



The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc.

Grief Support for Bereaved Parents, Grandparents & Siblings

Newsletter (Extracts) Aug - Sep 2006



Men Do Cry

Ken Faulk, Sands Newsletter, September, 2004, Issue 221

I heard quite often "men don't cry"
Though no one ever told me why
So when I fell and skinned a knee
No one came to comfort me.

And when some bully boy at school
Would pull a prank so mean and cruel
I'd quickly learn to turn and quip.
"it doesn't hurt", and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years
I learned to stifle any tears.
Though "be a big boy" it began,
Quite soon I learned to "be a man".

And I could play that stoic role
While storm and tempest wracked my soul
No pain or setback could there be
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby
And helplessly watched my son die,
And quickly found to my surprise
That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame
I cannot play that "big boy" game,
And openly without remorse
I let my sorrow take it's course.

So those of you who can't abide
A man you've seen whose often cried,
Reach out to him with all your heart
As one whose life's been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see
Their loss of immortality.
And tears will come in endless streams

When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

Reaching A New Plateau

By Roy & Juanita Peterson, Lexington, Kentucky, Bereavement Magazine, June 1991 (adapted)

Resolving the emotional and physical problems resulting from the death of a child is no easy task, and developing a new and comfortable life may take years. The prospect of facing an endless number of years of grief discomforts the bereaved no end and may engender a frantic search for ways to overcome grief.

Often the assumption behind questions about when grief will end is that grief is a time-limited step-by-step process. One bewildered bereaved grandmother even said to her daughter, "It's been two years and you're still grieving! You've got to put it behind you and get on with your life."

But getting on with one's life is not simple and putting "it" behind you can be extremely difficult. Although our work with The Compassionate Friends has facilitated our quest to overcome grief and to reach a new plateau, we have learned, as Sascha Wagner so eloquently said, "Grief cannot be conquered like an enemy. Grief can only be changed from pain to hope, from hope to deeper life." Reflecting on how we reached our new plateau, we now offer several suggestions that helped us after the death of our child. Understand and be open about what you are going through. Although you will need the assistance and support of others, no one else can resolve your grief. Overcoming grief is hard work, and the more you understand the reasons behind certain changes, the easier it becomes to adjust. Now, rather than later, is the time to seek greater understanding.

Learn about the symptoms of grief The unknown generates fear and anxiety, but learning all you can about grief reduces fear. It also serves as a means of opening communications and better understanding between the griever and friends or professionals. Help friends and professional caregivers to also become knowledgeable about grief; they need to understand the nature of the struggles you are experiencing.

Acknowledge that you will never "get over it". Never getting over it does not mean a lifetime of unresolved problems, however. The future will be better, and accepting the permanence of the loss is a significant step toward that future. It is important to picture children as they really were, concentrating on the joys of the child's life, while remembering the impish or humorous moments as well. This way of remembering provided many opportunities for us to smile more often, stimulated us to reflect positively and helped us to realize that the resolution of grief is possible.

Seek positive role models. If others can successfully travel beyond the "shadow of grief", so can you. A bereaved person whose child experienced a death similar to that of your child can discuss emotions and situations that may parallel your own. Discovering what was beneficial for another bereaved person who seems to be resolving the problems of grief gave us new techniques to use. Talk with a good listener can do wonders for our self-esteem and may be instrumental in obtaining new perspectives about our problems.

Consider professional help if an emotional or physical problem persists. Problems that seem to linger and interfere with everyday functions may drastically and negatively influence our ability to resolve grief. Physical problems should be discussed with medical personnel with whom you are comfortable—preferably those who are knowledgeable about grief. Anger, depression guilt or other emotions that are usually experienced during grief, are not easily (if ever) handled in isolation. If talking to friends or self-help bereavement groups does not reduce the emotional stress, a counselor who is familiar with grief concerns should be consulted.

