



The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc.

Grief Support for Bereaved Parents, Grandparents & Siblings

Newsletter (Extracts) Dec 2010 - Jan 2011



## I Met With You Yesterday

I met with you yesterday. I don't understand how. I only know the change in me is real. These moments of joy – combinations of indescribable longing and bliss beyond wishing – are only later mellowed by the sorrow that this rare and ephemeral meeting is the best we can do for now.

At first you were stretching, silently sharing a moment and movement with Ken. When I saw you I could do nothing but run to you, nearly knocking you over. Oh the pure delight; to see you, touch you, to share another moment.

Later you mimicked me, mocking my hand and facial gestures, laughing gently and with love, so very calm and knowing. For the briefest moment I felt like the child learning from you, seeking wisdom and understanding. I remember asking you questions about life and death but mostly wanting to know that you were okay. Our conversation was meaningful and significant and lasted some time but as I struggled to recall details they evaporated. Meanwhile my heart wept as I remembered in this moment of waking that I yet again had to reconcile that you were gone.

I had experienced something extraordinary. I briefly considered whether my longing for you had tipped if not my sanity, then perhaps my imagination. But you know truth when you experience it.

The demands of the day pressed – and yes I have spent many of them withdrawn and hidden from the world – but on that day my heart did not feel as raw and shattered as it had and I felt somehow soothed and comforted like I was wrapped in a beautiful soft blanket. A glimpse of peace and love in abundance. Beyond understanding perhaps but not, in this world of majesty and mystery, the realm of possibility. It made a difference.

*Written by Sharon Hardy TCF Qld*

*Sharing an experience of connection and healing with daughter Serene (27/5/1981 - 27/3/2007)*

*Sharon is collecting similar stories of how extraordinary experiences have helped heal grieving hearts and would appreciate any feedback or contribution towards this research. You can contact her on 0438 217000 or [sharon@livingwithloss.com.au](mailto:sharon@livingwithloss.com.au)*

## Including Our Absent Children in Christmas

As our second Christmas without Jason approaches, I find myself remembering the first, just three months after his sudden death in 1996. In many ways I am as fearful of this one as I was of the last, mainly because of the indescribable pain that surfaced at that time. But a part of me also knows that, having survived the first, this one can only be easier.

Jason, aged 20, left two brothers; Gavin 11 and Brendan 7 and, while Christmas will never again be what it once was for me, I recognize the importance of not robbing them of their childhood as well as their brother.

While we are all uniquely different in our needs and our hidden strengths and weaknesses, what I found imperative to successfully navigate this fearsome day was finding ways to honour the memory of this missing link in our depleted family.

Signing Christmas cards without Jason's name was anathema to me, so I simply signed them from "Karyn and her boys". Last year I asked that friends light a candle in his memory, this year I may not. Last year I hung all three stockings, this year I will again. Last year I had an overwhelming need to put a present under the tree for my absent son, so I wrote and framed a poem, a tradition I suspect I will probably repeat each year. Christmas Eve we prepared a wreath which we laid around his memorial plaque, this year I will again. After much discussion, Gavin and Brendan chose to continue the traditional Christmas breakfast of mangos and smoked salmon (Jason's favourite), but I could not partake and instead took a mango to his eternal bed.

My dearest friend, Desley, came over on the day we traditionally decorate the tree, bearing three tree ornaments, each with my sons' names on them; her way of affirming and encouraging my need to recognize Jason's continuing existence in our lives at this time. Yes, it was painful hanging his ornament on the tree, knowing all the while that he would not be home for Christmas, but it was also comforting in its own way. She was also the one who took over Jason's role of taking his brothers shopping for Mum's present and, with her husband Marty, ensured we were in a safe environment and not alone on this greatly feared day.

In short, I guess what I found to be most helpful was accepting the opening of their home and their hearts to us and, as far as possible, the planning ahead that enabled us to find a balance between mourning the missing link in our family while at the same time ensuring a modicum of normality for those left behind to face this Christmas without their adored brother.

I am still not sure of my ability to get through this second Christmas (not being cushioned by the shock and numbness of this time last year), but I suspect I will again find the resources within myself to include, in my own way, all the members of my family while at the same time ensuring Gavin and Brendan still experience the magic of such an integral part of the innocence of childhood—Christmas.

*By Karyn Watson,  
(TCF NSW Inc. Dec 97 Newsletter)*

## Hopes and Blessings

Five years ago I went to a memorial service for families bereaved by suicide. The service was peaceful and I think helped a lot of people who find suicide a difficult death to deal with. During the service the word "Hope" came up often (a small word with such a big meaning). For some reason this word seemed to have a very powerful effect on me. Everywhere I went I heard the word hope.

