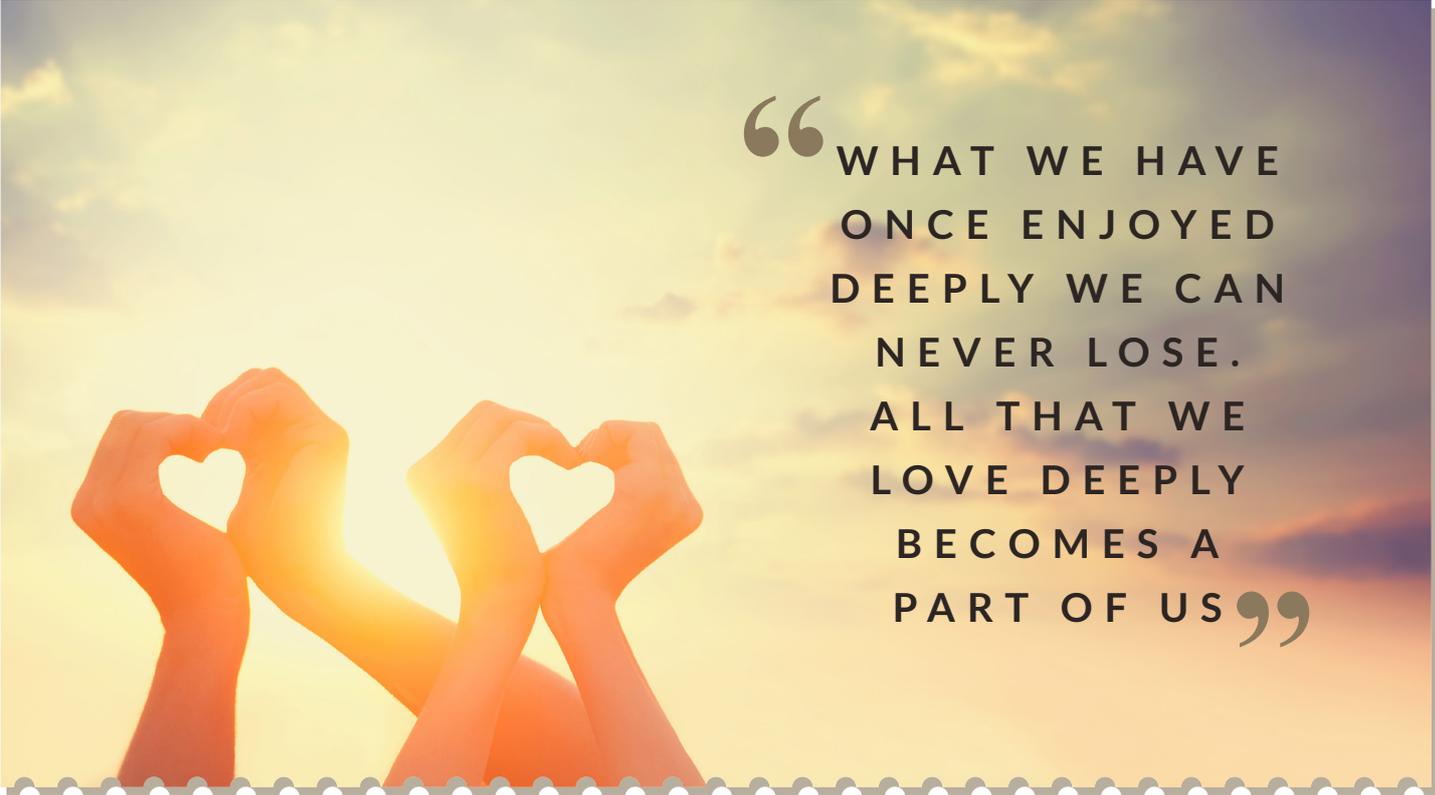




THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

February/March edition



“WHAT WE HAVE
ONCE ENJOYED
DEEPLY WE CAN
NEVER LOSE.
ALL THAT WE
LOVE DEEPLY
BECOMES A
PART OF US”

SUPPORT SERVICES

24 hour support line

We have a new national 24 hour support line number for those in need:

1300 064 068

We also have a new email address:

admin@tcfqld.org.au

TCF NEW FARM OFFICE

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who generously donated throughout 2017. Your support is greatly appreciated by everyone at The Compassionate Friends.

TCF NEW FARM OFFICE

Office opening hours

Monday, Tuesday and Fridays
8:30am to 2:30pm

If you would like support please call the office to organise a time with one of our compassionate volunteers on 3254 2657

CONTACT US

If you need a friend...

New farm office: 505 Bowen Terrace New Farm, Brisbane

Office Phone: (07) 3254 2657

Email: admin@tcfqld.org.au

Postal Address: PO Box 1930

Find us on 

SAVE THE DATE

Walk to remember

When: April 15th 2018, 10:30am

Where: New Farm Park, New Farm, Brisbane

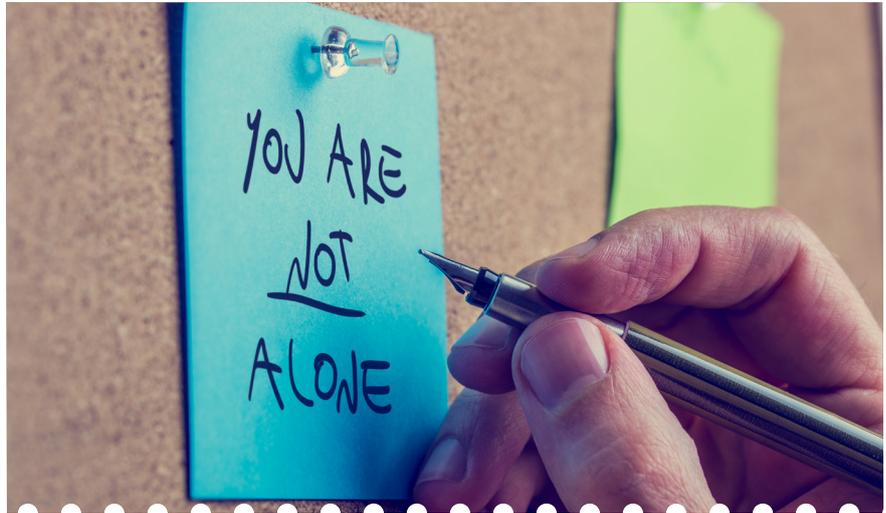
Please join us for The Compassionate Friends annual Walk to Remember.

