

Spring 2018 | Issue No 195



COMPASSION

The Quarterly Magazine of The Compassionate Friends.



*I realized it is not time that heals, but what we do within
that time that creates positive change.*

Diane Dettmann

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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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Gina Claye, Bridget Eley, Carolyn Brice. Designed by Sam at Forbes Creative, Printed by Greenshoots.

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Reflections from the Editor



Gina Claye

a purple box. Click on Resources first and then on Library.

Irene Baldock shared with us how listening to the music which her son, Stephen, loved and played on his guitar, helps her get through the day. Miranda Howle tells us that after her son, Alistair, died, listening to audio books during the small hours of the night has helped to keep her sane. I concentrate totally on putting my thoughts down on paper. For a blessed while my whole attention is taken up by choosing what I feel are the right words to use in my poem.

Dear Friends

Christmas is over and we're into another year trying to do our best to live without our children. Some of you will have had anniversaries in the last three months - mine are coming up. Nikki's anniversary is on March 25th and Robin's, the 18th March which is also Nikki's birthday! Like many of you one of the ways I'll be remembering them is by putting flowers on the grave - roses, pink for Nikki and yellow for Robin. We'll go somewhere together as a family, perhaps spend the day in the beautiful surroundings of Kew Gardens. It will be a special time to remember our two lovely children and help us get through the day.

But what about the other days of the year. What helps us get through these? Mary Hartley who runs our TCF library would say that reading about others' experience of bereavement helps her and many of you enormously. She is always ready to send out books to you on request. if you'd like to try this go to our website at **www.tcf.org.uk**. Just under the heading is

I'm sure there are many things you do that help you get out of bed in the morning and keep going. I'd like to collect all your different ways of coping and surviving. It might well be very helpful if we could get a list together so that we could share the things we do. You never know, something that helps you may well transform the life of another. Please send them to me. If you want to write a piece about it please do, but two or three sentences will do.
JUST PLEASE SEND THEM.

And of course, as members of TCF, we can share not only these ways of keeping ourselves sane, we can also share our child, sibling or grandchild's story and whatever else we need to with those who totally understand. Thank you everyone for being part of my wonderful TCF family.

With my love to you all, Gina Claye

Thoughts from the Chair

Dear Compassionate Friends

It seems like only yesterday that I wrote to you all to introduce myself as the new Chair of the board of trustees. I'm really not sure where the time has gone but then, time passes in a different way for us doesn't it? We don't mark time in the same way as those people who are happily oblivious to living without their children. We don't celebrate the beginning of a new year with joy like other people. We just see the start of another round of painful anniversaries and birthdays and face another year without our children.

So, what have I learned in this first year as Chair? Well, lots of things but I'm not going to take up the whole magazine with my ramblings. The main thing that I have learned is that there really is strength in numbers. This new world that we occupy, the one that I have re-named Planet Grief, is only habitable because there are so many of us; each playing our part in supporting and looking after each other.

Ok, let me put an image into your minds. One of James's favourite films as a little boy was *Dumbo*. No doubt influenced by my love of elephants and my huge collection of them in all shapes and sizes. Watching *Dumbo*, cuddled up on the sofa with my baby boy was one of my absolutely most favourite ways to spend an afternoon. The elephants linked into a chain, trunk to tail, and walked as a convoy. The stronger ones protecting the weaker ones and, as a group, walking united. It's an image that recently came to my mind when I thought about my place in this amazing organisation.

When I was flung into this club, I was weak. I wasn't sure where my place was and I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do. Someone took my hand and I was led to my place in the convoy. It seemed like an impossibly steep walk and I really couldn't see how I would do it. I begun my walk though, one step at a time, thanks to the strength of those who held me up and offered me support.



