



The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc.

Grief Support for Bereaved Parents, Grandparents & Siblings

Newsletter (Extracts) Dec 2007 - Jan 2008



Christmas Thoughts

Written by Anne Holloway

Returning home from Midnight Mass,
I lit a candle just for you,
Knowing you'd be close to us
And you would see it too.

I talked to you of Christmases past,
And of things you used to do,
Recalling of how our gifts we'd hide,
No place was safe for you!!

I told you how I longed for you,
Not dwelling on the pain,
I didn't want to make you sad
Only to explain.

I couldn't promise not to cry,
For crying brings relief.
Nor could I promise not to mourn,
Or put aside my grief.

But I promised I would always live
A part of each day for you;
And I would try to do those things
You'd be proud for me to do.

I wish you peace and send you love,
Then I said, 'Goodnight',
Asking God to care for you
And guide you to his light.

Taken from UK Newsletter, Winter, 1992

Christmas 2007

By Lyn Atkinson, Grandmother to Conor McAuliffe 3.5.03-22.7.06

Christmas looms...People ask, "What are your plans for Christmas this year?" I want to shout, "Well to be honest I could NOT care if it came and went unnoticed."

This is ME writing these words...one who loves, (or used to love) Christmas, the family, the feast, the festivities, the parties, the excitement and the joy of giving, but this year I feel none of that enjoyment. The buying of gifts at Christmas is no longer fun, I see toys and books and clothes we should be buying for Conor and the tears flow, unstoppable at times. Our family walks on eggshells, we watch our words for fear of hurting someone, the joy of cooking and entertaining has faded. So if one asks again, my answer may be ... "Christmas...forget it."

I KNOW this "new" normal that grief brings has created a "new" me and I have a "new" daughter who I have to get to know all over again and I hate it.

Yes, there is the religious aspect, which is the reason we celebrate, but if there is a God, what happened to Him where our precious grandson Connor was concerned?

My apologies to those who perhaps feel I should not write those words but today I feel a need. Am I angry...yes I am. Why does anyone allow an innocent child to die of a cruel disease like cancer and then LEAVE the whole family in a total mess? I know there are no answers to that question. In saying that though I do believe that my precious grandson is at peace and will remain with us forever in spirit and I also believe we will meet again. I want to believe that there is that magical place called Heaven but until I get there I will not know for sure but we will be united somewhere.

Then there is the "grown up", sensible side of me which says...how dare I dishonour Conor and be an angry, sad and bitter Grandmother. I have a husband and children and grandchildren and part of me knows they need me...not just a cut out or a token me, but a whole me, so I will try. I acknowledge that the other members of my family deserve more than my shell, they need their daughter, sister, mother and grandmother. If I completely lose my mind, I will also lose Conor. By allowing myself to be held captive in the gloom of grief and despair, I am not giving myself any chance of exploring the life lessons presented to me by Conor. I remember promising Conor to live my life for him, to honour him every day, to thank him daily for teaching me about courage and love so I know that the truest, most heartfelt way in which I can honour Conor is to re-invest myself in living and that includes holiday times.

As the months have now become a year, I am determined not to lose sight of the resolutions I made to Conor as I shared precious time with him in those last days. I have certainly changed, but in ways that aren't readily visible to others. Am I normal feeling like this...yes because I have read enough on grief to know it is my "new" normal. Am I crazy? No...I am grieving and that is OK. Will I get through this gloom, yes because it destroys me to see our grief affecting members of family, particularly the young ones, so perhaps I should set an example?

I hold Conor in my heart but I have other beautiful grandchildren whose hands I can hold as well and they deserve happiness and to see their loved ones enjoying time with them. How are they to understand our grief? It would be selfish of me to destroy their childhood dreams in my grief. I have to make up my mind not to let that happen. In a way I need to separate, not my love for Conor but my grief into another part of my life. Not that I will not feel it any more. I just must not let it control me. I am wondering if some how or some day I can really do that with the grief. Will it get easier, I cannot say, grief has no timetable but those who have been before me say yes. It is a journey, it is hard work and lonely but one day I hope I can approach Christmas and other "special" days with true joy. In time may my smile come from within. Until then I wish you all strength as we face the Christmas holidays. I cannot wish people a Happy Christmas any more but I wish us all some peace. If I feel like this my heart aches not only for all my fellow grandparents but especially for the parents and siblings of those who are living with the thought of a Christmas without a loved one.

