



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 174

OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2019

I do not need a special day

I do not need a special day
to bring you to mind.
The days I do not think of you
are very hard to find.

No one knows the heartache
that lies beneath the smile.
No one knows how many times
I have broken down and cried.

This roller coaster of emotions
is the worst ride of my life.
Nothing can prepare you
For this never ending strife.

So please don't ever tell me
that time will heal my pain,
because not even time nor reason
can bring you back again.

My thoughts are always with you
your place no one will fill.
In life I loved you dearly
in death I love you still.

Ian Robson
Candle Lighting 2018
Whanganui

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

RETURN ADDRESS
52 SUNRISE DRIVE,
SEAWARD BUSH,
INVERCARGILL
9812
NEW ZEALAND

TO

OUR CHILDREN

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

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

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

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

Please contact me on 03 4326004, or TCF, Lesley Henderson, 76 O'Neill Rd., 17 D R.D., Windsor, Oamaru or by e-mail tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz

Grief is the price we pay for love.
 We did not lose our children.
 They died, taking with them
 our hopes and dreams for the future,
 but never, never taking away their love.
 Though death comes,
 love will never go away.
 Hold it tight,
 the love our children gave us.
 Hold it tight through the storms of grief
 and bring it with you into today.
 Love never goes away . . ."

~ Darcie Sims Winnipeg Newsletter

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
		Grant Mills	Died 6/10/1999
Greg Burns	Born 27/11/89	Shane Parish	Died 7/10/1974
Michael David Cox	Born 19/11/64	Callum Robertson	Died 24/10/2002
Quinntin Albert Jason Crosswell	Born 10/11/03	Alan Bruce Scorrige	Died 30/10/1999
Matthew William Ross Dryden	Born 30/11/90		
Mark Peter Enright	Born 30/11/73	Nicholas James Cox	Died 18/11/03
Krysha Helen Hanson	Born 18/11/64	Rick Daysh	Died 17/11/95
Callum Warrick Langley	Born 4/11/96	Pauline Anne Newall	Died 12/11/98
Leonard Donald McLaughlin	Born 3/11/58	Cindy Parish	Died 26/11/01
Robert Shane McLaughlin	Born 5/11/74	Marlene Joy Penny	Died 30/11/91
Grant Mills	Born 9/11/62	Craig Noel Campbell Radka	Died 11/11/00
Marie Anne O'Neill	Born 18/11/61	Ross Templeton	Died 29/11/17
Peter John Oxley	Born 29/11/75		
Thomas John Poplawski	Born 25/11/97		

When tomorrow starts without me, and I'm not here to see,
 If the sun should rise and find your eyes all filled with tears for me.
 I wish so much you wouldn't cry, the way you did today,
 While thinking of the many things we didn't get to say.
 I know how much you love me, please try to understand,
 That an angel came and called my name and took me by the hand
 And said my place was ready, in Heaven far above,
 And that I'd have to leave behind, all those I dearly love.
 But as I turned to walk away, a tear fell from my eye,
 For all my life, I'd always thought I didn't want to die;
 I had so much to live for and so much left to do,
 It seemed almost impossible that I was leaving you.
 I thought of all the yesterdays, the good ones and the bad,
 I thought of all the love we shared and all the fun we'd had.
 If I could relive yesterday, I thought, just for a while,
 I'd say goodbye and kiss you and maybe see you smile.
 But then I realised, that this could never be,
 For emptiness and memories would take the place of me.
 And when I thought of all the worldly things that I'd miss come tomorrow,
 I thought of you and when I did, my heart was filled with sorrow.
 But when I walked through Heaven's gates, I felt so much at home.
 Then God looked down and smiled at me, from his great golden throne.

He said

"This is eternity and all I've promised you,
 Today your life on earth is past and here it starts anew.
 I promise no tomorrows, but today will always last,
 And since each day's the day, there's no longing for the past.
 But though I promise no tomorrows, on earth to anyone,
 So many live each day so sure of seeing 'one more sun'.
 Yet each one knows that I will call and no one knows just when,
 But they will never stop to pray and ask forgiveness for their sin.
 For many I have turned away so sad at Heavens gate,
 For when I called they weren't ready, and it was much too late.
 But you have been so faithful, so trusting and so true,
 Though there were times you did some things
 You knew you shouldn't do.
 But you have been forgiven and now at last you're free,
 So won't you come and take my hand and share your life with me?"
 So when tomorrow starts without me, don't think we're far apart,
 For every time you think of me, I'm right here in your heart.

Author unknown





...that their
light may
always shine.

Light a candle for all children who have died.
2nd Sunday in December, 6:30 p.m.

The Compassionate Friends : Bereaved Parents Grief Support was founded in England 50 Years ago. Whanganui was one of the first groups to meet in NZ and though it is a group no one wants to belong to, there is unfortunately a continuing need as families experience the death of a child, grandchild, brother or sister.

Every year for the past 23 years Compassionate Friend groups around the world have united together for one night of the year for the annual **Worldwide Candlelighting**.

This is always held on the second Sunday in December at 7pm local time. It is believed to be the largest mass candle lighting in the world as time zones each honour the memory of their children from 7pm to 8pm.... As lights go out in one zone another takes over and for 24 hours a wave of light encircles the globe.