Crying is an emotional release that has special value. Tears are a unique way of relieving tensions. They allow us to let go for a few minutes, clearing the air (and often the mind). Crying is good practice for recovery from other emotional situations and recovery is usually rapid. Men, especially, can find temporary relief in the flow of tears. Men's tears are increasingly being seen in our society as an affirmation of the depth of their love, rather than as a flaw in their manhood.

If religion has been a past comfort, try not to turn away from it. A strong faith often helps to promote emotional healing and, eventually, an even deeper faith. Seek friends who can support your search for a better understanding and internal peace. Many bereaved people use their grief struggles as the basis for informing their congregations of the need for an organized approach to helping persons whose child has died.

Try to be flexible, adaptable. There is no outlined road or lock-step process that leads to the resolution of grieving. What helps today may not work tomorrow. A flexible approach offers any number of possible adaptations of what has succeeded for others. You will eventually discover those that can help you to convert a bad day into an acceptable one. Not everyday will be good, nor will all days be bad. We have found succour in rejoicing in small victories and in celebrating them more than once. The ultimate goal—to remember our child with less physical and emotional pain, and to actually celebrate his or her life—can be reached through a series of small victories and some setbacks.

Picture yourself as a healthier, happier, more pleasant you, and work to make the picture a reality. Think about what you want to happen to you and work to make it possible. Even professional athletes, who have spent years improving their skills, picture in their minds what may happen before they perform and then they practice how they will respond in certain situations. We suggest that you visualize the life you want to lead, the person you want to become, the smile that can appear on your face; and then translate and transfer these visualizations so that they become a part of what you expect your daily life to be. If we are to eventually reach a new plateau, where grief has been allowed to convert us to a deeper, more meaningful existence, we must think, about the life we want on that new plateau. We can then reach for it with renewed consciousness and determination.

The death of a child can lead the griever to question his or her worth and to experience deep feelings of guilt. Feelings of being diminished because of the death are not uncommon. Learn to once again love yourself so that you can love others. Feeling good about yourself (loving yourself) sets up a chain reaction. Love, compassion and support are deeply intertwined; the more you can relate to or give to others, the easier it becomes for you to resolve your problems. Helping others expands our self-esteem, and as our picture of yourself grows, we can move toward becoming the person we want to be.

Resolution of grief does not mean you will ever forget your child, but overcoming grief does mean that you can remember with less pain. The painful periods are recognized and dealt with and therefore are either less intense or of shorter duration. Resolution means that you are able to function in a new and different environment that no longer includes the physical presence of your child. Time alone does not bring about resolution; positive actions by the griever are necessary.

Practice the art of letting go. We eventually just reach the place where our love and memories are liberated from the painful emotions linked with the death of our child. It is important to let go of the powerful urge to pretend it never happened, or the temptation to maintain that which cannot be continued. Letting go, though difficult, can be practiced in symbolic ways such as the writing of farewell notes. When you can finally let go, you will discover you have opened your heart and mind to a maturing understanding of your loved one. Friends often notice when the bereaved become comfortable with themselves that is when they have let go. In our own situation, friends began to tell us of their experiences with our daughter—stories not known to us before. Our memories of our daughter, Roya Renee, and our knowledge of her grew because we let go and therefore made progress. Letting go may also open an avenue through which you can obtain new knowledge and more mature memories of your child. Your positive actions may fill the spaces that are freed up by letting go.

The suggestions above have been helpful to us in the search to make our lives more tolerable since the death of our child. Part of the core of that new life is the assurance that even though our daughter died, our love for her and our memories will never go away. We have sought change, taken action, improved our self-esteem, and reaffirmed our worth as parents, spouses and individuals. In the words of Kubler-Ross, we have “known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found (our) way out of the depths...” You too, can reach a similar plateau where grief is resolved and where life, once again, has meaning.

A Man In Grief

By Eileen Knight Hagemeister, SANDS Newsletter, Sept 2004, Issue 221

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 calls and visitors
So she can get some rest
They always asked 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.

