



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 197

OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2023

Why We Will Never Get Over It

Child loss is never over.
It is a loss that spans a bereaved parent's entire life.

This is why we will never, ever, get over it.

Because "it" is our precious, irreplaceable child.
There is no getting over it.

There is only love (and pain)
to be bravely and courageously carried—
for a lifetime.

Angela Miller

Reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

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

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

TO

OUR CHILDREN

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

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

You are also able to contact me if you wish to have a poem or piece, with or without a photo of your child included. Once again, this is generally used for children whose birthday or anniversary occurs during the months of the current newsletter. I apologise for any omission or mistakes which I may make and ask that you contact me if this occurs. Please contact me on 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

The only thing I knew to do
was lean into everything,
to not close my heart
and to unconditionally feel whatever I felt,
including the pain.
Especially the pain.
Benjamin Allen
Compassion Summer TCF UK

Our Children ... Remembered with love

Forever Young

Forever Loved

Forever Longed For

Tania Rose Baldock	Born 22/10/69	Jaylene Jessie Bennett-Young	Died 17/10/2001
Kyle David Edwards	Born 15/10/1980	Mark Peter Enright	Died 31/10/1993
Henare Wiremu Fielding	Born 8/10/1983	Kirsten Patrice Flynn	Died 23/10/2005
Sally Verone Kitto	Born 3/10/1991	Yvonne Kay French-Wollen	Died 19/10/2001
Tara Louise MacPherson	Born 13/10/1987	Daniel Philip Innes	Died 9/10/1994
Hayden Ivan Pope	Born 18/10/90	Matthew David Innes	Died 9/10/1994
David Massey Reid	Born 6/10/1981	Steven Micheal Jack	Died 23/10/2003
Hayden Watson	Born 21/10/1981	Jessie Lineham	Died 23/10/2010
Ayla Rose Whitaker	Born 9/10/1989	Andrew John Manson	Died 14/10/1991
		Stefan David Maydon	Died 12/10/2001
Greg Burns	Born 27/11/89	Grant Mills	Died 6/10/1999
Michael David Cox	Born 19/11/64	Shane Parish	Died 7/10/1974
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Born 10/11/03	Callum Robertson	Died 24/10/2002
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Born 30/11/90	Alan Bruce Scorringe	Died 30/10/1999
Mark Peter Enright	Born 30/11/73		
Krysha Helen Hanson	Born 18/11/64	Nicholas James Cox	Died 18/11/03
Callum Warrick Langley	Born 4/11/96	Rick Daysh	Died 17/11/95
Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Born 3/11/58	Pauline Anne Newall	Died 12/11/98
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Born 5/11/74	Cindy Parish	Died 26/11/01
Grant Mills	Born 9/11/62	Marlene Joy Penny	Died 30/11/91
Marie Anne O'Neill	Born 18/11/61	Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Died 11/11/00
Peter John Oxley	Born 29/11/75	Ross Templeton	Died 29/11/17
Thomas John Poplawski	Born 25/11/97		

Dear Central Otago Compassionate Friends,

On 16/10 at our AGM it was decided that we continue as a voluntary organisation, with regular reviews to assess the satisfaction, or otherwise of bereaved parents. Our committee will conduct our first review 13/02/24.

Sincere thanks to all our previous Co-ordinators!

If a visit is required, or a listening ear, PLEASE do not hesitate to either phone Jan Pessione 027 309 1246remembering that I have lost 2 children....and will hear your devastation and grief.....

Or email ; janpessione@xtra.co.nz

Jan Pessione (Chairperson COCF)

“Our grief journeys are not about closure; they are about adjustment and staying connected.”

“The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.”

- Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends

Child Loss: Setting Aside Time To Grieve Helps My Heart Hold On

By Melanie Desimone

One of the commitments I made out loud and in my heart the day Dominic left us was this: I was not going to let his death tear my family apart. I was not going to let him become the sainted brother that stood apart and above his siblings. I was going to continue to give as much of my time, effort, love and presence to each of the three I had left as I had done when there were four on earth beside me.

I've been more or less successful in keeping this promise. I have no doubt that if you asked my living children, they could give you examples when I've failed. Some days are just too much. Some events are too hard to attend. Some moments I am overwhelmed and undone and there's no way to hide it. But I've learned a few things that help me be present, attentive and joyful for the beautiful things that are happening around me.

One of those is to set aside time whenever possible to “pre-grieve” an upcoming celebration or gathering. I allow my heart to feel all the things it needs to feel. I journal the questions and comments and (sometimes) anger that would otherwise overflow and ruin a moment. I write to Dominic and tell him how much I miss him, how much I wish he were here and how very hard it is to mark another happy occasion without him. I mentally rehearse walking in, greeting people, making small talk. I think ahead to any big moments that might tap emotions I need to hold in check. I even plan an “escape route” should I need it. Just knowing it exists has always been enough so far. Sometimes I find a song that suits my mood. I cry. And then I choose a token I can wear or slip in my pocket to remind me that I've got this. I can show up and smile (honestly) because I've already loosed the dam of grief and let the stored up torrent flow over the spillway.

