



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Offering friendship and understanding to Bereaved Parents, Siblings
and Grandparents
Johannesburg Chapter
March 2016

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My Dear Friends

Accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature, the poet Derek Walcott said, "Break a vase and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of the original shape."

Death shatters the vase of family wholeness. There could be times throughout grieving when the reassembling of the pieces may seem impossible. Conversely, it might be the imperative that starts some greater mending.

Perhaps the most obvious, and possibly the easiest, repairing comes with the impetus to memorialize the dead. How tenderly we frame photographs, preserve possessions, light candles, plant gardens, make donations, observe anniversaries, etc. We can never restore the broken vase to its original but the urge to prove that lives, however brief, were not lived in vain, is one of the most powerful human motivations. In their absence our children fill our lives every bit as much as their presence did.

There are other broken vases. Family life is splintered as each member tries to juggle coping with individual sorrow while caring for everyone else as well. Friendships suffer also under the burden of struggling to balance empathy with the desire to re-establish normality. Of course it's as much a recipe for conflict and collapse as it is for support and survival. It is a sad reality that some vases might be so cracked in the process that we have no option but to discard them. Most, though, respond magnificently to care. Think how art restorers go about their work – gently washing away stains, carefully brushing off dust and dirt, painstakingly filling cracks, meticulously refreshing paint – and learn from their devotion.

Amidst all this activity do not forget a very beautiful ornament needing re-assembly – YOURSELF. Loss has shattered you and your certainties and left you dazed and demoralized. As defeated as you feel now, you do not want to stay like that. Just as your child will always be precious and treasured so you should learn to cherish yourself. The cosmetic ad says it all – you're worth it. No amount of mending will ever entirely disguise the chips and broken lines but your vase can still be attractive and useful, and the patina of experience gives it a special brilliance.

Despite the tragedy of loss, or, because of it, our sensitivity to what remains is heightened. The glue of our caring certainly will seal all that is lovely and loved.

Much love,

ROSEMARY DIRMEIK

The Compassionate Friends

Grief and Special Occasions

"Holidays and special occasions (birthdays/anniversaries) are time spent with loved ones" was imprinted on our psyche from a young age. They mark the passage of time in our lives. They are part of the milestones we share with each other and they generally represent time spent with family. They bring meaning to certain days and we bring much meaning back to them. But since they are for being with those we love the most, how on earth can anyone be expected to cope with them when a loved one has died? For many people, this is the hardest part of grieving, when we miss our loved ones even more than usual. How can you celebrate togetherness when there is none? When you have lost someone special, your world loses its celebratory qualities. These "special" days only magnify the loss. The sadness feels sadder and the loneliness goes deeper. The need for support may be the greatest on these occasions. Pretending you don't hurt and or it is not harder is just not the truth for you. You can and will get through the holidays. Rather than avoiding the feelings of grief, lean into them. It is not the grief you want to avoid, it is the pain. Grief is the way out of the pain. There are a number of ways to incorporate your loved one and your loss into special occasions.

Grief has a unique way of giving us the permission to really evaluate what parts of any occasion you enjoy and what parts you don't. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to handle these occasions in grief. You have to decide what is right for you and do it. You have every right to change your mind, even a few times. Friends and family members may not have a clue how to help you through them and you may not either.

It is very natural to feel you may never enjoy these occasions again. They will certainly never be the same as they were. Even without grief, our friends and relatives often think they know how these occasions should look, what "the family" should and shouldn't do.

Do's and Don'ts

Do be gentle with yourself and protect yourself.

Don't do more than you want, and don't do anything that does not serve your soul and your loss.

Do allow time for the feelings.

Don't keep feelings bottled up. If you have 500 tears to cry don't stop at 250.

Do allow others to help. We all need help at certain times in our lives.

Don't ask if you can help or should help a friend in grief. Just help. Find ways; invite them to group events or just out for coffee.

Do, in grief, pay extra attention to the children. Children are too often the forgotten grievers.

Find ways to honour and remember your loved one. Think of ways to honour your child.

Light a candle

Say a prayer

Donate time or money in their name.

Do something you loved to do together on that day.

It isn't as important how you remember, you honour them by the fact that you remember.

Just Remember

Holidays and Special Occasions are clearly some of the roughest terrain we navigate after a loss. The ways we handle them are as individual as we are. What is vitally important is that we be present for the loss in whatever form the occasions do or don't take. These days are part of the journey to be felt fully. They are usually very sad, but sometimes we may catch ourselves doing okay, and we may even have a brief moment of laughter. You don't have to be a victim of the pain or the past. When the past calls, let it go to voice mail...it has nothing to say. You don't have to be haunted by the pain or the past. You can remember and honour the love. Whatever you experience, just remember that sadness is allowed because death, as they say, doesn't take a holiday.