Going to Brisbane on the train and passing through the tunnel the word hope had been graffitied on the walls - the letters would have been 6ft high - again it hit me. Why does this mean so much? What is the message?

Late in November I found out just how much I would know what the message was. My daughter phoned me to tell me she had breast cancer and would have to have a mastectomy. I then fully understood the message of "hope", at that time it was what I had to believe in. Fortunately hope paid off and Jodie's is in remission. I've since moved from Australia and see a lot of TV as for me sometimes it is the only "English" I hear in a day.

I watch John Edward shows and feel the sadness and the joys of the audience as they get their messages from their loved ones. On one show there was a man who was not sure if he believed in mediums. His wife could not come to the show but John asked if he could phone her. They had lost their only child when he was small. During John speaking to her by phone he asked her how she dealt with her son having died, her answer was, "I count my blessings never losses". Another powerful message. John was speechless for a few seconds.

It left me thinking. I could slowly see and understand my blessings, yes my son has died but I am blessed with wonderful memories of our times together. I „m blessed in knowing he has no pain anymore, I am blessed in knowing he is still with me everyday in spirit, I'm blessed to be his mother. Those things I can never loose.

My life is very different now but the blessings continue. My daughter is fine now and I always will hope she stays that way. Daniel, I'm sure is at peace. I'm blessed to have a wonderful husband without whom I believe I would not have ever been able to see the messages I've been given. He has been there for the saddest times and the angry times and he is still here now and we count our blessings together. We will never stop loving Daniel and we talk about him all the time. It will be 14 years on the 10th of December since Daniel chose to go but we celebrate him having been here and hope—hope that we will always continue to count our blessings.

*Submitted by Bev Bosma in memory of her precious son  
Daniel Warwick Good  
9/10/69—10/12/96  
We love you Dan X*

## Rising Above

No one told me the pain would not ease,  
No one told me to keep smiling to please.  
No one told me the struggle would be unbearable,  
No one told me the ache would be so terrible.  
No one told me I'd feel isolated and alone,  
No one told me I'd be depressive prone.  
No one told me my purpose would alter,  
No one told me life's meaning could falter.  
No one told me I'd be more sensitive to others,  
No one told me I could empathize with mothers,  
No one told me I should learn to be wise,  
No one told me I'd see life through fresh eyes.  
I did not need anyone to tell me these things,  
For I learned them in the school that only pain brings.  
But I can assuredly say that on this road I'm upon,  
That I've zigzagged and tripped, but I am moving on.  
The cocoon is breaking, I can see the light,  
Like a butterfly emerging, I'm ready for flight.  
I am excited by the newness of how I feel,  
Though still very fragile—I'm not made of steel.  
The ache is so raw, and the pain is deep,  
I could easily allow them to drip-feed and seep.  
No one told me it's okay to feel this way,  
But I can risk the hurt and welcome each new day.

*Written by Sandy (a good friend of Pat Cotterill)*

*Sent in by Pat and Dudley Cotterill in memory of their precious daughter  
Rebecca Ann Cotterill  
14.2.77 to 25.12.02*

## For The New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Years' resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

1. Try not to imagine the future; take one day at a time.
2. Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
3. Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
4. Try to be realistic about your expectations of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. If each of us is unique and different, how can there be perfect understanding?
5. When a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. They will come again and multiply.
6. Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water, take stress-type vitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal as well as your mind.
7. Share your feelings with other compassionate friends and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell—a very healthy sign.

I know that following these resolutions won't be easy, but what has been? It is worth a try. There is nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

*By Mary Ehmann, TCF Valley Forge, PA  
(TCF Dec 97 / Jan 98 Newsletter)*

## Will I Feel This Way Forever? The Answer is No!

I recently spoke with a bereaved mother whose son died three months ago. As any bereaved parent who has not had the benefit of a support group, she was agonizing over the depth of her feelings. Was she normal, or perhaps going crazy? She went on to tell me that she cries all the time, doesn't care about her appearance, drags herself out of bed in the morning to go to work, and doesn't feel "thankful" for her other children. "Please tell me this will get better," she begged. "Please tell me I'll learn to cope."

What this woman is experiencing is normal - it feels *horrible*, but it is normal. What she really wants to know is, "*Will I feel this way forever?*" The answer is no.

