

Autumn 2017 | Issue No 193



# COMPASSION

The Quarterly Magazine of The Compassionate Friends.



*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity. The price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve. Earl Grollman*

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**Correspondence is welcome and should be sent to the Editor. Contributions can also be sent via TCF National Office. Addresses are on the back page of this issue.**

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Designed by Sam at Forbes Creative, Printed by Greenshoots.

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# Reflections from the Editor



*Gina Claye*

## Dear Friends

I've started knitting. I haven't done so for a long time but Maria, our chair, got me started again. At our weekend retreats now in addition to other activities, we have a knit and natter session. All of us together chatting, saying the things we need to say, without having to hold back. Maria says she finds knitting and crocheting calming; and I must say I agree with her. Our fingers go on and on; it's repetitive and therapeutic and something I can take up when I'm having one of those not so good days.

We all have to live with the fact that our child or children are no longer with us. What helps you to keep carrying on? I know some of you go for long walks. In addition to being out there in nature and feeling the wind and sun and sometimes the rain on your face, walking itself is therapeutic too. You just keep on going, putting one leg in front of the other. It's a bit like knitting really, only with legs.

One of the things that helps us all is getting together. I spent a lovely day recently. Sue Hughes, our deputy chair, puts on a walk each year in memory of her dear Joe. Those of us who can face the hills go for a long walk first then we all gather together in the grounds of a lovely old house for a drink and an evening meal.

Maria got a lot of TCF parents together in a restaurant at Covent Garden and we had lunch together but so much more than this. It was being together, sharing our stories, saying our precious child or children's name, knowing that however we are is 'normal' in the new world we now live in.

We all try to do what we can to help ourselves. So I carry on knitting. At the moment I'm knitting a square with a heart in as are so many other TCF bereaved mums (it's open to Dads too). All the squares will be stitched together to make a blanket, one of those you can wrap round you to make you comfy, a blanket being made lovingly for a recently bereaved mum by other bereaved mums.

So do write in and let us know what keeps you going. And don't be on your own. Invite one or two other bereaved parents round for a cuppa or go out for walk or to a pub for a meal together. Talk about your loved ones, tell your story, and in the words of that lovely film made by Jane and Jimmy Edmonds, Say Their Name.

**With my love to you all, Gina Claye**

# Thoughts from the Chair

Once again, it has been a busy three months and the quiet of the Alpine village from where I wrote to you last time seems a very distant memory.

I hope that you are all having a peaceful summer. Personally, I find this time of year quite difficult. The summer months are usually the fun months aren't they? Memories of our children enjoying their free time and family time fill my mind and it is difficult sometimes to overcome the longing that comes with these happy memories. When I feel like this, I call up a happy memory or two and remember vividly Jamie's smile on a beach or at a park. That smile continues to brighten my day and I hope that each of you have been able to employ your own methods to find peace in these summer days.

In between memories of Jamie's smile, I have been kept very, very busy! So much has been happening at TCF since I last wrote to you that I almost imagine Gina telling me to stop talking! (As if I would! - Ed)

You will all be aware of the sad news that our President, Countess Mountbatten of Burma passed away in June. She was, as you all know, a bereaved mother herself. She and her family were on a boat in Ireland when the IRA detonated a bomb that claimed the life of one of her sons, Nicholas, his friend Paul, her father The Earl Mountbatten, and her Mother-in-law. The Countess became a tireless champion of our charity. I did not have the privilege of meeting her personally but I have spoken to many who did and I have heard about her hands-on approach and her kindness. I had cause to reflect after the funeral how levelling and equalising the



*Maria and her son James*

experience of child loss is. The effects of grief are indiscriminate. Though we may move in very different circles, we have everything in common. The loss of a child does that doesn't it? It equals us all out. All the important bits anyway. Whatever our experiences, lifestyle, faith or race, we all feel the same pain and face the same struggle without our child or children.

I was honoured to represent TCF at the funeral and to meet several members of the Mountbatten family. In particular, I spoke with Timothy Knatchbull, who along with His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, delivered the Countess's eulogy. Timothy was on the boat that day when his brother was killed. Speaking to him put into sharp focus the loss felt by siblings when their brother or sister dies. It made me conscious of the work that we do to support bereaved siblings as well as parents.