Even without grief, our friends and relatives often think they know how our holidays should look, what the family should and shouldn't do. Now more than ever, be gentle with yourself. Don't do more than you want, and don't do anything that does not serve your soul and your loss. © Daniel Kerr

The Strength You Gave Me

They tell me it's amazing how I've stayed so strong,
but they don't see how I cry when I hear your song,
they see the smile on my face but miss the hurt in my eye,
I would rather seem rude than let them see me cry,
I put on this front as I don't want the world to see,
the pain and sorrow so deep inside me.

I don't act this way cause I'm ashamed to feel the way I do,
I act this way in honour of you,
because although I hurt right now and my heart is broken,
I can't help but feel pride and love when your name is spoken,
my strength comes from the love you gave to me,
and it's that strength I want the world to see.

I will always love and miss you Lexi,
that I will never hide,
and when people ask me about my daughter Lexi,
they will always see my pride,
you were so precious and your memory will always live on,
I'll never be sad that I had you only that you're gone.

My tears are not a sign of my weakness,
they are a sign of the love I have inside,
they will always fall down my cheeks,
when I think of you with pride,
they say it takes a real man to admit when he is sad,
but how can I be sad when I look at the daughter that I had,
I will always have the memories of my little girl,
and you will always be my world,
Lexi always remember you gave me this strength and that,
you will always be your daddies little girl!!!

A Dad's Grief

It must be very difficult
To be a man in grief
Since "men don't cry" and "men are strong"
No tears can bring relief.

It must be very difficult
To stand up to the test
And field the calls and visitors
So she can get some rest.

They always ask if she's alright
And what she's going through.
But seldom take his hand and ask,
"My friend, but how are you?"

He hears her crying in the night
and thinks his heart will break.
He dries her tears and comforts her,
But "stays strong" for her sake.

It must be very difficult
To start each day anew
And try to be so very brave –
He lost his baby too.

You Did Not Die

Shari Swirsky

You live in the beautiful wind that blows.
You live in the sound of birds that crow.
You live in the sun that shines so bright.
You live in the peaceful dark at night.
You live in a star I see in the sky.
You live in ocean waves that come in with the tide.
You live in the smell of flowers and grass.
You live in the summer that goes so fast.
You live in my heart that hurts so much.
You did not die, we only lost touch.



**"COURAGE DOESN'T
ALWAYS ROAR.
SOMETIMES
COURAGE
IS THE QUIET
VOICE AT THE
END OF THE
DAY SAYING,
'I WILL TRY AGAIN
TOMORROW.'"**

- Mary Anne Radmacher

After One Year... By Phyllis Sewell, in memory of her son TCF Queensland Australia.

"What I want to know is how do I go on from here?" Many heads always nod in agreement when this question is asked at a Compassionate Friends meeting. Is that your question, too? It has been over a year since your child has died. In your own way you have met and survived those special days, holidays, his or her birthday and all the events you had anticipated sharing with your child, at least once. Now what? Where do you go from here? Life is going on around you, yet your own life may seem at a standstill. It has had a drastic and traumatic change. A tug-o-war is waging within your mind and body. Part of you wants to hang on tight to the life you knew when your family was whole. But after a year of grieving and crying for your child you realize that life as you knew it is no more. The separation death has brought is daily becoming more real. If you are at this point in your grief, you know how it is. We are weary and tired from the constant effort and energy it takes to keep moving ahead each day. Possibly we find ourselves putting up a false front and saying "OK", "fine", when people ask how we are doing, because we think that is how they think we should be feeling by now. We remember a year ago, when we looked ahead to this time, thinking we would be back to normal, our grief somehow healed and resolved. Now we often seem to be two different people. A person living with the burden of the loss of our child and the emotions, depth of sorrow and pain that only another bereaved parent can understand; and at the same time a person going through the motions of living in the normal world of everyday work, activities, friends and problems, which we are often tempted to let go on without us. A feeling of panic isn't uncommon yet you must have developed some survivor skills if you have come this far. How do we get out of here and go on without leaving the life of our child behind? Some helpful words might be 'slowly, carefully, patiently and prayerfully' accepting ourselves as we are, and truthfully facing our feelings. Our own son was killed 18 months ago by a hit and run driver. If you were to peel back my outer shell right now and expose my thoughts, you would see that loving, exciting seventeen-year-old we shared so many good times with and my wish to have him here on his nineteenth birthday this month. You would see my desire to know more about heaven and God's plan for eternal life, a deep lonesomeness, fatigue and many unanswered questions. It is strange. I have apprehension as I move back into life, yet a real fear of staying emotionally where I am. Yes, it is hard work to go on because no one can do it for us. The great effort it takes to get out of bed each morning, to plan ahead for dinner and to make the most out of each day must come from within us. Now is a good time to take inventory of our resources. Do you have your health, home, husband, other children, other family members, friends, a job, faith in God? Do you have talents which have been neglected or something you have always wanted to do which could be developed? Making an appointment for a health or dental check, deciding to lose those pounds you gained through frustrated eating, planning some special times with your family, initiating contact with an old friend and rebuilding relationships, releasing new energy into your job, taking time to seriously study your faith, enrolling in a class to learn something new may be the boost you need. Do you have strengths of understanding, loving, caring, and listening? No doubt you have already reached out to help someone else in their need or grief because you know how that kind of love has helped you.