We, in Aotearoa are the first to light our candles, celebrated with a quiet elegance, we honour our loved children.

Lighting candles

The commemoration here always coincides, time and day with Whanganui's Carols by Candlelight. This year we are grateful to Rotary for sharing the Lake with us. We plan to meet beside the beautiful statue of Peter Pan - the boy who would not grow up - Peter Pan, a beloved fictional character by J.M. Barrie, can fly and lives in Neverland with the "lost boys" who fell out of their prams when their nurses were not looking. If the boys were not claimed within seven days they flew to Neverland with Peter. Peter explains there were no lost girls as they were too clever to fall out of their prams.

This delightful bronze statue beside the Virginia Lake edge, opposite the fountain, shows Peter in a child-friendly defiant attitude, hands on hips, on a tree stump. Around the stump are the lost boys, woodland creatures plus some New Zealand fauna. The English sculptor Cecil Thomas created it in 1966 and it was "given for the enjoyment of citizens young and old of beautiful Wanganui by Frank and Eleanor Burnet" unveiled by the then Governor General, Sir Bernard Fergusson. A lovely local touch are the delightful wee mice on the base of the statue, sculpted by Wanganui's own Joan Bullock Morrell.

This will be an appropriate place for us to light candles in memory of 'lost' children who have died too soon. Candles will be lit from 6.30pm, sorrowing families are invited to light a candle for their loved one and then continue on to sing carols. Go right of the carpark towards the lake - follow the footprints - Group members will stay with the lit candles 'til 8pm.

TREE Decorating On Saturday December 7th at midday. The Compassionate Friends Bereaved Parents Grief Support Group will also be at the Children's Space at Aramoho Cemetery to place Christmas tree decorations, or wind chimes in the tree that shades that special area and at the Baby Loss Memorial Wall. Our group donated the bench that sits under the tree, a serene place to sit and ponder, regardless of where your child was laid to rest.

Families who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild, brother or sister from any cause; illness, accident or suicide, at any age; baby or adult, at any time; recently or long ago are invited to join us or you may like to do this privately at another time.

Take the first left at the Cemetery, McNeill St, then third right (OBlock)

Contact : www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz or phone Keren 3443345

LIGHT A CANDLE IN MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD WHO HAS DIED

World Wide Candle Lighting: Sunday 8th December 2019 at 7pm

On the second Sunday in December at 7pm (local time) parents and families around the world (starting in Aotearoa) will light candles for one hour in remembrance of their children who have died at any age, from any cause, recently or years ago.

Passing through the world's time zones, this 24 hour candle vigil is a moving experience as families unite to visually remember their children gone too soon.

World Wide Candle Lighting was created in 1966 by the Compassionate Friends, an International organization supporting bereaved parents and has been held every year since.



Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purist white

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight
In honour and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who knew great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays
Let's light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
Aswe remember.



Candle-light Services of Love and Remembrance.

CENTRAL OTAGO/LAKES DISTRICT

Thursday 12th December, 7.00pm.

Central Stories, Alexandra.

Please bring a candle to light in memory of your loved one and a photo or memento if you wish.

For further details please contact Louise, 027 6508986

SOUTHLAND

Thursday 5th December 7pm

Hospice Southland

Please bring a photo of your child if you wish and a small plate to share

KAPITI COAST

Thursday 12th December starting at 7pm

In conjunction with Kapiti Coast Funeral Home Annual Remembrance Service

For further details please contact Anna, 04 2936349

WANGANUI

- Right of car park, towards the lake. At statue of Peter Pan

* Time 6.30pm Sunday 8th December 2018

* Candles and light refreshments will be supplied

* Bring a photo for the memory table

Contact www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz or phone Keren 3443345

CHRISTCHURCH

Tuesday 3rd December 6.30pm

44 Bealey Ave, Presbyterian Support

Madras entrance Page 5 TCF Otago Oct Nov 2019

Please bring a plate, candle and photo of your loved one



Navigating the Ebb and Flow of Grief

At almost four years after the death of my daughter, I had thought it would be easier than this. In those early days and months when my grief made it feel like I simply couldn't survive this loss, I saw others in support groups who had lost their loved ones many years before, and they seemed ok. They looked almost "normal" again. They told me it wouldn't always be like this. They said you learn to live with the pain, and it would lessen over time. They said you will eventually find joy and happiness again. They said you create a "new normal." And they were right.

I have worked hard for almost four years on working through my grief. I have faced it head on through continual counselling and support groups and still seek out ways to express my pain, so as not to hold it in and let it consume me. Along the way, I have given myself permission to smile once more, and even to allow joy to enter my heart again. I have enjoyed my other children. I have volunteered my time with The Compassionate Friends. I have created my own grief support website. I have consciously tried to focus my energies on remembering my daughter's life rather than only looking at the pain her death has brought. And yet grief remains a constant part of my life. Grief is fickle. Unpredictable. And indifferent to whatever mood I'm in.

Most days my grief lies dormant under the activities of everyday life. Little triggers will continually remind me it's there. A sad news story on the TV. A girl at the park who reminds me of my daughter. But I can go about my regular routines with no interruptions. Other times, the triggers are bigger, and the grief bubbles up and takes over my mood. Tears well up behind my eyes, ready to release at the first opportunity. My patience seems to evaporate and everyday tasks become cumbersome, meaningless, and even difficult. Usually the bursts of grief from larger triggers only last a few hours or at most a few days. But sometimes it lingers and grows.