The final stage of grief is generally described as either recovery, reinvestment, or reorganisation. My personal favourite term is reorganisation - an appropriate word when we consider the vast disorganisation that occurs in our life when our child dies. Our family relationships must shift and alter to somehow account for the space that suddenly exists. Does our middle child now become the "baby" if our youngest died? In a two-child family, does the survivor still have a sibling, or is he now an "only"? If our only child died, are we still parents? If our marriage was troubled, is it worth saving now? Add to all of this the feelings that each family member has about the death, and the result is total confusion. Much of this may be on a sub-conscious level, but it is all the same. Sorting it all out - reorganising - takes time.

*Personally*, we are coping every minute with a pain that we would swear no human being could endure. We realise we must go on living, but don't know how, or even if we want to. We have an obsessive need to talk about our child or our grief - for awhile it is the only reality that exists. We know we can never be our "old self" again, but no one else does. I can think of few things that could so drastically disrupt a person's life than the death of a child.

So, if reorganisation is the goal, and disorganisation is the starting point, what lies in between for the bereaved parent? A life of utter agony until this "reorganisation" happens three or four years down the road? Again, the answer is no.

If we allow ourselves to feel what we feel, we will begin to move, ever so gradually, from beginning to end. We begin to feel better long before our life is reorganised, and I think that is what keeps us moving steadily forward. In the beginning, it might only be a brief respite from constant pain, or a feeling of being "not quite so crazy." Then maybe a few hours we enjoy with special friends, than a few good days. Eventually, when someone asks how we're doing, we say, "I still have bad days."

All of this probably takes place in the first year or so, but that reorganisation we're moving towards remains elusive for some time to come. And, the words "I am over it" will *never* be a part of our vocabulary.

I once read that a bereaved parent must live every day of an entire calendar before he can realise the full extent of his loss. I extend that further to say that if we spend the first year learning what it is that we lost, we spend the next couple of years learning to deal with and accept what we learned the *first* year. Reorganisation is not accomplished quickly or easily.

The mother I spoke with would undoubtedly deny that she is any better. But rather than being lost in her grief, she is beginning to at least *ask* about feeling better, about learning to cope. It's a teeny tiny step. She will feel horrible and out of control for quite a while - but she is taking a step toward reorganising her life without her child.

Finally, each person progresses down this path at his or her own pace. It can take a few years, or many years. It has little to do with the age of the child or circumstances of his death. It has more to do with our own personality, how we have handled problems in the past, and the amount of support we receive. I have received much support in the three years since Nicholas died, and I feel that I am getting close to feeling sane again, that my life is unscrambling finally. It's not the *same* life I had "before" - that life was scattered in many different directions - but the reorganising I've been doing for the past three years is shaping a new life for me now. It's a different life than my old one, but it's one I think I can live with.

*By Linda Moffatt*

*(This is one of TCF Qld's leaflets which is included in all packages sent out to new members)*

## Same Old

There's the same old sun each morning  
There's the same old moon each night  
There's the same old seas that wash the shores  
And there's the same old stars so bright.

There's the same old bus to ride on  
There's the same old things to do  
There the same old job to go to  
And there's the same old thoughts of you.

There's the same old friends to visit  
There's the same old house to live in  
There's the same old breeze to freshen  
There's the same old words "Don't give in"

There's the same old music playing  
On the radio at our same old place  
Your same old clothes are still there hanging  
In the same old wardrobe space.

It's been so hard without you  
We miss your same old ways  
We wish that we could have again  
Those same old happy days.

But we know that one day we'll see you  
And kiss your lovely face  
And hug and cuddle you once again  
And revel in your grace.  
And when we're re-united  
And we pass through the door  
We'll have so much to talk about and do  
And we'll be the same old family that we were once more.

*Written by Mike Edwards, loving father of Leigh who passed away on 7 January 1997, aged 21 years.  
Submitted by Mike and Sue Edwards in memory of their precious daughter  
Leigh Alison Edwards  
2.1.76 to 7.1.97*

## Letter To Our Aunty

Dear Auntie Leigh,

This letter is from your eldest nephew, Lachie and I am now four years old. My brother Harry has just turned one but he can't talk yet. Harry's second name is Leigh after you so your name is still in the family.

We never met you as we were born after you went to heaven but Mummy tells us what a lovely, kind person you were. We know that you would have been a great Auntie and we would have had lots of fun together.

And we know that you are up in heaven looking down on us and are our guardian angel. Sometimes we see Mummy with a tear in her eye when she thinks of you and we know that your not being here to share your lives together makes her sad. Seeing her sad makes us sad also. One day I am sure that we will meet you and then we can both give you a big kiss and a cuddle.  
Love always.

*Lachie and Harry Stevens  
(Nephews of Leigh Alison Edwards)*

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