The Mountbatten family asked for donations to TCF in memory of the Countess and we thank the Mountbatten family for their kindness and generosity.

In July, Carolyn Brice (our extraordinary CEO) and I were asked to speak at the Coroner's Court Support Service conference. This was attended by volunteers who support the families at inquests. A few of them were themselves bereaved parents. The feedback that we received was encouraging and the information that we passed on to the volunteers appeared to be received with interest and enthusiasm for our work. Our child's inquest is a harrowing time and we need all the help that we can when in that situation. I hope that between our charity and the CCSS we can ensure that no family has to face their child's inquest without support.

July ended with a warm and supportive weekend in Oxfordshire for parents who have lost their only child or all their children. The Childless Parents group as we are known. As a mother who has lost her only child, I have a particular interest in this group of parents and the issues that present themselves when you have no surviving children. Again, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and encouraging and plans are already being made for next year. This weekend, along with the weekend for the newly bereaved and the weekend for those whose child died by suicide or addiction, have proved so successful that they are becoming the cornerstone of what TCF can offer. I have said it before and I make no apology for repeating myself. There can be no substitute for being in the company of other people who say, "I know", and mean it. If you have ever thought about attending one of our weekends and for various reasons have decided against it, I would strongly urge you to reconsider. You will find warmth, comfort, support

and a tangible understanding that you are not alone.

In the midst of preparing for two of the weekends that I have mentioned we also managed to move offices. I say we... I sent a couple of "good luck" emails and a tentative "let me know if you need any help" message. Thankfully they didn't! Again, full credit to our amazing CEO who spearheaded the move in her usual organised and practical manner. We are so excited to have a new home and one from which the organisation can grow. On that note, if you have ever thought that you might be ready to volunteer with us, do look at our website for details of how you can help.

Ok, I think that Gina is definitely going to be shouting "enough!" now, so I'll leave you to enjoy this month's Compassion with my warmest wishes and I'll catch up with you all again in the next edition.

**With love and compassion, Maria**

**Do you have any free time? If you would like to volunteer visit our website for more information on how you can help...**

# News from the Catharine Pointer Memorial Library

As I write this the library is packed up into 20 boxes and is waiting to be transported across London. As you read this it will hopefully be settled into its new home and it'll be business as usual. Obviously this has all been fairly disruptive but it's been a useful exercise too because I have, of necessity, had to look at every book, as I've packed it, and that's jogged my memory about exactly what we have in our library which, in turn, has reminded me of what a truly wonderful resource it is.

It's an expanding resource too because the stigma around bereavement in this country seems to be dissolving a bit and there's a constant supply of new books, written by bereaved parents and siblings, being published. I've written reviews for two very good books, written by bereaved mums, for this journal and there are several more in the pipeline, a couple of them written by dads. I am a lifelong signed up book-worm, and letting me loose with the library is a bit like letting Casanova loose in a harem, so you can be sure all these new books will find their way onto the library shelves.

I couldn't let this quarter go by without talking about Countess Mountbatten, who has recently died. I met her once, and spoke to her on the phone, and she was a very compassionate person who grieved deeply for her beloved son Nicky but was also very concerned for other bereaved parents. Her account of Nicky's death and the way she survived, was one of the first accounts by a bereaved parent that I read after I joined the TCF library in 2004. It was part of an anthology called, 'Our Children' which consists of the stories of parents whose children died at various ages and from various causes. Knowing

that other bereaved parents felt as I did saved my sanity during those agonising early days of grief.

In her account Countess Mountbatten wrote that she hoped to be reunited, in heaven, with her beloved son one day and I do hope and pray that wish has been fulfilled. She also expressed her concern for Nicky's surviving twin brother, Timothy, and I often wondered how he had got on in life, and coped with such a devastating loss. Then, in 2009, I found out because Timothy published his own book called 'Out of a Clear Blue Sky' which tells of how he returned to Ireland to re-examine the tragedy that took his brother's life.

This is a truly inspirational account of the way Timothy was able finally to come to an understanding of why the terrorists had acted as they did and even, almost incredibly, feel he might have acted in the same way if he'd been born into that place and culture at that time. He has absolutely refused to become embittered and hardened by the atrocity which took his brother's life and has thereby reclaimed both his own life, and his connection with his brother. Both of the books I've mentioned are well worth reading and they are both available from our library.

