



The Compassionate Friends, Queensland Inc.

Grief Support for Bereaved Parents, Grandparents & Siblings

Newsletter (Extracts) August-September 2011



## Responses to a question from a Member

In the previous newsletter a TCF member, Maree, asked us to put this question in the newsletter as it is a very interesting question, one that has come up several times over the years. We have had a good response to the question and have decided to publish a few in the next couple of newsletters to share with other members. Thank you for your replies.

**Question: "I would like to ask your readers if any of them felt the need to sell their homes after their loss and move elsewhere, and, whether or not they regretted it at all".**

Hello Maree,

I would like to respond to your question in the June/July Compassionate Friends Support newsletter regarding the need to sell your home after losing a loved one. To begin, I will need to go back to June 2004. I lost my beloved youngest son to suicide.

He was 25 and lived at home so when he decided to use his car in our garden to fall asleep I told the family I could never leave our home. I felt he were there, I felt close to him, even to the extent of being able to smell the carbon monoxide in the house, there was many other things at that house that made him feel close to me. His fingerprints on the wall, his room and seeing so many other young men that reminded me of him. We lived in town, opposite shops where he used to go. So many people there saw what had happened that dreadful Sunday morning and it made it so hard knowing that, even though people were very kind, so many things made me want to stay and I did for 2 1/2 years. After about that time I realised I was making my life too hard to bear by staying, so my husband [who had found my son that unforgettable Sunday morning] and I decided that it would be better to sell. So we put our home up for sale, to my husbands relief. He thought I would never agree to move but then neither did I.

We bought a place out of town. I didn't realise I was causing myself and my husband more heartache by staying where it all happened. We love where we live now. I don't feel guilty for leaving the old place and I still feel my beloved son close to me in good ways that help me keep on going. I have learnt grief will always be a part of me but the love my child and I shared will too.

I will send in one of many poems I have written to the newsletters. I have written quite a few since losing my son, even having a couple published. I think deep grief can bring out so called "hidden talents" that we would never otherwise have thought of. I feel blessed to have had such a son for 25 years.

I hope this has been of some help Maree and if you are considering a move I believe it is something to think of very carefully. Knowing when the time is right is the key to everything.

*Blessings to you from Robyn mother of Shayne.*

Hi Maree,

We lost our son in February 2009, we put our home in Rockhampton, Qld on the market in July 2010 and sold straight away in four weeks with three offers. We said we'll give it six months it was a slow market and we went to Tweed Heads, NSW and bought another house we'd been watching the market on the

internet for about three months. We always say now if it's meant to be it will happen. We both threw our jobs in and I took six months off which my husband was pushing for as he said I needed it, I originally took six weeks off work when our son passed away. My husband took eight months off and I know we both needed to return to work, For me it made things worse not being busy I have always worked.

I had wanted to move from rocky for about 15 years and when our son passed away memories were everywhere we went even though Zowie our son was 29 when he passed away and he lived in Sydney for years, but we both visited regularly and always kept in contact every week. We left in rocky a daughter whose married and three grandchildren and we've been back 4 times in 8 months to see the girls and they've been down three times in July. We always said we would like to move down here when we retire then we started thinking after all this we might not make it to retirement.

It was very hard on my husband when we moved here, we didn't know anybody and I know he missed his friends and got sick of just talking to me and I now know being truthful Keith really agreed to move for me. Keith even says if I die before him he'll be back in Rockhampton, he is just settling now after 9 months. We have family in Brisbane who basically thought we should be over the death and be moving on and should be going to work as usual.


I don't regret moving but our life is the same - working, the things I said I'd do I haven't done as I'm working shifts, I do miss the grandchildren and ring nearly every day but we live in a beautiful area and in a good neighbourhood, even though it is just a house. It hasn't changed any thing that has happened we still have no son, but I think it has helped with the healing I was very quiet at my Rockhampton work place so many people ignored us and pretended nothing had happened and just had no idea how it really is, but then again unless you've been there you have no idea. I'm still pretty quiet to how I once was but were doing ok.

We thought about it at the time and we said if we could afford it, move and trial it for a year and see how we felt after a year of renting and getting work. The people we've made friends with down here are compassionate friends which we're thankful for. We hope your doing ok in your journey and whatever your decision is it is the right one, it is different for everyone and we all make so many wrong decisions in the craziness of it all. Hope anything I've said in my rambling helps somehow.

*Take care Ellen*

## Men do cry...

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 by 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 its course.  
So those of you who can't abide  
a man you've seen who's 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.  
*Ken Falk, TCF/Northwest Connecticut*  
*TCF Vic Jun/July 2010 Newsletter*

## Is there life after grief?

Not for quite a while.