Your Child's Belongings:

If you can, let time pass and healing begin before you make any decisions about your child's belongings. Early on, this task can be emotionally overwhelming. Your grief colours everything now, including your judgment.

An item that might seem important to keep in the early days of your loss may end up being less important a little further down the road, and something insignificant that you might easily have overlooked, may one day seem priceless to you. Box it up until you are stronger and some equilibrium has been attained. Eventually you will find a 'home' for all that belonged to your child. It may be that you want to keep everything or very little.

The real treasures that defined your child's life cannot be boxed up, put on a shelf or given away. They are placed safely in your heart.

Softly ... May Peace Replace Heartache and May Warmest Memories remain

**Wishing you a day Of Peace on the Anniversary of Your Child's Birthday
March 2016**

Hloni Modiselle 1.3.1976 - Beloved son of Stella Modisella and brother of Morongwe

Owni Ndebeli 6.3.2012 - Beloved son of Pretty Ndebele and Elvis Ncube and brother of Michelle

Yadin Moodly 6.3.2006 – Beloved son of Manju Moodly and brother of Elahn

Laura McKeown Dos Santos 8.3.1983 – Beloved daughter of Catherine McKeown and sister of Michael

Richard Colsen 9.3.1981 – Beloved son of Peter and Clare Colsen and brother of Karin and Julia

Thoriso Maotoe 9.3.2013 – Beloved daughter of Toko and Thabang Maotoe

Gareth Craig 10.3.1985 - Beloved son of John and Debbie Craig and brother of Taryn

Patrick Deas 10.3.1955 – Beloved brother of Coralie Deas

Mnkobi Monyamane 14.3.2015 – Beloved son of Irene and Sipheni Monyamane and brother of Keletso and Thato

Shana Levy 17.3.1967 – Beloved daughter of Mayer and Doreen Levy

Lethukuthula Mancube 18.3.2001 – Beloved daughter of Purity Sithole

Blayne Hullett 18.3.1981 – Beloved son of Ed and Carren Emary and brother of Kyle and Rourke

Lorraine Mayulu 18.3.1999 – Beloved daughter of Hemmy Mayoli and Nelson Muzinga and sister of Emmanuel Mayulu.

Elliot Vuyisile Msaule 18.3.1983 – Beloved son of Gloria Lehihi , Nephew of Glory Mokaie many Lehihi and brother of Donald, Conrad, Desmond and Giveness

Gregory Hawarden 18.3.1972 – Beloved son of Judith Hawarden and brother of Hugh and Verity

Kevin Staessen 22.3.1984 – Beloved son of Guido and Marleen Staessen and brother of Barbara

Justin Backos 22.3.1974 – Beloved son of Keith and Lynn Backos and brother of Talia

Kim Shor 22.3.1969 – Beloved daughter of Sandra and Jack Lurie and mother of Sera and Eitan Shor

Lathitha Likhwezi Dzanibe 26.3.2014 – Beloved daughter of Amanda Onele Dzanibe

Loyiso Toko 27.3.2014 – Beloved son of Laurette Toko

Rob Simms 27.3.1990 – Beloved son of Lillian and the late Bryan Simms 23.3.1952 and brother of Stephen and Clair

Shaun Easton 28.3.1978 – Beloved son of Bets Easton and brother of Charmain

Joshua Jennings 31.3.2004 – Beloved son of Warren and Kara Jennings and brother of Emma

You give yourself permission to grieve by recognizing the need for grieving. Grieving is the natural way of working through the loss of a love. Grieving is not weakness nor absence of faith. Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired or sneezing when your nose itches. It is nature's way of healing a broken heart. - Doug Manning

Our children loved, missed and remembered - Anniversaries – March 2016

Mogasharin Moodley 2.3.2004 – Beloved son of Val and Maureen Moodley and brother of Anisha and Rajen

Kimon Moutzouris 3.3.2002 – Beloved son of Johnny and Thea Moutzouris and brother of Lee and Tony

Juandre Tempette 4.3.2014 – Beloved son of Karl and Sanet Tempette and brother of Divan and Charlyne

Catherine Knowler 6.3.2014 – Beloved daughter of Jill and Kenneth Collins and sister of Jennifer Jones

Matthew Bowes 6.3.2011 – Beloved son of Megan Bowes and brother of Lauren

Kiel Myron 7.3.2006 – Beloved son of Lisa Myron and brother of Dylan

Nicole Green 10.3.1983 – Beloved daughter of Stephen and Heather Green and sister of Danielle and Brad

Andrew Jones 12.3.1990 – Beloved son of Myrtle Fleming and brother of David, Pete and Kim