I'll finish by quoting the inscription on Nicholas Knatchbull's grave:

***He took his big candle  
And went into another room  
I cannot find;  
But I know he was here  
Because of all the happiness  
He left behind.***



*There are no strangers at TCF meetings  
- only friends you have not yet met.*

## Poems from Woodbrooke

These next two poems, *I Know Him* by Fran Moir and *You Are Not Here* by Pauline Chambers were written in Mick Wilson's Creative Writing group at the Woodbrooke retreat in June.

### **I Know Him**

There is a baby  
Heavy and healthy  
Quick from the womb  
Eager for his freedom  
Yet suckling easily  
In the safety of his mother's arms

#### **I know him**

There is a toddler  
Flaxen haired  
Exploring his world  
Enjoying his freedom  
Yet staying close  
To the safety of his mother's arms

#### **I know him**

There is a little boy  
Sturdy and strong  
Starting school  
Ready to learn  
By himself  
Away from his mother's arms

#### **I know him**

There is a boy of 12  
Tall and confident  
So many friends  
New experiences  
Independent  
Not needing his mother's arms

#### **I know him**

There is a teenager  
Ignoring rules  
Pushing boundaries  
Living life so fast  
Without a care  
Pushes away his mother's arms

#### **I know him**

There is a young man of 18  
Angry rebellious  
Searching  
Experimenting  
A dangerous path  
So far from his mother's arms

#### **I know him**



There is a young man of 21  
Happy and safe  
Found his love  
Fathered a child  
His own family  
Held in the comfort of his arms

### **I know him**

There is a man of 28  
Broken hearted  
Lost his love  
His life shattered  
Comes back for a while  
To the comfort of his mother's arms

### **I know him**

There is a man now thirty  
Body and mind weakening  
Losing the battle  
With his demon  
He needs  
The comfort of his mother's arms

### **I know him**

There is a man just 32  
Hospital bed  
Frail and ill  
No fight left  
Dying  
In the safety of his mother's arms

### **I know him**

All these people  
From birth to death  
Joy and sorrow  
Sickness and health  
Their memories held forever  
In their mother's arms

### **I know them all**

### **Fran Moir**



## **You Are Not Here**

Days so quiet without you  
Because you are not here.  
Where is your laughter?  
Where is your music?  
Where is your touch?  
You are not here.

The phone does not ring  
Nor your voice asking  
'Ring me back mum.'  
Because you are not here.

Where did you go?  
What did you do?  
You are not here.

I was not with you,  
I listen for your return -  
But you do not -  
Nor ever will -  
Because you are not here.

You were my first born,  
Your love went with you,  
Carrying mine also  
On that poignant day  
called Valentine's.  
But I will carry you in my  
heart always  
Even though you are not  
here.

### **Pauline Chambers**

# Can We Learn to Live with Grief?

The following are notes from the talk that Philippa Skinner, a bereaved mum and counsellor, gave at the weekend retreat at Woodbrooke, Birmingham in June, for parents bereaved by suicide, addiction and substance use.

1. Who would choose to come to a weekend for parents on bereavement by suicide or drug use? The very title names some of the darkest fears we could have for our children, and for us these fears have become our experience.

2. Why run such an event at all? Isn't it bad enough to lose a child by any means, without having to single out some particular kinds of losses?

3. Sadly some kinds of deaths and the resulting bereavements can have additional factors which make them very hard to process, and can leave the grieving family feeling isolated, unsure of where to find help. Deaths by suicide and drugs, though there are differences, both fall into this category, as both can feel extra hard for us to find the support and understanding we so desperately need.

4. Very often we ask ourselves questions like how or why did this happen? But we can find no answers that make sense to us. We might be afraid of the judgement of other people, afraid our child might be thought badly of or that we might be judged as parents.

5. Here our common experience is the death of our child in very difficult circumstances and each of us, however shakily, are facing forward with courage, as the decision to come to Woodbrooke this weekend demonstrates.

6. We all have unique stories surrounding

the deaths of our children but there are also some common threads. We all have some common ground where we can 'meet' each other, support one another, learn from one another. We, all of us, are our best resource.

