



The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc.

Grief Support for Bereaved Parents, Grandparents & Siblings

Newsletter (Extracts) Dec 2005 - Jan 2006



Bittersweet Christmas

By Carmen Brining, Indianapolis, Indiana

I dread Christmas - gaudy with its bangles and bows and tinsel.
It is contrived, a frenzied whirlwind
That pushes and pulls me along
In the guise of happy-ever-after and universal love.

I am sidestepping this kind of holiday
For mine is a bittersweet Christmas.
Our son died and left too many never-mores.
It's the love-no-longer-here that diminishes Christmas.

Yet Christmas still comes.
It is, after all, a unique time to acknowledge love.
But sadness and Christmas don't mix,
And I cannot promise much.

As I struggle, a Christmas song fills the air:
For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given...

Suddenly, there is something I never saw before.
We celebrate this day cause of Christ's birth—His coming.
Yet, with every coming, there is a going.
A son, God's Son, had to leave in order to come to us.

Here, even at this first Christmas, when the star lit the earth,
And the angels sang to announce the Babe, God's gift of love,
Was there not an emptiness in the heavens because Christ left?
Was not God, the Father, Himself sad? Christmas and sadness do mix!

O God, You do understand don't You, my own bittersweet Christmas?

Bereavement Magazine Nov/Dec '90 & Nov/Dec, '97, www.bereavementresources.com

By Darcie D Sims and Sherry L Williams, lovingly lifted from TCF Victoria Inc, Dec 2000/Jan 2001.

I Watched My Child Die

By Jeanette Gustafsson, 12/5/05, Kingaroy, Qld—TCF, Qld Member

“When I saw the car hit my little girl it felt like my whole world suddenly exploded. It was like being an actor in a horror movie. Nothing seemed real. Somehow I was outside of my body and I could see myself acting out the different scenes. That felt really weird.

Merlyn’s little brother was there. He was wandering around like a lost puppy on the road, picking up Merlyn’s bag and lunch box which had been thrown out across the road.

I knew that Merlyn was dead, but in my heart I couldn’t believe it, didn’t want to believe it. I cried heaps, mostly on the inside, but every day.

The helicopter trip, the stay at the hospital, it was all a repeat of a previous episode in Merlyn’s life. She had spent a lot of time in hospital when she was younger. The next episode was new and one I didn’t want to see, but there was no way to miss it.

It was the episode where the Doctors told me that Merlyn was brain-dead. That means that the brain has stopped working and it can’t be fixed. When the brain doesn’t work, the body shuts down, the person is kept alive with a breathing machine, but after a few days the person dies.

Then followed the scenes from the organ donation, the autopsy, the wake at home and finally the cremation. It was awful, downright nightmarish. The wake was beautiful though.

Merlyn looked like she was asleep and seemed so peaceful there, in her own bed in her own bedroom. Her sister and brothers were there all day talking to her, saying goodbye. I didn’t want to let her go. If I were a millionaire I would have put her in a glass case, just like Snow White.

I cried a lot, mostly on the inside, but every day. Watching my child die was the most heartbreaking, saddest, awful thing I’ve ever had to live through.

Merlyn has now joined the ranks of the long lived fairies and she lives at the bottom of our garden. She has new friends and lots of new adventures.

It’s a comforting thought, but I miss her terribly everyday. I miss being able to hug and kiss her, her smart mouth and keen wit, and I miss her big sunny smile. She was only six.

And I still cry loads and loads, on the inside, everyday.

But I still have three other kids and they make me happy.”

*Submitted in loving memory of Merlyn Gustafsson 15/10/96 to 22/11/02
by her mother Jeanette Gustafsson, TCF Qld*

Tribute to Ryan Delany

2/12/02 to 19/12/03

If we’d known we didn’t have a lifetime
We would have touched your soft skin longer
We would have caressed your face with our cheeks more often
We would have sacrificed ourselves to keep you.

If we’d known we didn’t have a lifetime

We would have showed you more of the world's joys
We would have showered you with gifts
We would have watched your wonderment with more awe.

But you knew you didn't have a lifetime
And that's why you lived so fully
Each day was like a lifetime to you
And you taught us to appreciate each moment.

Because of you our lives have more meaning
We feel sadness more deeply
But we also feel joy more acutely
You touched our hearts and our lives.

We know you're always with us
And forever you will be our perfect "Baby Ryan"
God put eternity into our hearts
And that's how long we'll love you.

With all our love Dad, Mum, Kaila and Jack,
Bunyan and Delany Families

Lovingly submitted by Shan Delany, TCF Qld

Terrified Tears

*In loving memory of Rebecca Cotterill
Born Valentine's Day 14 February 1977
Left her loved ones on Christmas Day 2002*

The face of an angel is all that is here,
One beautiful freckle equals one terrified tear.