Lex Van Der Zwan 13.3.2011 – Beloved son of Gay Van Der Zwan and brother of Royce, Alfie and Richard

Mac (Maqhawe) Fakudze 13.3.1999 – Beloved son of Dudu Fakudze and brother of Thulani

Stuart Connon 13.3.2009 – Beloved son of Dave and Jean Connon and brother of Fiona Higgs

Nikki Reabow 16.3.1996 – Beloved daughter of Glenn Reabow

James Haybittel 19.3.1993 – Beloved son of Debbie Haybittel-James

Desmond Shaw 22.3.1997 – Beloved son of Robyn de Connick

Kealeboga Shago 22.3.2009 – Beloved son of Naomi Shago and brother of Mathabo

Londiwe Sithole 24.3.2010 – Beloved daughter of Elizabeth and Israel Moyo and sister of Sindi, Sanele, Patricia and Stroke

Thabiso Sebesho 24.3.2010 – Beloved daughter of Sybil Sebesho and sister of Freedom

Shaun Easton 24.3.1993 - Beloved son of Bets Easton and brother of Charmain

Warren Damelin 26.3.1989 – beloved son of Mike and Linda Damelin and brother of Hayley

Lloyd Miles 27.3.2004 – Beloved son of Karen Miles and brother of Chloe and Devin

John (Shoes) Lesiba Moshoeu 27.3.2015 – Beloved son of Rennie Moshoeu and brother of Bessie Naniki

Glynn Edwards 28.3.2012 – Beloved son of Lynn and Alan Edwards and brother of Shevon

Storm Riyadh Limbada 28.3.2012 – Beloved son of Aysha Limbada

Ntuthuko Danese 28.3.2014 – Beloved son of Ruth and Collen Danese

Johannes Olwage 29.3.2014 – Beloved son of Sally Olwage and brother of Magda, Estelle and Marius

Page sponsored by Mike and Linda Damelin in memory of their Beloved son Warren Damelin

Sam Fiorella : When Words Fail: Lessons from a Father Grieving His Teen's Suicide

Recently, my world was turned upside down. My 19-year-old son succumbed to the illness of depression and took his own life. As many have said previously, this pain is something no parent should have to endure. There are no words to express the depth of the guilt, anger, sadness, and sorrow that is felt by a parent when their child dies so young, especially one who was surrounded by as much love and faced a future with as much promise as my son, Lucas.

There are no words that can console me. Any death is a sad and difficult thing for the family members of the departed, but it's also difficult for the family and friends who support them. Each tries to find the words that may help their own grieving and assist in alleviating the torment of those left behind, yet words often fail.

The Inadequacy of Words

The inadequacy of words that console is exacerbated when a child takes his or her own life. It's a loss that adds the additional burdens of unbearable remorse and unanswered questions to already grieving parents; the general ambiguity heightens the pain and prolongs the grieving process. Yet, we fall back on words. We tell the survivors to be strong, to remember the good times, and to keep the faith. We search out the platitudes and phrases that were shared with us when we lost a loved one or that we read on a sympathy card. We try our best.

Unfortunately -- and especially in the case of a suicide -- words fail. Perhaps they should not be shared at all. Despite the best intentions of those offering these words, words often serve to worsen the pain felt by those grieving.

Below I'd like to share a few of the words and phrases that have failed to comfort me in the wake of my loss.

Words That Fail

1. "How are you doing?"

There's only one answer to that question: "I'm terrible, thanks for asking." However, what I say is "I'm doing OK," or "I'm as well as can be under the circumstances." In reality, I'm saying that only for your benefit. What I want to say is: "I'm devastated." "I'm sleepless and exhausted." "My pain is so deep I can't bear to see the daylight." Instead of asking how I'm doing, give me a quiet hug. Tell me you're praying for me, or share a story of how my son touched your life in a positive way.

2. "Be strong." "Be strong for..."

One of the more common advice shared when people came to pay their respects was "be strong." If being strong means that I should not grieve, pretend that my heart was not just ripped out of my chest, and that I should not show any emotion, well that's just not possible. When your child commits suicide, pausing your grief is akin to trying to hold back a tsunami with an umbrella. It's impossible, and in the rare case that the person has the fortitude to try, it's not healthy. It only serves to prolong the agony.

Likewise, don't tell any surviving young siblings to be strong for their parents. They are children; it's we who

should be strong for them. Instead of telling me, my wife or my daughter to be strong, please be strong for us. Be there with a hug, a shoulder to lean on, or just be there by our side quietly for as long as we need.

3. "The holidays will be tough."

We lost our son in mid-October and so it's natural to think of the upcoming holidays. I've been warned that this coming Christmas will be very tough and several people have suggested we should get away for a vacation. Yes, birthdays and holidays will undoubtedly be tough, but why terrorize me in advance of the event? I don't know how I'm going to feel during that time. It might be OK; I may take solace in my faith, at my church, or among family as we recount the contributions my son made to this world during his short time with us.