Maria and her son James

That's what we are. Not a convoy of pachyderms, obviously. James loved that word when he was little and was so proud that he knew it. He would chuckle now to read this. Anyway, as I was saying before my mind strayed again to happier times, not a convoy of elephants but a human chain of strength. In the beginning, someone offered me their hand and I took it. I clung on for dear life, grateful for those who were willing to hold me up. Then, gradually, I realised that I didn't need to hold on with both hands. That I could turn around and offer a helping hand to someone who had just been flung here too. One hand in front and one hand behind. Then I noticed something even more extraordinary. The person that I had turned around to help, was now holding someone else up... and so it goes.

I have witnessed first hand how the chain of strength works and how The Compassionate Friends is literally a human life line for those of us in this sad convoy.

So, like the elephants who apparently never forget each other... I don't know if that is true or not, but I love the idea that my favourite animal has this quality... We will stride on into another year; united and stronger for being together.

Have a peaceful new year everyone x

Maria (James's mum)

Am I still me?

Am I Still Me?

How satisfactory is your life right now? I think that this is one of the important questions grief may force us to address. Whether your loss was recent or years ago, if grief is left to itself, there may be times that the pain of loss will show up in how you handle relationships, work, and other parts of your life.

The precarious road to this question can be painful as a result of your grief. Your loss creates chaos, sadness and craziness. How can you go on without your loved one? It wasn't supposed to be this way. Life is changed. Horribly changed. Life is not the same. Nor will it ever be. Grief hits us with an unknown future and it painfully challenges us to find the hope and faith we need to cope with a new future.

So, Who Am I Now?

I have asked myself many questions many times but even more so recently: What am I passionate about? Who do I want to be later? What defines me? What matters most to me?

For us, within the first few weeks, Cathy and I knew we wanted to be happy again, to find happiness, to shine our happiness to others like we used to. We made a statement of fact to each other that we wanted to find some description of peace and happiness again in our lives. During these last (almost) 7 years we have had many days/weeks of sadness and despair but we have managed to find lots of optimism also. I often hold onto this happiness so I can stay pragmatic when I have a bad hour/day or week. I

know that I have had a bad day but that tomorrow is another day and that I didn't choose this road of loss, but I do get to choose which way to go.

This type of thinking has not come easily and during those first few years I wasn't even close to 'pragmatic' thinking. Your answers, like mine, to these questions may move in contrasting directions and so along the way you may still feel as if you are losing your mind. Being happy is not easy either. I find it one of the greatest challenges to face in the midst of my tragedy and can sometimes take all the determination, persistence and self-discipline I can find.

“Cathy and I knew we wanted to be happy again, to find happiness, to shine our happiness to others like we used to.”

Cathy and I try each day to create a new identity in the midst of all the pressures of grief and the struggle of daily life. It is almost like growing up again like we did at school. A great deal of time must be spent in sorting through feelings to discover how you feel about life and evaluating your worth. Working out what does and doesn't define you (if anything specific even does).

Now What?

If we take away the clichés and numerous books on the topic of grief, what remains? Insights and learnings? With insight comes a choice: Do nothing, do something. What is your next step on the journey?

For me, it's about creating a new present as I certainly can't change the past. We're all travelling through time together and one of my passions is to do my best every day. Important for me is being at peace with my situation. Being thankful for what I have now is what matters.

Finally, I remember reading, "What is happening to you is too important to be ignored, too valuable to be left behind. Make it a part of who you've been and who you are right now. And allow it to influence who you are becoming, a deeper richer person." I can relate to this saying immensely... I hope you can too!

**Love to you all,
Ian, bereaved father of Lauren-Kay**

Lifted with thanks from TCF Victoria AU

Facebook Snippets

A poem posted by Hugh McAninch with the following introduction:

Meaningful words that could have been written for TCF

*Grief visits so very many
But how isolating it can feel
When others don't speak of
The heartache, or pain so real*

*When grieving hearts are open
Willing with others to share,
Their deepest sorrow
Somehow becomes easier to bear*

*It is in the sharing of the pain
Where light and slowly hope
Enters into the grieving heart
As together we learn to cope*

*Whether in a group, online chats
Or speaking heart to heart
It is in the presence and sharing
That gives hope its gentle start*

Tanya Lord

Posted by Lorraine Lynn

*I am not an early bird or a night owl
I am some form of permanently
exhausted pigeon*

News from the Catharine Pointer Memorial Library

As I sit here in Kilburn, surrounded by books, envelopes, sticky tape and all the paraphernalia necessary to run a postal library, I can't help but notice the poster and flip chart left from the recent training weekend. This has made me realise, and appreciate, what a lovely space this room is for the various meetings and get togethers which take place at our head office.