I've learned the hard way that memories are precious. I don't want the ones I'm making now to always be tainted by sorrow and loss. Dominic is never far from my thoughts and always in my heart. I'm not abandoning nor forgetting him. I honor him by honoring his siblings.

Love lives.

Reprinted from TCF NSW Focus Newsletter

Page 3 TCF Otago Oct Nov 2023



**The Compassionate Friends
Bereaved Parent's Grief Support Whanganui
Annual Report for the year ending 30 September 2023**

Another year to look back on. I ask myself "Have we made a difference to bereaved families in Whanganui?"

This is hard to ascertain and not easy to quantify, as we get very little feedback. People are always interested and sympathetic to our cause and ideals.

I am proud of the things we have managed to do this year which would not have been possible without funding.

Funding

We are grateful to the Wanganui Community Foundation for \$1000.00 given for administration and running costs August 2022 to July 2023. This amount has served us well for the year to now. We have submitted a further application in October 2023 for \$1200.00 for the same. We are yet to hear about this being accepted. This money will cover: website hosting \$300.00; plus \$100.00 earmarked for each Mother's Day, Father's Day, Candle Lighting, Memorial Tree Day, La Fiesta/or similar plus \$400.00 for administration, postage, printing, memory cards and other contingencies.

Board Members

We are kind to ourselves and I think that is good. We are all in various stages of grief and our mental well-being needs to be foremost.

For this reason, I have resigned as Chairperson for TCF Whanganui as from 14 October 2023. I feel I am better suited to being an active Board member, concentrating on my strengths - promotion, publications and events. It is better I pass on the Chairmanship to those more capable of chairing and meeting procedure. It will also clear me a bit of space/time and enable me to concentrate on my strengths.

We were sorry to lose Derna and Jude from the Board this year, for personal and health reasons. A BIG thankyou to them for their support of us under personal difficulties.

Facebook Jude is hoping to reconnect with us in the future and in the meantime still does the FACEBOOK page which is a new venture for us this year. Jude reports "that it has had a slow start but is ramping up a bit now. We have 23 Facebook members, only a handful of posts (mainly mine). I do think it will continue to grow. I know from my own experience Facebook support groups were the first place I went." Thank you, Jude.

Thanks to Yvonne for her meticulous and reliable bookkeeping as our treasurer.

Linda does a grand job with the minutes and other secretarial matters.

Ian has faithfully served as Vice Chair. Roanne has taken on the role of Communications and sends out memorial cards and reports on the Coffees.

Nina (Honorary) and Sue(Advisory) remain as Board members.

We are getting low in active Board members and hope we can encourage others to join us.

Website: This gives us an online presence and we have made contact with a few bereaved families - (One this week as I write this report, from Auckland)

Mostly from outside Whanganui but we always respond and keep in touch with them by post or email. A huge Thanks to Nigel at KiwiWeb for his prompt attention to updates done with no charge. This is most generous and saves us a lot of money. We still pay the hosting costs and as it is a national site, we would be glad of any contributions from other chapters.

So, What have we done this year?

Our Board met for dinner at Christmas. This was a good time and TCF shouted a drink for each of us as a Thank you for a year's hard work. It is the first time we have done that as we are aware that our funds are given for our work but it was agreed we needed to thank ourselves in a small way.

Worldwide Candle Lighting

We held our Candle Lighting at Virginia Lake on December 13th. Over 30 people attended with many children's names being listed and read out. We met at the Peter Pan Statue and gave out information packs and children's activity packs. We find this event attracts people that do not necessarily come to any other function but they appreciate this meaningful event, remembering their child, 'specially near Christmas.

Worldwide Candle Lighting

We held our Candle Lighting at Virginia Lake on December 13th. Over 30 people attended with many children's names being listed and read out. We met at the Peter Pan Statue and gave out information packs and children's activity packs. We find this event attracts people that do not necessarily come to any other function but they appreciate this meaningful event, remembering their child, 'specially near Christmas.

Memorial Tree at Aramoho Cemetery.

This was planted in 2022 in the Baby Loss area and we are planning a Memorial Tree Day in November 2023 to highlight this. The tree was planted by the then Mayor of Whanganui, Hamish McDouall and this year we plan to erect a small plaque saying so. At the time of planting last year, we placed 2 small weatherproof plaques at the site and on a seat in the children's area with contacts for our group. We will also decorate the tree in the Children's Area on the same day. We used to do that at Christmas. This will be the first time we have held this event. It will give us an opening into natal death - miscarriage, stillbirth, SIDS etc formerly covered by SANDS. As they no longer operate here, we hope to be able to support grieving families dealing with baby loss.

Coffee Care & Chat.

Held every first Saturday of each month at the Yellow House Café Whanganui at 11am We are grateful to the Yellow House for their continuing support and will continue to meet thus for next year. We have a table topic and this year have had "What is in your grief case?: Tips for surviving Christmas : Butterflies : Snow geese , Change and grief : Autumn leaves : Easter, Dos and Don'ts : Bereaved Mother's Day and Father's Day too : Rain hail or shine : Grief and Joy. We averaged between 6 and 12 attending.

Mother's & Father's Days.