Again, it's better to simply be there. Instead of warning me of the impending dread, during the holidays please just take time to join me for a coffee, share a story, and lend a shoulder if I need it.

4. "I'm in so much pain for you."

Few suffer in isolation. The pain felt by parents of a deceased child is shared by their parents, their siblings, and their friends. Our family is incredibly fortunate to have a very large network of people who truly love us and our son so the pain is shared by many.

The challenge is to not let your pain or your sorrow as a friend become a burden on the grieving parents of the child. They should not be required to console you, to hold you up as you faint, or to be strong so you can manage your grief.

Knowing that many people are suffering right along with us is both a blessing and a curse. We feel the love and it certainly helps; we're truly blessed to be surrounded by so many caring people. On the other hand, we cannot grieve ourselves if we're busy consoling others.

Why I'm sharing This

I hope that my intentions are clear in writing this article. I do not wish to criticize anyone who has shared their love with us or who has attempted to console us. We see and feel the love and are truly grateful.

I'm sharing this list of lessons learned by a father grieving the loss of his son with the utmost respect, in the hopes that it will help you better support those who may be grieving in your life. Your presence is immeasurably more powerful than your words in such times.



If you have ever lost a loved one, then you know exactly how it feels. And if you have not, then you cannot possibly imagine it.

—Lemony Snicket

A SIBLINGS JOURNEY OF GRIEF By Jacqueline Cairns of TCF QLD

When the writer Mark Twain lost his daughter suddenly to illness, he described his grief in just three words 'The unutterable sorrow.' I remember being incredibly moved by his words and could only begin to imagine the depth of his sadness and pain that lay hidden within them. Grief is an emotion we would like to believe is experienced only by other people. It is not until one day when it arrives on our doorstep that we are suddenly faced with the reality that we will all experience it. My own grief arrived a few years ago with the tragic death of my brother to suicide. My brother did not have cancer or a life threatening illness but unknown to those around him, he was slowly dying. Unlike cancer, the physical symptoms were not visible to us. We simply could not see that he had lost his will to live. His depression was masked by the sound of infectious laughter. his smile concealed his pain. Even so many years on, it still seems almost impossible to believe. Suicide. It's a word I had never really heard until the day my brother died. I knew what it meant, and I knew that it happened to other people. Suddenly though, it had invited itself into our home. It had befriended my brother. It was his comfort when no-one else was there for him. It promised to be the solution to all of his problems and tragically he took its hand. Unbelievably the world somehow kept turning and life went on for other people. My own world, however, stopped and I stood helpless as I watched it crumble around me, unable to prevent it. I was completely broken by my brothers' death and shattered pieces were simply too great ever to put back together. To ever make me whole. The days, weeks and months that followed my brother's death meant that I relived the same horror every morning I awakened. He was gone, he had died and I had not imagined it. It wasn't a bad dream from which I could ever be wakened. It was simply an inconceivable reality that I struggled desperately to grasp. Mornings were awful for instead of the sound of sleepy yawns there would be muffled cries. My only comfort during that time came from sleeping in my brother's bed. Somehow, feeling a little closer to him in my dreams. this was the place where he had slept peacefully at night and where he had been safe from his demons. unlike most of us, his real nightmares were not during sleep but while he was awake, making them increasingly harder to run from. The loss of my brother was like losing a limb but instead of learning to walk again I was trying to learn to live without him. it took years before I was finally ready to take the first step and years before I was finally ready to take the first step and eventually break through that dark period of my grieving. I look back on that time of my life with a few regrets because it was a period of healing which I believe was completely necessary for me to go through. I am no longer confused by the sadness and pain of my loss. Whether I run from it or not I know in my heart that I will always grieve for my brother. I am tired of running, so now I accept it as part of my life, as part of me. My brother's life and his death have enabled me to look at myself with a greater sense of clarity. He has given me the gift of compassion, of caring and of being able to express without reserve my love for those around me. Written by Jacqueline Cairns of TCF QLD In loving memory of her brother Colin

Donations Received

Judy Couremetis
D Horak
Hollard Insurance
E Chapman
Clarence and Mildred Dreyer
Sarah Mahoko

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! for donating to TCF.
Thank you to our members who pay monthly via debit orders.
Thank you to our members who have recently signed up with
My Village and to those who use their My Village Cards!
Thank you to all our Members who have paid their Subs!



Grateful appreciation to all who brought refreshments for the Meeting

Page sponsored by Pam and Neil Naidoo in memory of their Beloved son Nicaylan Naidoo

Love Gifts

Love gift donated by Mike and Felicity Kriel in loving memory of their beloved son Mark Daniel Kriel.