If you attend any of these meetings you are most welcome to borrow a book or two. Just leave me a note in the blue 'post box' on the bottom shelf next to the door. You are also very welcome to come and visit the library when I'm here if you are in the area. I'm in 2 or 3 times a month and the days I will be here are recorded in the office diary; let me know you're coming and I'll bring cake!

You will have noticed that every month in Compassion magazine we have book reviews and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who are writing the reviews for us. We have some great books in the library, both old and new, and I do like to let people know about them and that would be difficult without your help. So a big thank you to you all. I do try to pass the reviews on to the authors when I can. Most of our books are written by bereaved parents and siblings and it can't be an easy thing to do so I think they should know that their work is helping others. I do have a couple of new offers to review books and I shall

certainly be taking you up on that; I'm just working on fitting the right book to the right reviewer.

I've also received a few very generous donations of books over the past few weeks from people who are moving house, or having a general clear out, or have simply decided to give us a book which they've read and found helpful. Thank you so much for thinking of the library. The vast majority of our books have been given to us or have been paid for by our readers, often in memory of their child, sibling or grandchild and that's one of the things that makes our library unique. The memorial book system was set up by Catharine Pointer and I've used some of the money her son and daughter-in-law, Jonathan and Joanne, gave us on the occasion of their marriage to dedicate some books to Catharine in gratitude for the amazing legacy she has left us. The library has helped me so much, especially in the early years, and I'm by no means the only one to benefit; it took a very special and talented person to create this wonderful resource and I think we're all very grateful to her.

Finally I've been leafing through the books and a poem by Sascha Wagner put me in mind of the simple act of friendship which is the heart and soul of our organisation. Sascha was a member of TCF in America; sadly both her children died and she expressed her grief, and helped others, with her beautiful poetry.

This is from For You From Sascha, p45, and is called Lifelink.

Find in the dark of grief the sunlit places,

Find in your sorrowed time a moment's smile.

Find in the loneliness of your despairing

One warm and kindred mind,

One hand to touch your most secluded feeling.

- Find a friend.

With love from Mary

Finding comfort from Audio Books

We all grieve in different ways, Irene Baldock's article *The Power of Music* made me realise that music can be a comfort to some, but for me it wasn't. When my younger son, Alistair, died in a car accident 32 years ago I found hearing and listening to music very difficult, too painful, so many songs seemed to be saying "I miss you, I love you, I need you." We went to see the wonderful show *Les Miserables*, but I came out looking and feeling as if I'd had sand thrown in my eyes. Even much loved classical pieces made the tears flow. Yes, music made me feel totally debilitated.

I spent many hours on my own at home, Audio books were my salvation. They distracted me from my all consuming grief, if one loses concentration you can rewind, during sleepless hours at night they helped to keep me sane.

Audio books can be hired from the library for under £2 for 3 weeks hire. They can be found in charity shops and downloaded from the internet.

I hope this helps someone else to cope.

Miranda Howle

Mourning is one of the most profound human experiences that it is possible to have...

The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a loved one and to continue to treasure the memory of that loss is one of our noblest human traits. Shneidman, 1980

Memory Corner

We remember with love all our children



From Isabella and Richard Lawson

Our son, Graham, died 8th December 1992, aged 17 yrs and 10 months.

Our daughter, Claire, died 4th December 2016, aged 43 Years.

You are both forever in our hearts and thoughts.

Remembered always with all our love.

Mum and Dad xxxxx

From Bill and Elaine Young

Loved and missed beyond measure, our wonderful son William.

William collapsed and died at his offices in London two years ago.

His 27th birthday on 28th March 2018 is yet another day to endure without him."