Not ready to leave but has to go,
Wants to go back but God says no.

Leaving your life is a scary thought,
I guess it's something that can't be fought.

A mother, father, daughter, 2 sisters and friends,
A meaningful life that suddenly ends.

An angel is what she was meant to be,
Now just think of all she can see.

Looking over her family night and day,
Saying I love you in her own special way.

In the night we sleep, in the day we cry,
She watches us all from her star in the sky.

Rebecca was only 25 years old when she passed away in Amsterdam on Christmas Day, 2002. She died of Placental Cancer. Rebecca left behind her mother Patricia, her father Dudley, her two sisters Michelle and Susan, her partner Peter and her daughter Sydney who was born on 29th May 2002.

If love could build a stairway and memories could build a lane, we would walk right up to heaven and bring you back again.

We miss you more and more each day and we will always love you.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS.

Lovingly submitted by Pat Cotterill, TCF, Qld, In memory of her daughter.

What Do I Have To Be Thankful About?

By Sabrina Rahe Parker, Colorado

To me, the fact that my eight-year-old son is dead is reason enough to have nothing to be thankful about. I must confess that I have truly felt that way for most of the five years he's been gone. Not constantly, but a great deal of the time.

When grief takes hold with that "hard grip" (You know the times), it's not easy to be unselfish and to continue to be "thankful for what I still have." I'm too consumed in despair for what I don't have. Do you feel that way, too sometimes? For me, it's especially painful during the holidays. They say "time heals all wounds", but time has done its best, and a heart as broken as this just doesn't "heal up:" I believe it will probably remain cracked and festering off and on forever.

So ... what do I have to be thankful about? The fact that my wonderful son was alive is a lot to be thankful about! (But sometimes it's hard to remember that when I'm missing him so). For me, time has lessened that "hard grip" of grief. I still have family, friends, and especially a husband and son who love me, which is more than some have. I am very thankful for that!

I also have eight years of memories; my sons playing (and fighting) together, our family as four, whole persons instead of the three broken spirits who are here now. But, even my memories sometimes don't seem to be enough. I always want more—I want Brandon back! But, still, I am very thankful for those few years of memories. Since Brandon's death, I have my new and very dear "grief family", my Compassionate Friends, and you can bet I am very thankful about that!

And so ... this year I will be thankful for all these things, although even being thankful is painful sometimes. Maybe you can find something to be thankful about, too. If not now, well, maybe down the road. While all the holidays are difficult, I find Christmas to be an especially hard time because it's usually so "family oriented". I guess missing my son so much has precipitated this writing, but it's also in part from missing my younger brother, Denny, who died last year. I miss him a lot, too.

I know for a lot of us the usual, "Happy Christmas", won't be very happy. So instead, I'll just wish you love and say to you, "Try to find some peace somewhere inside yourself, or with others you're comfortable with, but most of all take care of yourself.

Adapted from Bereavement Magazine November/December 1996

Tributes to Keegan Rhys Hardy

Lovingly submitted by Fiona Hardy, TCF Qld in memory of her son, Keegan for his birthday.

My Memories

The memories we have no-one can take
They've left us a lifetime of great heartache
But that's our life, one of a broken heart
But it's those memories that keep us from falling apart

We keep you so close, deep in our hearts we do
We speak your name daily, our child #2
Your brothers talk of you and all that they know
Your baby sister will also learn of you so

Of that you can be sure, of her big brother she'll speak
We all hold you so close, our love is so deep
Keep walking beside us each and every day
Until we are together again, we send our love and we pray.

All our love
Mummy and Daddy

I feel you with me

As I put pen to paper
The words they do not come
Some days they come so freely
But now I've just gone numb...

I feel you with me when I'm happy
I feel you with me when I'm sad
I feel you with me when I'm lonely, upset or feel like I'm going mad
I feel you with me at night
I feel you with me when I wake
I feel you with me watching your brothers and sister
I feel sometimes this is all too much to take

The pain is so strong each and every day
Sometimes I have no words to express what to say
Keep with me each day as I know that you are
I need to feel you near and not gone too far.

Love always little man
Mummy

Our beautiful boy, twin number one
You will always be to me
Just perfect, beautiful and so sweet
Life was as it was meant to be

We had great dreams for our twins and their big brother
And how it would be, our happy family
Three boys in the house (and daddy)
How busy we would be!

We only had ten weeks
To do our best to show you life
Then you went to rest far away
And life isn't the same as it should have been
You now have a sister, such a sweet little girl
Who looks just like her brothers, with little bits of you all
She's got bright blue eyes that light up the room
We'll teach her about you, from the time she is so small

I'll always be your Mummy
And he'll always be your Daddy
You'll always be a big brother, and a little one too
You'll always be our son, the baby that we had

But you are now gone, and yet always around
We feel you each day
You are our pride, you are so precious
We cry your tears, and we love you so dear.