Love gift donated by Jack and Patti Bennie in loving memory of their beloved son Brendon Bennie



When a Grandchild Dies: No one expects to outlive their own children, much less experience the loss of a much-loved, much-wanted grandchild. It is so difficult to raise a family, see your children do the same and see the cycle broken in this out-of-order way. No one is prepared for the grief that follows. As a grandparent, you have a double grief. You grieve for your grandchild who has died, as well as for your own child who is now a bereaved parent. You not only feel your own pain and sadness, but also feel helpless and frustrated at not being able to help your bereaved child. It helps to remember that there is no timetable for grief. Don't expect too much of your child, his or her spouse or of yourself. At first, no one believes it. When the reality "hits" everyone feels even more devastated. It is important to consider your needs as well as those of your bereaved child. Acknowledging and working on your grief will help you and, indirectly, your grieving child. Don't be surprised if at first you can't reach out to your grieving child. Remember that you are grieving. Be patient with yourself. Eventually you may be able to talk, listen and help. If you find that you can't help specifically with the grief you can send cards, tell them that you love them, etc. Explain that you wish that you could be of more help but that you don't know what to do.

Suggestions for Helping Yourself and Your Grieving Child (the Parents)

- Read about grief. It is important to understand what you and your child are experiencing.
- It helps to be open and share your feelings. Your openness sets a good example for your child. Share the good memories and the good days as well as the pain of grief and the bad days.
- Talk about your dead grandchild. Mention his or her name.
- Find someone with whom you can talk freely — a friend, support group member, clergy or counsellor.
- Be available to LISTEN frequently to your child. Respect your child's way of handling the pain and expressing the grief. Don't tell your child how he or she should react.
- At special times (anniversary of death, holidays) write and/or call your bereaved child. Mention that you realize what day it is. You are calling to say you love them and you wish that you could take some of their pain away.
- When adults are grieving, the child's siblings often feel neglected — plus they don't understand the grief that they themselves are experiencing. Try to spend extra time with your other bereaved grandchildren, offering to listen and reminding them that they are very important and much loved.
- If possible, offer to take surviving grandchildren for an afternoon or a day; help with practical matters, such as preparing food, doing laundry, shopping; spend time alone with your child.
 - Most of us need hugs, even if we don't recognize that we do. It helps to hug and hold your child if you both are comfortable doing so.
- Allow yourself and encourage your child to cry when needed. Crying offers relief.
- Let the family know that you care; that you love them.
- Hold on to HOPE that eventually you all will enjoy life again. Offer HOPE to your grieving child and family.

From Hope Bereaved Handbook, Adapted from the website of the Alliance of Grandparents, A Support in Tragedy, 2004

Courses 2016

TCF will be running self help courses this year. If you have lost a child, sibling or grandchild over two years ago, have consciously worked through your grief, and would be interested please contact the Office on 011-440-6322, or call Isabel on 082-335-8593 to discuss your possible involvement with The Compassionate Friends.

Current Counsellors

Isabel Ferreira: 082-335-8593

Maureen Conway: 011-802-2805 or 082-452-4490 (Siblings)

Roseline Ananmalay: 084-556-4616

Jabu Mpungose: 082-548-9604

Ntuthu Radebe 082-741-5761

My Village/Planet/School Card is a really great way to contribute to TCF – every time you shop at a partner store they donate money to us if we are listed on your card as a beneficiary. WESTPACK are now one of their partners! We will fill in the form for you if you don't have a card. Email or phone us and THANK YOU Debbie 011 440 6322 tcfsa@mweb.co.za

Everyone keeps telling me that time heals all wounds, but no one can tell me what I'm supposed to do right now. Right now I can't sleep. It's right now that I can't eat. Right now I still hear his voice and sense his presence even though I know he's not here. Right now all I seem to do is cry. I know all about time and wounds healing, but even if I had all the time in the world, I still don't know what to do with all this hurt right now. —Nina Guilbeau



Dragonflies by Kelly Farley

It must have been a couple of weeks after the death of my son Noah when I first noticed the dragonflies. It was mid-June 2006 and I had already been off work for several weeks. I had called my office to let them know that I wasn't going to be in for a while. At the time I didn't know what "a while" meant and thankfully they didn't ask. I spent most of my days doing small tasks around the house, just to keep my mind occupied. The rest of the time I hung out with my wife, worked out and made lunch on the grill every day. I was still trying to process what had happened to us and really hadn't started to feel the full impact of the depth of my pain from the death of my son and my daughter just 18 months prior.

This particular day I decided I was going to start staining my fence. I wasn't in a hurry because I knew I didn't have anything else that had to be done anytime soon. So I just took my time and tried to enjoy the beautiful summer day. This was the first summer I had off from working or college since I was probably 14 years old. I had forgotten how nice it was to be able to get up when you wanted to and spend the day doing what you wanted to do versus what you had to do. However, I was still trying to comprehend what had happened to my wife and me. The loss of two children over 18 months had inflicted major depression and anxiety that wouldn't allow me to do much of anything other than small tasks. Even the small tasks were exhausting.

While I was taking a break sitting under the shade on my patio, I noticed two dragonflies hovering around my backyard. They were not just passing through my yard; they seemed to be hanging out for a while. I don't live near water and I had never noticed them before, but I enjoyed watching them that day.