President's Report

Once again Christmas and New Year has come and gone. For many of us not the greatest time of year. I hope that with the support and love of your family and friends, you were able to enjoy the festive season. We now move into a new year, one of promise for many and a softening for others. Like every other new year it will have its challenges and some disappointments. As long as the former outweigh the latter we will be able to look back with satisfaction. 2017 was like that for me. It was an improvement on 2016 and I hope a step towards a better 2018. If you are new in your grief then that year is, of course, an "annus horribilis". It will remain so forever. Such is the nature of memory. Just as we pass an object on a long straight road, it recedes into the distance and eventually becomes invisible. But our memory of it, ensures that its existence is always real.

There are quite a number of issues that your board needs to deal with in the next few months. Amongst these is our ongoing governance. This is a requirement of state government legislation to ensure that we continue as an organisation which can provide the help and assistance you need. To deal with governance issues the board needs to be freed from the day to day issues that confront us.

I know it is far from the minds of many of you and that is as it should be. But many have expressed a wish to assist in some small way.



The opportunities to do this, whilst not exactly endless, do abound. Speaking with our co-ordinator Kristie is one way of finding out what you can do. One job which comes to mind is making yourself available to serve on a sub-committee. We have a few we need to get in place in the very near future. Many of the events that we provide have been left on the shoulders of one person in the past. This is a recipe for burnout of our hardworking volunteers and board members. I am keen to have the load spread as much as possible to avoid this. We will not, I hope, ask too much of you but the reality is while every association needs its members to survive every member needs to help where possible to keep the association viable.

It seems the news has been full of tragedies of late involving children of all ages. I am not sure if there are more now or that I am just more in tune with these stories. In any case, promoting TCF at every opportunity, is a way of getting our name out there. Just a simple name and phone number might be all that is required. There are many out there who desperately need our assistance and we need to let them know we are here.

TCF Qld has a Facebook page which I would encourage all of you on social media to join. It can be found as "Compassionate Friends (Brisbane)". There are others under the TCF banner as well if you find them more interesting. A search through any of these pages will show you that there is more to being in this organisation than the sharing of grief. Sharing a laugh also promotes friendship, understanding and most of all compassion.

OPPORTUNITIES *Community Fundraising*

We are looking for members that are interested in holding their own Community Fundraiser in the area that you live. Over the years TCFV have had members who have done a fundraiser in memory of their child, whether it is a dinner dance, a trivia night, doing a fun run or even a sausage sizzle at the local hardware store. What ever you would like to do I am here to help you, help us. Please call or email Kristie on admin@tcfqld.org.au or 3254 2657

YOU STORY *Your contribution could help others*

If any of our members, family or friends have a story, article, letter etc. they would like to share with us, please let us know. Please note that space is limited, so try to keep publications between 800 to 900 words.

If you or anyone you know would like to sponsor either the postage or printing of the newsletter please email to admin@tcfqld.org.au or call 3254 2657.

HELP WANTED *Sub-committee's needed*

TCFQ are looking to fill roles within the following sub-committee's for 2018:

- Seminar – 30th June 2018
- Charity Golf Day – 3rd August 2018
- Candle Lighting Service – 9th December 2018
- Fundraising Events (Sausage sizzles, jam stalls) various dates throughout the year
- Marketing – ongoing

If you would like more information please contact Kristie at the office on 3254 2657.

The New Year

Well, here we are: the holiday onslaught is now officially behind us and a new year has begun. In this season of resolutions and intention setting, how does your grief match up? The “happy” part of Happy New Year may not be something you can claim, but some things might still be within reach.

You may have had people tell you that 2018 is going to be a “much better year” for you. While the sentiment is nice, the reality is not that easy. If this is the first year without someone you love, the calendar turning over into a year they will not see is not a comfort by any means.

If we put aside the whole idea of the new year being “better,” it’s as good a time as any to ask yourself what you might need, what parts of this life of “after” can be made more gentle. Even though we might give anything to have life just go back to what it used to be, we can still want something for ourselves in the year to come.

Given that what has been lost cannot be restored, what do you want for yourself in this coming year? Is there anything that can be released and left behind? Is there anything you call to you? Any changes you’d like to make that might ease your load, even just slightly?

This isn’t easy, I know. When I left the year in which Matt died – kicking and screaming, leaving claw marks on the calendar – I would have had a hard time with this exercise.

And, still. There are parts of that first year I would have gladly left behind.

I would have left behind the nightmares, the self-doubt (the self-doubt!), the flashbacks. I would have called to myself more love, the ability to feel the love around me, the love that was still mine, even though the form had changed.

If you were to gently approach this new year that you may not have wanted to come, what would you leave behind in the old year? What would you call to you, in the days to come? Sometimes just asking those questions helps something to shift, even just a bit.

What do you leave behind from last year? What do you call to you in this year to come? If you allowed yourself to dream, if only a little, what sweetness or peace – or even excitement – would you look for? Sharing your hopes and intentions, as well as what you wish to leave behind, can help others in the same situation.

Setting intentions can be hard when you’re grieving. Given that what has been lost cannot be restored, what do you want for yourself in this coming year? Is there anything that can be released and left behind?

Written by Megan Devine, extracted from refugeingrief.com

A TRIBUTE TO MY BROTHER GREG

A compassionate friend shares their story.

He left us at 29, but lived a life well beyond that. His legacy and friendship remain in my heart and mind always, it seems only by the miracle of dreams that I see him again. It is now only by the strength of his character that I meet with a brother that is around like he never left. Only by the wisdom of his knowledge that I am brought back to a time that he was with us. We fish, we study, we reconnect through adventures that still seem so believable. I am blessed with a presence – a spirit that will never die. I take with me the best bits of the past.

He was a source of strength and protection. He was an inspiration and a tremendous encyclopedia of information that I often relied on – anticipating an answer that was from a higher ground... comical, authentic, light, heavy, dark, mysterious or bold. He often went against the grain and found success in this approach.