What I didn't expect is that even coming on four years after her death, I still find myself in situations where grief becomes so overwhelming again that it feels like I've gone right back to the debilitating early days of grief. Feelings of sadness, pain, lethargy, disinterest in things I normally enjoy. Going to work becomes a struggle. Even taking care of my kids feels like a burden. I know these periods require extra attention and care, and I navigate through the best I can, asking for support along the way. I just wonder if these episodes will ease over time, or if I should just expect them to become a permanent fixture of my "new normal" life?

If the death of my daughter has taught me anything - and it has taught me A LOT - it has taught me that we have more inner strength than we can ever imagine, and that with time, attention and support, we can navigate through just about anything life might throw at us.

Maria Kubitz, TCF/Contra Costa County, CA In Memory of my daughter, Margareta

Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Afterglow

We came to the beach in Florida intending to watch the sun set over the Gulf. The sun had already disappeared over the horizon, apparently lost beyond the waters. After a brief period, emerging from where the sun had set arose a brilliant afterglow, seemingly covering the sky with a growing, pulsating display of molten gold.

I was struck by the spectacular beauty emanating from the sun already gone from view. Involuntarily I thought, just like our children! When the sunshine of their lives disappeared, we expected eternal darkness to remain. After our initial period of grief, we find that each child has left an afterglow - the memories of the beauty and joy their lives brought us.

It is incumbent upon each of us left on the beach of mortal life to allow ourselves to maintain that afterglow and continue to bring meaning to the "suns" of our lives who have disappeared from view "over the horizon."

Hopefully, we can help one another honor our children's lives by perpetuating their afterglow with our own meaningful lives of hope, optimism, and peace.

~ Toba S. Cohen, TCF/Bustleton, PA

Gratefulluy reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter News.

My dear Friends,

It's the rare child who escapes any illness or injury. For most, there are the occasional fevers and pains, cuts and bruises that hurt at the time but thankfully pass. However, sickness may come suddenly to once-healthy children and as swiftly bear them away leaving their families confused and stranded in shock. Then there are children, and we may not realize how many, who suffer serious complaints where life-threatening plunges into life-taking. Even though these deaths may not be unexpected they nevertheless leave loved ones in shock. Grief is enervating and when added to the exhaustion of having cared for a sick child over a lengthy period, families are quite depleted.

No matter how serious the illness, how dark the prognosis, we want to cling to even the slightest thread of hope. When that fails it is no consolation to be told for instance that "it's better this way, she/he would only have been a vegetable, a burden, a drain on resources ...". Such remarks are beyond tactless, they're cruel and have no conception of the love parents have for all their children, the most handicapped or diseased as well.

Of all the fierce emotions felt by griever anger is perhaps the strongest and the most common. Because the death of a child goes against what we regard as the natural order, part of that anger is often directed at God by believers. Their faith is shaken and few are consoled by being told it is God's will and must be accepted unquestioningly. The majority of us do ask why? do feel betrayed albeit for a short while. It certainly does not help to be made to feel this doubt is sinful. Bewilderment is legitimate and should be met not with condemnation but with compassion.

Non-believers and believers alike are disorientated by the incongruity of living longer than their children. Previously held certainties are smashed. What trust can there be for the future? It takes an enormous effort and an extremely long time to foster hope and confidence again. This may seem impossible at first but gradually glimmers of optimism are seen once more. The faltering sparks when tended will burst forth into brightness one day.

I hope that that day is not too far off for you.

Rosemary Dirmeik – Rosemary's book "A String of Pearls"

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

VOICES

A book of poetry

Written by

Margaret Gillanders and Sandi Legg.

Poems which feature in our newsletter from time to time.

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

To order your copy send \$5 to

TCF

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

Windsor

Oamaru

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.

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Surviving Suicide: A Mother's Search for Meaning.

How do you go on living when your child kills himself? If a mother can be only as happy as her unhappiest child, the unhappiest of mothers are those whose children have died- particularly when the death was intentional. For them, time seems doubly out of joint. It never feels right to survive a child and particularly one who has deliberately chosen to die. How to live with the gaping hole? How to stop the self-blaming? How to understand this most mysterious of actions? How to get thru the day?

I have asked Deena Baxter, author of *Surviving Suicide: Searching for "Normal" with Heartache and Humour*, to describe her experience of losing a child and to share the wisdom she has gained from it. She writes: This is the landlord in Brazil. Your son is dead." That was the moment my unwanted journey to survival began, a search for 'normal', after losing our youngest adult son to suicide – death by bipolar mental illness. Survival is a destination with no map. Cyber Siri, my iPhone "knowledge navigator," couldn't provide destination coordinates. I was left to my own devices with my home team: me, myself and I.

The priority was fulfilling our son's wish to be buried in the U.S.; easier said than done considering he left no will- but did leave a grieving Brazilian wife and a maze of Brazil laws and customs. When you lose a loved one to suicide, the family tree instantly splits - hit by a bolt of lightning: one half dies, one half survives. You can cling to the dead branches as they become brittle and break, taking you down with them; or you can tenderly nurture the surviving branches with life-affirming love and care so the remaining family tree can thrive again, in spite of the precious missing limb. I chose the second path.