The Anger of Bereaved Parents

From an article by Denis Pye, TCF UK Newsletter 1992 (adapted)

The anger of bereaved parents can often be seen as a reaction to feelings of helplessness and loss of control over events. Our beloved child has died, whether suddenly through accident, suicide or murder, or as a result of illness and disease — and we have not been able to prevent it. Our desperate frustration emerges in anger, either against particular others, against the whole world, or against God. Someone must be responsible, someone must be to blame for our loss, our suffering and our pain. After all, the inevitable process of ageing cannot be an explanation for such an early death. So, our anger is directed against those seen to be responsible, or sometimes simply against those nearest to us. In this way, our anger may be turned on doctors and hospital staff, on police, or on the driver of the vehicle involved in our child's death. Writers on bereavement have often mentioned the anger, conscious or submerged, which can exist against the loved one who has died. This can present an enormous problem to bereaved parents. How could we be angry with the child who has died. But we could, after all, be angry with our children when they were alive, and still love them, couldn't we? Better, surely, that the anger is brought to the surface rather than repressed and added to our burden of unnecessary guilt? The very worst outcome is that anger, unacknowledged and unexpressed after our child's death, is turned inwards against ourselves, gnawing away at our sense of self-worth and leading to the despair of deep depression. We have all felt the beginnings of this descent in a temptation to blame ourselves. Like all the welter of emotions which hit us in the terrible weeks and months following our loss, it needs to be faced and talked out with those who will listen with real empathy and understanding.

A Father's Feelings

Hope
Joy
Elation
Excitement
Anticipation
Caring
Love
Achievement
Protectiveness
Shock
Panic
Bewilderment
Anguish
Pain
Helplessness
Powerlessness
Loss
Gutted
Sadness
Disbelief
Anger
Frustration
Stress
Suffering
Lost future
Empty
Hidden tears

*By Shane Cassidy 15 September 2004
In memory of Zach 15th October 2002*

When Fathers Weep at Graves

By Alice J Wisler

I see them weep
The fathers at the stones
Taking off the brave armour
Forced to wear in the workplace
Clearing away the debris
With gentle fingers
Inhaling the sorrow
Diminished by anguish
Their hearts desiring what they cannot have
To walk hand in hand
With children no longer held
To all the fathers who leave a part
Of their hearts at the stones
May breezes underneath trees of time
Ease their pain
As they receive healing tears
....the gift the children give.

Life is eternal,
And love is immortal,
And death is only a horizon;
And a horizon is nothing
Save the limit of our sight.
Anonymous,
"Compassion", autumn Edition 2004, TCF, UK

Lovingly taken from "Tributes" ezine, June 2005

On Father's Day

Brian Euhus (father of Karen)

It is early morning on a fine spring day
The thick mist is slowly rising
And filtered sun is shining through
Revealing fields covered in a sea of colour.
The quiet of the day is broken by the noise of parakeets
As they busily feed on the grasses
And I am left with my thoughts
As I quietly sit by her grave on Father's Day.
So another year has gone since your passing
And a father's love is sorely tested
As he thinks now of distant memories
Of a little girl bouncing on his knee on Father's Day.

"Words of Sorrow, Words of Love" Edited by Eva Lager

My Pattern Of Grief

Fran Hamilton, March 2002, mother of Zara

As I am approaching two years without my daughter,
I have seen a pattern emerge for me and those who grieve alongside
I believe grief isn't a path or a linear journey.
It is circular
Times of fond memories bring tears and anguish one day
And a smile the next
Days of despair, follow days of peace
Days of depression, followed by days of numbness
Days of hope for the future,
then days of hopelessness and helplessness
Days of anger,
then days of absolute love
Days of feeling close to my child
Then days of feeling as though she is a universe away
Days of believing that life goes on following death
And days of utter disbelief
I have learned to embrace this circularity,

To truly appreciate the good days,
and to allow the bad days to happen
And follow the flow each day
I know if I had died,
I would have wanted my daughter to live her life to the full
And although I cannot promise that in return I will do my best.
Zara's motto for life was
"Accept Life As A Challenge".
By this she meant we can look at what we have to do,
Then accept it as a challenge to bring out the best in ourselves.
"Well my darling I'll try—and you always loved people who tried!"