I love you Conor and Miss you more than you can imagine.

Your Nettie Lyn Atkinson, Grandmother to Conor McAuliffe 3.5.03-22.7.06

About Christmas

By Dennis Klass, St Louis, MO

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message.

Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them. But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness.

But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

TCF Professional Advisor TCF Qld Dec/Jan 94/95 Newsletter

Life since the loss of my Rebecca

By Patricia Cotterill, TCF Qld Mother of Rebecca Cotterill

who passed away in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002, aged 25 years.

I would like to write about my journey since the loss of my beautiful daughter Rebecca on Christmas Day 2002. To think that it will be 5 years this December that our Bec left our lives and how much our lives have changed since then. Once a parent loses a child, their lives are never the same ever again. Only a parent who has suffered the loss of a child can fully understand what I mean.

Our Rebecca passed away in a hospital in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002 at approximately 9.20am. She was aged 25 years and had been diagnosed with cancer on the 29th November. We received the call from Rebecca and even then when she told us that horrid news, she was strong within herself. At that stage Rebecca had been in hospital in a place called Deventer for 2 weeks whilst undergoing all sorts of tests, as it took the Doctors that long to finally give her the diagnosis of Choriocarcinoma, or, Placental Cancer.

Rebecca was taken by ambulance to this huge hospital in Amsterdam on Saturday 30th November and her first chemo treatment was started that very afternoon. Her partner, Peter was by her side. Rebecca and Peter had a daughter on the 29th May 2002 and they called her Sydney. Peter's parents took care of her whilst Rebecca was in hospital.

Rebecca's sister, Michelle and her husband, Chris were living in the UK at this time and they were able to be there with Rebecca as soon as they heard this terrible news. Rebecca nearly passed away on the 9th December and was rushed to the Intensive Care Unit where Doctors managed to save her at that time. My husband, Dudley and our youngest daughter, Susan arrived in Holland and stayed in a family unit at the hospital, thus we were able to spend lots of quality time with Rebecca. When we were able to talk to the head of Oncology, she gave Rebecca a 30% to 40% chance of beating this cancer.

After her second chemo treatment Rebecca lost all her beautiful long hair and she cried in my arms when the nurse finally shaved her head. To witness our daughter go through the terrible sickness that chemo does to the body and to see how weak she became, was just the most horrible thing for us, and of course we felt absolutely helpless.

Michelle and Chris had to return to their jobs in the UK and left the hospital on Sunday 13th December. We had family photos taken but Bec was very ill at this stage and could not smile. After her third chemo treatment, Rebecca seemed to pick up a bit and was able to smile again. She was always very positive about beating this cancer and never once discussed dying from it with any of us. How does one talk about dying with their loved one who is suffering from cancer and is so very positive?

On Christmas Eve, Peter and his parents came to the hospital to visit and brought Sydney with them, and so we have beautiful photos of Rebecca holding her daughter on that day. We had decorated Bec's room with decorations for Christmas and the room was laden with gifts. I sat with Bec on Christmas Eve and watched some TV with her. We watched East Enders which was her favourite show.

On Christmas morning, Peter came knocking on our door to say that he had received a call to say that Bec had been rushed back to ICU. We all gathered up there in the waiting room and just waited. We were taken to see Bec and she was sitting up in bed and was able to talk to us. She said she'd had a very bad night. She had tubes everywhere and it was so difficult to hold her. The last words she said as we left the room were 'I'll talk to you later Mummy'. She only ever called me Mummy when she was scared. I couldn't speak as I was crying so much and trying to be so brave for Bec's sake.

We just sat and waited, then a Doctor came to tell us that Rebecca's heart had stopped and they were trying to resuscitate her and then he left. When he returned we knew the news was going to be the worst possible news that we could ever receive, and it was. Our daughter was gone forever. We went to see her and shed many tears over her. It was just so unbelievable that we would never see our daughter again or hear her speak.

Rebecca's funeral was on the Monday 30th December. There were approximately 200 family and friends who were there for her final farewell. Her ashes were divided and half are now placed in the cemetery at Derventer where Peter, Sydney, their family and friends can go and visit. We brought the other half of Bec's ashes back to Nambour with us. They remained by my bedside for a few years. We also had a Memorial Service for Rebecca on Saturday 18th January 2003 where approximately 400 family and friends attended.