First, there was that awful emptiness: that hole in my middle that nothing seemed to fill. Days, weeks, endless months went by in a daze. That constant weight of grief on my shoulders. I was just existing. There were times when life seemed unbearable, my self-esteem non-existent. It seems unbelievable that I have come so far from that empty shell.

I don't know when I felt I was living my life again. Working through grief is a gradual process. It was like I was on a quest, always searching for answers, struggling through each emotion and striving to understand. Wishing I'd wake up one morning and say, "Hello world, I'm back!"

Many people have helped me—family, friends, family doctor, Compassionate Friends and social workers.

I have gratefully taken advantage of all this community support when I have needed it.

Life has a better quality now; a clearer perspective. I feel more serene and in control of my life. I know I will have more pain in the future and that I will survive. I am stronger now.

Most important of all has been my discovery of myself. I have learned to work through anger and guilt. To take time out to pursue my own interests; to be kind to myself. To laugh, cry, and feel whole.

By Julie New, Mother  
*Words of Sorrow*  
*Words of Love edited by Eva Lager*

## The silhouettes of fatherhood

The silhouettes of fatherhood  
From another time and place.  
Grief has cast it's shadow  
On his cheerful father face.

The contour of his happiness  
Created sometime long ago,  
Darkened by his agony  
And the truth he's come to know.

The profile of his peacefulness  
Embraced in days gone by,  
Shaded by his loneliness  
And the many tears he's cried.

The shape of all good things to come

Yearned for in future days,  
Blackened by reality  
Of death that's come his way.

The form of his existence  
In the life he though he'd live,  
Clouded by his pleading  
That his life he'd gladly give.

The figure of fulfillment  
From yesterday's desires.  
Obscured by constant mourning  
And all that it requires.

The likeness of tomorrow  
Won't bring the things it should,  
But soon he'll find the light within  
The silhouettes of fatherhood.

*In memory of Lucas Christopher Ross, 1979—2001  
©2007 Christine Ross Williams, AZ  
'Living with Loss' Summer 2009 Magazine*

## How do I miss you?

I see your face, but cannot touch it  
I see you laugh, but cannot hear it  
I feel you close, stay with me.  
Are you sitting here beside me like you used to do?  
Or is it the love I shared with you.  
Sometimes I see your likeness in the street,  
It's then my broken heart skips a beat.  
It's 20 months since you left your footprints on the floor,  
They have now been washed away forever more  
Your fingerprints no longer on the door  
No clothes to wash, no meals to call you for  
All seems lost.  
Sometimes when I hear the gate?  
No not you, because of fate,  
The pain of missing you too great,  
Your footstep on the stair to call  
"Mum are you there"?  
No not you, it's too unfair!  
The year you left to go to school  
I would walk past your room to look  
Missing you so, and wishing you were here.  
Now that will never change,  
I will always still be missing you.

*Dedicated to my beloved son Shayne,  
lost to suicide 27th June 2004  
Sent in by Robyn Williams*

## In memory of John Alexander Davison

5.6.79 - 27.8.10

Forever unanswered, our questions remain,  
But the love we have will only gain.  
Heart ache and pain we suffer each day,  
And for the rest of our lives it will stay.  
Embracing your life and who you are,  
Has been stitched in our hearts like an eternal scar.  
The big kid you were was truly an art,  
And because of that we're now all young at heart.  
You opened our minds and made us all see,  
That we have to live our lives and be free.  
We've learnt so much from you over the years,  
And you watched us grow proudly through  
Our blood, sweat and tears.  
We always knew when we did something right,  
Cause we'd get that big bear hug where you'd  
squeeze us so tight.  
Another thing that won't be forgotten,  
Is the gas you'd pass, it was so bloody rotten!  
We know you're protecting us from the other side,  
Helping us through life and being our guide.  
A role model, mentor and inspiration you've been,  
And this is something that will always be seen.  
If life gets hard and we want to throw in our gloves,  
We just have to remember you're with us forever,  
Watching over us with love.



*Written by Daniel Hinton, in memory of his older brother John.  
John is deeply loved and missed by all of his family.*

## My time to go home

It was my time, time for me  
To go back home to be free  
A time for me to learn to fly.  
With new wings above the sky  
The angels came to guide my way  
Making sure I did not stray.  
So many things to see up here.  
I'm much at peace, I have no fear.  
I see many people that I know,  
All from the world I lived down below  
I hear bells when they ring.  
I dance with angels when they sing.  
I know you miss me, and I miss you all  
But I had to leave when I heard my call.  
Please don't cry. I am so free.  
Try to be happy, please, for me.  
I see you all from up above,  
I continue to give you my eternal love.  
My journey here has just begun,  
I'm living my dreams I left undone.  
Life is quick, you must live yours now.  
I can't do it for you or tell you how  
But listen to these words that come from my heart.  
They will help ease the pain while we're apart.  
We will meet again, face to face,  
Only this time in a better place.  
So you see, it was my time. It was His plan.  
I was sent to learn lessons, and return when I can.  
Now its time for me to move on.  
But I'm always around you, I will never be gone  
And someday, you will see  
This beautiful home made for you and me.  
*By Lisa McQuade for her brother Bobby - 2004*  
*Tucson Chapter of The Compassionate Friends 2010*  
*Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow Newsletter, June 2011*