We allow funds to make a special event of these days which are difficult for bereaved parents. Looking through our records we have made contact with 60 Mums, (NZ wide) so we followed them up with a wee gift and thought. Father's Day saw over 26 men given a gift and card. As well as sending 33 memorial cards for those who have requested them. We also plan to send an annual memorial card to the rest of our contacts. These were/ will be posted or delivered. In July a revamp and count was done of contacts on our email post box. This is the main way we keep in touch. Over the past 12 years we have gained over 60 bereaved families (16 outside Whanganui): Contact via the website 18 : Businesses 6 : TCF Groups nationwide and overseas 19 : Overseas contact 1. We are reaching out to many grieving families.

La Fiesta

This year we have been involved in this Women's Network initiative. We were able to be included in their general advertising which gave us exposure at no cost to us. This year we combined with another Grief Support group in Whanganui 'Surviving Grief'. It was good to work together on these two events - **Good Mourning** February 17th and **Good Mourning this Evening** March 1st. These were open to anyone experiencing grief (not just parents) It was not hugely supported but between us we made 5 new contacts Thanks to Carla and her team at Women's Network. They give us such encouragement. Following on from discussion between our 2 groups A meeting of like-minded community groups was organized and it gave us exposure and also an insight into 15 local groups we could connect with, and who learned about us. We hope to keep this network going.

Publicity & Promotion

Our publicity focus has been able to go ahead this year thanks to previous funding that was used for posters, leaflets and cards. Our Publicity was slowed during COVID but we have plenty of material to use as we carry on making ourselves known in the community. We did a 'random act of kindness' by supporting **Gabby's Starlit Hope** to show care for another Grief Support work done in hospitals with children. Board members, personally gave a food parcel to the City Mission. We had a photo and article in the RCP covering this. Our profile is gradually increasing in Whanganui and surrounds through our care of grieving families. We were thankful for funding which enabled us to purchase branded pens. These are really cool and have 6 statements about TCF that can be clicked over. The pen branding does say TCF Whanganui.
See included order form.

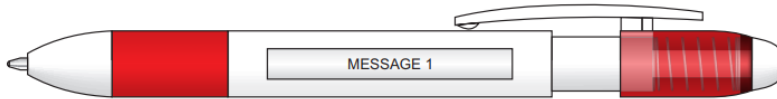
Newsletter.

TCF NZ produces a newsletter bi monthly and we often contribute to this. It is a valuable source of comfort and knowledge for grieving families. It is available as a paper copy but is also sent to our e mail supporters and all copies are recorded on our website.

We continue to be grateful to our community supporters: Kiwiweb: Yellow House: Clevelands: Dempseys: Women's Network: River City Press: Whanganui Chronicle, Whanganui Community Trust. I want to end by thanking each of the Board members and our loyal friends for their participation. Let's look ahead to the next year with enthusiasm and hope.

Keren Marsh Whanganui October 2023

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BALLPOINT PENS



Pens are **BLUE** and **WHITE** - not **RED**

The 6 messages that click over are:

- 1 www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz
- 2 Supports families of a Child gone too soon
- 3 Worldwide Candle Lighting ; 2nd Sunday December
- 4 Gone but never forgotten
- 5 You need not walk alone
- 6 Grief support when a child dies

Logos on pen - **The Compassionate Friends Whanganui
Bereaved Parents Grief Support**

Pens are generic to TCF except we have Whanganui on the pen logos.

You are welcome to order some - no charge to you but you cannot sell them, just gift them. We would ask that you include \$10.00 to cover post and packaging for 25 pens. Thanks.

Send your details to: Keren Marsh, 90 Surrey Rd, Springvale. Whanganui. 4501.

"Why Can't People Understand ... My Need to Grieve?"

My son died. He died suddenly, without warning. On that warm day in May, the lives of so many people changed when my son's life on this earth ended. He was the strong one in the family. He was the oldest brother and the one that the others looked up to always. He's gone and our hearts are broken and life will never be the same again!

It is now going on two years since Mike died. Life has gone on for most everyone except his immediate family. For us, the pain is real. The pain is cruel. The longing for Mike overshadows every day in a million different ways. Our lives changed permanently when Mike died, and yet.....

I'm finding it so hard to grieve openly without others pointing a finger and letting me know that I should be stronger than this.

"Stronger than what?," I want to scream over and over again! "How strong should I be? You walk in these shoes a day and tell me how strong I should be!"

I don't understand. I really don't. I don't ever remember myself criticizing another for mourning the loss of a child. In fact, I often wondered how they were able to function.

I think part of the problem with my open grieving is others are so used to me being the strong one, that they want to snatch away my right to grieve! They selfishly want me to be strong for them!

Some days I feel like wearing a banner across me that says, "Every mother has the right to grieve her child. Every mother needs to grieve the loss of her child because that is her last way of showing her love for her child."

There is a place in my heart that feels like there is an open wound. It hurts. Some nights when I'm getting into bed I sit on the edge of the bed and let out several long, deep mournful sighs. Oh, how much it hurts deep within to know that my son died and is never coming back to this earth! I will feel that open wound inside of me until the very day I die. Why? Because I am a mother who nurtured this child inside of me before he was ever born. I held him close to me for months after he was born feeding him, rocking him and singing him lullabies. I wiped his nose and gently rubbed his back through many feverish nights. When his stomach was sick I sat up with him and talked him through the fear of throwing up.