This year though, on the 14th February, when it would have been Rebecca's 30th birthday, we placed her ashes under a liquid amber tree at Kulangoor Cemetery. Her tree overlooks a pond and she is now at rest with nature and the angels.

Our journey has been very tough. Our lives will never be the same again for us. We wear our 'masks' every day. Life goes on though and we have learnt to just take one day at a time.

Peter suffered for a long time and he has done a brilliant job of bringing Sydney up. Sydney is now 5 years old. Peter has moved on now and has a lovely partner called Susan. They have a daughter called Gwen who was born on 5th September last year. We have regular contact with them. My hobby is scrapbooking and I have done two albums already for Sydney to have one day. The first album has photos of Sydney in her mother's tummy, Sydney's birth, plus photos of Rebecca and Sydney for the first seven months.

Michelle and Chris now live on the Isle of Man. Michelle is studying to become a Natural Therapist which should eventuate next September. Susan is engaged to Nathan and they are getting married on 27th September next year, so it gives Dudley and I something to look forward to.

Everyone who has lost a child has their own story to tell, and I just wanted to share my story with all of you.

By Patricia Cotterill, TCF Qld Mother of Rebecca Cotterill who passed away in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002, aged 25 years.

Coping with Christmas

Adapted from "enigma", December 2006 A publication of Sids & Kids, Qld.

It's not easy to miss Christmas or try to ignore it. No matter where we go, what TV station we watch or radio station we listen to and even in our own letterbox, we are bombarded by the commercialism of Christmas, the holiday season and the expectation that we will be happy and celebrate.

And for some there is also the expectation of family and friends. Planning the Christmas parties and gifts. Children dreaming of presents from Santa, And all those songs about a new born baby!

So what if we wanted to skip Christmas this year? Or what if we wanted to remember Christmas in a different way from the past. What if we wanted to spend Christmas alone, or run away? What would people think?

Unfortunately we spend our time thinking about what others would expect and how they would react rather than thinking about what we want and what is best for our own family.

For many people the holiday season is not a happy season. It's amazing when you realize how many people endure it, wishing it would go away. What is supposed to be a time for family becomes a time of dread because one special family member is not there to celebrate.

If you are worrying about the coming season, you are not alone. So what can you do to help yourself and your family "Cope with Christmas?"

Thoughts for the Holidays

By Joannetta Hendel, Indianapolis, Indiana Bereavement Mag Nov/Dec 97, www.bereavementmag.com

Plan Ahead

Bereaved individuals who experience the most difficulty with the holiday season are those who have given little thought to the challenges they will encounter. Consider ahead of time what may be expected of you, both socially and emotionally, as well as your own preferences.

Accept your Limitations

Grief consumes most of your available energy no matter what the season. The holidays place additional demands on your time and emotions. Plan to lower your expectations to accommodate current needs.

Make Changes

Your circumstances have changed. Expect to make necessary alterations in holiday plans to accommodate those changes. Consider changing your surroundings, rituals and/or traditions to diminish stress. Serve notice on family and friends that this year things may be somewhat different.

Trim Down to Essentials

Limit social and family commitments to suit your available energy. Shop early or use catalogue sales. Re-evaluate priorities and forego unnecessary activities and obligations.

Ask for and Accept Help

Accept offers for assistance with holiday shopping, decoration, cleaning, cooking, etc. Chances are loved-ones are looking for ways to lessen your burden at this time of year. Allow those who care about you to offer their support in concrete ways.

Inform Others of Your Needs

Give family and friends the tools they need to help you through the holidays. Be specific with them about your preferences and desires, and keep them up-to-date when those needs change.

Build in Flexibility

Learn to 'play it by ear'. There is no concrete formula for learning to deal with loss. You are the foremost authority on what is best for you, and your needs may legitimately change from day to day. Accept the fluctuations that must occur when walking in unknown territory, and learn to take each moment as it comes.

Give Yourself Permission 'To Be'

Allow breathing space and expect fluctuations in mood and perspective. The bereaved work overtime. Not only is life more complicated, but all energy is siphoned into mental and emotional resolution. Grieving is nature's way of healing the mind and heart from the greatest injury of all. Allow yourself the privilege of limping till your wounds have healed and you can learn to run again.

