

OUR CHILDREN

This page is for parents or siblings to register their loved ones name and birth and death dates.
Children whose anniversary or birth dates occur in the months that the newsletter covers, appear here.

We have recently updated names and if you were expecting to see your child's name here and it hasn't appeared, please email or contact me as I may not have received your update.

Lesley Henderson
tcf.nz@hotmail.co.nz 021 2155 279

The human heart has the extraordinary capacity to hold
and transform the sorrows of life.
—Jack Kornfield

Our Children ... Remembered with love
Forever Young Forever Loved Forever Longed For

Richard Craig Bell—11th September 1987-21st January 2005

Jaylene Bennett-Young—19th March 1995-17th October 2001

Vanessa Oatley—5th October 1977-17th June 2023

Micheal (Mickey) Park-ithell— Born and Died 18th September 2012

Hayden Pope—18th October 1990-11th August 2008

Ross Anthony Francis Templeton—22nd June 1996-29th November 2017

Hayden Alistair Watson—21st October 1981--11th April 1997

Deepest apologies to Linda MacDonald and family for omitting their
child's name last newsletter.

Thomas Craig MacDonald—3rd March 1991-25th May 2008.

Hello Friends,

As the year passes so quickly, and spring approaches, it is lovely to have some warmer days and longer days. It makes it all the more pleasurable to get outside and do some gardening, go for walks or just sit and enjoy the day. I hope you all take some opportunity to spend some time in the fresh air and sunlight, I think it not only makes us feel happier, but sunlight has many other health benefits. And if we can get ourselves motivated to do some physical exercise, this in turns seems to give us more energy.

As Father's day approaches, I find myself often thinking of Ben's Dad and all the other bereaved father's out there. And I know I'm not the only one. You have often been there for us Mum's, with a hug or a touch, or just a kind word and often we don't say thank-you enough. There is a lot more understanding these days, on the effect of grief and bereavement on men, and hopefully more opportunities for bereaved fathers to talk about their emotions and feelings. It can be difficult for wives, partners and friends to broach the subject though. We realise, that although we don't need you to be strong and staunch, often, you place this pressure on yourself and many men still do not want to expose themselves and their deepest feelings and emotions, for fear they will be judged negatively. Please believe me that this is not the case. If you get the chance to talk with your partner, friends or another bereaved father, don't worry about how you may appear. We know you grieve, we know that the pain is there for you as it is for mothers and talking does help. I do hope you find some comfort and inspiration from this months newsletter, use the list of telephone friends on the back page if you have no-one near to talk to and most of all be kind to yourself. Take some time out to remember your beloved child/children, and also take time to spend with your loved ones, partner, children, friends.

Lesley Henderson.

"You don't just lose someone once"

You lose them over and over, sometimes many times a day.

When the loss, momentarily forgotten,
creeps up, and attacks you from behind.

Fresh waves of grief as the realization hits home, they are gone.

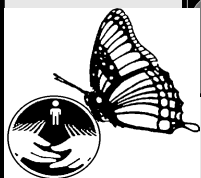
You don't just lose someone once,
you lose them every time you open your eyes to a new dawn,
and as you awaken, so does your memory,
so does the jolting bolt of lightning that rips into your heart, they are gone.
Again.

Losing someone is a journey, not a one-off.
There is no end to the loss,
there is only a learned skill on how to stay afloat,
when it washes over.

Be kind to those who are sailing this stormy sea,
they have a journey ahead of them,
and a daily shock to the system each time they realize, they are gone,
Again.

You don't just lose someone once,
you lose them every day,
for a lifetime.

Donna Ashworth, TCF/Victoria, AU



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

(Otago Chapter) Incorporated
Founded December 1989

A WORLD WIDE FAMILY OF BEREAVED PARENTS CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

NEWSLETTER NO: 214

SPRING 2026

Saying their name doesn't
"bring it all back."

It brings them back.

And for a moment, they're here again.

In our stories,
in our laughter, and in our tears.

Because grief doesn't get to say the final
word.

Love does.

And love, when spoken aloud,
Has a heartbeat.

Jameson Arasi
Facebook

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

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

TO

Some Thoughts About Father's Day

This time of year we are told that fathers can cry, they can mourn, they don't have to be "strong" nor hold back or "bottle it up." That is good advice because there are men who are inhibited and hold back. They bottle up their grief, deny themselves expression, they may appear to be weak to themselves or others, or because they feel it is their duty to be strong.

They need to know they can grieve, any way they must. They need to know that expressing their grief produces an added healing dimension to their life, with no penalty in cost, pain or time.