Bill and Elaine Young

From Elaine Mannion

In memory of our beautiful, funny daughter, Natalie Rachel, who would be 24 years old on the 13th April 2018.

Wishing you were here to celebrate with us.

Love and miss you. Mum, Dad and Stef.

From Gina, Tim and Rachael Claye

Remembering with great love our daughter and sister, Nikki, and our son and brother, Robin, on their 31st and 15th anniversary.

Nikki, your rose bush still gives us beautiful pink roses after all these years.

Robin, Wales beat Scotland 34 - 7 in the Six Nations last Saturday. I wonder how they're going to do against England!

Holding you both in our hearts and remembering you always,

Mum, Dad and RN xxxxx

*There's this place in me where
your fingerprints still rest, your
kisses still linger and your
whispers softly echo, it's the
place where a part of you will
forever be a part of me.*

From Lynn and John Brown

Remembering our precious only child, Joseph, on the 24th March, 24 years on gaining his angel wings at the tender age of just 2 1/2 yrs..

In Memory of our wonderful son Joseph

*It's sometimes hard to know
why some things happen as they do
for so much joy and happiness
was centred around you*

*It seems so hard to comprehend
that you're no longer here
but all the happy memories
will help to keep you near*

*You're thought about with pride son
with each mention of your name
death cannot change a single thing
the love will still remain.*

With all our love darling Joseph, miss you every day. Mummy and Daddy xx

**From Aileen Cross
Remembering Erica in 2018**

My Daughter

*To me you are absolutely
every beautiful thing I could
have wished for and I want
to thank you for bringing so
many smiles into my life.
Thank you for being in all
my favourite memories and all
my most thankful prayers.
Of all the things I could have
been, I will always be grateful
beyond words
that I got to be the parent
of the sweetest girl in the
whole, wide world.*

Aileen, mom to Erika



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.

Testament of Grief by Jennifer Wilkin Shaw

Of all the myriad books written about losing a child there has never been one that really confronts what it is like to be a lone childless parent, until now.

It is written by Jennifer Wilkin Shaw after the death of her only child, Charlotte, in a tragic accident on Dartmoor while training for the Ten Tors Challenge. Charlotte was just 14 years old and Jennifer's loss is a double tragedy because, only seven years before, her husband, and Charlotte's father, Jonathan had died by suicide.

Be warned, this is not an easy read. There is no narrative as such but it is written in a 'stream of consciousness' fashion where Jennifer just articulates the thought of the moment. Many readers will find such a style off putting or annoying and wish she would just get on with the story. There are also many asides to Mary, mother of Jesus, not in a religious or reverent way but as one bereaved mother to another. Depending on your religious sensibilities you may accept this or not. Stick with it though and, in Jennifer's thoughts, you will see your own echoed.

For this is the baring of a tormented soul with all the guilt, doubt, self-recriminations and the terrible dread of a lonely empty future that all childless parents feel. Jennifer takes a step further into the darkness; she has the courage to question

herself and her motives. Is she beginning to enjoy her grief? Does she relish her new status as a bereaved mother and widow? After all why does she keep upsetting herself by looking at her dead daughter's things and going into her room? She also dares to voice that which cannot easily be spoken of, namely the resentment and jealousy that can be felt for those who have living children.

This is an honest and moving book recommended for all but especially for childless parents.

John Robertson

One for Sorrow by Alan Hargrave

In the final chapter of his book Alan Hargrave writes that "People give us books to read about coping with grief. Most are unfit for human consumption."

This is not such a book. Tom Hargrave died of cancer in 2002, aged 21, and fifteen years on Alan looks back to the uncertain and increasingly dreadful months leading up to Tom's death. His book has just over a hundred pages but he packs a lot in, not only his own responses, but those of his wife, Tom's siblings and his friends. The downward spiral of Tom's health is another heartrending, though not overstated, story.

At the time of Tom's death Alan was a Church of England vicar so he was in a public position in which many people

were looking to see how he was dealing with his terrible loss. Some of the things that were said by people in his church were profoundly unhelpful. Alan writes courageously and honestly about how he was unable to continue with his daily work in the same way as before. He explains why it was that he came to take up new work on the staff of a Cathedral.