Journal Writing

By Cathy Styles, TCF, Qld, Childers

I am writing this in a hope that it might help someone get through those dark times that we all know about. I started writing a journal.

I just wrote down everything and anything that I was feeling at the time. I didn't write all the time and sometimes I only wrote a sentence. Other times I wrote pages depending on the feelings and circumstances.

One day I was so mad at someone for telling me how I should get on with things that I got up and wrote her a letter and told her how I felt about what she had said. I felt I got it off my chest. Then I put it in the fire. It didn't stop the pain or change the situation but it made that problem seem less important. Make sure you date it and maybe put the location you are writing it—in bed, in the garden, curled up under a tree, etc. Later on down the track you can go back and re-read it and you can see how far you have come in your grief.

At first you won't see much of a change but over a period of months you will. You may not want to re-read it. I didn't for a long time because going back was so painful, but after some time I did. Over a period of time it starts to make sense. It has been 8 years since we lost our son, Nathan and I still write. I hope this has brought some comfort to you.

Feelings

I feel like I've just existed
And now it's been 4 years
I don't know how I've lived and breathed
Without you being here.

I know you lived your lifetime
As short as that seems to me,

But the pain in my heart is still so great,
Yet I know your spirit is free.

At times I think I hear you
The thoughts come to my mind.
I struggle for the sound of your voice,
But your voice I cannot find.

Yet you come to me in many ways
So I know you did not die,
You want to tell me that you're close,
And to please stop asking Why.

Our lives on earth seem all too brief,
or brief as it seems to me.
But where you are is forever,
God calls that Eternity!

Grief Delayed

By Connie Pate, Maceo, Kentucky Bereavement Magazine Jan/Feb 1997

Hi, remember me?
Sure, you do. I'm grief -
The feeling you're so afraid to feel.
Did you really think
I'd go away all by my myself?
I'm hiding in every season, holiday and celebration -
Just waiting for an unguarded moment to overwhelm you.
I'll bring you to your knees.
I don't even care if you say, "Please!"
You must feel me, this I insist.
Avoid me, stuff me, medicate ...
I'll still persist.
The only way is through me.
"Sorrow" is really my name.
I believe you know my sister, "Suffering".
Take our hands and let's be friends.
For surely, in a lifetime we will meet again.
With the grace of God, we could become joy and peace.
It all depends on healthy grief!

Resolving Grief

To "be strong" or to "have courage?"

By Bob Wyborn, TCF Qld An article Bob wrote for "Self Help Qld Magazine"

We are very often told to be "strong" when in times of great emotional challenge and in particular when grief is that challenge. It has always struck me as a very easy piece of meaningless advice and it invariably comes from those who have never been in the current predicament we are experiencing. I have often pondered the use of that word and its intended meaning by the user. Is it chosen and then

totally misinterpreted because the English language often lacks specificity? After all on a hot Queensland summer day almost all of us would “love” to have a cool, refreshing ice cream.

On the other hand do our mostly well intended advisors choose a clichéd word without understanding its significance and power to have exactly the opposite effect to that which it was intended?

It became apparent to me some time ago that part of a successful resolution to our grief required the use and engagement of another word and we needed to bring it into play much earlier than we often felt inclined. That word is “Courage”. Observation confirms that it comes as an almost obligatory action in our grief journey and not, most often, as a welcome visitor. We are “forced” to display it firstly at the funeral, then many times thereafter for many different reasons; because other family members rely upon us for their daily welfare, at the workplace from which we cannot hide, the shops, the neighbours, our spouse, the very act of leaving the cocoon of our bed and entering the shower is often a monumental task requiring great pain. The list goes on and on. I think perhaps the toughest task which requires our utmost courage is to be able to face and accept ourselves for what we are in that “eternal moment” of truth and absolute exposure.

Perhaps a quick look at what is meant by the two words in question may allow us to understand and hopefully influence others to choose their words with more deliberation and thereby cause less pain than they continue to do.

We are strong if we have the muscular capacity to lift heavy weights—we are courageous if those weights are emotional pain and its many visitors.

We are strong if we can exert great physical or mechanical power—we are courageous when we use that power to face reality.

We can have a strong voice which can be heard at a distance—we are courageous when we listen to the still, quiet voice.