Many fathers grieve, but not openly, but I think privacy is involved. Long ago, I decided I would mourn as I pleased, but I would do so in private. I don't care; how I mourn is no one else's business but mine. I'm sure other fathers feel the way I do and keep their mourning private. I do grieve and I intend to keep on grieving as long as necessary. And I will go to great trouble to maintain my privacy while I grieve. If that is being inhibited, well, I just don't care.

As a father you must be careful not to be trapped by one stereotype while trying to avoid another. You need not go about wailing and gnashing your teeth in order to avoid being labeled as cold and unresponsive. If you feel comfortable crying in public, by all means do so. But if you want to be private, by all means be private. That's okay, too.

This Father's day and any day, mourn as you please.

Robert Lierman, Rockford, IL

Reprinted with thanks from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

The difference between fathers and mothers dealing with grief (article) by helpwithgrief.org

I write this at the risk of promoting stereotypes but I think it is important to discuss differences in how fathers and mothers tend to grieve. This discussion will certainly not completely apply to any particular couple but I hope there is enough useful information to help fathers and mothers better understand and support each other. I will use the terms "husband" and "wife" while acknowledging that these terms do not necessarily apply to all parental units.

In our culture women tend to form close relationships with other women, and these relationships are typically excellent sources of support during challenging times. Women usually expect to be able to share their joys and their sorrows with their close friends and family members. When a child dies, it is normal for a mother to turn to her support system for comfort. Sometimes it is hard for a husband to understand why his wife needs to talk about the death so much. It might seem to him that talking with her friends and family about the death only makes his wife more upset.

Men sometimes wonder why women seem to dwell on what happened instead of moving on. On the other hand, women frequently share with me that it seems as if their husbands are not grieving. Women tend to view not talking about the child as abnormal, and maybe even a sign that the father does not care as much as the mother. Men's tendency to "stay busy" following a child's death is also viewed in a negative way by many women. I have talked with many mothers and fathers following the death of a child, and I have developed a view of how the genders typically cope with the death of a child.

Mothers usually have a deep need to remember in obvious ways, and so they talk about the child and everything that happened. They watch videos, make scrapbooks, hang pictures, and they talk a lot. Mothers are more open with their grief, and therefore their pain and functional limitations are usually quite obvious. In our society, men are expected to fix things and when a child dies, a father is confronted with the reality that this is not something he can fix. Not only is his child gone, but typically his wife is in deep and obvious pain and he is helpless to fix that. Conditioned to "do something", it is completely understandable to me that many men retreat from their wife's grief into their work, where they can actually accomplish something most days.

Something else that I have observed over the past few years is the profound loneliness of a bereaved father. Men are not usually allowed the privilege of close friendships the way women are in our society, and so often men rely on their wives for their primary source of emotional support. When a couple loses a child, the wife turns to her friends/family while the husband is faced with the loss of his child AND his primary support system – his wife. This is nobody's fault but it is very often a reality.

Mothers and fathers may express their grief in different ways, but I am convinced that expression (or lack thereof) is not an indicator of depth of grief. Men and women both suffer profoundly and deeply when they lose a child, even if their grieving looks different. Differences in grief do not have to drive couples apart.

The first thing that can help is to remember that it is perfectly normal for people to express grief in different ways. Second, it is also normal to cope with grief in different ways, and we certainly see this in every couple that loses a child. Judging another person's grief is not helpful or loving, and so mothers and fathers need to aim for acceptance with each other. Third, it is very important not to use grief as a measure of love. A parent whose grief is more private did not love that child any less simply because s/he is not as open with feelings.

In addition to being gentle and accepting of our partner's grief experience, couples can support each other by actively working on their relationship. A child's legacy should not be the destruction of his/her parents' relationship and so it is a tribute to the child you both love to work on the relationship. Think back to a time when your relationship was happy – what did you do together? What did you talk about? Make a list and then start doing those things from a happier time. The death of a child is a big strain on a relationship but it does not mean a marriage or relationship is doomed to failure! Understanding and respecting differences in the expression of grief is important and so is making time for the relationship. Take that other parent – the one your sweet child loved so much – and do something kind and loving in honour of your child.

Sometimes relationships need help, and that is certainly available. Marriage counsellors can help couples find a smoother path again. If a counsellor seems like a good idea, be prepared to shop around for one that seems compatible with you and your spouse. Also, look for one that has experience both with couples and also with grief. There are wide variations of normal grief in both men and women. Differences in the expression of grief and coping should not be seen as a problem, but simply as differences. Children's memories are honoured when we continue to love, respect and support the other parent through the difficult – but shared – loss of that child.