He subscribed to a theory contrary to public opinion and found university professors a great leveller. He lived always with a mindset to attain new ideas, new colours and explore undiscovered theories, or question current schools of thought.

This was his soul, his ability to remain unique in his thoughts, and this is the reason I still see him casting 70 yards with live bait to hook his next story. I will always see him this way.

Written by Brett Alcock, TCFQ member



Gregory Nikola Alcock (June 10 1971 – January 2 2001)

Helping your child deal with death

When a loved one dies, children feel and show their grief in different ways. How kids cope with the loss depends on things like their age, how close they felt to the person who died, and the support they receive.

Here are some things parents can do to help a child who has lost a loved one:

When talking about death, use simple, clear words. To break the news that someone has died, approach your child in a caring way. Use words that are simple and direct. For example, “I have some sad news to tell you. Grandma died today.” Pause to give your child a moment to take in your words.

Listen and comfort. Every child reacts differently to learning that a loved one has died. Some kids cry. Some ask questions. Others seem not to react at all. That’s OK. Stay with your child to offer hugs or reassurance. Answer your child’s questions or just be together for a few minutes.

Put emotions into words. Encourage kids to say what they’re thinking and feeling in the days, weeks, and months following the loss. Talk about your own feelings: It helps kids be aware of and feel comfortable with theirs. Say things like, “I know you’re feeling very sad. I’m sad, too. We both loved Grandma so much, and she loved us, too.”

Tell your child what to expect. If the death of a loved one means changes in your child’s life, head off any worries or fears by explaining what will happen. For example, “Aunt Sara will pick you up from school like Grandma used to.” Or, “I need to stay with Grandpa for a few days. That means you and Dad will be home taking care of each other. But I’ll talk to you every day, and I’ll be back on Sunday.”

Talk about funerals and rituals. Allow children to join in rituals like viewings, funerals, or memorial services. Tell your child ahead of time what will happen. For example, “Lots of people who loved Grandma will be there. We will sing, pray, and talk about Grandma’s life. People might cry and hug. People will say things like, ‘I’m sorry for your loss,’ or, ‘My condolences.’ Those are polite and kind things to say to the family at a funeral. We can say, ‘Thank you,’ or, ‘Thanks for coming.’ You can stay near me and hold my hand if you want.”

You might need to explain burial or cremation. For example, “After the funeral, there is a burial at a cemetery. The person’s body is in a casket (or coffin) that gets buried in the ground with a special ceremony. This can feel like a sad goodbye, and people might cry.” Share your family’s beliefs about what happens to a person’s soul or spirit after death.

Explain what happens after the service as a way to show that people will feel better. For example, “We all will go eat food together. People will laugh, talk, and hug some more. Focusing on the happy memories about Grandma and on the good feeling of being together helps people start to feel better.”

Give your child a role. Having a small, active role can help kids master an unfamiliar and emotional situation such as a funeral or memorial service. For example, you might invite your child to read a poem, pick a song to be played, gather some photos to display, or make something. Let kids decide if they want to take part, and how.

Help your child remember the person. In the days and weeks ahead, encourage your child to draw pictures or write down favorite stories of their loved one. Don’t avoid mentioning the person who died. Recalling and sharing happy memories helps heal grief and activate positive feelings.

Respond to emotions with comfort and reassurance. Notice if your child seems sad, worried, or upset in other ways. Ask about feelings and listen. Let your child know that it takes time to feel better after a loved one dies. Some kids may temporarily have trouble concentrating or sleeping, or have fears or worries. Support groups and counseling can help kids who need more support.

Help your child feel better. Provide the comfort your child needs, but don’t dwell on sad feelings. After a few minutes of talking and listening, shift to an activity or topic that helps your child feel a little better. Play, make art, cook, or go somewhere together.

Give your child time to heal from the loss. Grief is a process that happens over time. Be sure to have ongoing conversations to see how your child is feeling and doing. Healing doesn’t mean forgetting about the loved one. It means remembering the person with love, and letting loving memories stir good feelings that support us as we go on to enjoy life.

*Reviewed by: D’Arcy Lyness, PhD
Article lifted from Kidshealth.org*



2017 CHRISTMAS CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE

I had the privilege and honour of attending the Christmas Candle Lighting Service in December. Wow what a beautiful and heartfelt experience I felt that special night!

The evening started with the arrival of around 90 family and friends. Some regular attendees and a lot of new families came together to celebrate and to remember their beautiful loved ones. Together we shared tears, smiles and love for one another as the poems were read, the slideshow was shown and then the special part of the evening when we were able to light candles in special memories of our loved ones. At the conclusion we all came together to sing Silent Night with love in our hearts.

After the service, there was food and drinks to be shared, people coming together who only get to see each other at this time each and every year. The chatter was loud and joyful. Then along came the drawing of the statewide Christmas Raffle followed by the raffle of the night and some lucky door prizes. Congratulations to the three current members who won the annual Christmas Raffle and congratulations to all our other winners on the night.

I would like also to acknowledge and thank all the volunteers who helped make this special evening a beautiful memory for so many of us. I will be forever grateful for the love and support that we The Compassionate Friends are able to offer to so many families and I thank you all for a wonderful, sometimes emotional year.

With Love, Kristie State Coordinator



Candles lit in memory of our beautiful children



Parents read poems of love to their children. (Vera Caltabiano)



Candle lighting service



(L-R) Clint, Julie and Ray McGregor



One of the many winners of the night



Fellowship and support after the service

7 things I've learned since the loss of my child

Child loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her “good” days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are needed. If you'd like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts a lifetime, here is what I've learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

1. Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased child as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours—the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn't so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn't stop me from saying my son's name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn't make him matter any less. My son's life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2. Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds—a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we've never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child.

It's a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

3. I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no “moving on,” or “getting over it.” There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no exilir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul.

There will never come a time where I won't think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime.

Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone—should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born—an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered forever.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

4. It's a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I've ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship—that we could have met another way—any other way but this. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day grieving parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining the club.

If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a lifeforce to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

5. The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains.

The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

6. No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why every holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two – anything – than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart.

Almost anything would be easier than living without one of more of your precious children. That is why holidays are always and forever hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

7. Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it's both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again – when the joy comes, however and whenever it does – it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply: the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it.