The next day I got up around 9 o'clock, which was typical for that summer. I was usually up until about midnight and obviously needed the sleep to cope with the pain I was dealing with inside. When I went outside to start working on my fence, the dragonflies were there to greet me. The dragonflies and I spent the rest of the summer hanging out in my backyard.

I started to have other experiences with dragonflies during this same time. I live near a bike path that leads to a local forest preserve and would often ride the 12 mile loop as part of my daily workout. There were times when I would be riding and thinking about my son when a dragonfly would appear out of nowhere and would fly along with me at the same speed. He would fly about 3 or 4 feet away from me, but would stay with me for a while. I would just smile because I thought it was Noah letting me know he was ok.

It's been just over 5 years since the loss of Noah, but because of these experiences, I think of Noah every time I see a dragonfly and I just smile. On a recent bike ride on that same trail I came upon a swarm of dragonflies, the big ones with the double wings. There must have been over a hundred of them in a fifty foot radius anywhere from 4' to 12' off the ground. I stopped my bike and I just stood there in the middle of this swarm. They were beautiful.

They must of known I was there because they would stop 2-3' in front of me and look at me. They would fly slowly by to let me know they were aware of my presence. This had to be one of my best experiences in a long time. I must have stood there for about 15-20 minutes watching them. I even called my wife to tell her about what I was experiencing. I felt close to Noah when I was standing there with those dragonflies. I think it was just his way of visiting his daddy and to let me know he was thinking of me.

I have met several grieving dads (and moms) over the last several years that also have similar personal stories when it comes to our children visiting us. There have been other signs from Noah, but this particular one was spectacular.

Does your child send you signs? If so, what are they? If not, do you keep yourself open to seeing signs?

Celebrate You More, Mourn You Less was written by a daughter for her father but is so moving and could apply to all of us mourning the loss of our children. I have included it.

After losing my dad suddenly to a heart condition, I noticed for many years that I would start to feel anxious and unnerved for the week leading up to major holidays, the anniversary of my dad's death, and most of all, his birthday.

It always struck me as ironic. It was still called his birthday, even though he was gone. It was a day marking an age that he didn't have the chance to reach. A day that for most people celebrates a new year of life, to me was another reminder of an untimely death.

His birthdays came and went for nine years with me spending March 12th in solitude. I shut myself off to friends, family, and everyone who cared about me. I lied when they asked if I was okay. I convinced myself that this was my grief, my story, my hard day, and nobody else could understand. It seemed easier to deal with it by myself, to not have to explain, to shut off emotions, and let numbness wash over me.

In my senior year of college, March 12th approached as it always did... but for some reason, that year was different. I was a wreck – overcome with emotion, filled with anxiety, and struck with a realization I hadn't allowed myself to come to terms with: I missed my dad.

I wanted to celebrate with him, to call him on the phone and sing him happy birthday, to buy him a present and mail it in a care package to Richmond, or drive three hours there to have dinner with him. Admitting these things to myself reopened wounds that I had been denying, because in the back of my mind I knew how painful it would be.

So on the eve of what would have been my dad's 49th birthday, I was broken. Not knowing how to deal with this sudden rush of emotions, I called my mentor, Lynne. I told her how I was feeling, how much it hurt, and asked her what I could do to make it better. Lynne validated everything I was feeling and reassured me that this wasn't a bad thing – it was a step forward. Then she made a suggestion that surprised me. She said "If you wish you could celebrate your dad's birthday with him, you should do it. Why don't you take tomorrow off and have a birthday party for him?"

I thought through this for a little while, and felt like I couldn't throw a party for my dad. Doing something like that would make me crazy. Could I actually consider myself a sane person if I spent the day having a birthday party for my dead father? What would my roommate think?

But by the end of the night, I decided to do it. I took the next day off from classes and schoolwork, and spent my day doing only things my dad and I loved to do.

I woke up that morning, put my dad's picture in the main room of my apartment, and moved on to my first activity: breakfast. When I was a kid, if we had time before school my dad and I would make *pastina*. So, I boiled the tiny pasta in the water, added the butter, and cracked an egg into the middle. I then had to stir as fast as I could to make sure the egg wouldn't congeal before spreading to the entire dish. As I stirred, I could almost hear my dad's voice over my shoulder, jokingly cheering "Stiiiiiiiiir! Faster, faster, faster!" I laughed out loud and realized that in that moment, I felt more connected to my dad than I had in a long time.

For the rest of the day, I spent my time doing things I knew my dad would have loved to do if he could have been there with me. I watched one of our favourite movies, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. I thought about which parts he told me were his favourites, and felt a special elation when those events unfolded on the TV screen. When the movie was over, I went to the grocery store to get ingredients to make one of his favourite dinners, taking care to purchase only *authentic* Italian products, which he had taught me to pick out. I came home and prepared linguini with clam sauce, remembering his number one rule of cooking: "Don't be afraid of the gaaaah-lic!" (in a cheesy Italian accent, of course).