7. Some practical problems we may have faced:

- The most painful goodbyes are the ones that are never said and never explained' (Card at memorial to Manchester Arena bombing). Perhaps we never had a chance to say goodbye and we don't understand why things happened as they did. Consequently, it can be hard for us to find any peace or sense of resolution of the tragic loss.
- Involvement of public officials, which can feel unsympathetic and intrusive - the police, the inquest, the coroners court.
- Unhelpful media intrusion... so-called 'public interest'.
- Social stigmatization of mental health problems and drug or alcohol addiction which may cause us to find it hard to talk openly or find support for The fear that some may feel our child 'brought about their own death' and they are not seen as worthy of sympathy as other young people who die by natural illness or in a car or sporting accident for example.
- Such feelings may cause us to 'cover up' the cause of death, and we feel isolated and silenced in our grief.

8. How do we go on? A few things to think about:

The concept of 'going on' can feel painful and unwelcome to many of us, when we

are flung into this dark world of grieving for our children.

But remember: My child, and your child, is so much more than the way they died. We go on because we must, for many different reasons, and we take our children with us. In time, as our capacity grows and we find that somehow, and almost imperceptibly, we are a bit stronger, we can choose to live FOR our children.

#### 9. 'Continuing bonds'

Our relationship with our child remains but of course it is not the same. Their imprint remains on us and on all who knew and loved them. They have marked our lives in all sorts of ways and we are who we are because of them; we carry their imprint and always will. The reality of their life is woven into our lives and our continuing story. Who we are includes them and they are reflected in the tapestry of our whole lives. They are with us. We can choose to mark this in all sorts of tangible ways... as many ways as we can imagine... benches, trees, marathons, charities, art, poetry, nature and so on. There is no limit.

#### 10. Living between loss and restoration.

Like a river, life moves us on, an unstoppable flow. We are caught between two opposites, yearning for our lost child and feeling deep grief, and finding we need to make decisions about our own continuing lives... other family members, paying the bills, returning to work, where to live and so on. This sense of 'needing to look both ways at once' is stressful and also an everyday experience. It might be a cause of strain on a relationship where one person feels the other person is looking too much forward or too much backward or vice versa and it is hard to find common ground.

These are just some ideas that you may or may not find helpful. A few bullet points written like this, however, can suggest this is easy when in fact we know it is very hard. The grieving process always takes time and a lot of hard work and in difficult circumstances it takes more time and is even harder work. Above all, try and be kind to yourself, look after yourself and look for understanding support. The pain of grief is the pain of love... and love always remains.

#### Philippa Skinner



*Someday it won't hurt so bad and I'll be able to smile again.*

*Someday the tears won't flow as freely whenever I think of what might have been. Someday the answers to 'why' won't be quite as important.*

*Someday I'll be able to use what your death has taught me to help others with their grief. Someday I'll be healed enough to celebrate your life as much as I now dwell on your death. And someday, Maybe tomorrow, I'll learn to accept the things I cannot change.*

# Week 145 by Maria Ahern

***“Getting to the end of the holiday mum?”***

James...?

***“I know mum, I know.”***

Why James? Why do such things happen in a world that could be so beautiful. Why?... and why can't I stop crying? One minute I'm crying for the lost children. The next minute I'm crying for their parents, then I'm crying for you...

***“Me?”***

Yes you. It has catapulted me back to those early days James. Right back to the beginning. The wave of grief has crashed all over me.

***“But you stayed standing mum. Because you have found your balance. Every time one of those waves comes now, I see you standing there, defiant and willing yourself to stay standing... and each time it makes you that little bit stronger.”***

It's torture James, that's what it is. And I keep thinking of all those new parents who have just been thrown into this prison. What would I say to them if I could reach them? How could I comfort them?

***“Just by holding their hand.”***

Yes, yes I know but then what about those poor children who have lost their mummies, James? What about them. How does anyone comfort them?

***“I know mum.”***

And then I started thinking about what I would have done if you were still here.

***“Banned me from leaving the house I guess. That was your usual response if you felt a bit worried about the outside world. Do you remember the first time I was allowed out?”***

Remember!?! How could I ever forget that? You were about 14. You and Luke begged us to let you go to that concert in Tottenham Court Road. To the Dominion. What was the event?