Top priority was finding ways to respectfully honour our son's mind, body and spirit while holding on to mine. Meditation helped me embrace the present moment; learning to let go of the past, stop worrying about the future, and to think before I act. This clarity enabled me to put together a Survival Kit. I have added helpful tools along the way: books, compassionate friends, a support group, and more. But there is so much suffering, verging on torture, that our mind can do to us: haunting, nightmarish thoughts of our beloved child's last moments of life and not being there to save them like a good mother should. Running to the mailbox for a month, awaiting a letter of full disclosure that never comes. There is relief shrouded in guilt and sadness. The ambivalence comes with thanks that our loved one is free from the demons and despair that haunted them coupled with the infinite emptiness and pain left behind. I call this The Empty Heart Compartment: It is an irreparably broken part of my heart. Some days it feels like a crater. It is not as blistered as it once was, but it gets rubbed raw every time a new member joins my support group – surviving suicide and searching for their "new normal". It happens again on birthdays, holidays and other family milestones: The absence of our son in family photos is like a jigsaw puzzle with a piece permanently missing.

Each family's journey is different but the underlying heartache is similar. We are card-carrying members of a club in which we never sought membership. Each of us is left to build our own Survival Kit. For me, it continues to be a work-in-progress: Some tools work better than others, some get discarded, others still remain a vital part of my kit. Equally important, I carved out sacred time to talk with my husband and respect that his own journey is far different from mine. Priorities changed: I let go of tasks, some friendships a little past expired, and accepted, with sadness, that some friends turned out not to be. My journey to survival is two-years young and counting, the toddler stage: The Terrible Two's complete with the "Whys?", the "No's!" and the occasional hissy-fit. Sometimes I have a complete melt-down as I did when hearing the news about Robin Williams' suicide; causing pain so deep.

My book records my journey through heartache and discovery. It includes creative elements of irreverent, healing humour and colourful artwork by NAMI artists living with mental illness and impairment. The artwork was infused with life: It was so validating for the artists it inspired a website focused on living with mental illness (WriteOnMyMind.com) - a virtual global community where folks impacted by mental illness (patient, caregiver, family member, friend, employer or colleague) can find helpful resources and be inspired by the different ways the mind can speak - in words and in art. The global community is invited to submit artwork. All profit from book sales benefits NAMI and other mental health organizations. My hope is that this project benefits you or someone in your world, who may be dealing with loss of a loved one or friend to suicide, and prompts change.

As my search for "normal" continues, here's my "Short List" for surviving suicide:

- 1) Stay tethered and anchored to reality: Meditation, prayer, a nature walk, yoga.
- 2) Beware of guilt: It is hopelessness looking for a home. Make it a brief visit.
- 3) Have a plan: Let your heart be your guide. Do what feel right for you and those you care about.

- 4) Support: Take time for solitude and grieving but don't isolate. Build a support system. Seek professional help if needed.
- 5) Pick and choose your battles: You don't have to engage in every battle you are invited to.
- 6) Give yourself and your loved ones' permission to smile again: "There is not much laughter in medicine but there is much medicine in laughter.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

Resisting Resentment

I have been aware for years now that battling a descent into self-pity is pretty much a daily struggle. More recently, I am noticing how much I struggle with resentment.

I am at an age when many of my friends have children who are nearing adulthood or have reached adulthood. As a consequence, their lives are focused on graduations, new jobs, new apartments, weddings, and grandchildren. None of those things are happening for me and I am finding it hard. I don't resent the friends who are enjoying those life pleasures; in my own weirdly stunted way, I am happy for them. But I do resent that those things aren't going to happen for me.

Didn't I change an equal number of diapers? Didn't I nurse children through all the miseries of childhood maladies? Didn't I pack all those school lunches? Didn't I cheer at all those soccer games?

I know I did.

I know I carefully assembled Easter baskets and tried to be creative about Halloween costumes. I played Santa. I never missed a Parent/ Teacher conference. I organized elaborate birthday parties. I even provided pick-up and delivery service for a tuba for two years.

I cooked dinners for the Youth Group. I made gingersnaps and date nut bars and pumpkin streusel muffins (his favorites). I fixed daily BLTs in August when the tomatoes were ripe.

But my son will never graduate from college. He'll never get married. He'll never have a career. He won't have children. He won't call me on my birthday or negotiate with me about when and for how long to visit. And I resent it.

I go to Crate and Barrel, or Bed, Bath & Beyond, or Pottery Barn and select wedding gifts from a registry. I send checks for graduations. I buy gift cards from Target for baby showers.

And I resent it.

Peggi Johnson, TCF/Piedmont Chapter, VA
Lovingly lifted from Minneapolis Chapter

Life after my grandchild died

My 14 year old granddaughter, Erin, passed on, in 2014. My Christian faith helped me enormously at that time; without it I do not think I could have coped; it still sustains me every day and will for the rest of my time on this earth.

Since Erin died I have made a big effort to appreciate life more, as sadly I know how fragile life is. I try not to waste a precious moment worrying but try to be more positive and complain less. I also try to eat more healthily and exercise more: I garden and I walk. A lot of the words I used to use very flippantly, such as, boring, routine, fine, depressed, fed up etc, take on a different meaning now. In this wonderful world I never allow myself to be bored; routine is good and better than tragedy. I no longer use the word, 'fine'. I say, 'I am good'. I don't say 'depressed' anymore as I'm not. I no longer say 'fed up' as there is so much I am able to do that sadly Erin can't.