Missing you always
Daddy, Mummy, Lincoln, Bayden and baby Emersen

Grieving in the fast lane

By Judi Fischer, Cleveland, Ohio

We live in a society where we expect our daily tasks to be taken care of quickly. We have drive-through windows for everything from fast food to pharmacies, boxes with easy-to-follow instructions for a "quick" meal, computers for immediate access to global information and books offering instructions to make everything easy—from understanding your investments to developing a better self concept. As we travel in the fast lane of life, we often expect, even demand, our daily tasks and adjustments to be handled at the same pace in which we live our lives.

And then we experience a significant loss. The death of our child stops us in our tracks. The pace in which we live our lives needs to slow down, to allow time to heal. There is repair work to be done. An informed and cautious traveler will proceed with care. There are helpful road signs we need to observe along our grief journey to help us proceed in a positive direction, especially as the holidays approach. As you think about where you are, where you would like to be and how you will reach your destination, consider these suggestions:

Entering Holiday County: Proceed with Caution

Clearly define what you would like your holiday to look like this year.

Do you want to continue with familiar traditions, or begin to create new memories? There is no right or wrong. Choose what is best for you right now.

School Zone Ahead

Wherever you are in your grief journey, it is a time for learning and growing. You are seated in the schoolroom of life, so learn all you can about grief and understand how it has impacted your life.

Road Construction Ahead

Life is changing and adjustments need to be made with these changes. Holidays are a time for celebration, but if you don't feel like celebrating, what do you feel like doing? Slow down and consider your options and construct a holiday that has some ingredients for a meaningful occasion.

Danger Ahead

Grieving is emotionally and physically demanding. Accepting your limitations as you enter into the holidays will help keep the emotional level tolerable. Listen to what your body is telling you emotionally and physically. Listening will help keep you away from the danger zone of over commitment and overwhelming exhaustion.

Slower Traffic use Left Lane

When you express your feelings, they seem less overwhelming and more manageable. If you stay in the fast lane of life, you will never take the time to identify supportive people and supportive opportunities. Supportive opportunities may include attending a community holiday program, participating in a weekly or monthly support group or seeking professional counseling. Pull away from the busyness of life and reevaluate the direction you want to go.

Resume Speed

Encourage yourself that you will survive the holidays. Anticipation of the holidays is usually worse than the actual day. Try not to let worry rob you of the joy and meaning surrounding the season. Temper your expectations with reality. There is no perfect holiday. You can look forward to resuming speed again as the intensity of your pain begins to soften. Time is your friend, but the best companion you have is yourself. Above all else, take care of you in this holiday season!

Adapted from Bereavement magazine Nov/Dec 2001, www.bereavementmag.com

The Seventh Christmas

*By Susan Evans, Greenwich, Connecticut
Bereavement Magazine Nov/Dec 2001, www.bereavementmag.com*

The Seventh Christmas

It's been six years since my daughter died;
Seventy-eight moons.
We've celebrated six Christmases.

Six times, I've pulled her hand-knit stocking
From the tissue where it's stored,
And pressed its fuzzy Santa to my face.
Six times, I've debated whether to hang it on the mantle.
Six times, I've decided not to.

Six year, I've cranked up the corny carols
And coerced the kids to trim the tree.
"Like we always have," I chirp.
Six times, we've lit a purple candle
In her honor to keep us company.
While we open presents.
We're about to do it a seventh time.
No changes.
There's a comfort in rituals, even sad ones.

I'll cry, of course, but tears now, not buckets.
I've walked the miles, done the work, endured.

Somewhere on that journey,
One day when I wasn't looking,
"courts" came along for the ride.

This Christmas, the seventh Christmas,
I'm ready to hand her stocking.

A Lifetime of Joy

*Written by Tania Ludlow, TCF, Qld
In loving memory of her daughter, Alex*

The instant you arrived
I knew a lifetime of joy would follow
Your smile lit up a room
Our first baby—our joy—soon to be sorrow

You captured our hearts and our minds
You were our world, our life, our plans
To hug you and hold you were precious times
I knew a lifetime of joy would follow

We did so many things together
Our world completely changed
Your life fulfilled our biggest dreams
I knew a lifetime of joy would follow

The instant I found out a sister was to come
I knew you would be best of friends
Someone to grow up with and have some fun
I knew a lifetime of joy would follow

So many plans, so much to do
Not one beautiful baby but there was going to be two
The shock, the fear but then the joy
I knew a lifetime of joy would follow

That horrible day came around too soon
Our world shattered beyond repair
Our beautiful princess taken without warning
Not a lifetime of joy—just horror

The days and weeks turned into years
We slowly began to breathe
My arms are empty, my heart still sore
The lifetime of joy—no longer

Beautiful princess, you reached the stars
An angle in heaven keeping guard
Your sisters have given some joy to our lives
But the lifetime of joy is tainted

Ten years on, your memory remains strong
Each day I long to hold you
I cry like it was yesterday and know that
A lifetime of joy won't follow

We get our joy from little things

Your memories and those created
By your beautiful sisters who remind us of you
A lifetime of memories will follow....