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg 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.

A Gift From Another Father

Like most men I know, I was raised to be “strong,” and when things became difficult, you either dealt with it on your own, headed to the bar or a combination of both. I subscribed to this way of thinking for most of my life. I can honestly say I never saw a grown man cry while I was growing up. I’m sure they did, but they did it when they were by themselves out of fear of being perceived as “weak.”

As a result of this, I had always fought off the temptation to cry during sad times. Even after the loss of my first child, I tried to fight it off every day and when I couldn’t hold it in any longer, I would let my emotions breakdown when I was by myself.

About eighteen months after the loss of our first baby, my wife and I lost another baby. I couldn’t hold in the pain, and I couldn’t be “strong” anymore. I had become a broken man. I was at the point where the burden of carrying so much pain became too much for me to manage. I began thinking I had something physically wrong with me. I was having various physical symptoms that were unexplained. I would wake up crying, having feelings of dread, nervousness, headaches and loss of interest in things I used to find intriguing.

I decided to make myself go to my doctor to tell him about my conditions to see if he could run some tests on me to find out what was going on. As soon as he closed the door to his office and asked me how I was doing, I started to bawl. I couldn’t get my words out and it took me a minute or two to compose myself. I told him about all of the physical symptoms I was having and asked him what he thought it might be. He responded with a word I never thought I would ever hear as a description of me. “Depression.” I told him I didn’t believe him, and I wanted to have him run some blood tests on me. On my way out of the office he gave me a card for a counselor and told me to call them while he ran the blood tests on me. The blood tests came back normal.

I made a call to the counselor’s office for an appointment the following day. I remember the sense of embarrassment I had the first time I walked into the waiting room of the counselor’s office. I didn’t make eye contact with anyone sitting there out of fear of being recognized by someone I knew. I didn’t want anyone to think that there was something “wrong” with me. Even though I knew that there was something desperately wrong going on inside of me. I didn’t tell anyone other than my wife how I was truly feeling. It took several months of weekly meetings before I had the courage to tell someone other than my wife and the counselor how I was doing.

I was starting to see a correlation between telling my story over and over again and the fact the anxiety was starting to lift. I cried every time I told my story. I even got to where I was telling strangers, but I noticed a compassion for others. I wasn’t looking for sympathy, but I realized some people were more than willing to listen—truly listen. Once, when I was meeting with a woman who owned a small public relations business when we started just talking about things we had been going through. She was dealing with a very bad divorce and a child with special needs, while I was dealing with the loss of two children. We shed tears as we told each other our stories, and she asked me if I minded if she gave my name to a group of men that did yearly weekend retreats for men dealing with difficult circumstances. I was hesitant, but she assured me she thought I would really benefit from the event. Reluctantly, I agreed.

A few days passed and I had forgotten about her offer when I received a phone call and an official invitation to the event. Within a couple of weeks I found myself gearing up for it. I had no idea what to expect and was a little uneasy about spending a weekend with a bunch of guys talking about their “feelings.” The event was held at a local church, and that also made me uneasy. Was it going to be a bunch of men sitting around all weekend reading the Bible? The thought of going away for a weekend retreat at a church was a little outside my comfort zone.

However, I had made a commitment to go, so I went. That weekend, I met other guys who were dealing with all types of issues, and I realized I wasn’t alone in my emotional pain. I decided to

attend weekly meetings in order to start preparing for the following year's retreat. During that time, I was asked to be a facilitator and presenter at the next retreat.

For an hour, as the opening presenter in a room of about thirty men from all walks of life, I told my story of heartbreak at the loss of my two beautiful babies. There were times I sobbed but, to my surprise, I noticed many of the men wiping away their own tears. When I finished my presentation, I left the room and walked into a vacant room next door where most of the refreshments were. I walked over to a window that was open to get some fresh air and compose myself. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see that someone was rapidly approaching me. An elderly man grabbed both of my hands as he stood sobbing, tears streaming down his face. He said, "You've been to hell and back haven't you?" I just shook my head and said, "Yeah,"

There it was; a gift from another father acknowledging what I had been through. He wasn't telling me that I would get through it, that everything would be fine, to toughen up or to hang in there. He wasn't trying to run from the uncomfortable discussion. He engaged me in the conversation. He was being human without societal rules on how you should converse with another man. He was simply acknowledging the pain and the journey I had traveled and survived.