I include Erin in my life journey by speaking to her about where I am, how I feel - silly things and serious things. This keeps her memory alive and keeps me close to her. On the Anniversary of Erin's passing, my grandchildren write a message on a balloon and put it on Erin's tree in the garden, and on her birthday we have a Birthday Meal in a restaurant and lift our glasses for a toast. I feel that to use the precious gifts I have been given such as my body, my intellect, my characteristics to the best of my ability is honouring my lovely granddaughter.

I have changed forever since my loss, and became a better person who appreciates life more. This is my granddaughter, Erin's legacy.

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Iris Hodgson

Searching for Joy

(A survivor's story of moving on, attempting to live again while anchored to the past)

Darkness arrives without her knowing as she sits quietly mourning her thoughts. The shadows in the room fade into memories of the past, the place she often hesitates as she attempts again to push away the anguish in search of the joy she desires.

Avoiding all awareness of the mirror, she rejects the image before her, no longer recognizing who she has become, as the tears come calling again. Tired of stumbling regularly, she leans into the hurt that betrayed her, longing for a breakthrough not cloaked in sadness.

Fractured recollections are carved deep within, cutting through the skin in a tattoo, scars engraved on your heart, casting a wound with images engrained in her soul. Shaking her head, as if this will dislodge the sadness, she recalls the tear as it slid down his face, devastating her further.

He died before her, in her arms as she cradled him, saying goodbye while the shock clung to her breath. There were no words to console her; his life was ending and all that swirled within her was an invitation to join him.

There was no time to question our lives in search of a remedy. No time to call in a team of experts for help.

When loss occurs, everything is stripped away. Nothing arrives, just in time, no remedy to fix him, no lifeline to save her, the life they once shared flutters into a memory, and time continues slipping away. A shell of her former self, she is empty, and the act of going on is too overwhelming to bear, so she sleeps. But sleep is just another ruse in the mysteries of grief, waking in a fog, feeling happiness until the crash of reality sends you back to the puddle you left behind earlier, back into the sorrow that echoes from the emptiness.

Using compassion to embrace this place of grief she begins her pursuit, seeking more love, true happiness and pure joy. But joy does not just appear, it must be discovered, unearthed beneath the debris that sadness has dragged in, blanketing the life she once knew, as it masks all the dreams she previously held.

This new beginning was hers to catch, the time to uncover the obscurity and allow in the light. Exploring her motivation, she unravels the softness that she has cultivated through grief. This kindness fills her heart, captivated by the beauty she had to be taught when stumbling through heartache.

The prospect of joy continues to intrigue her, commanding her attention to pursue the changes she needs to explore. She wants joy; she wants to believe in joy again, allowing it into her heart without the fear that lingers so closely behind it.

For so long she has muddled through her life, forcing the faded smile to appear, broken and set to burst as she attempts to get through one more day. Unwrapping sad stories and heartbreak that go on unnoticed, with the tears of what was, she has to learn to move forward.

I don't remember how long it took or if there was a day that I started living again. I had fought against the current for so long, I did not notice when it changed directions. I did not feel the embrace of joy with its mixture of happiness and guilt, but it was a beginning.

(While searching for a reason to go on after losing their five-year old son Ryan, she discovered that giving back could actually save her.) Tina Zarlenga is married with two children, sharing stories of inspiration and hope, as well as her journey through grief with emotional essays of life.

~ Tina Zarlenga, TCF/Central Iowa Chapter

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Winnipeg Chapter newsletter

Like a Tsunami ...

I live in a bubble, in a new landscape It feels an unreal, surreal new existence Denial and distraction help some escape BUT reality intrudes with no pretence Strikes anytime, uninvited, unkind

Like a tsunami with its destructive wave A sharp unbidden sword sears right through me Throughout my heart, my thoughts, my soul, my mind Revealing in its wake such a ghastly truth !! My child has died ?? NO !! It cannot be true !!

Feelings peak, as I hear a sudden shrill sound Piercing all matter, that guttural scream Followed by shock-waves, I'm now on the ground I try to breath ... and I breath once again ... Stunned, shocked, in the depths of a bad bad dream

An echoing internal scream resounds I breathe in and out, a rhythm returning A softening unfolds; stark truth still burning Tears and more tears spill out, makes such a big pool A BIG pool of LOVE all around, all around Time and again the tsunami may strike me But I ride the storm with my love so sound Adding tears to the pool of love around me Memories and reflection of you I see So clear in the BIG pool of LOVE all around, ... all around ... and all around ...

Irene J Kosted Towan, my son, had such a big heart for everyone. His favourite CD was Pete Heller's "BIG LOVE". Gratefully lifted from UK Compassion Newsletter

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.

Our Boys

Can you see our boys in Heaven,
our boys so young and strong?
Can you see them up beyond the stars,
the boys for whom we long?

Do they see us and wonder
if our tears will ever end?
Our T.J., Trevor, Morgan,
our Ray and little Ben.

I hope that they can see us
and are proud of what we do,
as we fight to bring them justice
in a world that's gone askew.

I hope that they can see us
and hear us as we pray,
for God to hold them close to Him
each and every day.