## What is different about suicide loss?

One way to understand suicide loss is to think of it in terms of the layers of grief that it involves. It starts with the same grief that we all feel when we lose somebody that we loved or cared for a lot.

The first layer relates to suicides being avoidable. Grievers feel responsible and guilty because they 'didn't do anything'. Parents agonise that they let their child down when most needed. Blame for the loss may also be directed at a third party (ie. a therapist, school, friends, etc).

The second layer relates to the seeming intentional nature of a suicide. Those left to grieve may feel that the victim chose to leave them, which generates anger, betrayal, abandonment and rejection. Emergency responders may notice these feelings.

The third layer relates to suicide's unanticipated nature, which leads to a search for the 'why'. Most family members and friends never saw it coming. Being blindsided by suicide generates anxiety, fear, and a sense of vulnerability. These feelings come early.

The fourth layer flows from the stigma and shame still attached to suicide. Churches and public attitudes are better that they use to be, but old beliefs die hard. Those close to the victim may even be blamed for the death.

Helplessness shapes the last layer. It opens the door for hopelessness, the mindset behind the emotional pain that precipitated the victim's suicide. Suicide grievors are at high risk of suicidal behavior. Many victims had family histories of suicide.

It is suggested that younger children be told that the death was caused by a brain illness that makes people want to hurt themselves. It should be explained that this illness can be treated and is preventable but that it is sometimes very hard to recognize.

*SOSBSA Newsletter May/June 2011*

## The chains that bind: reminiscence

I hear your whisper on the wind  
I hear your voice just as it has always been  
Your laughter fills the air around me  
And I turn with a smile to laugh with you  
But when I turn there is silence  
There are only echoes in my mind  
I know this, and yet, often they are so loud  
So clear, so real, that I just can't believe you're not here

*Karen Gerry in 'Words of Sorrow Words of Love'*

## Getting back to normal

A frequent bit of advice given to those who grieve is: "You must get back to normal."

This is well intentioned but displays a lack of understanding of the long-term effects of grief in general and, specifically, the effect of the death of a child on parents.

There are so many events in routine living that remind parents of the child who no longer graces their lives - the birthday, the anniversary of the death, Christmas and the other holidays, the start of school, vacations, and special days relevant to the child. Events in the lives of former playmates or others from the same age group as the child who has died have a special poignancy for parents who may feel that they have been cheated out of participating fully in life. They are not able to just pick up the pieces and go on in the old way, as often admonished. The old way is no more!

Those who are working through their grief must come to realize that there is a normal to go on to, but that normal will never be the same as the former normal.

Nothing can substitute for the lost child. As much as we may love another remaining or new child, this does not take the place of the child who is now gone. Our child who died was a person, is still a person and will always be a person, separate from all others, with his or her own personality and identity.

This is not always understood by friends who, without realizing the foolishness of their words, comment, "You can have another child; you are still young." Or "At least you have other children."

I was reminded today, by my personal physician, that at least I have six other children. I probably have made such statements in the past, for how little we know until we have been "there" ourselves.

In spite of this, we can assume, in time, a normality. And it will include the fact that once there was a child (or children), dearly loved, who responded to our love, but who is now gone.

Our love remains and we cannot expend that love on another child or some other purpose or cause in life. Back to normal? Yes, in time! But our lives will never be the same.

*Robert F Gloor, TCF AL USA  
TCF Vic Magazine, Dec-Jan 2011*

## Just for a moment...

Our hands have touched, Our paths have crossed  
A love is gained, a love is lost.  
Just for a moment I kissed the face  
Of an innocent child I can't replace  
Just for a moment a maternal touch  
Would say the words that meant so much  
A soft caress, the gentle tears  
That made those moments last for years.  
Just for a moment, I held your hand  
My broken heart in your command,  
So much to tell you, so little time  
Why were we punished, what was the crime?  
They took part of me when they took you away  
As much as I loved you, You weren't meant to stay  
I gave you a hug that for always must last  
As facing the future means leaving the past.  
Our souls have merged, I live for you  
Perhaps I'm living your life too.  
I will carry on. I can always stand tall,  
Because just for a moment I had it all.