TCF Perth, WA "Reflections", Vol 21-2, June 2002

Do You Want To Understand?

By Jan Brady, TCF Des Moines, IA, USA

You say to me, "It's been a year, when will your grieving end?
Why can't you be like you once were, my smiling happy friend?"

If you really want an answer, though I wonder if you do,
I'll take you deep inside of me where sadness dims the view.

First, my friend, for your sake, come close and take my hand,
And we will pray that what I share - you will understand.

The 'me' you once knew is no more, it died right with my child.
A voice that stilled forever, yet the echo drives me wild.

You say you lost Aunt Bertha, so you have seen death, too.
Aunt Bertha, though, was not your child - she was eighty, not twenty-two.

I barely survived those first few months, coping was a dreadful task.
I'd tell you I was doing fine while sobbing behind the mask.

If I talked about my precious child, you turned away in fear.
You couldn't stand to see me cry, nor would you shed a tear.

I wanted you to speak to him - please won't you say his name?
But you pretended he never was, so he died over and over again.

Oh, I see you're uncomfortable, you no longer want my hand.
So, as it was before we talked, my friend, You don't want to understand.

To Mollie

Jackie Gavin, Bolton in the UK.

Jackie lost her daughter Mollie aged 6 years on 6/8/03 and Lucy, aged 4 days on 18/9/03.

We miss you every single day.
We wish that you were here to play.
To joke and laugh and dance and sing.
We miss the joys that you did bring.
No Harry, No Disney and no Scooby Doo.
No scaring your grandma by saying "Boo!"
Our home's not a home without you around,
It's too tidy, too quiet and neat.
No kisses, no cuddles, no gel pens and bubbles,
No sound of your dancing feet.
No swimming, no pool balls, no cinema trips,
No bossing us all with your hand on your hips.
No pooh sticks, no pizzas, no pushing your swing,
The truth is Mollie, we miss everything

Much loved daughters of Debbie and Chris Freeman

This poem is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Jaden (31/1/95 to 9/7/96) and Jordan (19/7/93 to 19/7/93)

Bring My Child Back To Me

By Barbara Patterson TCF Coquitlam, BC, Canada

Whisper, whisper, wind in the woods,
Bring back my child, here, where he stood.
Let him laugh, let him shout, let him giggle with glee.
Wind in the woods, bring my child back to me.

Silence of morning, dew on the grass,
Give me peace in my soul, let this time pass.
Let my child sit beside me, Let the two of us be.
Silence of the morning, bring my child back to me.

Middle of the night, so dark and so still,
Let me relax and remember at will.
Let my child in my thoughts drift forever to see.
Middle of the night, bring my child back to me.

Memories, memories here in my head,
Don't ever leave me, even though my child's dead.
Keep him alive, keep him strong, keep him free.
Memories of mine, bring my child back to me.

Love you always, Mark
Mum, Dad, Tanya, Karen, Dean, Nathan, Joshua, Georgina, Tyler & Ella XXX

Lovingly submitted by Joy and John Van Raalte in memory of their son, Mark 29.3.75 to 2.9.93 on his 13th Anniversary.

What does “empathy” mean when we help those who are grieving?”

By Doris Zagdanski

Empathy is about listening with your heart so that you can share what is happening with your friend. Empathy provides an underlying message of acceptance of where your friend is coming from even if you have not been there yourself.

The power of empathy results from its ability to keep communication open because it does not judge, try to change or solve, belittle or criticize.

Empathy gives grieving people permission to do two very important tasks in healing—to talk and to feel.

“Stuck For Words”, QHVSG News-Link, November 2003

The above writings have been extracted from the official members newsletter originally compiled and printed by The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc. Our printed newsletter contains additional stories, verses, news, events, memorial notices & contacts. It is also sent to members much earlier than available on our website. Please contact our office if you wish to become a member to receive the full newsletter. We welcome contributions of articles, stories, verses etc to the newsletter. All contributions should be emailed to the Newsletter Editor.

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