I was there to calm him when he had nightmares. I was there to cheer him on when he was struggling and felt self-defeat. I washed his clothes and cooked thousands upon thousands of meals for him and did it because I loved him. I watched him grow into a fine, young man. Then he died, and my heart broke. And, now people expect me to be strong and not show my grief.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not constantly sobbing. I don't always have a tissue held to my nose. My eyes aren't swollen shut every day from crying. I go to work every day. I enjoy family and friends. I love cooking and gardening.

But, I am also walking around with an open wound in my heart that painfully hurts day and night, and when I do cry or express my sorrow I expect to be respected and given the support I need to grieve in my own way.

What a shame that parents of child loss often feel like they must put on a happy face and mask their grief! How wrong it is to ask a parent who has had a child die to "Buckle up. Be strong. Put that behind you and move on!" I don't expect people who have never felt this pain to fully understand. That's an impossibility. But, I do expect to be given supportive freedom to grieve as my final way of expressing my love for my son.

Grief is the longest good-bye a parent will ever say If only others could understand how important this final good-bye is to a parent!

If you are a parent of child loss, I know that you understand what I'm saying. May we be bold in our grieving and never feel pressure to hide our final expression of love for our child!

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN GRIEVING

Taken from St Judes Children Hospital

Gender and cultural influences can also play a role in how people grieve. These factors shape how people process and express emotions. Although generalizations are not true for everyone, men and women often differ in their grief responses.

Everyone grieves the loss of a child differently. Feelings may be similar—sadness, helplessness, anger—but the way they are processed and expressed can be very different from person to person. There are many factors that affect how a person experiences and expresses grief. Coping strategies, life experiences, communication styles, personality, and support systems can all influence individual responses. Gender and cultural influences can also play a role in how people grieve. These factors shape how people process and express emotions. Although generalizations are not true for everyone, men and women often differ in their grief responses. However, whether a response is more common to a man or woman is not as important as recognizing and supporting individual differences. Accepting differences can help family members give one another space to grieve in their own ways.

Men and Grief

Many men grow up feeling like they should hold in their emotions. For boys, crying might have been viewed as a sign of weakness. People who feel pressure to be strong and independent might try to limit outward displays of emotion or avoid talking about feelings.

During grief, men may be more likely to:

- Turn inward rather than expressing themselves outwardly. They may be less likely to cry, express themselves verbally, or openly discuss grief with others.
- Avoid talking about the death of the loved one. Many men do not seek conversation to process the loss.
- Feel a sense of failure at not being able to protect their child from death.
- Want to move past the loss instead of expressing pain. Some men may feel a desire to move forward with their lives.
- Try to manage grief alone rather than using resources to grieve.

Men might try to cope through behaviors such as:

- Participating in strenuous or repetitive tasks. Some men may look for distraction or find release by exercising, doing manual labor, working in the yard, or doing other activities.
- Taking control of family needs. Many men feel a responsibility to take care of family members after a child's death. They may do this by taking charge of finances, organizing details of the funeral, or taking over household responsibilities.
- Working more. While working more may be related to a desire to increase the family's economic security, it may also be a needed distraction from feelings of pain and loss.
- Engaging in shared activities and experiences with family members. Men may have trouble communicating their feelings of grief. They may try to connect with loved ones by doing things together.
- Isolating themselves. Some men may wish to be left alone as they internally process their grief. They may express anger at the inability to be alone or avoid others for fear of not being able to control their emotions.

Women and Grief

Women are more likely to express their feelings of grief with other people. They may be more willing to seek out connections and accept the help of others.

During grief, women may be more likely to:

- Feel isolated. Women are more prone to feeling alone and secluded, particularly when other family members have trouble communicating feelings or do not share their desire to express their grief.
- Try to connect with others. Women may feel that talking about the experience of losing one's child helps the healing process.
- Feel frustration with others' inability to share grief. Women may feel angry or resentful when others cannot join them in working through their grief together.

Women may try to cope by:

- Talking about their grief. Women tend to process their feelings by speaking to friends and family about their loss.
- Seeking support. Women are more likely than men to seek help both outside and within the family during the grieving process.
- Creating new social networks. As women process and express their grief, they may reach out to their existing social networks or create new ones, especially others who can understand their sense of loss.
- Questioning or blaming others. Some women may question their partner or spouse if they are unable to share their grief and work through it together.
- Expressing grief through writing. Some women may find that reading and writing journals, stories, or books helps them engage with other people and reduces the feelings of isolation.

There is no typical or “normal” grief response. It is common to have a variety of feelings and behaviors. For most people, some responses will be typical of gender. Others will not be.

The important thing is that each person feels like their grief is accepted and supported by other family members.

Finding Support

Everyone needs support in grief regardless of how they grieve. After losing a child, family members need validation that their responses are normal. Each person tries to cope in his or her own way. But, families also need to find ways to connect and come together in their grief.

It can help to remember that:

- Expressing grief is important.
- Listening to others may help you feel less alone and more normal in your own experience of grief.
- Each person needs to feel acknowledged and accepted.
- One person cannot provide all the support another person needs.
- Grief after losing a child is a lifelong journey, and needs change over time.