Alan is retired now but, as all of us who have lost a much loved child will know, his grief journey will continue for the rest of his life. He writes about how his family tragedy has thrown up all sorts of questions about the meaning of life and death, the relevance of the Christian faith and his many new perspectives which are still a work in progress. Tom's death was tragic but Alan shows how personal growth, which may not have happened otherwise, has come out of it. His book has already helped many who are travelling on the same painful road.

Henry Whyte



The depth of your sorrow diminishes slowly and, at times, imperceptibly. Your recovery is not an act of disloyalty to the one who has died. Nor is it achieved by forgetting the past. Try to strike a delicate balance between a yesterday that should be remembered and a tomorrow that must be created.

Lifted with thanks from the Oklahoma City TCF Newsletter.

Week 180 by Maria Ahern



"Mum, what on earth are you doing awake at 5 am on a Saturday morning?"

Good question son.

"Thank you. Does it have a good answer?"

Oi! Stop using my lines!

"Haha... seriously mum. Why are you awake at this silly time?"

Dunno.

"Anything I can do?"

Yep.

"Name it."

Another metaphor for life?

"Well don't you think so?"

Come and give me a cuddle? Make me a coffee? Toast? I don't know James?

How much of a list can I produce of things that I can't have?

"Ok, ok Missy. No more self pity. It doesn't suit you and it's not attractive anyway. Man up."

Alright Mr!! I only asked for a cuddle and some breakfast! Jeez...

"Why do you need a cuddle?"

Stuff.

"What Stuff?"

Aw, nothing. Actually, you're right. It's ok. I'm ok. So... I guess you know that Death has paid another visit.

"Yes mum."

So that's two funerals in two months James. Is this how it's going to be?

"Well yes mum. It is. Either you leave the party early or you stay late and help clean up. That's the choice I'm afraid. What do you expect mum? No one will live forever and no one should want to. Want some advice?"

Always...

"Remember this... the important thing is not how long you live physically. You just have to trust me on this one mum because I know it's an impossible concept to get your head around. The important thing is how you are remembered. It's better to live a good life and leave behind memories that make people smile, than live a long life and be remembered badly. See?"

Yes, I know James. You've told me that before but it's still so sad when you lose another friend...

"Your friend has completed his life mum. And he was a lovely man who made you laugh and raised your spirits. Remember him that way and he will live on in that way."

Yes, yes. I guess you're right.

"There's no guessing here mum. It's a sure thing. Live your life well. Leave good memories and happy images wherever you go. Try to be kind, compassionate and pleasant and above all, take every opportunity to smile and say thank you. Then the rest will fall into place."

I get the smile bit but why the 'thank you'?

"Because if you look for something to be grateful about, it will take your mind off the negative stuff that you humans seem preoccupied with. If for example you stay stuck in the notion that I can't give you a cuddle when you need one, you won't get the benefit of being grateful for all the cuddles that we DID have. See?"

James, it's 5am and I haven't had a coffee yet.

"Haha... well off you go then. Get yourself a coffee and remember to smile when drinking it... And don't ask me what you have to smile about. You have plenty to smile about. Just remember to do it. Now, I've got to go, 'cos the new arrival needs me to show him around and get him a beer so I'm off. Smile mum. It will all be fine. Oh and one more piece of advice..."

What?

"Try and have a snooze or you'll get over tired today and then you'll be a right grump..."

Ok son. Thank you...*she says smiling*.....

"Haha... you're welcome."

Maria Ahern

Men and Women Grieve Child Loss Differently

If you have suffered the loss of a child, then you know that men and women grieve very differently. This difference between the ways we grieve has caused much additional pain to a couple already feeling alone, lost, and often without hope. So many times, a woman will shout out in despair to the father of her child saying, "You don't care about this loss! You don't show any emotions at all. I need you to hold me, to cry with me, and to tell me how much you miss our child!"