My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but because of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all "worth" it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say thank you, thank you, thank you. Because there is nothing – and I mean absolutely nothing – I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given. Even death can't take that away.

Written by Angela Miller

RENAE PEARSON

A compassionate friend shares their story

As I head into Renae's 5 year anniversary I realise it'll never get easier! One of the hardest things is moving through life after losing a child.

Our nightmare began on 2nd December 2008 when Renae was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma. After a 4 year battle with many highs and lows, 11 rounds of chemo and 13 operations Renae lost the battle on 11th February 2013.

During this time we never discussed or imagined that Renae was going to die. As silly as it sounds even though she had cancer I never thought I would lose her. People thought I would have been prepared but I honestly believed she was going to beat this! We spent so much time together during this 4 years which only made losing her harder.

From December to her Anniversary every year I can't help but relive every event leading up to losing Renae.

Every year I hope it will get easier and time will help me to forget but it doesn't! I get very good at pretending I'm ok because nobody really wants to hear it anymore! I'm so scared people will forget her as they don't talk about her.

I get the feeling they are uncomfortable to mention her name. I watch her peers grow older but have no new photos of Renae – she will never grow old.

I want to forget to make it easier but am afraid to lose my memories. I feel guilty sometimes when I'm happy and laughing as for that slight moment I have forgotten that I have lost her.

I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever and that the loss of a child just never goes away. Every missed birthday, milestone, wedding that will never be and grandchildren that should have been but will never be born. If you have never lost of child you will never understand what it does to your mind, body and soul.

I miss you Renae – I miss being your Mum and I never knew how hard it would be to live without you. Love you forever my darling daughter.

*Written by Tracey Pearson, TCFQ member
Mother of Renae*



Father's role in the loss of a child

While many fathers may put on an outward display of strength, inside they are as heartbroken as any parent would be over the loss of a child. They experience the same stages of grief as anyone else, even if they do not always express it. However, society often focuses on the mother and meeting her needs, but fathers need support as well in order to heal from the loss of their child, and they need to be allowed to grieve on their terms.

HOW MEN GRIEVE

While women are generally open with their emotions, men often keep theirs bottled up. A father may not outwardly show any sadness over the loss of his child, either because of societal pressure to be strong or the feeling that he must be there to support his wife.

GRIEVING SILENTLY

Many men have been taught that they should not share their emotions or reach out for support. They are raised to be strong in times of trouble, thus they often grieve silently. This does not mean he is not grieving - it just means he is doing it differently.

GRIEVING PHYSICALLY

Men often express their grief physically. A grieving father may throw himself into work or projects around the house, or he may take up a hobby to keep himself occupied and avoid dealing with his emotions. He may turn to physical activity, such as playing basketball or going to the gym, to get the anger out. He may avoid contact with his wife because he doesn't know how to deal with her emotions on top of his. Whatever form his grief takes, a father must be allowed to process his feelings in his own way.

HELPING A GRIEVING FATHER

Society often neglects to care for the grieving father, showering all its support on the mother. Yet fathers need support as well, and he may not wish to turn to his wife for support, who is working through her grief. If you know a father who has recently lost a child, here are some suggestions for helping him work through his grief:

- **Be supportive:** He may need help with funeral arrangements, including driving him to the funeral home, picking out a casket or selecting flowers.
- **Don't pressure him:** If the father refuses to talk about his child's death, don't try to force the issue. Let him know that if he needs to talk, you'll be there to listen.
- **Listen:** When he is ready to start talking, just listen. Tell him how sorry you are for his loss. Use his child's name. Do not throw clichés at him, such as "Your child is in a better place", or "Now you have an angel to look after you". Not only are these not helpful, but it may make him feel that expressing his emotions is making you uncomfortable, which may cause him to stop talking about his grief.

- **Help him with daily tasks:** Find out what needs to be done, show up and just do it if you ask if he needs anything, he will likely say no. Tell him you will be at his house at a specific date and time to do the laundry or mow the lawn, or that you are dropping off dinner. If he has other children, offer to take them to the movies or the park to give him and his spouse some time alone.
- **Invite him out:** He may decline, but keep inviting him. Even if he never accepts, sometimes just knowing the invitation is there and that somebody cares is enough to get through a bad day. Often friends fade away after the loss of a child because they don't know what to say. He needs to know that you will not abandon him.

SUPPORT

If you know someone who has lost a child, or if you are a father who has lost a child, take time to get some help. There are many organizations devoted to helping parents through the loss of a child, and many have local chapters with support groups for mothers, fathers, and both parents. Many of these organizations also have online forums specifically for fathers to go and talk about their grief with other men who have been through the same experience.

- Center for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB) is an organization aimed at parents who have lost one, both or all children in a multiple birth, whether at birth or later in life. They have a page on fathers and grief.
- MISS Foundation is a volunteer-based organization that provides counseling, advocacy, research, and education services to families experiencing the death of a child. Their website has a page dedicated to fathers, as well as an online forum for dads called "Man of Courage."

RESOURCES

Oftentimes the best comfort comes from reading about others who have been through the loss of their child and survived. Books written by fathers who have lost a child can help eliminate the feeling that nobody understands your pain. Look for these books at your local bookstore, library or at Amazon.com.

PATH TOWARDS HEALING

There is no one way to grieve and no quick answer to the pain a parent feels after losing his child, regardless of the circumstances. Grief is a process, and it's important to let each individual experience that grief on their own terms. Grief counseling is often helpful for people who are struggling through the loss of a child as well.

Written by Amy Newman



WE NEED NEVER BE ASHAMED OF OUR TEARS

- CHARLES DICKENS



Accommodating Grief

Well, here we are: the holiday onslaught is now officially over. The doctor I see every six months or so for my rheumatoid arthritis always fusses at me. One of the routine questions is, “How’s your pain level?” I usually say, “About a three.” And then she looks at my hands and my feet—at the swollen joints and twisted toes—and shakes her head.

But here’s the deal: sure they hurt, sure I can’t do all the things I used to do, sure I have to do many things differently than I did them when my hands and feet were unaffected by this disease – but I’m STILL moving and doing what needs to be done. I don’t really know how to do anything else.

And that’s how it is with this grief I lug around—it’s heavier some days than others—but I’m STILL moving and doing what needs to be done. This is not the life I thought I would be living, but it’s the life I have.