A variety of resources are available to help family members in their grief. Some people find it helpful to read books from authors with a similar grief perspective. Support groups can help people find connection and sense of belonging in grief. Professional help is also available. Marriage and family counseling can be an important resource to help family members learn to accept differences in grieving and find ways to grieve together.

Lifted with thanks from TCF Focus NSW Newsletter

The Weight of Grief – Sculpture by Celeste Roberge



MY GRANDCHILD DIED

Author wishes to remain anonymous.

Many months ago now my grandchild died, some days it feels as if it were yesterday, other days it seems a lifetime ago.

I am told by my friends and some of my family that it is time I “moved on”. They tell me that I must put “it” behind me! It is not easy to smile back. It is not easy to tell them why I will never “get over it”. How can you explain the grief? One cannot do so and I hope they never learn from personal experience what it is like for a grandmother to lose a grandchild.

I used to think my heart had broken but I now know that is not true. If my heart had broken I would not be here.

My “being” broke, I feel as if I am a 3D jigsaw puzzle that broke into thousands of pieces the day my grandchild died. Slowly, through self-help I have put that puzzle together. It is not perfect and regularly a piece, or sometimes a few pieces, slip out and remain out for some time. They can be put back in and need to be for me to live my life, but I find I have two pieces that will not fit back into that puzzle, no matter how I try.

Some days one piece almost fits; this is the grief for my grandchild. It will always be a new piece in my being. That grief will remain until the day I die. It is a piece of a puzzle uniquely shaped from happy and sad memories, from an undying love, and from so many emotions. I touch this piece of the puzzle often, sometimes the grief it brings is so intense it is almost unbearable, other days it does not seem so bad. Some days touching it makes me smile. It is always in my thoughts and I feel it constantly, however, I can place it in my pocket and know that it rests safely there. It is at peace so I have learned not to struggle to try to make it fit.

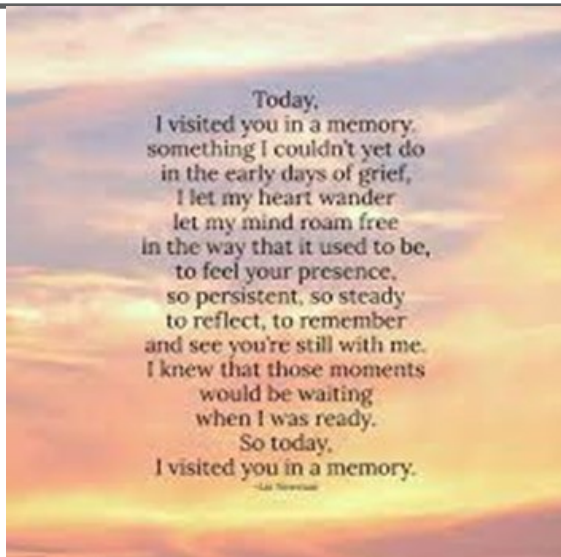
The other piece is more difficult. It belongs to my child, the daughter I gave birth to, fed and nurtured, loved and cuddled. The daughter I watched grow from baby to adulthood. The daughter I helped shape into a wonderful human being. She too was part of my “being”, I understood her and we shared a history. We were mother and daughter. Now that piece has changed shape forever and does not even look like fitting in.

Can I mould the shape to fit, no not yet? Will it ever fit back in? I do not know. I understand that she has changed forever and I love her unconditionally but I wonder if I will ever get to know this new daughter. Is it possible to find that comfortable place I once shared with her? Can that natural mother-daughter relationship be learned again now we are not child and adult? She has had to change to cope, she has been dealt the most terrible of tragedies, and her life has changed forever. She lost a child. She has needed to find strength from her deepest self. She is grown up now, she no longer needs me to nurture her as a mother but I still need her as a daughter.

I long for the day when I can feel her arms around me again and hear her say I, love you Mum from her heart. Maybe then that piece of the puzzle will have days when it fits into my pocket comfortably too. It will always be a piece of my puzzle whose shape has changed but hopefully one which also becomes comfortable to hold.

Is this why they say a grandparent suffers double grief when their grandchild dies?
Maybe.

Reprinted with love from TCF NSW Focus magazine



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.

Ways I Know That Life Goes On

I know my life is moving forward because...
 today I moved the waterproof mascara to the back of
 my makeup drawer.
 I didn't make any mistakes at work all day.
 I slept all night through.
 I remember her smile...and smiled.
 I drove home and didn't expect to see my little girl
 greeting me at the door.
 I remembered where I left my car keys.
 Someone asked me today if we were going to have
 another child,
 and I didn't get angry and change the subject.
 The first holidays have passed, and I'm still here.
 I haven't taken a pill to help me sleep in 12 days.
 We've started talking about another baby.
 The knife in my stomach eases up sometimes.
 Morgan's baby brother is due in July;
 she's finally going to be a big sister!
 It's June 23rd, the day after Morgan's second birthday;
 I guess I made it through.
 Our little boy was born today,
 and I cried tears of joy not sadness.
 He has his sister's little pudgy nose.