***“The Kerrang gig I think it was mum.”***

Yeah that. I took you there and Luke's dad was going to pick you up. I gave you money to buy yourself some merchandise and to get some food. I was on tenterhooks the whole evening. Then I got the phone call...'Mum... I'm ok'...This often meant that something had happened and you were most definitely not ok... 'but we got mugged'. You both came home, white as a sheet, and explained that as soon as you got out and whilst you were going to find Luke's dad, some of the bigger boys had grabbed you both, threatened you with a knife and patted you down for your money. Remember what you said to me and to the police who came to take your statement?

***“Yes, I said, It's ok mum, they didn't get anything, I'd already spent it all! I offered them my poster but they told me to fuck off!!!”***

You had been so frightened my little man but you did your best to hide it from me and appear brave.

*“Yeah, because I didn’t want to worry you AND I didn’t want you to make me wait another 4 years before letting me out again! Remember what you would say to people, ‘I’m not trying to wrap him up in cotton wool, I’m wrapping him up in safety.’”*

Yeah, how did that work for us then? I bought you a sodding car and...?

*“So, life must be lived and enjoyed and what will be will be. You can’t lock yourself in a cupboard. Look at this photo. Am I smiling?”*



No James, you're being a clown that's what you're doing.

*“You’re a clown.”*

No, you are.

*“No you are. But seriously, if you live in fear and try to protect yourself from every eventuality, life will look like this photo!”*

I guess you're right son. Anyway, I have to confess something. I don't know what you will make of this James, as I don't know myself...

*“I know what you are going to say mum.”*

Well let me say it anyway. Even after 145 weeks my first thought was, 'Where is he, did he say anything about going to Manchester, I must ring him.' It was a split second when I forgot that you weren't here and I wanted to make sure that you were safe.

*“And then?”*

Then I remembered...

*“What did you remember? Tell me out loud.”*

I remembered that nothing or no one could hurt you now, and that I know exactly where you are and nothing would harm you ever again. I remembered James that you are...

*“Say it mum.”*

**Safe.**

# From My Heart to Yours... by Patricia Rose

## Wham!

**Last night I had a wham! moment... where all of a sudden out of nowhere, my heart started beating fast, a flood of tears came and Alex the boy was here, in my head, my heart, my soul.**

I could sense him, smell, see, hear and feel him as he was. All of these sensations came simultaneously. Like a tsunami, its powerful determination forced its way in, wreaking havoc with my emotions. I was tumbling helplessly out of control, at its mercy.

On March 26th, it will be seven years since my son, Alexander, died from suicide.

So many people still ask me: 'How did you survive? You must be so strong.'

And invariably I respond: 'It's not me who is strong, it is the great reciprocal love between my son and me that is strong.'

How do we survive? We each have our way of processing this impossible tragedy. We each find ways of wading through the myriad of confusing emotions. Our minds wander in every conceivable direction searching for some sort of answer, or perhaps an anchor by which to stop the continuous torturous thoughts and emotions which consume every ounce of our already depleted energy.

My path was made clear for me the day Alex died. My anchor came from within. It has always been there, buried deep inside my consciousness, and somehow I subconsciously knew that I had to dig deep and find it in order to achieve some kind of peace within this torturous pit of grief I had been thrown into.

A belief in the survival of consciousness was the only way I was going to get through the pain of losing my only child.

I still have my Wham! moments, but the intervals between knowing my son has survived the shedding of his body and is free to be Alex my son (with all of his personality and love for me intact) and the despair of having lost his human semblance, have lengthened.

I have found my anchor in knowing where he is now, or more importantly, knowing that he is now. I have developed the skills to reach out to him and he responds. This is where I go to for comfort when Wham! assaults me and I fall back into the grief pit.

We all have the capacity to find the child we have lost, it involves unconditional love and faith.

## Patricia Rose

### When Someone Cares

*If my thoughts could reach you  
They would surely find a way  
Of letting you know someone cares  
And is thinking of you today.*

*And if my arms could reach you  
I would hold you close for a while  
To let you know how much I care  
And to give your heart a smile.*

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# Book Reviews

We are always looking for people who are willing to review books for us. Please contact Mary at the library (address on back page) if you would like to help in this way.

## For the Love of Mike and Bereavement Columns by Anne Hilary Philips

This book is in two parts. The first part is Anne's account of her family and the events leading to her son, Mike's, untimely and shockingly sudden death after a freak accident caused by the so-called 'choking game'. For me the most relevant chapter in this part of the book is the one where Anne intersperses her account of the events in the Intensive Care Unit with her own thoughts and feelings. I read a lot of books, to see whether they are suitable for our library, and this chapter moved me more than most books do.