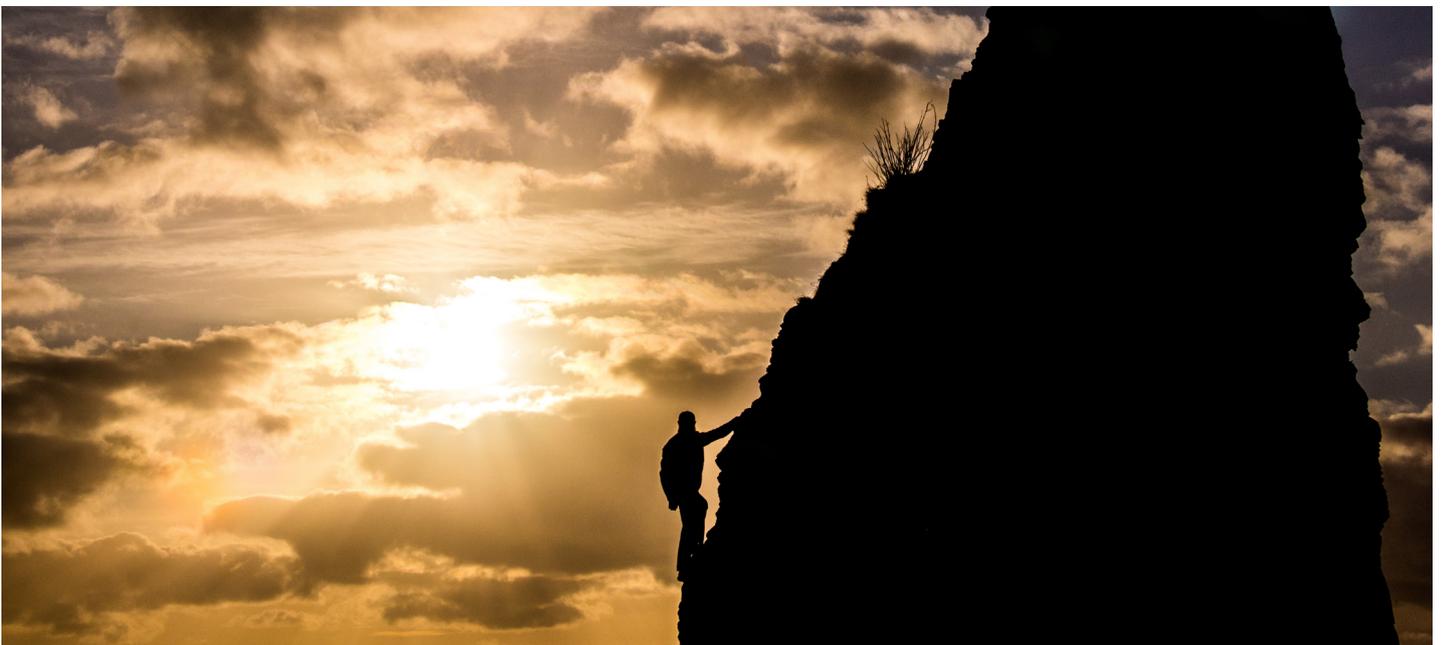
So I make accommodations for my sorrow just like I make accommodations for my hurting hands and crooked toes.

- I try not to over-schedule my days. If I have an appointment I mark it on the calendar and refuse to pile other commitments on top of it. That way if I’m wiped out I have some built in down time.
- I prioritize what needs to be done. Whether it is for a week or a day, I jot down a list (still using paper, but a phone would work) and then decide what are the two or three MOST important tasks that must be done in that time frame. If I find myself running behind because it’s a hard grief day (or week), I can quickly make choices that ensure the needful things are done and the others laid aside for when I have more energy to do them. I’m less anxious about what I don’t get finished because I know I did the most important things first.

- I build rest into my days. When I’m overtired, I’m more susceptible to grief attacks. I pause every now and then to sit or take a quick walk outside or simply change my work from detail-oriented to broad strokes. I have more flexibility because I work at home but even in an office it’s possible. My husband walks every day on his lunch hour—sunshine and physical activity make his afternoons easier to bear.
- I ask for help. When I’m drowning in grief, I reach out for a lifeline. There’s no shame in asking for help. I have a good friend that I can text or call anytime I need to and ask for prayer or a listening ear. I belong to a couple of online grief groups and they are full of people who understand my pain and will lift me up in prayer and encourage my heart when it feels especially broken.
- I accept my limitations. My toes don’t allow me to wear beautiful shoes anymore so I’ve learned to wear what fits instead of what’s in fashion. I am not the same person I was before I buried a child so I’m learning to live with the new me. I don’t like crowds. I don’t like unexpected change. I feel anxious in unfamiliar places and around strangers. I make choices that limit my exposure to those things when possible.
- I shake off the really awful day. I can’t help that some days take a nosedive into terrible as soon as I leave the bed. I admit that grieving is hard, that it will continue to be hard. But I won’t let my worst days be my only days.

I am not in control of everything, but I can control some things. I would not have chosen this life for myself, but I can make choices that help make it bearable.

Melanie – “The Life I Didn’t Choose”



Chris Davis on Making Sense of Loss

A professor of psychology at Carleton University in Canada, Chris Davis is an expert on how people respond to life-altering experiences like illness or death. He has studied spinal injury patients who lost mobility in their arms and legs, people with chronic illnesses, and those whose children have died from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), as well as the process of bereavement. His research seeks to understand how people make sense of and find meaning in life-changing experiences.

Q: *Is it possible to find meaning after loss?*

It varies by person and situation. A colleague and I did a study of people who had lost loved ones in a Canadian mine explosion – a tragic event that many regard as senseless. The interviews took place seven or eight years after the accident, and we asked those who had lost a husband, father, or son in the explosion how they made sense of the deaths. Many of these people were still grieving profoundly and could see no meaning in their loss. Some of them were still very angry. But there were others who said, “As awful as it was, it changed me in a good way.”

One widow used the analogy of her life as a puzzle. Before the accident, she was married and had two small children. She knew where she was going; the puzzle of her life was almost complete. Then when the mine exploded and she lost her husband, she said it was as if somebody had picked up her puzzle and thrown it on the floor. From that point on, her life was about putting it back together, but she only had half the pieces. She was adamant that she was going to reassemble her puzzle. The pieces she had left made a different picture. The life she had before was no longer possible. But she was motivated to pick up the pieces to make something new. It took time. It involved small steps. But she believed it was possible for her to live a full life again.