The father remains silent with a puzzled look on his face. Fathers do care. Fathers most certainly do grieve the loss of their child, and they grieve long and hard. But, they grieve in a very different way than a mother grieves. And, that is something that should be explained to couples early on after the death of their child. So many relationships have ended following the loss of a child mostly because communication ended and there was such a misunderstanding about the different ways men and women express their grief.

I saw it happen to my own mother and father. Following the death of my 13-year-old sister Carmella, my mother fell into a deep, dark depression almost immediately. Not only was she struggling with heavy grief, but she was unable to claw out of this pit of despair because she had fallen into the grip of depression, also. My mother cried endlessly, and she desperately wanted my father to talk. I can still hear her anguished cries for help.

And, I can still see the look of questioning on my father's face. He didn't know

what to do. He didn't know how to fix this. So, he did as a lot of fathers do. He stopped talking. Instead, he spent endless hours in our basement working on farm equipment, thinking of ways to build our farm business bigger and better than before. And, he stayed away from the cries of my mother as much as possible.

"My mother cried endlessly, and she desperately wanted my father to talk. I can still hear her anguished cries for help."

Sadly, their marriage ended in divorce less than two years after the death of my sister. Communication had broken down. Later on I would find out just how much my father grieved the death of my sister. He ended up moving away and living out the remainder of his years on this earth separated from all of his family. I truly believe that he never was able to express the grief he had over the death of my sister.

And, my mother? She eventually got help for the depression, but she grieved the death of my sister and the loss of her marriage until the very day she died. She never remarried. She simply couldn't understand what had happened - why she was left alone by the man she loved during her greatest time of need.

This story isn't unique. Thousands of couples experience this same parting of the ways each year following the loss of

their child because they have not been told how differently men and women grieve.

Men feel the need to fix everything and child loss is the one thing they cannot fix. Women, on the other hand, feel the need to share their feelings with anyone who will listen. Women need the support of a community. Men often feel like they are total failures for not being able to prevent the death of their child, so their communication shuts down.

During this time of grief and turmoil, we need to be extremely sensitive to the fact that men and women grieve in vastly different ways. In order to keep

your relationship strong and intact, there needs to be allowances made for these differences. The pain of child loss is hard enough without having to experience the death of a relationship, too!

It is my hope that as you are grieving the loss of your child, you will remember that we each grieve our child in a different way, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Allow space for differences, and always, always work hard to communicate!

Love, Clara Hinton

Lifted with thanks from TCF Johannesburg Newsletter

From My Heart to Yours. Poems by Patricia Rose



In Living Memory

*I can't think of a finer tribute
Than to choose a beautiful tree,
And plant in your loved one's name
'In Loving Memory'.*

*Then watch it grow and blossom
Beneath the bluest skies above
In memory of your loved one
And their precious, precious love.*

*As it grows you will be comforted
By the peace and tranquility,
Knowing your loved one is with you
'In Living Memory'.*

Patricia Rose, patricia@patriciarose.co.uk

Brick by Brick: Laying a Path to Acceptance

How do we get to acceptance? Ever since four family members died in 2007, including my elder daughter, the mother of my twin grandchildren, I've grappled with this question. I studied grief recovery then, and continue to study it. Many grief experts see acceptance as a choice we make for ourselves.

One thing is certain - our loved ones wouldn't want us to stay stuck in the darkness of grief. They would want us to live our lives to the fullest and be happy. Ten years have passed since my daughter died, and I'm living a new happy life filled with surprises, including acceptance. Now may be a good time to start working on your acceptance path.

According to 'The Power of Acceptance', an article on the Abundance and Happiness website, acceptance is 'based on the quality of consciousness that we choose individually.' Choosing acceptance requires awareness, introspection, and resilience. You need to gather some supplies too, a willingness to change, learn and believe in yourself.

Bob Deit, author of *Life after Loss* cites steps you can take to achieve acceptance. When I read this section I thought of construction bricks. Each brick is sturdy and when placed with other bricks it forms a foundation. Laying a path to acceptance can be a foundation for the rest of your life.