Finally, I made him a birthday cake, candles and all. My best friend at college, who had also lost her father, came over and we shared the cake outside on a beautiful Blacksburg night while exchanging memories of dads.

When the day was over, I was filled with peace beyond explanation. I had never felt so close to my father in the nine years since he had died. I knew that I needed to continue to honour him in this way, and that finding joy in celebrating his memory is exactly what he would want me to do.

For the past few years, my dad's birthday has become an entirely new milestone for me. Rather than being one of the "hard days," it is now a day that I look forward to, and get excited about. His birthday has become an opportunity to share memories with people in my life who never got to know my dad, as well as those who did. One of my dad's favourite things to do was eat great Italian food at a table full of people he loved. Tonight, I am going to celebrate his birthday by doing just that.

I recently heard two teenage girls share a poem they wrote in memory of their fathers. All of their words were beautiful, but the line that stuck with me was, "We will celebrate you more, and mourn you less."

Today, on my Dad's birthday, that is the step I am also choosing to take. Happy birthday, Dad.

By [Elizabeth Sullivan](#) | [Hello Grief](#)

ANKING DETAILS: The Compassionate Friends, First National Bank –

NB: Please remember to put your name (and what you are paying for) as a reference when you deposit money into TCF's account

Support Groups, Meetings and Events, for Bereaved Parents, Siblings and Grandparents March 2016

Saturday, 5 March at 10:00 – 12.00	Coffee and Sharing Meeting at 11 Andre Street, President Ridge, Randburg (above The Brightwater Commons)	Facilitator: Gladys Gagliardi 011-787-7876 or 084-500-5440
Saturday, 12 March at 14:00 for 14:30	Monthly Meeting at TCF Centre, 122 Athol Street, Highlands North	Speaker: Kathy Heapy Topic: The Effects of Grief/Stress on your body
Saturday, 12 March at 14:00	Lenasia Support Group, Recreational Centre, Sylvia Street, Lenasia Extension 3	Counsellor: Roseline Ananmalay 084-556-4616
Every Friday 10.30 - 12.30	At TCF Centre, 122 Athol Street, Highlands North	Host – Ntuthu Radebe 076 975 5840

We will be hosting a painting workshop on Saturday 2nd April at TCF. All art materials will be supplied and Kate Shand will be on hand to guide you. There are limited places available so please book well in advance. The cost of the afternoon will be R350. Please book/get more information by calling the office 011 440 6322 : email tcfsa@mweb.co.za

Friends of The Compassionate Friends, Johannesburg	We are compiling a list of all our longstanding members who we hope will help us with Fund Raising, Events and Functions	If you would like to participate, please let Debbie James, Chapter Leader know on 011-440-6322 or info.tcfsa@mweb.co.za
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

We are a Charity Organization and our aim is to help bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents cope with their loss. Our services are free of charge for the first year. (Starting from the first time you made contact with us at TCF). Thereafter if you would like to continue participating in our activities, we ask for a fee (Subscription) of R250 per annum
 You can also sponsor a page in our Newsletter at R100 per page or R50 per half page.
 A LOVE GIFT can be any amount of money you would like to donate in memory of your child.
 We are looking forward to your participation in putting together our Newsletters by writing your own story. Send your story to TCF at the beginning of the month and we will do our best to publish it. We would like to support you in your grief journey. Writing brings healing.
 Contact the office to set up an appointment with any of our Counsellors for one-to-one sessions.
 If you know of any organization (schools, hospitals, work places) that would benefit from our services at TCF, please inform them about our work. Often people do not know what to say or do or how they can help someone who has lost a child or a sibling. Our contact details are in the Newsletter.

Do you have an idea that will help TCF raise funds?
Book Reviews: Books are available from TCF as part of our Fund Raising Initiative. We need your help

Call us 011 440 6322

A String of Pearls by Rosemary Dirmek
After the death of her son Jonel in 1991, Rosemary Dirmek turned to The Compassionate Friends for grief Counselling. Under their guidance she was enabled to cope with her loss and eventually became a counsellor herself. Over several years she wrote a number of articles for the TCF (Johannesburg) Newsletter and in 2002 took over the Newsletter's monthly editorial. This book is a compilation of some of those editorials. Cost R100 (excluding shipping)

Email tcfsa@mweb.co.za

Thank you

Boy by Kate Shand

When 14-year-old John Peter made the tragic decision to end his life by hanging himself, he left behind a devastated family who grappled not only with coping with the overwhelming loss of a beloved son and brother, but also coming to terms with the incomprehensible choice he made that afternoon. An engaging story of unbearable sadness and grief, this searing memoir is also a journey of strength and courage. Ultimately, it is the story of a boy like any other and of a mother's survival in the aftermath of the suicide of her child. Cost R200.00 (excluding shipping)