My own daughter died after a few days in the ICU and very few books address that experience and even fewer do so as well as this one does. Time and time again, as I read this chapter, I cried as I realised these were words I could easily have written myself because they so accurately describe the terror, the disorientation, the hope and the death of hope that I'd felt; an absolute roller coaster of emotion which you have to live through to really know.

The second part of the book consists of columns Anne wrote for a Canadian newspaper, giving people advice about coping with bereavement. I'm writing this without the book in front of me because it was far too good to keep to myself and I've already sent it out but, from

memory, these columns cover everything from coping in the early days, to coping with Christmas, to helping your surviving children and lots more. Each column forms a chapter which is short, easy to read and digest and is full of good advice. They are all clearly listed so you can search for the ones which give the advice which you currently need or you can browse through and take what you need from each chapter. I would thoroughly recommend this book to all bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings.

The book is available from the TCF library, from Amazon or directly from the author, which I think is the best way to purchase a copy. It costs less than £8 from Anne and if you email her on [ivyhousefarm@gmail.com](mailto:ivyhousefarm@gmail.com) she'll be able to help you with that.

**Reviewed by Mary Hartley**

## 17 Days: The Shocking True Story of Dan's Cancer Diagnosis by Anne Logan Huxtable

I sat and read this book in one sitting; I just could not put it down. Shocking is absolutely the right word for this account of Dan's illness as a fit, strong healthy rugby player went from being unwell, with what appeared to be a tummy bug, to his death from cancer a couple of weeks later. Dan was the author's only child, she was by his side throughout his ordeal and she has written a day by day account



of his illness. I think other parents whose children have died from cancer will relate to this book even more than I did although, as a very wise mum once said to me, 95% of what we feel, we all feel and the other 5% comes from our own individual circumstances.

One of the nicest things about the book is the way the chapters are interspersed with anecdotes and photos from Dan's life so that you get to know him as a person too. My favourite is the one on page 41 of Dan and his mates all dressed up as Elvis for a rugby cup final. Apparently, when they got on the tube, the announcer said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has entered the station'.

Also, on page 110, there is a poem, written by Anne, which expresses her anger at the

cancer cells which stole her son's young life. It's extremely powerful and ends, 'You took my reason for living that day, you took my future, you took my son, how dare you.' Is there any bereaved parent anywhere who can't relate to that?

The last bit of the book is about the aftermath of Dan's death. Anne had lost her only child and, a short time later, she and her husband descended into hell. She survived though, partly through the help of TCF, and I would be interested in knowing more about that because I think it would help others. Another book maybe? In the meantime I recommend this book to all bereaved parents and especially those who have lost their only child.

**Reviewed by Mary Hartley**

## TCF WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING



**Join us in this worldwide event Sunday 10th December 2017...**

A worldwide event uniting family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honour the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of formal candle lighting events and thousands of informal candle lightings are held to commemorate and honour the memory of all children who have died but will never be forgotten.

**More details will be available soon on our website.**

# Memory Corner

We remember with love all our children



**From Lorraine and Terry Young  
To our two darling boys.**

Our sweetheart, Matthew, on the 38th Anniversary of the awful day you left us, 15th September 1979 aged just 5 ½ years. We are so sorry baby, it should never have been you going before us. We miss so much, those lovely cuddles and beautiful smiles.

And our beautiful Laurence, on your birthday, 19th October. You would have been 36 years old this year, but you will always be 17 to us. Again, you should never have gone before us. Oh how we miss the love we shared with you and those special hugs, rocking from side to side – right up until the dreadful day we lost you.

You both taught us about unconditional love and strength; we ourselves have had to be strong and our love for you is

eternal. If we could have just one wish it would be to see those beautiful smiles again and feel those cuddles and hugs, even if it were for just one more time.

**Loving you always, Mum and Dad xx**

**From Aileen Cross  
Remembering Erika on her birthday,  
19/8/78 to 24/12/03**

ERIKA, From the day you were born, I have felt such love for you, a love that grows stronger with every passing year, a love that only a MOTHER can feel for a wonderful daughter like you.