The economy is strong when it is stable and thriving—we are courageous when our emotional bank shows a healthy balance of deposits and withdrawals.

A sporting crowd can be 50,000 strong—we are courageous when we can stand as the sole participant and can cheer our own on field achievements.

We can have a strong likeness to a family member—we are courageous when that likeness resembles who we really are.

The oceans have very strong currents—we are courageous when the idea of our injured emotions are allowed to wash over our Soul.

There are many more examples that could be made to highlight this belief. It seems to me that the word “strong” is often used to denote an instruction given by a non-participant in the communal action that is grief. Someone for whom the advice is not relevant or needed and indeed it is given as a tacit order. It therefore must be obeyed as it has some omniscient pre-requisite to moral character and courage. The insidious component of the use of the word “strong” in the context of grief is its glaring comparative and polar nature. ‘If you are not strong you must therefore be weak.’ It is a very tough call under which to rally.

“Be strong” can also mean some of the following:

“I do not know how to handle this situation but surely you can get over it as it has been 8 weeks now.”

“I have no real understanding of your situation but as I currently feel this is the solution.”

"I am uncomfortable with this and my words of advice have fulfilled my moral obligations to you, so get over it!"

"I am very genuine in my belief that this is the best for you."

The desire to offer help to those in grief is most genuine for nearly all people however those who often hurt us the most are those who are the closest to us. Is this because of our nearly non-existent training on the subject and our poor understanding of death? How much does our Western dominated thinking of permanence and procrastination contribute to this circumstance? Do we simply not have any idea what to say? Do we need to develop a grief specific language?

I would suggest that when we look at offering advice to those in grief that we learn to understand that grief is an active and participatory process. Whilst it is very true that it is also a learning experience and probably the ultimate learning experience it does not need a series of "Professors" instructing those who know their pain. If grief is anything it surely can be well described as the absolute pain Grief comes to us because we have had someone, most loved, die. The attached love and its myriad of memories stay whilst their physical presence leaves. There has never been a situation like this before and we have no reference point to help us make sense of the apparent senselessness.

We are then catapulted onto a one way road with no clear sign post or road map. Amongst the mixture of all the emotional feelings and total uncertainty comes the companion of the unknown—fear. The secret to overcoming grief is not obedience to a command to be strong but rather to have the state of mind, body and spirit that will allow you to face the pain, feel its force and thus strip fear of its power. We need to encourage such a course of action as it brings into play the healing energy of courage.

I suspect those that mourn do not often acknowledge their own courage as they do not feel very brave most of the time. However, I would suggest that we must take time out to recognise and become "aware" of what it is that we are experiencing and what actions we are undertaking; those by deliberation or rote. Courage is a doing thing not engendered by obedience to a cliché or command. The courage that is shown in grief is an essential part of the journey towards resolution and acceptance of what has occurred. As Mary Ann Radmacher has said; "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is a little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow."

The significant role that courage plays cannot be overstated. Perhaps before we offer the "be strong" advice we should place ourselves in the shoes of the grieving person and recognise that the emotional turmoil that is their unwelcome lot is already extracting its long term pain. The day to day course of their life is requiring courage whether it is volitional or not. We need to acknowledge their current achievements and encourage their progress. Just like a long distance road sign they need to see that this sign has the destinations of Imagination, Hope and Resolution upon it.

The danger of quelling courage is that it leads to another road which is sign marked with such destinations as Snagged, Hopelessness, Bitterness and Clinical Depression.

Courage should not be misinterpreted as an action requiring super human feats but rather be seen and understood for what it is—the act of facing your fears. Fears are generated by the mind. They do not exist but they are nevertheless very powerful. The same source that generates fear produces hope and in equal amounts. Courage is the converting catalyst. We need to gently and lovingly encourage this wonderful and essential quality.

I have included a few quotations that may help expand this subject.

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear. Except a creature be part coward it is not a compliment to say it is brave." - Mark Twain

"For without belittling the courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men have lived." - John F. Kennedy

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage." - Anais Nin

"Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared." - Eddie Rickenbacker

"Courage is the art of being the only person who knows you're scared to death." - Harold Wilson

"Courage and perseverance have a magical talisman, before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air." - John Quincy Adams

Bob Wyborn is a grief facilitator for the Redcliffe Chapter of The Compassionate Friends and is passionate about the healing of those on their grief journey. He wrote this as a result of observations and feed back from the many family members who were confronted by the use of the word "strong". Bob is also the Queensland contact for the Australian Leukodystrophy Support Group and a member of the Self Help Queensland Management Committee.

