you out my friend,
I'm here today for you
And I've found some words of wisdom
from the sorrow I've gone through
The fact you're here brings comfort,
you need no longer fear
It's enough to say you're sorry
and enough to show you care

And as the days and weeks go by
and months turn into years
The grief may start to weaken
but it always will be there
So call once in a while
or just visit for the day
Because those simple acts of kindness
Are more than words can say

~By James Eugene Batchelor
In memory of Ethan

We Need Not Walk Alone

"Today was a Difficult Day," said Pooh.

There was a pause.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.

"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."

"That's okay," said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing, really," said Piglet. "Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either.

"But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be here for you, Pooh."

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs...he thought that his best friend had never been more right.



Lifted from TCF Victoria Newsletter

Grieving Alone: A Discussion About Social Isolation and Complicated Grief

- DEBBIE ROBSON

Grief is a normal and natural part of the bereavement process (a period of mourning following a death), but sometimes, grief doesn't feel "normal" and can even seem "complicated". This is especially true when we experience a sudden loss. Given the world's recent unprecedented events, sudden losses are more common, and it can be difficult to process grief when such constant reminders of loss are all around us.

What is Grief? The Mayo Clinic describes grief as a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion that is common after any loss – the loss of a loved one after a terminal diagnosis, ending a relationship, losing a job, losing some level of independence or even losing valued possessions. Grief is both personal and universal. It is not one single emotion; rather, it is a state of being that you might walk through with moments of sadness, anxiety, anger or uncertainty.

Expert on grieving, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross breaks grief down into five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. While many people will cycle through all five stages, it is not necessary for all five stages to be present in order for grieving to occur. Remember that your journey through grief is unique, so there is no "normal" amount of time for each of these stages to last, and it's not abnormal to skip a stage or cycle through the stages in an order that appears to be different from this list.

The Grief Process Grieving in Isolation

Because the grief journey is complex, as humans we are hard-wired to try to simplify it by defining it as "normal" or "abnormal". The truth is, there are a lot of different variations of "normal" grief. However, grief is often complicated when certain factors are out of our control. In a time when self-isolation has become the standard, it's not "abnormal" to feel challenged when it comes to grieving in a healthy way. The added precautions of staying home and physically distancing ourselves from the people who we would normally turn to for support may certainly limit our ability to move through grief in a productive way, however, there are many simple yet effective tools for coping with loss in a healthier way.

Tips for self-care

Practice Stress Management – Learn to use meditation techniques, mindfulness techniques or other ways of relaxation such as gardening, reading, or writing letters

Connect with Friends and Loved Ones Through Phone Calls, Video Conferencing or Social Media – Technology can be a real help to access needed support

Plan a Future Vacation or Event to Focus on Happier Days that Lie Ahead

Find a Safe Space such as a Bereavement Support Group

Learn a New Skill – Take Up a Hobby or Enjoy an Online Class

Find ways to Give Back by Volunteering to Serve Others while Social Distancing

The Emotional and Physical Toll of Grief

Regardless of whether grief is normal or complicated, loss hurts, and grief is challenging for most people. As you walk through your grief experience, expect mixed feelings and even waves of anxiety, sadness, regret or panic. While these emotions can feel uncomfortable, it's often reassuring to know that they are normal and experiencing them can even help you to cope.

In addition to the emotional toll that grief takes, many people experience physical effects on the body. These might include headaches, stomach pains, exhaustion or the inability to focus. While all can be a normal part of the grieving experience, it is important to take these symptoms seriously and reach out to your physician especially if they're lasting for a prolonged period of time or impacting your overall health or day-to-day ability to function.

What is Complicated Grief?

While there is no set timetable for grieving, nor is there one "right" way to grieve, some individuals may experience complicated grief especially after a sudden loss or resulting from the more uncertain times we are currently facing. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), approximately 10% to 20% of bereaved persons have severe enough symptoms so as to be diagnosed with complicated grief.

8 Risk Factors for Complicated Grief

While the signs and symptoms of complicated grief can look similar to those of normal grief in the initial months of the grieving process, what distinguishes complicated grief is its time period and how grief impacts a person. Complicated grievers often bounce back and forth through the stages of grief without resolution. Their period of grief lingers and significantly impairs their ability to function. Essentially, it is a heightened state of mourning or a fog of hopelessness that negatively impacts their ability to heal and one which feels impossible to lift out of.