What he gave me that day was the gift of acknowledgement, empathy and compassion. I suspect it had something to do with the fact that he had lived many years and had figured out that since we do not have to travel difficult journeys alone, we shouldn't let others do it either.

Kelly Farley Grief Digest, 2010 Kelly Farley is a bereaved father who has experienced the loss of his two children over an eighteen-month span. He lost his daughter, Katie, in 2004 and his son, Noah, in 2006. During that time, he realized that there is a lack of support available to fathers suffering such a loss. As a result, he is working on his first book as a resource for grieving dads. He is on a mission to bring awareness to men's grief and provide hope to the many men who often grieve in silence due to societal expectations.

Lifted with love from TCF Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

Imagine someone spills a container of glitter all over your home. At first, it's everywhere on the floor, in your clothes, in your hair, and in places you didn't even know existed. You clean and clean, but you can't get rid of it all.

Grief is like that glitter.

After a death, reminders of the person seem to be everywhere. A song, a favorite food, a birthday, a familiar scent, or an ordinary moment can suddenly bring a wave of sadness. Over time, you clean up most of the glitter. Daily life becomes more manageable, and the reminders aren't constant. But the glitter never completely disappears.

Years later, you might open a drawer, hear a laugh that sounds like theirs, or visit a place you shared, and it's like finding another tiny speck of glitter. It catches the light, and for a moment, you're reminded of them. The grief isn't necessarily as overwhelming as it once was, but it's still part of your life.

Sharing this as a reminder to myself and others that grief doesn't disappear, it simply changes over time. It's okay to still find pieces of grief along the way.

Yasmin Gibson [#grief #loss #friendship](#)
Facebook



Journaling – How to Start

Journaling has long been viewed as an effective coping strategy for people dealing with grief. This is because privately filling a page with words, images or more can be a completely freeing exercise, allowing you to express your thoughts and emotions without fear of judgement from the outside world. It can help with self-reflection, giving you a way to sort through any muddled or complicated feelings, and it can help you to understand your grief from a different perspective when you start to write things down. Your journal can become your own private and safe place to let your thoughts out, and it's somewhere you can go whenever you need to. You are in control of what you write, how often you write and when you write. This can be really healing when life feels out of control.

What is a grief journal? Your grief journal can be whatever you decide you want it to be: a space to hold memories, a notebook of your personal feelings or a conversation with the person you're grieving for. It can be somewhere private for you to express your thoughts; both the ones you understand and the ones that don't make sense just yet. And it can also be a place for you to reflect on your journey through grief over time, recognising progress and noticing change. Ultimately though, it's yours to create and use in any way that feels right for you.

The benefits of keeping a grief journal The benefits that come with keeping a grief journal will depend on how you use it, but it's common for journaling to help people: become more aware of their emotions make sense of their thoughts as they write them down feel uncensored, unjudged and free to express whatever is on their mind keep their memories safe feel less stressed find sleep more restful reflect on their grief journey and notice how it is changing over time. The process of journaling in itself helps us to slow down and be more reflective. As you transform your internal world of feelings into words or images on a page, you might find that your grief starts to feel more manageable.

What can you put in your grief journal? There are no rules when it comes to what you can put in your grief journal. Three swear words might be enough for one entry, while another day might see you write three pages of thoughts instead. It's your personal space to write, draw, scribble or stick down anything that you want. Some things that come out might be unexpected or scary, but that's OK. It's just part of the process of expressing yourself, and you may even feel a sense of relief when they are out on a page rather than just inside of you.

Grief journal prompts to help you get started Although the freedom that comes with starting a grief journal may be exciting to some people, we also know that trying to fill a blank page with your thoughts or feelings can be intimidating too. That's why, we've pulled together a list of written prompts to help you get started.

Today, I am really missing... You may want to write about the person you're grieving for; what they look like, how you remember them, or what you'd want to say to them if they were here.

The hardest moment today was... You could focus your journal entry on what you found difficult about your day, or spend some time exploring how you might be able to cope differently next time.

I have been feeling... You might not always feel comfortable talking to the people in your life about how you feel, but your journal can be a safe space for you to express your emotions.

Something that helped me cope today was... Keeping a record of what has helped you feel better can be useful to refer back to during the more difficult moments of your grief. You might want to note down conversations with friends, podcast series or anything that's made you smile that day.

My favourite memory of you is... Use your journal as a way to collect and reflect on the photographs, moments or stories you want to keep close.