Q: *One of your studies focused on SIDS. What is unique about that type of loss?*

I think one of the reasons the death of an infant is so devastating is that it can feel like a loss of a parent’s hopes and dreams. We think that people are not supposed to die when they’re young. So when a child does –especially an infant– it shatters our idea about how the world is supposed to work.

HOW TO COPE

Q: *How can we come to terms with an untimely death?*

It’s difficult to process any loss, and you may not fully come to terms with it. But many people use tragedy as an opportunity to create something meaningful in their life, to apply a sense of purpose to their loss. You may decide to change how you interact with your children, your spouse, or the world around you. Or you may spend time supporting a cause or an organization that you start. All of these things can help you feel like you made something good out of tragedy.

Q: *What are some ways for families to be resilient together?*

Communication is really important because everyone copes with loss in a different way. In the SIDS study, some of the participants felt like their spouse wasn’t grieving as much as they were. They interpreted that to mean that the spouse did not love the child as much as they did, and it negatively impacted their relationships. Talk to your partner and children about how you’re feeling. Don’t be afraid to show emotion. It can be helpful for them to see you grieving as much as they are.

HOW TO HELP OTHERS

Q: *What are some strategies to offer support to someone who is grieving?*

We recently asked teens who lost a parent about what their friends did that meant a lot to them. One thing they said helped was simply being there. Let the bereaved person cry, talk, or just be. Silence is okay. The other thing that helped was when their friends spent time with them doing the same activities they had done together before their loss. They didn’t want to be pitied. They didn’t want everyone walking on eggshells around them. The teens wanted their old lives back, and though that wasn’t possible, it helped to hang out with friends doing the things they enjoyed before.

Q: *How can workplaces be more empathetic to those who are grieving?*

In the wake of tragedy, it can be incredibly hard to concentrate. People may have waves of grief. They may start crying without notice. These things are going to interfere with their ability to work, and employers need to be aware of this. Just knowing an employer is understanding can go a long way toward helping a person cope.

Article lifted from OptionB.org



SOMETIMES THE SMALLEST STEP
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION ENDS UP
BEING THE BIGGEST STEP OF YOUR
LIFE. TIP TOES IF YOU MUST,
BUT TAKE THE STEP.

- UNKNOWN



Changing How We Think About Grief

Julia Samuel is a psychotherapist who has spent more than twenty-five years helping people grieve the loss of loved ones. She is the UK's leading grief expert, author of *Grief Works: Stories of Life, Death, and Surviving*, and godmother to Prince George. She believes that when we face our fears—the death of someone we love, our own death, or being with bereaved friends—we are better able to cope with them. Here she shares her perspective on why we fear grief and pain and how we can talk about them openly.

Q: *Why does grief sometimes come in waves?*

We're wired to protect ourselves so we're not faced with reality all at once. We adjust to it bit by bit. Imagine walking into a room and seeing or smelling something that reminds you of the person who's died. In that moment, you are acutely aware that they are not coming back. The pain forces you to face reality, its harshness and its brutality. The process of grieving is moving in and out of these moments.

Q: *Why do people have a hard time talking to loved ones about death?*

People who've been given a fatal diagnosis may only have weeks, months, or years to live. But often nobody around them, not even their partners or close friends, will talk to them about the fact that they're going to die. They have this kind of magical thinking: "If I acknowledge that you're going to die, I'm going to hasten your death. So if I don't think about it, then good things will happen." But the truth is that talking about death can be cathartic. When you start the conversation and take time to listen, it can help your loved one find the words for what they're feeling. They can have a good cry and then sometimes feel lighter. So it doesn't drag them back; it helps them move through what they're feeling. We're all going to die. We're all going to know people who die. The more we accept that and talk about it, the more we'll be able to connect authentically with our loved ones during those hard times.

Q: *What can help people who are grieving the loss of a loved one?*

The thing that helps most when people are suffering is the love of others. When we lose love, we seek it. But we don't all receive love in the same way. You can get clues for how your loved one receives love by paying attention to how they give love. Often, we offer connection in the same way that we want to receive it. For example, maybe you have a friend who always finds a helpful book or sends you an inspirational quote when you're having a tough time. She might also appreciate the same things if the roles were reversed. If you pay attention to the way your loved one connects with you, it can give you clues for how best to connect with them in return.

Q: *If a child goes through a great loss, how can we help them become more resilient?*

Those closest to the grieving child know their needs best. But in general, children need as much truth and information as adults—just in age-appropriate language. Parents love their children, and their instinct is to protect them. But children may experience this as exclusion. They may make up what they don't know, and what they make up can be limitless and terrifying. So the truth, however difficult it is, is better than a lie or nothing at all. Children's grief is like jumping in and out of puddles. They can be very sad one minute and very happy the next. You need to give them opportunities to be both. You can set aside specific times to talk about the loved one they've lost. It may help to create a memory jar or memory book. In other moments, though, they will likely want to have fun with their friends, play sports, or make crafts. Above all, children need to know that they're loved. They need to be comforted. They need structure. They need to experience some things that feel familiar after something so unfamiliar and chaotic has happened.

Written by Julia Samuel



Birthdays

Our children – loved, missed and remembered by their families

FEBRUARY

05.02.67
Mark Anthony Fitzhenry

Precious son of Cheryl Vennard-FitzHenry
Mark, I miss your crooked smile
Mark, I miss your laugh
Mark, I miss your warped sense of humor
Mark, I miss your hugs
God, I miss my son!

07.02.81
Aaron Frederick Charles Arthur Louis de St Atlais Le Boutillier

Happy birthday. Precious son of Donna and Kerry, brother of Brooke, Amber and Freya and uncle of Aaron.

14.02.77
Rebecca Ann Cotterill

Happy Birthday Rebecca, our Valentine Girl. Love you forever from Mum, Dad, Michelle and Chris, Susan, Peter and Sydney.

20.02.78
Michael John Salkeld Norman

Michael, always bright and beautiful. Dearly loved son of Sue and Alan, brother of David.