**I love you so much,  
Your broken hearted MOM xxx**

**From Jenifer Cager  
Matthew Cager 12/08/1975 to  
29/09/2001**

Matthew would be 42 this August if he had not ended his life September 2001... Sadly missed always remembered...

**With love, your heartbroken Mum, sister  
Sarah and brother James.xxxxx**

**From Lynn and John Brown**  
**Remembering our wonderful son**  
**and only child, JOSEPH, on your 26th**  
**birthday, 3rd October, forever 2½**  
**years.**

### **Your Birthday**

Your Birthday comes around every year,  
Each time it reminds us that another year  
Has passed without you being here.

No more presents to buy  
No more cakes to decorate  
And no more parties to surprise you with.

Instead a cold numbness invades our day  
Where once a happy child played and  
laughed,  
Is replaced with sadness and tears.

We wish we could play party games and  
hold you close  
And tell you how much we love you.  
But on your special day

We place flowers and cards on your grave  
And remember the precious times  
We had with you.

**Happy Birthday our precious angel**  
**Joseph. Love forever, Mummy and**  
**Daddy**

**From Gail Sullivan**  
**In memory of my son, Daniel, who fell**  
**asleep on 4/10/2013, aged 43**

'I've lost a child' I hear myself say  
and the person I'm talking to turns away,  
now why did I tell them?  
I don't understand  
it wasn't for sympathy  
or to get a helping hand.

I just want them to know,  
I've lost something dear,  
I want them to know,  
my child was here,  
my child left something behind  
no one can see.

So if I've upset you,  
I'm sorry as can be  
you'll have to forgive me  
I could not resist,  
I just want you to know  
my child did exist.

**We will miss and love you until the end of**  
**time. Your loving mum, dad and siblings,**  
**Jackie, Richard and Emma.**

We talk about them, not because  
we're 'stuck' or because we  
haven't 'moved on'; we talk about  
them because we are theirs, and  
they are ours, and no passage  
of time will ever change that.



**From Lynne Potter**  
Remembering and missing our dear son, Mark, who died of Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome on 9th October 1989 aged 10 years.

**If Ever**

One day  
I built a wall  
Its stones were heavy with the tears I cried  
as one by one I set them round about me  
shielded from the world's pitying eye  
containing all the storm of my despair  
hidden within I nursed my pain  
a life-time of grieving stretching ahead,

Until  
one day  
a ray of sunlight percolated through  
the wall of misery and I thought  
if ever heart-ache causes much less pain,  
if ever I wake up and do not think first of my loss,  
if ever I can feel the joy of laughter, not the guilt,  
then I could build a life within my wall.

Then  
one day  
escaping through the wall's chink of light  
I looked up at the sun and felt the warmth  
I worked and smiled and played, I gazed around  
and saw my life was on the outside  
looking in  
at all the sadness that was always there  
whenever it was needed to remember.

**Lynne Potter**

**From Najwa Mounla**  
This is a poem I wrote in memory of my only child, Haas, who died 10 years ago. The end of the poem depicts a new way of looking at life and death and reflects some kind of healing.

**Dream Like**

I doze off to sleep  
Lamenting my loss  
Humming my child's favourite song:  
'What will be will be'

My eyes closed  
My breathing slow  
My body floats  
I understand all

I begin to see the light  
To sense the love  
To comprehend the truth

I see sorrow and joy holding hands  
dancing to one tune

I understand that death and birth are  
one resting in one room

I know that fear and love are friends  
healing human wounds

I am swimming in a gentle breeze  
held up by the vibration  
of my thoughts

Breathing in  
Breathing out  
I am one with the Divine

**Naja Mounla. If this poem speaks to you please get in touch with me at: [najwamounla6@gmail.com](mailto:najwamounla6@gmail.com)**