Seven Signs of Complicated Grief

Within the last month, having experienced any three of the following seven symptoms with a severity that interferes with daily functioning is an indication that you may be experiencing complicated grief:

- Intrusive symptoms Unwelcome memories or intrusive fantasies related to the lost relationship-
- Strong spells or pangs of severe emotion related to the lost relationship
- Distressingly strong yearnings or wishes that the deceased were there
- Signs of avoidance and failure to adapt
- Feelings of being far too alone or personally empty
- Excessively staying away from people, places, or activities that remind the subject of the deceased
- Unusual levels of sleep interference
- Loss of interest in work, social events, caretaking, or recreational activities to a maladaptive degree

Surviving Complicated Grief

Complicated grievers require immediate support from professional therapists, bereavement counsellors and sometimes psychiatrists to effectively heal through the grieving process. Talk therapy, cognitive behavioural exposure therapy and meaning-oriented therapies can help them to break through this



cycle, alter their habits and face their loss in a healthy way. For the most severe cases, medications that treat the dopamine system are sometimes prescribed in collaboration with bereavement therapy to positively support healing and help a person to find a healthier path forward.

In addition to seeking professional support, it is often helpful for the grieving individual to:

Talk Through It Don't underestimate the power of talking through and allowing yourself to feel the true weight of your emotions. Think of this as an emotional release- as you talk, you vocalize your innermost feelings and let go of pain that is weighing you down. Sometimes it helps to hold an article of clothing that your loved one wore close and initiate a conversation with them – this exercise can bolster confidence, reduce anxiety and help you to find inner peace. Alternately, write letters. Later, when you're ready, you can read these back to help identify your needs or burn them to release stuck feelings and signify a new beginning.

Seek Support Support is crucial to help you work through inner turmoil. Friends, family, your house of worship or social support groups provide a safe space to voice concerns, share thoughts and express feelings. When seeking support, give yourself permission to express your emotions in your own way. Expressions of grief that might seem "messy" or overwhelming to someone else might be right for you. Keep in mind that it's the other person's job to listen and be there for you, and that's just what anyone who cares about you will want to do.

Take Care of Yourself Listen to your inner voice and what it tells you that you need. Remember that this is your own personal journey, and as long as the choices you are making are not harming you or someone else, it's okay to walk this path in your own way. Try to maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine. This can be challenging when you don't feel like cooking or staying active, but even a short walk and a couple of healthy snacks per day can make a difference in your physical and emotional wellbeing.

Finding Solace Truly the pain of losing someone may never fully go away, but with the passing of time and the right support, you can heal. Take action now to move forward in a healthy way after your loss. Grant yourself patience and the ability to grieve in your own way, but also watch for signs of complicated grief and seek professional help if you need it. Remember that there is no certain timetable for grief. Take care of yourself throughout this process. Know that in time, things will get easier.



Sibling Page



10 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SIBLINGS & GRIEF

<https://www.drchristinahibbert.com/dealing-with-grief/siblings-grief-10-things-everyone-should-know/>

I'm an expert on siblings and grief. Not because I'm a psychologist who specializes in grief. No. I am an expert because I have lost two of my sisters.

- 1) Sibling grief is often misunderstood—by parents, families, friends, and counsellors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?
- 2) Sibling grief “has been almost entirely overlooked in the literature on bereavement.” It's no wonder, therefore, that even mental health providers misunderstand sibling grief. How are families supposed to know how to help siblings through grief if even the research on the subject is lacking?
- 3) Common emotions siblings may feel when a brother or sister dies include: Guilt Abandonment Loss of Innocence Fallout from the Family Somatic Symptoms Fears and Anxiety
- 4) Siblings may feel “trumped” by the grief of other family members. I sure felt this way, and it's common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling's own loss.
- 5) Young siblings lose innocence when a brother or sister dies, which may lead to fears and anxiety; “Survivor guilt” is also common. Experiencing death as a child becomes a lifelong experience of processing and understanding the loss. Children grow up with grief, understanding more as they get older. Fear of death or dying is common. Anxiety or worry about getting sick may become prevalent. In young siblings, guilt for provocative behaviour or for unacceptable feelings (jealousy) is common. Young children may think, before the death, “I wish my brother were dead!” then believe they somehow caused it to happen. Older siblings may wonder, “Why them and not me?” Because siblings are usually similar in age, it can bring up many questions about the sibling's own life and death, and guilt along with it.
- 6) Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents', siblings', or other family members' mistakes, emotional blow-ups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, but sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren't so lucky. At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a “parent” figure over the years, but the separation from my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly influenced my life. It profoundly changed our family.
- 7) Siblings may manifest somatic symptoms of grief, including symptoms that mimic the deceased sibling's symptoms. Especially in young children, symptoms like stomach-aches, headaches, nightmares, body pain, digestive symptoms, and trouble sleeping are common. These should be seen as symptoms of grief, and hopefully, an adult in the family can help siblings work through their feelings and show them how to grieve.
- 8) Having someone explain the loss to younger siblings, to be there for them and help them grieve, is ideal. Little children don't comprehend death in the same way adults do. It is therefore important to have somebody who can walk them through the loss and the grief process, to explain it wasn't their fault, to validate what they feel. If parents aren't able to do so, another family member or friend may, and hopefully will, step in.
- 9) Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn't less simply because you're older. In fact, in many ways, it's harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven't developed abstract thinking and understanding, will. Grieve your loss. If you're not sure how, here are some ideas.