Can you see our boys in Heaven?
If you shut your eyes you can.
Just until we're reunited,
in accordance with God's plan.

-Shelley Marshall Benjamin's mom

This poem was written by my friend Shelley, whose son Ben was murdered in 2001. Her heart was broken as was mine when my Trevor was murdered July 4, 2004. Shelley wrote this poem in memory of Ben, T.J., Morgan, Ray and Trevor, and on a cold October day, Shelley and I met at Floyd and Karen's house, T.J.'s mom and dad. It was from there that the 4 of us embarked on a day long journey to each of our boy's murder sites. Sounds gruesome, but it was something that only we could understand the meaning, and the need to make such a journey. At each site, (in T.J.'s case, we got as close as we could) we laid flowers, spread rose petals and read Shelley's poem. I have this poem framed at home and I read it often, more often at this time of year. I am grateful for TCF, and for everyone I have met through TCF, for without them and my family, I would not have survived the death of my son.

Always Remembered and Forever Loved, Ben, T.J., Morgan, Ray and Trevor.
Trevor, gone 15 years, how did this happen...

From Marcheta Tanner, Winnipeg:
Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

You came just after Midnight
On a cold November morn
Crying, pink and crumpled And a Mother was born

You went away years later
To do your job with pride
Happy, willing, hopeful And a Mother cried

You left the world in early hours
Of an August summertime
Alone, depressed, despairing And a Mother died.

By Jill Myers from Kiss Today Goodbye
Reprinted with thanks from Childless parent newsletter UK

<https://henryfordliverwell.com/how-coping-with-grief-can-affect-your-brain/> How Coping with Grief Can Affect Your Brain By Henry Ford Health System Staff

You've probably heard the term "baby brain" to describe the mind-numbing fog that sets in when you bring a new baby home and you're overwhelmed and under-slept. You may have also heard of "chemo brain," where people who are going through cancer treatment have trouble concentrating as a reaction to the medications swirling through their bodies. The concept of "grief brain" is less discussed, but equally real.

Effects of Grief on the Brain While many people associate grief with a loss or death, that's not always the case. People can also grieve when adjusting to any sort of new normal. "Maybe you're becoming an empty nester, or you're newly retired," says Jannel Phillips, Ph.D., a neuropsychologist at Henry Ford Health System. "The emotions you experience look similar to grief – and underneath that grief are neurological changes that take place in the brain."

In fact, several regions of the brain play a role in emotion, including areas within the limbic system and pre-frontal cortex. These involve emotional regulation, memory, multi-tasking, organization and learning. When you're grieving, a flood of neurochemicals and hormones dance around in your head. "There can be a disruption in hormones that results in specific symptoms, such as disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, fatigue and anxiety," says Dr. Phillips. When those symptoms converge, your brain function takes a hit. After all, if you're overwhelmed with grief, it stands to reason that you won't absorb your environment the same way you would when you're content.

Grief Brain "Remedies" Unfortunately, there's no magic tonic that can restore your ability to function when you're overcome with emotion. But, the following strategies may help you feel more peaceful as you find your way to a new normal.

Practice self-care. When it feels like your world is falling apart, the most important thing you can do is focus on yourself. If you take time out to eat well, exercise and sleep, you'll help your body and your mind recuperate from grief. Insufficient shut-eye is particularly challenging to the post-grief mind. "Disrupted sleep interferes with cognition and concentration," says Dr. Phillips. "Grief often leads to trouble sleeping, so you need to do what you can to establish a good sleep routine."

Take a time out. It's appropriate – even necessary – to take some time off from work and daily responsibilities to process your grief. Every situation is unique, and there's no set timeline for when you need to get back in the game. But it's important to establish a reasonable timeline so your grief doesn't run your life.

Challenge negative thought patterns. Sharing memories is healthy but ruminating on what-ifs can be mind-numbing. "It's not just that we're thinking about our loss, but also the situations tied to that loss," Dr. Phillips explains. So instead of heading down a rabbit hole of negative self-talk – maybe I should have said something, maybe I should have done something, maybe it's my fault – choose to delight in your happy memories.

Get support. If you're struggling to think straight, and get back to your daily activities, get help. Support groups can offer valuable resources to help manage grief. People who have been where you are can share tools and strategies to help you get back to living. Brief individual counselling can also be beneficial, particularly if you are struggling to complete your normal activities and interact with loved ones.

Search for the silver lining. It's not uncommon for grief to evolve into maladaptive thinking. With some practice, you can learn to reframe nearly every situation to focus on the positive. "The idea is to reframe your experience in a way that allows you to move forward with more peace," says Dr. Phillips. While there's no timetable for the grieving process, most people take steps toward getting back to their lives and responsibilities after two to three weeks.

"When grief is interfering with your relationships, your ability to parent or your work, your loss becomes even greater," Dr. Phillips says. "Most important, if your grief reaction is explosive, extreme or if you're having suicidal thoughts, get help. A doctor, therapist or counsellor can help you identify coping strategies."

Lovingly reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter

Thanks for the offer, but I don't know what I need!

We've all heard it before, from the well meaning, tilted-head friends at the funeral and in the weeks to follow: "Let me know what you need." It is, of course, a kind and often well-intentioned offer, but there is one fatal flaw: it assumes you know what you need. To be fair, on the surface, this isn't an unreasonable expectation. If a person hasn't experienced the depths of grief or some other pit of despair, it can be hard to imagine that sometimes you are just so overwhelmed you can't figure out what you need.