I wish the people around me knew... If you're not sure how to say the things you want to say to the people around you, try writing your thoughts down first. This can give you the chance to make sense of them before you start your conversations.

Today, I'm going to practise self-care and try to... It's common for people to forget to take care of themselves when they're grieving. That's why taking the time to set out what self-care activity you're going to try can be a helpful reminder to make your well-being a priority.

Getting started with grief journaling If you feel ready to try journaling, here are some top tips to help you get started. Pick your journal Do you want lined paper in your journal, or would you prefer blank pages instead? Do you want a particular colour or size, or are you looking for a digital way to journal instead? The choices may seem overwhelming, but remember that you can always change your mind. Sometimes it's better to start with what you have and figure out what's right for you along the way.

Bianca says, “I worked with a client on this and they started to write on loose pieces of paper, keeping them safe in a metal box. On the last day of every month, they would look at them to see if they wanted to take any of those thoughts and feelings into the new month. What didn’t make it was burnt, and the rest was reviewed again a month later, alongside the newer additions. This way, the client could see and feel that things were changing and it helped them feel unstuck. It also made them feel like they had choice and control in a journey of mastering of their grief.”

Explore your thoughts Remember not to be too strict about what you can or can’t put in your journal and don’t worry about making mistakes. Experimenting is all part of how you learn to make sense of your grief and what it means for your life moving forwards. Try to stay consistent Set achievable goals to help you stay motivated in the beginning. This might be trying to journal once a week or once a day if you feel like it, but don’t be too hard on yourself if things don’t go to plan. Take the time you need and pick it back up when you feel ready. Sometimes having a particular place and routine to writing your journal can help, or, you may want to have it nearby you so you can react to your feelings in the moment and use it spontaneously.

Re-read what you’ve written Don’t worry if you feel differently when looking back over previous entries. That’s all part of your grief journey, and taking the time to reflect on it can help you to realise just how far you’ve come. It can also be a place to collect special memories of the person you have lost, and re-reading this over time can be healing and help you to feel close to them.

Gratefully reprinted from TCF Johannesburg Chapter Newsletter



Bereaved Parents of the USA's Post

Bereaved Parents of the USA

January 15 at 1:25 AM ·

Losing a child is not something a heart is built to survive—yet somehow, parents do.

It breaks every part of you. It shatters the future you imagined. It changes the way you breathe, the way you wake up, the way you move through the world. Nothing feels safe anymore. Nothing feels certain. Time keeps going, but your life stops where your child’s did.

You don’t just miss them. You ache for them. In your bones. In your chest. In the quiet moments and the loud ones. In the milestones that come and go without them standing there.

It’s waking up every day to a reality you never wanted.

It’s learning how to carry unbearable pain and still show up.

It’s loving someone so much that their absence rewrites who you are.

There is no right way to grieve a child.

There is only learning how to breathe around the hole they left behind.

And this is a pain no parent should ever have to carry.

I.R.

Facebook

The Quiet Comfort:

how pets can help during loss and grief

by Alice Needham, director, TCFV (Victoria, Australia)

Grief after the loss of a child is a journey no one expects to walk. It is raw, personal and often isolating. During these moments of sorrow, many find comfort in unexpected places - including the quiet companionship of a pet.

Unconditional presence

Animals don't ask questions or offer advice. They sit with us, often sensing our sadness without needing to understand it. A pet's presence can be grounding, a gentle reminder that you're not entirely alone, even in your deepest grief.

Gentle routine

Grieving can make it difficult to find purpose in the everyday. Pets, by their very nature, bring a soft structure to life. Feeding them, walking them, caring for them - these small acts of love can help you move through each day, one moment at a time.

Comfort without words

Petting a dog or cat, listening to the soft chirps of a bird, or watching fish glide through water can bring a surprising sense of calm. Research shows that interacting with animals reduces stress and promotes emotional healing, often without a single word spoken.

A safe space for grief

You can cry in front of a pet. You can talk or stay silent. There's no pressure to be "okay", pets accept you just as you are, and their constant, nonjudgmental presence creates a safe space to feel all that you need to feel.

Honouring your child's memory

For some families, a new pet becomes part of their healing journey, a tribute to the child they lost. Others find comfort in caring for the pet that their child loved, keeping a piece of their memory alive in the everyday moments. These relationships don't replace what has been lost, but they can become a gentle thread of connection, something meaningful, soft and healing.

If you already have a pet, you may know firsthand the comfort they can bring. If you don't, consider spending time with animals through volunteering or pet therapy programmes. Even brief moments with a gentle companion can bring warmth in the coldest seasons of grief.