Brick one: Believe things will get better.

The death of four family members made me despairing. My sister-in-law kept telling me, 'You will get through this.' I believed her and kept doing my grief work.

Brick two: Tell your story.

Deep in your heart you know you need to share your story. With retelling and the passage of time, you will eventually be able to tell your story without sobbing, and that's progress. As you tell your story remember that it may help someone.

Brick three: Acknowledge your pain.

Trying to avoid pain saps energy and cements you in place. You're not going to feel better if you keep trying to avoid it. That's why grief counsellors tell clients to 'go with the pain,' something I've learned to do. In the long run going with pain saves time.

Brick four: Ask 'how' questions.

According to Deits, 'Questions that begin with 'how' indicate that you are ready to face the reality of your loss.' He goes on to say these questions help you create a future. I think 'how' questions are better than getting stuck in the muck of 'if only I had' thoughts.

Brick five: Grow from grief.

Judy Tatelbaum, author of *The Courage to Grieve* thinks we need to make something good from our grief. She sees this step as an antidote to despair and this has been true for me. Grief can make us better people.

Brick six: Reach out to others.

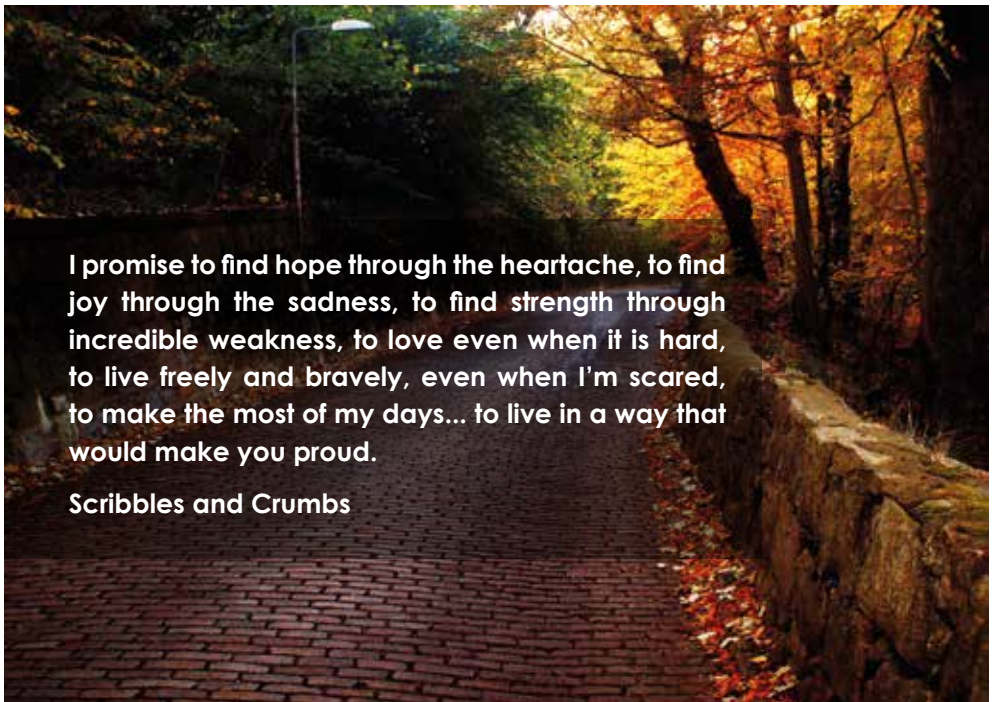
I'm a bereaved parent, daughter, sister, niece and friend so this idea comes from experience. When I felt strong enough, I tried to help other bereaved people by listening to their stories. Every contact bolstered my acceptance path and made it stronger.

Brick seven: Let yourself laugh.

After four family members died I didn't laugh for a year or so. Thankfully my humour returned. I remember my first belly laugh and how good it felt.