The reality is, no one can meet the needs that may be most pressing in your mind or give you the things you want the most. This is why you may find yourself internally screaming the response, "Yes, I need you to bring my loved one back!" or "Yes, I need you to take away this pain!" every time someone asks you if there is anything you need or anything they can do. Thinking about any other needs can feel impossible and overwhelming. You may find that you feel like you're sinking, but it isn't clear what help would help you come back up for air.

We want to talk about this basic but complex challenge: how do you figure out what you need when you have no idea what you need? First, remember your needs might not all look directly like grief needs. When you lose someone, your life is shattered. One person disappears and it can feel like everything else falls out of place. We call those other things "secondary losses". Getting support from others is not always about that primary loss, often it is finding support for one of those secondary losses.

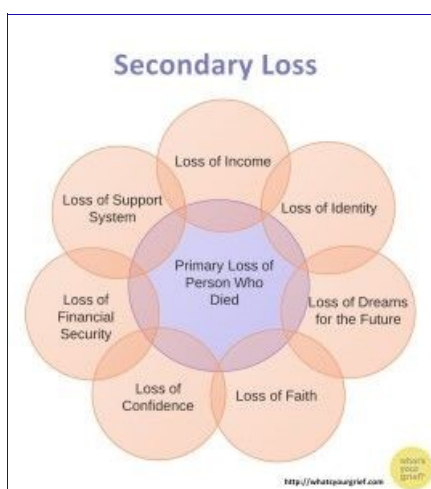
In some cases, it may be practical, logistical support you need. When you're feeling completely overwhelmed, it can be helpful to consider that you have needs in all the different areas of loss you are go-

ing through.

In others, it may be emotional support – someone to let you cry, remember and listen without judgment.

Finally, it may be just support related to your general well-being — things and people who will help boost your mood and reconnect with yourself. As with many things in grief, it is helpful to take it step by step.

Each day we encourage you to increase your awareness around your greatest "pain points". These don't have to be grief specific. Anything in your life that is a stressor may be part of your grief or making it more



difficult to cope with your grief, so it is important to consider any needs that can ease your overall suffering in a given day. To do this, you will need to become aware of the moments in your day that cause the most pain, bring up complex emotions, are the most physically taxing, the most mentally taxing, and create the most stress. Write them down during the day, either on your phone or on a sheet of paper.

If it is helpful, you may want to look at your needs in three categories:

Practical/logistical needs: Whether it is childcare, grocery shopping, filing taxes, mowing the lawn, etc, there are often countless concrete needs we have. Knowing what these are can make it easier to ask people in your support system for the help or take them up an offer.

Grief needs: Though all needs may be connected to grief, some are cer-

tainly more explicitly so. You may realize your need is for people who you can share memories with, or someone to be comfortable with your tears. You may need someone who wants to help you memorialize your loved one or join you in advocacy work. Whatever the case, you may realize you are feeling very alone in honoring and remembering and it is time to reach out to others.

Well-being needs: These needs fall somewhere outside of just the grief experience, and are things that simply help with our overall well-being. This can be anything from needing that push to get off the gym to needing someone to be social with (or at the very least, grab a coffee). It can be anything from painting to writing to photography that you know would boost your mood and well-being, but that you keep avoiding.

The important thing is to slowly begin increasing your daily self-awareness about what is difficult. At moments that you feel stressed or overwhelmed, make a note of what is creating that experience. At the end of a day, rather than just saying "this day is terrible," instead outline what has made it so challenging. As you do this over time, you may see trends emerging, areas big and small where some small help from others could make your days just a little bit earlier.

Others are unable to provide support if you can't tell them what you need, so just knowing your needs is the first step to receiving support. First become more aware of your needs and second, identify who might help you meet those needs. Whether your support system can or will meet these needs is impossible to predict, but identifying the need and asking for help is the first step.

This article was lifted from whatyourgrief.com and reprinted in TCF Queensland Newsletter



Sibling Page



Do I Have To?

Mom, do I have to stop loving my brother
because he is not here?
Will I forget all about him
because he's not near?
I remember all the things we did together,
even though we were very young.
I laugh and feel warm each time
I think of a particularly funny one.
Sometimes I get so angry
that he's no longer here to share,
But I know he knows it's only
because of how much I still care.

I miss him, so
even though at times we didn't agree,
Just knowing he was there
made things feel safe for me.
He always felt he had to be
my strong, protective big brother,
And that's a bond we'll always share
forever with each other.
He tried to protect me even when
he, too, was just scared.
No, I won't stop loving that big brother of mine,
Not now, not ever,
not till the end of time.
He will always be a part of what makes me be me.
And that's the part of our love that will live eternally.

Jackie Rosen TCF N. Dade/S. Broward, FL
Lifted with thanks from TCF Minneapolis Chapter newsletter

Washing the Family Car

As the water began to bead
across the hard black surface,
my mind slipped into a memory.
Back to a time when a smile
could fix the pain
and mortality was not questioned.
You and I played during the dreary
task of washing the family car.
Rinsing turned into a water fight.
Soapy sponges became weapons,
and upside down buckets served
as our fortress.
This dull chore became an adventure,
a game shared only by you and I.
Drenched, the giggles slowly subsided
and we turned to complete
the more serious side of our labor.
We began to dry off the car.
As the memory faded, so did my smile.
With forlorn my mind came back
to the present.