Kimberly L. Rhodus
 Bereaved Parent of Morgan Louise Hope Rhodus
 June 22, 1996 to February 25, 1998
 Reprinted with love from TCF Winnipeg Newsletter

I wish you knew how much of
 you there is in everything I do.
 It can be the smallest thing.
 Trivial. Mundane. But you're there,
 under the surface of it somewhere.
 I wish you knew how I carry you with
 me always. Everywhere I go.

—Ranata Suzuki



Acorn: cup and seed, mother and daughter For Emily

In my handbag I root around for a pen.
 Instead I find the shallow cup of an acorn,
 Outside rough texture,
 Inside hollowed, smooth, scooped out,
 Always a space, wide open, ready, as
 If the acorn might return.
 I let the cup rest in my palm
 Small and empty.
 What now? Once its purpose clear,
 Nourishing, protecting, caring,
 Guarding all the rich green hopefulness.
 I am like the little cup,
 I am still shaped to hold you,
 To guard and protect you,
 To treasure your potential, the green
 Hopeful soul of you.
 But for me, there will be no oak, no tree
 Even though you are in the ground,
 Even though I am empty without you
 I am still here, longing to care,
 A part of me missing, gone.
 And in my bag I fumble around,
 I find the acorn adrift
 Still shaped to fit the shell.
 I breathe easier, seeing
 How they, cup and seed, still hold the
 shape
 of the other.
 At the family gathering
 I rest my hand on yours,
 In the restaurant on holiday
 you rest your hand on mine.
 So easy, so simple,
 the touch of mother and daughter,
 And so I am forever shaped to hold you,
 Cradling you always
 With my very self.
Susie Barrington
POEMS FROM THE GATHERING 2015
 Written under the skillful guidance of Mick Wilson
 in his Creative Writing group

When others Fail to Meet our Expectations –

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all had a network of family and friends who could be present for us, who knew exactly what we needed without our having to tell them, who would bear witness to our struggle, and who would honour our unique journey through grief?

Unfortunately, as many of us soon discover, most people in our culture simply don't know what to do or say when someone dies, or they're so afraid of doing or saying something "wrong" that they avoid us and / or the situation all together.

But can any one of us honestly say that, until we lost a loved one of our own, we were completely sure of ourselves in the presence of another's sheer, raw grief? Did we always know the "right" thing to say? Were we always the first one on the scene to offer our presence, solace and comfort?

I think until it happens to us personally, we simply cannot know how involved and emotionally draining the grief process truly is, much less how vulnerable we are to the insensitivity and lack of understanding we may encounter from others who've yet to walk this journey.

One of the advantages of attending meeting or counselling is that mourners find themselves among others who are on the same path--and in addition to sharing our own stories of pain and loss, we can practice giving to one another the compassion and understanding we ourselves desire from all those friends and family members who may mean well, but don't know how to comfort us. When others take time to visit, they are presented with a wonderful opportunity: to learn and share what helps and doesn't help, and to increase their awareness as they reach out to others.

Because our culture isn't comfortable with the subject of death, until it happens to us directly, few of us know how to cope with the pain of loss and grief. We don't permit or encourage the free expression of sorrow in our society. Instead, many of us learn to control our feelings and hide our pain so we won't embarrass ourselves in public or disturb other people. Sometimes we're reluctant to turn to others, either because we haven't learned to accept or ask for help, or we're afraid others won't know what to do with our feelings. Sadly enough, we live in a death-denying culture, and unless they've encountered death in a very personal way, most people really don't know what grief feels like and they don't know what, if anything, they can do to help a person in mourning.

If others are unfamiliar with the intensity and duration of grief, or uncomfortable with the expression of strong emotions, they may offer only meaningless platitudes or clichés, change the subject, or avoid us all together. And there may be times when we will feel hurt by their thoughtless, trivializing comments. What is more, some people we know may be done with our grief long before we are, expecting us to be —over it by now|| or worrying that we're somehow —hanging on|| to our grief. Uncomfortable with our strong feelings, they may change the subject or avoid any mention of our loved one's name.

The challenge for mourners is to find ways to cope with the loneliness and isolation of grief. We need to think about and identify who is supportive in our environment and who gives our life purpose and direction. Our list may include family members, pets, relatives, close friends, co-workers, teachers, classmates, colleagues, clubs, athletic activities, religious groups, online forums, in-person grief support groups, bereavement counsellors and therapists.

While some folks really are thoughtless and don't think before they speak, we are wise to bear in mind that many well-meaning individuals have yet to experience a significant loss, so they really don't know what grief feels like, how to respond, or what to say. They aren't deliberately trying to hurt us. After all, no one can totally understand the relationship we had with our loved one.

We can't expect others to guess what we need, either. So often in grief, we don't even know what we need! (We certainly know what we want. We want our loved one back--but that is the one thing we cannot have, and nobody else can give it to us either.) When we want to be contacted, touched, held, hugged, listened to or pampered, we must say so. If all we want from others is help with simple errands, tasks and repairs, we must say so. If we want and need to be left alone, we need to say that as well, so others (especially children) won't feel rejected.