In your journey, you know this: you are not alone. And sometimes the smallest companions can walk with us in the biggest ways.

TCF UK

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

What could I have done
On that dreadful, fateful night,
To convince you that life's victories
Were worth every minute of the fight?

What could I have said?
What words of wisdom had I to impart,
That would perhaps have mended
Your badly broken heart?

Could I have convinced you
That life could be gentle and be kind?
Could I have shifted the direction
Of the windmills of your mind?

These questions remain unanswered,
And lives are forever altered
By one frozen moment in time
When you stumbled and you faltered!

All the love I had for you
Was not enough, it seems,
To stop the silence of the night from breaking
With the "shot" that shattered dreams!

Though you chose to leave this earth,
Your soul did not depart.
For a piece of you remains forever
Nestled in the corner of my heart.

Sherri Johnson
Lovingly lifted from TCF/Atlanta
And reprinted in TCF Winnipeg Chapter news



POETRY / MEMORY CORNER

You are all invited to submit poem's, in memory of your child/children. These may be original poems or one that you have read which means something to you and your loved ones. Please remember to add the authors name if known.

Steep Learning Curve

by Louise Boddy

I've learned my body is made of tears,
that grief is not just felt
but carried
in muscle, in breath, in bone.
I've learned that looking at the clouds,
standing quietly in nature,
can soothe something raw and visceral in me
as if the earth knows how to hold sorrow
when people do not.
I've learned the heart breaks
the way a leg breaks
suddenly, irreversibly
but the heart never fully repairs.
It learns only how to bear weight again,
crooked, altered,
forever tender at the fault line.
I've learned that I am not who I was before.
I have changed.
I have been reshaped.
I am now made of sadness and happiness,
an uneasy contradiction.
But I can feel moments of joy,
small, fragile ones,
because this life is still a gift,
even as it costs me everything.
I've learned that any joy now comes
with an edge,
an awareness of what has been cruelly snatched
away,
an appreciation sharpened by absence.
To live is to hold gratitude in one hand
and loss in the other.
All the while carrying the weight of you,
my child,
your absence pressed against my chest
with every breath I take.
And I know this
I would choose the twenty-seven years
I had with you
over nothing at all.
But this story is all we have.

Changing of the Seasons
The changing of the seasons
Always make me blue
Never use to, now they do.

Now I cry...
Cry for the life Gregory never got to live
Cry for all the people who never got to know him
His sense of humor, his beautiful eyes, his smile
All he had to offer

Cry for all the children who had to suffer
And never had a chance,
all they had to offer
Spring,
Summer,
Autumn,
Winter Rebirth,
prime,
aging,
death
Changing of the seasons,
How they make me blue.

Peggy Satinover Kaiser, Buzzards Bay, MA. TCF
Greater Providence Chapter
Gratefully reprinted from TCF Minneapolis



Guest blogs

August is the month my life changed

POSTED ON 25 AUGUST 2021 AT 23:04

I'm writing this in mid-August.

August is the month my life changed - 13 years ago.

I was a happy and fulfilled working mum, – juggling a satisfying career with bringing up 3 boys, which was stressful at times, but I was managing fine.

I work on a freelance basis and always took August off to spend time with the children during the summer holidays. That August we had been camping in a very wet and muddy Devon and had returned to the mad rush of getting all the back-to-school stuff sorted before I flew off to cover a conference. Joe (11), my eldest, was starting secondary school, so there was lots of new uniform, sports kit, etc, to purchase. I was running around sorting everything out as was my norm.

Then, wham. The day that changed everything. Joe died. He had an out the blue, completely unexpected, asthma attack and literally fell down dead.

My life also stopped that day. How do you move forward after something like that? I didn't know. I was paralysed by grief. I was a complete wreck. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't stop crying. Making a cup of tea was an enormous challenge. How could I possibly look after my two younger sons who were 7 and 8, cope with my grief, and their grief, earn a living. How could I even stay alive in a world without Joe? He was such a kind and sensitive child. He was turning into a wonderfully emotionally-intelligent young man. He was my best friend and a fantastic big brother to Jack and Ben. I didn't want to live without him. The mountain ahead was just too enormous, and I didn't have the energy or the inclination to try and climb it.

It's now 13 years later. How did that happen? I'm honestly not sure. I can't remember a lot about the first year or two. I know I was very dysfunctional. I couldn't work, so I didn't. I didn't care that we didn't have any money and the bills were piling up. I somehow managed to do the basics for my other two boys, in between long bouts of painful tears.