20.02.85

Daniel Wyatt

Happy Birthday to our beautiful boy. We miss your heart, we miss your face and we miss your cheeky smile. Sending you birthday hugs and kisses.

27.02.83
Dugald John Cornes

You so enriched our lives. Beloved son of John and Julie. Beloved brother of Rebecca, Natalie and Charles.

29.02.76
Anna Lavinia Debney

Daughter of Mal and Liz, sister of Megan and Matt (Dec'd). Loved and remembered on your birthday. Forever in our hearts little Keenie, love from all your family.

MARCH

05.03.96
Brianna Ashleigh-Kate Spiteri

Happy Birthday Brianna, my beautiful Angel. I love you. Forever in my heart, Mum
xoxoxo

09.03.79
Bradley Michael Smith

We wish you much love and eternal happiness on your birthday....Mum (Lady), Dad, Grant and Aaron (Dec'd).

09.03.84
Gerard Francis O'Donohoe

We love and miss you mate. We wish we could celebrate this birthday with you here. Mum and Greg, Beck and Jason, Jess, Deb and Matt, Marce and Shane, Abi and Hannah.

10.03.78
Benjamin Joseph Little

Cherished son of Betty and Les. Love and hugs for your birthday. Forever in our hearts.

22.03.91
Keenan Kent Smith

Always so lovingly remembered and missed year after year. Forever in our hearts little Keenie, love from all your family.

29.03.75
Mark Andrew Van Raalte

Happy birthday mate. Forever in our hearts and sadly missed. Hugs and kisses. All your family. xxx

Today is full of memories happiness and tears, of birthday celebrations we've shared throughout the years. And although we'll always miss you, our hearts are filled with gratitude and joy for one so very dear. We celebrate your birthday and will hold you in our hearts forever and always with love eternal.

Wishing you a day of peace and warmest memories on your child's birthday.

From the Compassionate Friends

Birthday submission form

Child's name: _____ Child's date of birth: _____

Parents' names: _____

Your Message: _____

In memoriam

Forever loved, forever young, forever remembered

Daniel Stewart Bryen
21.04.72 – 14.03.97

Beloved son of Bronia. In loving memory of Daniel. Missing you very much, David your brother, Charmaine, Dawn, Gary Family and Friends. It broke our hearts when you went away. David and Charmaine have a beautiful son named Rory Daniel, born 14/3/07. Love you so much. Mum.

Andrew John Buchanan
4.11.74 – 12.02.94

Precious son of Eddie and Wendy. Much loved brother of Leanne and Scott and brother-in-law of Peter. Treasured memories of your sense of humor and special ways keep us going. In God's tender care. We love and miss you, our boy.

Charles William Cornes
23.11.78 – 01.02.03

Beloved son of John (dec;d) and Julie. Would give the world for one more smell, smile and touch of you. Love you always and in our hearts forever. Love Johnnie (dec'd), Ju, Rebecca, Natalie and Dugald (dec'd).

Shane Kenneth Cross
22.08.86 – 07.03.07

Beloved son of Mark and Donna Cross. If you can trust God when he gives you a gift, then you must trust God when he takes it back. Shane was our gift, an irrevocable gift, always ours – just missing for a while.

Michael (Mick) Stewart Grennan
10.9.62 – 23.3.83
aged 20 1/2 years

Dearly loved son of Barry and Lorraine Grennan. Brother of Cathie, Michelle, Chris–pher and Peter. I thank my God each time I think of you, and when I pray for you – I pray with joy. We love and miss you our darling son and brother.

Michelle (Curry) Hayes
30.11.63 – 12.03.97

Has Michelle really been gone 20 years they say? But as Her Mum I miss Her every day. As I look here and there, Constant reminders are everywhere. March is not my best Month you see. Reminders of Her Death the Loss, the Grief, God's Love and Healing will finally set me Free. Love You Forever Mum, Rod and all your Family.

Peter Raymond Hill
29.03.80 – 29.03.80

We love you and miss you. We look forward to seeing you in heaven. Love Mum and Dad

Dean Raymond Jenner
04.03.81 – 23.03.85

Beloved son of Leonie. In loving memory of my son and our brother Dean on his birthday and for the anniversary of his death. Forever in our hearts. Mummy, Craig and Steven.

Benjamin Joseph Little
10.03.78 – 07.03.00

Precious son of Betty and Les Hooper. Loved and missed every day and only just a thought away. Until we meet again – sleep safe. Mum and Les.

Peter John Marin
07.08.67 – 27.03.84

Much loved son of Bernie (dec'd) and Maureen and brother of Michael. "I will not forget you – I have carved you on the palm of my hand." Isaiah 49:15

Nathan Gregory O'Connell
15.01.00 – 21.03.03

Loved son of Greg and Terri and brother of Meaghan, Kaitlan, Callum and Abbey. We love you and will miss you forever, little man. Keep blowing us kisses from Heaven. All our love, Mummy, Daddy, Meaghan, Kaitlan, Callum and Abbey xxxxx

John Pearson
11.11.71 – 13.03.94

Beloved son, brother, stepson and grandson of Pat, Dave (dec'd), Kylie, Des, Ursula, Dave, Tony and Hayden. Always loved and remembered.

Renae Ann Pearson
17.05.94 – 11.02.13

Precious daughter of Mark and Tracey Pearson. Our beautiful daughter and sister Renae. We love and miss you more and more each day. Forever in our hearts and thoughts. Dad, Mum and Bradley xxxx

Christopher Glenn Rysanek
10.01.95 – 01.02.09

Dearly loved son of Glenn and Deb, loved brother of Jacqui. Another year without you. 14 years and 22 days was not enough. Always loved, forever missed, always in our thoughts. Miss you mate. xxx

Steven James Small
28.09.74 – 13.02.13

Dearly loved son of Ken and Carmel and brother of Julie. We were all shattered the day God called you home. You seem to give us the strength to carry on each day. You loved life so much and you left us all with great memories of our lives with you.

Bradley Michael Smith
09.03.79 – 05.03.98

At only 18 years old you left us far too soon! You will never be forgotten – our memories of you shall live on in our hearts forever. We shall think of you on the 5th March, the day of your passing but, we wish you much love and eternal happiness on your birthday on the 9th March – the day you came and blessed our lives if but only for a brief moment on this earth. From your loving Mum (Lady), Dad, Grant and Aaron (Dec'd).