I'd also like to add this thought about friendships. Unlike a therapeutic relationship (whose focus is on the client and the client's needs) a friendship is a —two-way street|| that, in most cases, requires us to give to the other as much as we get back. Like a good marriage, if it is to last, a close friendship requires fairly constant tending, and also requires that we overlook each other's faults and shortcomings. In short, maintaining a close friendship is work, and sometimes it can be harder work than we may be capable of doing at the time, given the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

We all know that mourning is hard work, too, although of a different kind--but work nonetheless, and it requires a great deal of energy, most especially in the beginning. I suspect that when we are in the depths of grief, we have precious little energy left over to invest in our friendships. Over time, I think, our friends begin to notice this, and some of them may not be willing to put more into maintaining a relationship with us than we are able to give back to them. Such —fair weather friends may take a vacation from us and come back later when the weather's nicer and they think we're better, or they may abandon us completely, never to be friends with us again.

If we find that others are not there for us in the ways that we need them to be, we may not have the energy or the will to confront them effectively about that right now, and we may want to look elsewhere for understanding, comfort and support.

I think it boils down to this: When dealing with others who aren't living up to our expectations of how we think they should —be there for us, we have three choices: We can choose to bear with such people and simply ignore their shortcomings; we can assume a teacher's role and enlighten them about what we've learned about grief and what we need from them; or we can look to others who are more understanding to find the support we need and deserve.

<http://www.griefhealingblog.com/2012/10/grief-support-when-others-fail-to-meet.html>

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

The Storm of Grief

It comes like a huge thunderbolt - shocking and deafening you to all else around you. Suddenly the world that has been so bright is black and desolate. There seems to be no hope. The tears come like torrential rains. The winds of reality come, and your body is torn by the pains and fears caused by the storm. Even when the tears stop for a while, the dark clouds loom over you, threatening you with more tears and more pain.



Most passersby can't help you through the storm because they have never been caught in one like it - and some don't seem to care. There are a few who will reach out their hand and try to pull you from the storm, but the storm must be endured. And then there are the special ones - the ones who are willing to walk with you through the storm. Usually these are people who have been there before and know the storm can be survived.

After a time, the torrential rains turn to showers, and then the showers come less often. But the clouds don't go away. The sadness and pain remain, but they become more bearable. Eventually, as the clouds begin to part, there may even be a rainbow - a sign of hope. And as the sun begins to shine a little more, flowers of memory will blossom to be enjoyed.

I don't think the showers will ever completely end, but I believe as they get farther apart, the sky will get bluer and you will see more rainbows. Perhaps it's even good to have a shower now and then - to cleanse our souls and to revive those special flowers of memory.

Mary Jo Pierce, TCF/Tuscaloosa, AL
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Page 13 TCF Otago Oct Nov 2023



Sibling Page



Helping yourself heal when an adult sibling dies

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

Your brother or sister has died. I am truly sorry for your loss. Whether your sibling was younger or older, whether the death was sudden or anticipated, whether you were very close to your sibling throughout your lives or experienced periods of separation, you are now grieving.

Consider your unique relationship. Brothers and sisters often have strong and ambivalent feelings for one another. Sibling relationships tend to be complex, characterized by a mixture of anger, jealousy, and a fierce closeness and love. Sibling relationships are so complex because while we are growing up, siblings are both friends and enemies. We play with our siblings, and we fight with them. We share our parents' love, and we compete for our parents' love. We enjoy being part of a family, and we struggle to become individuals. Sometimes we carry our childhood rivalries and differences into adulthood, and our ambivalent feelings toward our brothers and sisters remain. Sometimes we separate from our siblings completely as adults. And sometimes we become very close friends with our grown-up brothers and sisters.

Yet no matter what your present-day relationship with your sibling was, their death is a blow. The truth is, the more deeply you feel connected to someone, the more difficult their death will be for you. And siblings—even when they have not spent much time together as adults—often have profoundly strong attachments to one another.

Yes, your grief for your sibling is very real. And it may be very difficult for you. Allow yourself the time and the support you need to mourn. If you have surviving siblings, you will find that each will mourn this death in their own way. If your parents are still alive, they, too, will have their own unique responses to the death. You can help by facilitating open and honest communication with them about their grief and yours. Embrace the healing power of linking objects, items that belonged to or remind you of the sibling who died. Photographs, clothing, gifts you received from them — all of these connect you to the sibling who died. Some items may bring sadness, some happiness, While linking objects may evoke painful feelings, they are healing feelings. They help you embrace the pain of your loss and move toward reconciliation. They may also give you comfort in the weeks and months ahead. Whatever you do, DO NOT get rid of linking objects that remind you of the sibling who died.

Honor the sibling who died. Consider your sibling's loves and passions. You might also choose to carry on with something your sibling loved to do or left unfinished. You will find that honoring your sibling is both a way to express your grief and to remember what was special about them. If you are a twin, seek extra support. If you are a twin whose twin brother or sister has died, you may be especially devastated by this death. Twins often report a sense of being halved after their twin has died. Without their twin, they simply do not feel whole. Your grief work may be particularly arduous. I recommend that you seek the support of an experienced grief counsellor if you are struggling. The wonderful website www.twinlesstwins.org and the resources this organization offers may also be of help.