Finding TCF was an absolute Godsend for me. Friends and family didn't know what to do with me. They couldn't understand why I wasn't "getting better". I needed to find others who had walked this path – how did they do it? I remember going to my first TCF group meeting. Walking in and seeing all these people who looked normal, they had nice clothes on, and they were LAUGHING with each other. I remember thinking I couldn't have come to the right place. These couldn't possibly be bereaved parents. And if they were, they couldn't have possibly lost a child they loved as much as I loved Joe. But when they started telling their stories I saw their emotion and realized their losses were similar to mine. How on earth were they still here and able to smile?

I came away from that first meeting with some hope – if they could do it, so could I. I felt a little less lost. One of the phrases I heard a lot at TCF meetings was "one day at a time" and that became a mantra for me. I got through the next few years one day at a time. Just doing the basics.

One small task at a time. I would write a list of things I needed to do each day – have a shower, do the grocery shopping, cook dinner, pay a bill, and congratulate myself of achieving each one. Small steps.

Looking back, I believe my life did end on that August day in 2008. But then my new life began. The life I didn't want and spent the first few years trying not to have. But I had to learn how to live it. And I believe I have learnt how to do that. It still isn't the life I want but I think I have now accepted that it is the one I have. There are good things in it. I have learnt to enjoy small pleasures, such as a sunny day, a walk in a beautiful place, the company of a good friend. The pain and sadness of losing Joe is still there and always will be, but I seem to have got used to it, and have learnt how to live with it and around it.

Joe is still an enormous part of my life. He occupies more space in my brain than anybody or anything else. But it is not all pain and sadness. There is also my love for him. Huge massive wonderful love. That has not died. If anything, it has become stronger.

So here I am, 13 years on. It's that time of the year. Facebook is full of family camping trips, and I'm seeing all the "back to school" clobber in the supermarkets. Those things used to tear me apart. But I seem to have developed a tolerance to them now. My other two have grown up and are leaving home. My new life is moving forward, and Joe is there right in the center of it.

TCF is still a big part of my new life. I run a local group in Marlow, Bucks, and we support each other so well. I still cherish the times I spend with my TCF family, who I think are the only people who really understand me. So, thank you TCF for being there in the beginning when I was completely lost and for being a constant reassuring presence as the years go by.

by Sue Hughes, Vice-Chair and Trustee of The Compassionate Friends

Reprinted with thanks from TCF.UK Newsletter



*Missing you isn't loud.
It doesn't always cry.
Sometimes it just sits with me,
breathing quietly,
waiting for moments you should have been in.*



Sibling Page



Siblings almost universally experience distress but many feel unable to share this for fear of burdening their already fragile parents. One of the many factors which influence sibling grief is developmental level and the impact this has on the child's understanding of illness and death.

Development and concepts of death

Most children learn to recognise when something is dead before they reach 3 years of age. However, at this early age, death, separation and sleep are almost synonymous in the child's mind. As children develop and experience life, their concept of death becomes more mature. Six sub-concepts are acquired during this process (average age of attainment in brackets):

Separation (age 5)	dead people do not co-exist with the living
Causality (age 6)	death is caused by something, be it trauma, disease, or old age
Irreversibility (age 6)	a dead person can not 'come alive' again
Cessation of bodily functions (age 6)	
Universality (age 7)	all living things will die
Insensitivity (age 8)	the dead can not feel fear or pain

There are important consequences of an incomplete understanding of death. Children younger than five years old may not appreciate that the deceased will not return. This belief will have been affirmed by stories such as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and exposure to irrepressible characters like the Wile E Coyote. A young child may also believe that they have brought about the death of another through their wishes or behaviour. This reflects their tendency to think 'magically' and their inability to understand causality in death. Slightly older children who understand irreversibility and causality may not grasp the idea that bodily functions cease after a person dies. They may then worry that the buried person will be hungry or cold. Perhaps more significantly, children who understand that a dead person does not need to eat or breathe, may not necessarily appreciate that the person can not feel pain or fear. They may have fantasies of the person trapped in a casket in the ground and feeling afraid. Children who do not understand universality may view death as punishment for wrong doing.

Every child is different and his/her understanding of death will depend as much on past life experiences and cognitive ability as on age. Children who have experienced the death of a grandparent, a fellow patient or even a pet will have a more mature concept of death than others of the same age or developmental level. It is also important to note that children often regress developmentally at times of illness or stress. For this reason, it is essential that assumptions are not made on the basis of age. Each child should be assessed individually as to their level of understanding before explanations are given.