While creating an acceptance path is an experience we share, each path is different, with its own setbacks, twists and turns. Add more bricks to your path if you think you need them. When you can see the path you're on the way to the future. When I was putting my bricks together sometimes I thought I could hear my daughter saying, 'You can do it Mum!' And I did.

Harriet Hodgson



I promise to find hope through the heartache, to find joy through the sadness, to find strength through incredible weakness, to love even when it is hard, to live freely and bravely, even when I'm scared, to make the most of my days... to live in a way that would make you proud.

Scribbles and Crumbs

I am there

*I am the breath of wind on your face.
Whether head held high you tread
the hard-edged crags of grief,
or stooped and worn weary out
the windings and unwindings of the day
with each barely breathed sigh you take,
let my touch lift you,
let me be with you,
I am the breath of wind on your face.*

*I am the sound of birdsong in your garden.
When stumbling
you work the weeds blindly
or numbed by memories
you slump bone limp in the waiting chair,
I am there, listen to me,
I am singing to you,
I am the sound of birdsong all around.*

*I am the dawn of the new day:
the light that breaks your unsleeping.
Rise with me, walk with me.
I am there in the mists of the morning
and the change and the change of the
seasons.
In the rain on the wind
and the warmth of the waking sun
I am there, lean on me,
I will hold you,
I will always be with you,
I am the dawn of the new day.*

By Gina Claye



Poems by Aileen Cross, Mom to Erika

A Face Before Me

*There is always a face before me
A voice I wish to hear
A smile I always remember
Of a daughter I loved so dear.*

You Were Real

*You were real
I held you in my arms
I loved you
We talked, we fought
We laughed, we cried
We gave, we sought
We lived, you DIED
I hold you in my HEART
I love you ALWAYS
YOU ARE REAL*

TCF One-to-One Support

Would you like a grief companion/befriender?

Grieving for a child can be a lonely path. The whole philosophy behind TCF is putting bereaved parents in touch with each other to facilitate peer-to-peer support.

We are now launching a new service to provide more one-to-one support. So if you would like to be put in touch with another bereaved parent for some one-to-one support please let us know.

Your grief companion/befriender will be another volunteer bereaved parent who will offer you informal support and friendship. He or she will probably be a little longer from their bereavement. They are not formally trained but will offer you an opportunity to share your grief and experiences together, to 'walk alongside' one another and to be a listening ear and an understanding 'friend'. The contact you have may be by phone, in person, email and/or Skype/Face Time etc.- whatever suits you both.

If you would like us to try and find you a grief companion/befriender please email the TCF office at info@tcf.org.uk

Would you like to be a grief companion/befriender?

If you would like to be a grief companion/befriender please also get in touch. You would be providing informal support and friendship to another more recently bereaved parent. It offers you and another parent an opportunity to share your grief and experiences together, to 'walk alongside' one another and in this way be a listening ear and an understanding 'friend'. The contact may be by phone, in person, email and/or Skype/Face Time, whatever suits you both.

If you feel you would like to do this please contact us at info@tcf.org.uk

Find your own grief companion/befriender

If you would prefer to find your own grief companion/befriender we are starting a page in Compassion where people can write a short profile - just a few lines about you and your loss (maybe where you live, your child's name and age and how they died) and the kind of person you would like to communicate with. If you include an email address then other bereaved parents can contact you directly.

For example: "Hello. My name is Jane. I live in London and lost my son, John, aged 19, two years ago in a car accident. I'm finding life very difficult. I would like to befriend someone who has lost a child of a similar age. It would be great if we were near enough to meet but I'm also happy to email and talk on the phone. My email address is XXXX."

These profiles would only be circulated within TCF to other bereaved parents.

Sue Hughes (TCF Vice Chair)

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.

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.

Articles, poems and letters to the Editor

E: compassioneditor@tcf.org.uk

Memory Corner

E: 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

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

To find out more about TCF visit

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

Leave a legacy to The Compassionate Friends

Help us to continue to support others after the loss of a child of any age from any cause.

Final Date for Contributions is 17th APRIL 2018 for the next issue of Compassion (Summer 2018)

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.

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

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.*



The
Compassionate
Friends