Sisters & Brothers

Hold On

By Brooke Le Boutillier, TCF Qld

We all have our dreams
We all hope our wishes come true
When I want you here beside me
There's nothing I can do.
I could hope for a wish upon a star,
I could count to ten and try to open my eyes,
To catch a glimpse of you
For the last time.
No matter how far,
No matter how long,
We will always be together,
Till we meet again I know you're in my heart, I feel you all around,
You're the only little thing that keeps me hanging on.

Taken from TCF Qld, Dec/Jan 93/94 newsletter

I Always Sleep Late on Christmas

By Lorrie Beyl, TCF, Colorado Springs, CO

Somehow, I always sleep late on Christmas.
Strange—that's not how it used to be.
Each year in anticipation of surprises left for me by the tree,
I jumped from my bed at the crack of dawn.
Now I always sleep late on Christmas.
It just doesn't seem so important anymore
to be the one whose feet are first to hit the floor,

as it was when I would stand over my brother's bed and say,
"Wake up! You can't sleep late". "It's Christmas Day!"

There is no one now to keep me from missing
Christmas dawn because of too much sleep.
That time on that day is now lonely in a way.
So, I always sleep late on Christmas Day.

Taken from "This Healing Journey—An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings" TCF, Oak Brook, IL, NSA

Daniel's letter

Written and submitted by Bryn Good in loving memory of his brother, Daniel Good.

We grew up in the 70s and 80s
We were taught to be hard
No fear or crying
From pain bruises and grazes
But you were so little
When you used to get flogged
You would cry out in pain
I'd try to help you
My efforts were in vain.
But as we grew older
I protected you as much as I could
I was the bad one
But I was so proud of you
Because you turned out good.
You had everything in life
A good job, a car, a bike, a dog
You'd grown into a man
But I never knew your inner turmoil
Your fight with God.
Then came the drugs
And depression soon followed
You said you were lonely
You had no friends
And you were sad
I said 'you got me'
And you said 'I'm glad'.
I was always there for you
You were my best mate
But when you really needed me
I wasn't there,
I let you down
And when I found out
It was too late.
I wish you had known
When it came to the end
How many people you touched
Who came to respect you
And class you as their friend.

The One Left Behind

By Jacqueline Cairns, TCF Qld

When my younger brother died by suicide, it was an indescribable loss that shattered my family. It is a loss that we all continue to struggle with even today. My parents had two children, a son and a daughter and in an instant there was only one. You might remember me, I'm the one left behind.

I'm the one who after my brother's death tried to hide the pain I felt from my parents even though inside my heart was breaking. I didn't want to burden them with how I was feeling because I knew they too were struggling with their own loss. I'm the one who couldn't be around friends for a long time because it hurt too much to see them with their siblings, their families intact. I felt the heavy burden of guilt because I was alive and my brother was dead. I became the constant reminder to my parents of the son who was no longer with them every time they looked at me. I could see it in their eyes. I knew it pained them and it made me feel even worse about myself.

Grief can be all consuming and my mother's sole focus was on the child she had lost. I listened as my mother talked of everything that she missed about my brother and I missed all these things too. I wanted so much for her to see that she was also missing out on me. I needed her to still be my mother. My father struggled to express any emotion, never openly discussing my brother or his death. And over time he distanced himself from me, becoming more like an acquaintance than family. Years on and he still cannot talk about my brother his son perhaps in time that may change.

My parents dealt with their grief in different ways and as best they could just as I did. It was and still is terribly upsetting that when my brother died my parents drifted away not only from each other, but also from me. I watched the cracks widen in their marriage until there was nothing left. Watched my mother leave only to wonder if she would ever return. She never did.

It is so important for parents to try to understand the isolation felt by their sons or daughters who have lost a sibling. This isolation only becomes magnified when they are forgotten and there is no place for them in their parents every day lives. And while all of us will grieve for those no longer with us, we must not lose sight of those who are still here.

Please remember me, the one left behind, the one that survives.
This is lovingly dedicated to all those who are left behind.

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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