Implications for preschoolers

Children in this age group may ask many questions in their quest to understand what is happening. They may also ask the same question many times over. They have an almost matter-of-fact curiosity about death which adults may find confronting or even worrying. They do not yet understand that death is:

- Irreversible 'When is my sister coming back?'
- Caused by illness, trauma and age children may have thought bad thoughts or said hurtful things to the deceased prior to death eg. In a fight with a sibling, 'I hate you, I hope you die'.
- Associated with loss of function 'What will my sister eat/breathe?'

Explanations need to address concerns that arise as a consequence of an incomplete concept of death. eg; 'Your sister, Amy, died because she was very, very sick. We won't be able to see her any more. Nothing you did or said caused Amy to die. Amy doesn't need to eat or breathe and she cannot feel sore or scared. Mummy and Daddy are very sad that Amy has died but they are not sick and will be here to take care of you'.

Preschool children may not sustain sadness for long periods. They may also appear indifferent. Young children often incorporate themes of death and dying into play. Parents need to understand that play is the child's way of making sense of their world, so it is normal for recent life experiences to be played out with toys or friends.

Reactions to loss in this age group are variable but might include:

- Apparent lack of reaction
- Periods of distress alternating with normal play
- Developmental regression (eg. bed wetting, clinging)
- Sleeping problems
- Separation anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Death/funeral/illness themes in play

Implications for school age children

School age children gradually acquire and refine the capacity for logical thought. During these years, they develop a more complete understanding of death. At first, they see it as something that happens only to other people. From the age of six, children start to develop the death concepts of irreversibility, causality, and universality. There is considerable variability in the ages at which these concepts are acquired so it is important when speaking with children to make some individual assessment of their level of understanding. School aged children become increasingly curious about the causes of death and are interested in details and death rituals. Explanations should be tailored to the child's developmental level, cognitive ability and previous life experience.

Possible reactions include:

- Denial
- Anger and aggressive oppositional behaviour
- Guilt
- Sadness/withdrawal
- Disturbed sleep/appetite
- School failure
- Expressing a wish to die so as to be reunited with the deceased

Implications for adolescents

By the beginning of adolescence, most children are aware of the reality of death. It is during this time that adolescents begin to ask theoretical and philosophical questions about life and death. Their mourning responses are similar to those of adults but they may find it easier to talk to adults outside the family than to parents. The peer group remains very important but adolescents may feel some ambivalence about confiding in peers for fear of seeming different. Many young people have not had a personal experience of death.

Young people who experience grief do so in the setting of important life and developmental changes. Grief presents yet another crisis at a time of heightened vulnerability.

Possible reactions include:

- Excessive concern for others, guilt, anxiety and insecurity
- Sleeplessness or wanting to sleep all the time
- Withdrawal from family, spending increased time alone listening to music or watching TV
- Wanting to be around the family more than before
- Preoccupation with the death, wanting to talk about it all the time or angrily refusing to talk about it
- Changed values and philosophy of life
- Poor concentration, memory, organisation, planning skills and reduced school performance
- Restlessness, always needing to be doing something or be with peers
- Angry, controlling, assertive and demanding
- More detached from life, the future or interests
- Rebelling against all authority
- Risk taking behaviours

www.rch.org.au



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	Ngaire 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	Pauline Trotter (Andre, 25yrs, Car crash)	0273960611
	Carolyn Oatley	021 0332796
INVERCARGILL	Josie Dyer Vanessa Young (Jaylene 6yrs chemical poisoning) Southland Coordinators	0276321742 0273562271
TIMARU	Phyl Sowerby (Son Cancer 1998)	03 612 -6402
CHRISTCHURCH	Chris Guerin	02102931357
WELLINGTON	Lorraine Driskel Son (twin) 19yrs—car accident	021 688504 lorraine.driskel@gmail.com
KAPITI COAST	Anna Upton (Son, suicide)	04 2936349
PALMERSTON NORTH	Robyn Galpin (Hayley, motorcycle accident)	06 3535929
TAUMARUNUI	Marie and Ron Summers	07 8954879
CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND	(Son, Wayne 23yrs, Suicide)	
WHANGANUI	Nina Sandilands (Debbie, 16yrs, Brain Virus)	06 3478086
WHANGANUI	Keren Marsh (Simon, 23yrs, car accident)	06 3443345 marshkandb@gmail.com
WHAKATANE	Trish and Alan Silvester	07 3222084 atsilvester@actrix.co.nz

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