In memoriam

Forever loved, forever young, forever remembered

Billy John Stranks
05.01.95 – 07.03.13

Our beautiful son and brother was taken from us way to soon. Our hearts have been broken and we miss your smiling face and caring nature. Forever loved and missed. Always in our thoughts. Until we meet again. Love Mum, Dad and Allan.

Craig William Thomson
30.06.80 – 09.02.08

There are no words to describe the void created by your passing. You were my first born, my strength, my comfort, my pride, my joy. I miss you heaps my wonderful boy. Love you always, Mum.

Tanya Maree Van Raalte
22.05.73 – 10.02.09

Precious daughter of John and Joy, loving sister of Karen and Mark (dec'd) Beautiful Mum of Joshua and Georgina and Aunty of Tyler and Ella. Tan you fought to stay with us so hard, with dignity and great courage but you lost the fight to beat that cunning disease cancer. The world is an emptier place without you our darling girl, your life was your children and family and we all miss you so, so much. We will send our love to you on the 10th as we do every day. Luv u heaps xxxxx

Brett Thomas Watkins
01.10.65 – 23.03.14

Loved son of Johanna Craig and brother of Kym. You bravely fought the fight but lost and while you suffered we loved you most. It took so long for it to cease, thank God at last you are at peace. We love and miss you so much, Brett, RIP. Love Mum and Kym xx

In memoriam submission form

Child's name: _____

Parents' names: _____ Telephone No: _____

Your Message: _____

Date of Child's Birth: _____ Date of Child's Death: _____

As so many anniversary messages are submitted it is not possible to print long messages, so please limit your message to six lines.

We are happy to print poems in other sections of the Newsletter

THANK YOU

To the readers

We acknowledge with gratitude all contributions to this newsletter.

Thank you to all who have generously donated money or sent in used postage stamps. All donations are very greatly appreciated.

Please note that articles included are subject to available space but will be included as soon as possible. Please ensure that all articles/poems/ prose you wish published in the newsletter have the author's name included.

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in articles within this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily those of either TCF or the Editor. The editor reserves the right to edit any contribution. Any articles, poems, quotes that are stated as 'author unknown' within this newsletter are reproduced in good faith and do not intentionally contravene copyright laws.

Phone Contacts and Meetings

Phone contacts are fellow bereaved parents, caring and understanding, who want to hear from you. If you are having a bad day and feel the need to talk to someone A Compassionate Friend is always there. Should you find you are unable to contact any of the people listed, please let the office know.

DEDICATED SUPPORT LINE: 1300 064 068

BRISBANE SUPPORT MEETINGS

When: Support meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.

The next meeting is on:
Tuesday 13th February

Where: The New Farm Centre Meeting Room 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm

Time: 7.30pm

Who can attend: Any grieving parent, grandparent or sibling who wants to meet with a friend and learn how others are coping.

Cost: Only the effort it takes for our bereaved parents to gather together and meet another bereaved parent who really understands and cares.

Note: There is plenty of street parking and complimentary tea and coffee is provided.

CALOUNDRA SUPPORT MEETINGS

When: Support meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month.

The next meeting is on:
Saturday 17th February

Where: St Andrews Anglican Church Upper Gay Terrace, Kings Beach

Time: 9.30am

Please contact Lorraine for more information on 5491 8662

GOLD COAST/TWEED HEADS

Meetings as required.

Please contact Helen or Rodney for more information:
Helen – 0412 543 499
Rodney – 0429 166 100

HERVEY BAY

When: Support meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month.

The next meeting is on:
Thursday 8th February

Please note this meeting is for suicide survivors.

Please contact Owen for more information on 0401 311 468

LOCKYER VALLEY/GATTON

Meetings as required.

Please contact Robyn for more information on 5465 6574

ROCKHAMPTON

When: Support meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.

The next meeting is on:
Monday 12th February

Where: CPL Building, 39 Macaree Street, North Rockhampton

Time: 6.30PM

Please contact Rhonda for more information on 0458 274 211

GRANDPARENT CONTACT:

Brisbane/Lockyer Valley
Robyn: 5465 6574

Northern Territory/Wide Bay
Marie-Clare: 0408 702 716

SIBLING CONTACTS:

Brisbane/Beaudesert
Trish: 5541 3948

Lockyer Valley
Mellisa: 5465 6609

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEW FARM CENTRE

COFFEE MORNINGS

Coffee Mornings are held at the New Farm Centre, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm, on the first Monday of every month from 10am.

We invite you to come along and take the opportunity of sharing with other bereaved parents.

At this time you are also most welcome to access our library with its large range of grief related books, literature, leaflets and newsletters.

March – Monday, 5th

April – No Coffee Morning in April

“
HOW CAN THE DEAD
BE TRULY DEAD
WHEN THEY STILL
LIVE IN THE SOULS
OF THOSE WHO ARE
LEFT BEHIND?
– CARSON MCCOLLERS
”



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FAX: (07) 3358 2533



TCF WOULD LIKE TO
THANK THE FOLLOWING
COMPANIES FOR
THEIR GENEROUS
CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2017

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Arnotts</i> | <i>Grace Grace MP</i> |
| <i>Priceline – Oxley</i> | <i>Cr Vicki Howard</i> |
| <i>Samies Seafood</i> | <i>Village Roadshow</i> |
| <i>Australia Zoo</i> | <i>Feast on Fruit</i> |



Listen out for our ad on 96.5FM!

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Newsletter submissions

Closing date for submissions for the next newsletter is: Monday, 19th March.

Newsletter printing, folding and preparation for mailing is scheduled Tuesday, 3rd April from 10am at the Centre, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm. Volunteers are welcome!

Please note: If your child's anniversary or birthday is in April or May and you would like an Memoriam or Birthday Notice in the April/May 2018 Newsletter, the closing date is Monday, 19th March.

To have your child's birthday listed in the Birthday notices, it is necessary for you to let us know. (An In Memoriam notice is for the anniversary of the death of our children – we require you to complete the Birthday notice form and send it into the New Farm Office). Birthday messages are to be very short messages. This message will then be automatically listed every year unless you advise us of a change.