- 10) My best advice for siblings in grief: Feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be “over it by now.” They don’t know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It’s not about “getting over” the loss of a sibling. You don’t get over it. You create your life and move on, when you’re ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life. I once heard someone say, “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.” That is the grief of a sibling—grief for what was past, and grief for what should have been the future. Just remember these things, my friends. Remember to be there for siblings in grief. You can be the difference in helping them create a bright future, even if they now must do so without their beloved sibling.

Do You Have any Siblings?

I don’t feel the warm rush of panic flood my chest when I’m asked this question anymore, though I’ve never quite gotten used to it. As a middle-aged mom, I don’t actually hear it as much anymore. When I’m getting to know someone new, our inquiries tend to center around kids or jobs or news. So when someone asked me recently, I was caught off guard. We were at my mom’s doctor appointment. My mind flitted around from the fire alarm that has delayed her appointment by a half hour to my mom’s health to the stubborn disbelief that I was sitting there instead of my dad, who died a year and a half ago. “Do you have any grandchildren?” the doctor asked my mother. My mom told him about my children. Then, before I could even see the question hurtling toward me, the doctor turned and asked me: “Do you have any brothers or sisters?” The question sat between us, ripe and waiting. For a moment, I wondered: If the doctor had asked my mom if she had other children, would she have answered the same? Or would she have told the truth? In the early years after my brother’s death, the question haunted me. As a twentysomething at the time, I heard it often. Do you have any brothers or sisters? But if I said, yes, I had a brother, I’d have to also say that he died. Otherwise, they might ask where my brother lived, and if I answered, “In a box in my parent’s liquor cabinet,” things would get weird. Dropping death into polite small talk almost always turns awkward. We don’t learn how to speak about topics like death and grief and overdoses in school — we learn it either by being thrust into the bog of it or by having an unusually open and curious heart. At some point, I decided on a loose rule for dealing with the inevitable question. If someone I was unlikely to have any type of consequential future relationship with — for instance, a hair stylist in a town I didn’t live in — asked me if I had siblings, I’d say no and try to pivot the conversation to safer ground. If it was someone I might be edging closer to, like a neighbour or a new friend, I’d tell the truth: I had a younger brother, and he died. The harder, more painful question now is the internal one that pulses just beneath the surface. No one has asked me it; I doubt anyone will. It’s deeper and more crushing. Am I still a sister? It’s been nearly 22 years now since my brother died. He’s been gone for longer than he was here. And while the brutal loss doesn’t haunt me every moment like it did in those early months, it remains etched on my heart. It continues to evolve, just like our relationship would’ve. Should’ve. A year and a half ago, when my dad was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and my mom and I sat at his bedside, I sometimes imagined a third chair with us, my brother filling it. In the loneliness of my dad’s illness and death, I felt the stark pain of my missing brother rush over me again, the wide reminder of all the awful and beautiful thresholds he should’ve been here for. Sometimes I wonder if acquaintances ever see my posts on social media and wonder why I’m still writing about my brother’s death all these years later. Why I keep dredging it up, running my fingers through the silt. Maybe I’d tell them it’s because I can still summon up those metallic early months after Will died, the vast loneliness of searching for books to accompany me in my grief and finding more literature on pet loss than on sibling loss. David Kessler, an expert in grief who worked with death and dying guru Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, has posited that there’s an often overlooked sixth stage of grief — meaning making. My interpretation of this sixth stage is that by taking some of the love I have for Will and alchemizing it into words that might help other grieving siblings, my love for him has somewhere meaningful and tangible to go. I often receive messages from people who are wading through the raw and murky days after a sibling has died. I’m always touched by these, always grateful. I usually say a little prayer for them, for the missing galaxy of their lost sister or brother, for all the future they feel robbed of. And I also say a thank you — to my brother, to the universe to some unseen power — for allowing me the opportunity to extend my hand, to peer back at all the milestones I’ve crossed and continue to cross without my brother. Because in these moments of quiet connection, in these slivers of mentorship? I still feel like a sister.

Lynn Shattuck We Need Not Walk Alone Lynn Shattuck grew up in an Alaskan rainforest and now lives in Maine. Her work has appeared in “Elephant Journal,” “Headspace,” and “Mind Body Green,” among other outlets. Lynn is currently writing a memoir about her brother’s death. To learn more about her, visit her website, [The Light Will Find You](#).



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	Pauline Trotter Central Otago Coordinator (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611 centralotagocf@gmail.com
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	04 9387212 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 (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND		
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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