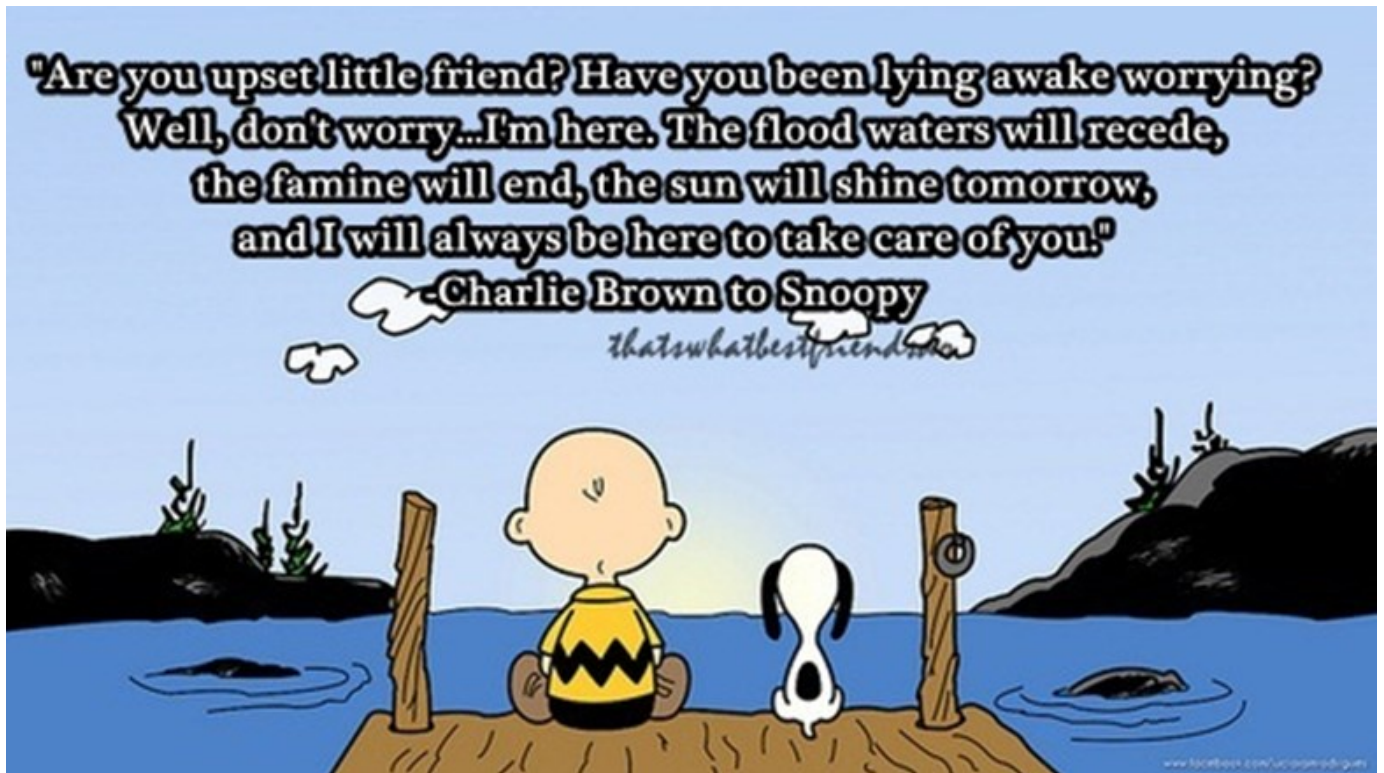
Understand the concept of “reconciliation” Know this: mourners don't recover from grief. Instead, we become “reconciled” to it. In other words, we learn to live with it and are forever changed by it. Yet we only achieve reconciliation if we actively express and receive support for our grief. Find someone who will listen without judging as you talk about your grief. Cry. Journal. Make art. Find things to do that help you express your grief, and keep doing them.

I believe every human being wants to “mourn well” the deaths of those they love. It is as essential as breathing. Yet because our culture misunderstands the importance of grief, some people deny or avoid their normal and necessary thoughts and feelings. Choose to mourn. Choose to heal. Choose to live and

love fully again.

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

About the Author Dr. Alan Wolfelt is a respected author and educator on the topic of healing in grief. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt has written many compassionate, best-selling books designed to help people mourn well so they can continue to love and live well, including Understanding Your Grief, The Mourner's Book of Hope, and Healing the Adult Sibling's Grieving Heart, from which this article was excerpted. Visit www.centerforloss.com to learn more about the natural and necessary process of grief and mourning and to order Dr. Wolfelt's books. Copyright 2007-2013, Center for Loss and Life Transition





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	Jan Pessione (Acting Coordinator) (16 yr old daughter, accidental) janpessione@xtra.co.nz (Marina, 54yrs, Airways Obstruction)	03-4487800
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
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 CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	Marie and Ron Summers (Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	07 8954879
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz



COPYRIGHT

We are grateful for permission given to use material from other T.C.F. chapters, for our own, The Compassionate Friends (Otago Chapter) Incorporated, Dunedin New Zealand. All material is copy right to "The Compassionate Friends" and all is marked with it's Author and origin (if known). Copyright, All rights Reserved. Permission to use anything from this issue or other issues, must be sought in writing by contacting,

TCF c/- Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru. New Zealand. e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz Or by ringing Lesley Henderson, 021 2155279