I had my own serious task to complete,
So I picked up a towel to dry off your headstone.

Adele Rosales, TCF/Ventura, CA In memory of my
sister, Anita

Reprinted with thanks from TCFWinnipeg Chapter
Newsletter



“It was a long journey out of the darkness, But once I discovered what my purpose was, I began to heal.” By Heidi Horsley

When I was twenty years old, my seventeen year old brother and seventeen year old cousin were killed together in a car accident. This tragic event turned my world upside down and put everything I ever believed into question. I didn't know how I was going to survive, or even if I wanted to. This was not the life I had planned, it was not the life I had signed up for, and it was not the life I wanted. At twenty years old, I had to face the rest of my life without my brother. None of my friends had ever had a sibling die and they couldn't relate, they wanted me to get over it, and find closure. We don't get over a loss, we learn to live without the person in our lives. As for closure, it's for bank accounts, not love accounts.

An Unacknowledged Loss The death of my brother was a double loss. I had lost not only my brother, but also the parents I once knew. I felt extremely guilty that my only brother had died, and my parents still had three living daughters. I have since learned that survivor guilt is normal among siblings. After all, Scott carried the family name, was extremely athletic, popular, and was adored by his sisters. He was very easy going and was an all around great guy.

I hid my grief from my parents because I was trying to be a good daughter and didn't want to cause them more pain. I worried a lot about my parents, as they had lost their only son. I even felt guilty grieving since my parents had experienced the loss of a child.

After Scott's death my parents received hundreds of condolence cards—I received one. I felt my grief was overlooked and unacknowledged by the world. When I told people I had a brother who died, they would reply, "wow that must have been very hard for your parents," or, "be strong for your parents, they have been through a lot." And while it was very hard for my parents, it was also hard for me. I felt lost and alone and didn't know how I was going to make it without my brother in my life.

Finding Meaning After Loss Several months after Scott's death I went on an Outward Bound survival program in the Colorado Mountains, a program Scott had done the year before. Prior to boarding the plane my father handed me Victor Frankl's book *Man's Search For Meaning*. This book had a profound effect on my healing journey. It's the story of how Victor Frankl survived the Holocaust and found the will to live, even after his entire family perished in the concentration camps. Frankl quotes Nietzsche in the book, "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how." In other words: if you have meaning and purpose in your life, you will be able to get through each day. I realize that I am on this earth to help others who have experienced loss, and to give a voice to the bereaved. Scott's death has defined my life, but in no way has it destroyed my life. I have found hope and joy again. Though my brother is no longer on this earth, he continues to have a profound influence on my life.

In 1998, I gave birth to my son Alexander and it was such a joy to know that he had some of the same genetic makeup as my brother. I always wanted to give Alexander the gift of a sibling, since the sibling experience has been so important to me. When I held my daughter Samantha, I knew she was the daughter I was always meant to have. My children are extremely close, and it is such a joy to see them together—it brings back so many wonderful memories of my own childhood. Today my life is filled with joy and I have met so many incredible people in my grief journey. I once again have passion, meaning, and purpose in my life. Although I am poorer for having lost Scott, I am so much richer for knowing him for seventeen years. Although he is gone, his memory remains forever in my heart and he is my guiding light!

Dr. Heidi Horsley, is Executive Director and Founder of the Open to Hope Foundation, an internet based resource offering hope for those grieving a death. Heidi serves on the National Board of Directors for The Compassionate Friends, USA in NYC and has co-authored eight books.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance self-help organisation offering friend-ship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

The primary purpose is to assist them in the positive resolution of grief experienced upon death of a child and to support their efforts to achieve physical and emotional health.

The secondary purpose is to provide information and education about bereaved parents and siblings. The objective is to help those in their community, including family, friends, employers, co-workers and professionals to be supportive.



Do you need to talk? Our telephone friends are willing to listen.. Telephone Friends

DUNEDIN	Anne Lelena (Son Colin 22yrs Suicide)	03- 455 9274
DUNEDIN	Ngairie Penny (Marlene, 18yr old daughter MVA Nov '91)	03- 455 5391
DUNEDIN	Alexis Chettleburgh (22 yr old son, suicide.)	03-4777649
	Corinda Taylor (Son, 20 years, suicide)	021 2930094
CENTRAL OTAGO	Wilma Paulin (Son & Daughter, 6yrs & 3mths)	03-4493213
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Pessione (16 yr old daughter, accidental)	03-4487800 janpessione@xtra.co.nz
QUEENSTOWN	Arlette Irwin	03 4510108
CENTRAL OTAGO	Jan Johnson, Adult son, Neville, cancer	03 4488360
CENTRAL OTAGO	Louise McKenzie (David, 14yr, accident) Central Otago Co-ordinator	03 4486094 louise.mckenzie@xtra.co.nz
INVERCARGILL	Linda Thompson. (Ryan, 16yrs, Cardiac Failure. Dec 2001) Southland Co-ordinator*	03-2164155 027 390 9666
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	04 9387212 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

www.thecompassionatefriends.org.nz

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1493888227582838/>

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