Alexandra Kate Ludlow drowned in the bath at her daycare mother's place on Friday 13 October 1995. She was almost nine months old. Ten painful years have passed and although there is some peace, not a day goes by when we don't miss her. We have learned to live with broken hearts.

Love you precious princess....
Mummy, Daddy, Monique & Sabrina

Written in special memory of Alex

The Season of Light

By Darcie D Sims PhD, Wenatchee, Washington

In this season of light remember to:

Be patient with yourself. Know that hardly anyone is as happy as you think they might be. We all have our hurts to bear. Do what you can this season and let it be enough.

Be realistic. It will hurt, but don't try to block bad moments. Be ready for them. Lay in a supply of tissues. Let those hurting moments come, deal with them and let them go.

Be kind and gentle to yourself. Figure out what you should do, balance it with what you are capable of doing and then compromise. Forgive yourself for living.

Plan ahead. Grieving people often experience a lack of concentration. Make lists. Prioritize everything. Decide what is really important to you.

Listen to yourself. As you become aware of your needs, tell family members and friends. Ask for help when you need it.

Take care of yourself physically. Eat right. Exercise.

Change something. Everything has already changed, so don't be afraid to change some traditions. Try whatever pops into your head. You can always stop it if it doesn't feel quite right or doesn't work! But don't toss out everything this year. Keep some traditions. You choose which ones.

Leave the word "ought" out of this holiday season.

Hold on to your wallet and charge cards. You can't buy away grief, but you might be tempted to try. Understand.. That heartaches will be unpacked as you sift through the decorations, but so, too are the warm loving memories of each piece. Don't deny yourself the gift of healing tears.

Share your holidays. With someone, anyone! Ride the ferry, visit a soup kitchen or nursing home. There are lots of lonely people who could use your love and caring.

Work at lifting depression. Take responsibility for yourself. We cannot wait for someone else to wrap up some joy and give it to us. We have to do that for ourselves. Think of things you enjoy and give yourself a treat.

Hang the stockings. Place a wreath on the grave. Do whatever feels right for you and your family.

Light a special candle. Not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and love shared.

Learn to look for joy in the moment. Get a pair of rose coloured glasses and change the way you look at things. Joy happens when we look for it!

Find the gifts of your child's life. Think of all the "gifts" that your child gave to you... joy, laughter, sharing, etc. List these "gifts" on strips of paper and keep them somewhere close to you. Some may put them in a gift box while others may decide to place them in the stocking. Some may decorate the tree with them or simply keep them in a memory book or in a secret place. But, wherever you place them, know these small strips of paper hold treasures far beyond our capacity to understand. They hold tangible evidence that someone lived. It is a reminder that we did exchange gifts and that we still have those gifts, even if the giver has gone.

Live through the hurt. So that joy can return to warm your heart! This is the Season of Light... for it is the season when we remember that once we loved and were loved. And that is the greatest light and memory of all!

Bereavement Magazine Nov/Dec '95, www.bereavementresources.com (adapted excerpt)

Shopping

*By Mary Jane Cronin, Scottsdale, Arizona
Bereavement Mag Nov/Dec 2000, www.bereavementmag.com*

In the store, I became claustrophobic
As I saw things to buy for you.
I want you back to hold again,
As I rejoice in your passing, too.

It is selfish of me to want you here;
I know you exist in a better place.
I still want the Mum-and-daughter stuff.
I still feel the soft skin of your face.

I can smell you and feel you still,
Your gentle laughter and warm brown eyes.
Both live inside me and haunt me still.
Our short lifetime created unique ties.

You shopped with me, while on my hip.
I bought dresses with you in my cart.
I took you to stores in embarrassment...
Teens and mothers should shop apart.

You then went alone, not needing me,
I was so proud of my grown-up girl.
As I got older, you bought for me.
Each gift was a valued new pearl.

I ache now to buy you one last thing.
Oh, this would look so pretty on you!
I touch the things that you would like.
As the tears roll from my eyes, too.

The last dress I bought for you, in tears.
I did not know was your burial gown.
Though, you were not there to approve.
Please know that you looked so beautiful
As they laid you down!

“Pick and choose and try to spend this holiday season with people who will put no pressure on you to “get back to normal”. There is no such thing. Normal was when your child was still alive. The task is to create a new normalcy, not to live in denial as to the reality of the old one.”

*Deirdre Answers Your Questions, by Dierdre Felton, MA,
Windham, New Hampshire, Bereave Mag Nov/Dec 2000, www.bereavementmag.com*

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