*Adrienne Ryan from her book "A Silent Sorrow"  
Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow Newsletter, June 2011*

## Sisters and Brothers

### How can they move on?

How can they move on? Every day I realize that while my brother's death may have touched many people's lives, they seem to be able to just pick up where they left off and continue with their lives. For me, it has been so much harder. I learned this week, that last year, my brother's girlfriend had gotten married. While I am very happy for her to have finally been able to love again, my happiness is also filled with a little jealousy. I think of my brother at some point every day.

Does this mean that she has forgotten him? I have asked myself this question all week. I hope that she hasn't and at least remembers the good times that they had sometimes. I find it hard to think of her with someone else, but she was so miserable for so long, she deserves a little happiness. I was also told that she is pregnant and is having her baby soon. When I heard this I almost cried.

I think that was harder than finding out that she was married. Then a real jealousy kicked in. I thought, "Hey, what about Sean's baby?" He'll never know the joy of being a parent. After mulling this around for a while, I realized that everyone must move on. Sometimes I feel as if I can't go on another day because I feel so much pain. That pain is not so strong as it was two or three years ago, but it does come back to visit now and then. When Sean first died, a few of his friends came over a lot. Over the past few years, that began to happen less and less until his friends stopped coming at all. One of his friends still comes by or at least calls my mom at Christmas. Another puts presents on his grave occasionally.

I know that a lot of people cared about my brother, but I think that knowing him for 19 years and being as close as we were has made it all the harder for me. I know that he watches over our family and is always with us. I know in my heart that moving on is not the same as forgetting. I hope with my heart that all who knew Sean still spare at least one thought for him once in awhile. While I wish every one of his friends much happiness in their lives, I hope that they will never forget.

*Traci Morlock, BP/USA Bereaved Sibling, St. Louis, MO*  
[http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/AP\\_Siblings.htm](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/AP_Siblings.htm)

## Losing a sibling to suicide

To all siblings:

A sibling suicide death creates incredible life changes for the survivors. The death of a brother or sister not only emphasizes our own mortality, but also destroys the fabric of a family as it has been. Older generations are supposed to die, not our own.

The importance of sibling relationships cannot be emphasized enough. Chances are the longest relationships in our lives will be with our siblings since we are generally just a few years apart in age. Because our sibling ties are so long, we witness more life changes than anyone else does. We have shared experiences and memories, bedrooms and chores, family celebrations and family tensions – a history and a heritage. Bound by love and jealousy, we have stuck up for and fought one another. We have grown up together, sharing many things until death has severed our connection.

For these many reasons, sibling grief can be prolonged and complicated. Since siblings have played such an important role in the people that we have become, we feel an especially intense sense of loss.

With the passing of our brother or sister, we lose an important sense of family ties and security. Suddenly, an attachment to our family is gone and we are forced to reorganize and redefine roles in our family.

[www.thegiftofkeith.org/info/sibling/losing\\_a\\_sibling\\_to\\_suicide.html](http://www.thegiftofkeith.org/info/sibling/losing_a_sibling_to_suicide.html)

## My grief rights: ten healing rights for grieving children

*Author's note: This "bill of rights" for grieving children is intended to empower them to help themselves heal and to help direct the adults in their lives to be supportive as well.*

Someone you love has died. You are probably having many hurtful and scary thoughts and feelings right now. Together those thoughts and feelings are called grief, which is a normal (though really difficult) thing everyone goes through after someone they love has died.

The following ten rights will help you understand your grief and eventually feel better about life again. Use the ideas that make sense to you. Post this list on your refrigerator or on your bedroom door or wall. Re-reading it often will help you stay on track as you move toward healing from your loss. You might also ask the grown-ups in your life to read this list so they will remember to help you in the best way they can.

1. I have the right to have my own unique feelings about the death. I may feel mad, sad or lonely. I may feel scared or relieved. I may feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.
2. I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking. When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don't want to talk about it, that's okay, too.
3. I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way. When they are hurting, some kids like to play so they'll feel better for awhile. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and scream. This does not mean I am bad, it just means I have scary feelings that I need help with.
4. I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me. Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.
5. I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems. I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.
6. I have the right to have "grief-bursts." Grief-bursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that just hit me sometimes even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.
7. I have the right to use my beliefs about my God to help me deal with my feelings of grief. Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

8. I have the right to try to figure out why the person I loved died. But it's okay if I don't find an answer. "Why" questions about life and death are the hardest questions in the world.

9. I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died. Sometimes those memories will be happy and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, these memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.

10. I have the right to move forward and feel my grief and, over time, to heal. I'll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I'll always miss this special person.

*Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. Fort Collins, Colorado*

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