# Compassion - How Does Your Quarterly Journal Work?

- For all entries related to the contents of Compassion (including Memory Corner and SIBBS), the TCF Postal Library, the website and the National Office, please see back cover.
- All queries about donating membership of TCF and receiving copies of Compassion, please contact National Office on **0345 120 3785**.
- Send your contributions (poems, letters or articles) to the Editor. You can also email your contributions to **compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk**. Please put your email address under your name at the end, and please let us know if you wish your full contact details to be included with your contribution otherwise just your name will appear.
- **Editing your contributions:** It may be necessary to shorten your letter or article for reasons of space, but we will do our best to make sure that your message comes through clearly. We welcome your thoughts about your grief and the loss of your child - sometimes it's very difficult to know how or where to express the turbulent emotions that wash over you in the months/years following your son's or daughter's death. Other readers of Compassion will understand all your difficult emotions; many will have passed that way before you and be able to share your feelings.
- Enduring friendships continue to be forged through the pages of this journal, especially when a particular contribution 'speaks' to another reader. In responding to expressions of common experience, bonds are forged which help to sustain and console us. However to protect privacy we are now unable to publish contact details in the journal, unless you expressly ask us to do so, but we will endeavour to obtain permission for contact details to be exchanged on request.
- **A practical request:** Please write clearly. It helps if you write your name and address, and your child's name, IN CAPITAL LETTERS - it is sometimes difficult to interpret handwriting. We do not like to get such important details wrong.

*We are always looking for ways to make your  
journal more relevant to your needs.  
Do let us know. We love hearing from you!*

# TCF Leaflets and Publications

The following leaflets and publications are produced by TCF and are available from the National Office (address on the back page) and online at [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk).

## **Leaflets for Bereaved Parents and Grandparents:**

- Introducing TCF
- After Suicide
- Back at Work
- The Bereaved Lone Parent
- Childless Parents
- Coping with Judgemental Attitudes
- Coping with Special Occasions
- Death Abroad
- The Death of a Disabled Child
- The Death of an Adult Child
- The Death of a Stepchild
- A Father's Grief
- Grief of the Newly Bereaved
- Grieving Couples
- Grieving for Our Baby
- Helping Our Grandchildren When Our Child has Died
- Living with Grief
- A Mother's Grief
- Our Children's Friends
- Preparing Our Child's Funeral
- The Sudden Death of Our Child
- When Our Child has been Murdered
- When Our Child has Died from a Terminal Illness
- When Our Grandchild Dies
- Prolonged and Intense Grief
- Our Child's Digital Legacy
- Grieving Child Loss in Blended and Step Families

## **Leaflets and booklets for bereaved siblings and their supporters:**

- A Sibling's Grief - For Young Adults
- Our Surviving Children
- When a Student Dies - Guidance for Schools and Colleges

## **Leaflets for friends and professionals supporting bereaved parents:**

- Guidelines for Funeral Directors
- Helping a Bereaved Employee
- Helping Bereaved Parents
- Ministering to Bereaved Parents
- The Police and Bereaved Parents



# The Compassionate Friends Creed

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends.

We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.

Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for our children unites us.

Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.

We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.

We are young and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel hopeless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; others radiate an inner peace.

But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

# Compassion Magazine Contacts

Contributions to 'Compassion' are always welcome. Please use the contacts below to get in touch.

## Letters to the Editor

E: [compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk](mailto:compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk)

## Memory Corner

E: [compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk](mailto:compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk)

## Support in Bereavement for Brothers and Sisters

The Compassionate Friends SIBBS, Kilburn Grange, Priory Park Road, London NW6 7UJ

E: [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk)

## TCF Catharine Pointer Memorial Library

The Compassionate Friends Postal Library Service, Kilburn Grange, Priory Park Road, London NW6 7UJ

T: 01634 666353, E: [library@tcf.org.uk](mailto:library@tcf.org.uk)

## Donating membership enquiries

The Compassionate Friends National Office, Kilburn Grange, Priory Park Road, London NW6 7UJ

T: 0345 120 3785, E: [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk)

## Talking Compassion

The audio edition of this publication is available as a CD on loan from TCF Library. Back Issues from Summer 2011 onwards.

*Beautifully read - always wonderful to listen to.*

To find out more about TCF visit

[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk) |  [@tcf.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/tcf.org.uk)  [@saytheirname](https://twitter.com/saytheirname)

## Final Date for Contributions is 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 for the next issue of Compassion (Winter 2017)

If you are sending a letter, poetry or story for publication in Compassion, please remember that to protect your privacy only your name will appear alongside your contribution, not your full contact details, unless you expressly ask for them to be included. Please try and make sure you get your contributions in by the final date for the best chance of being included in the next edition. All views are welcome, irrespective of your personal religious beliefs. Compassion allows freedom of expression in whatever way you wish in order to honour your children.



The  
Compassionate  
Friends