



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

KAMLOOPS CHAPTER

 **AUTUMN 2012** 

The Compassionate Friends is a voluntary self help organization offering support, understanding and hope for the future. All bereaved parents are welcome.

CHAPTER LEADER

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NEWSLETTER

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MEETINGS

2nd Wednesday September & October @ 7:00 PM
Starting November - 1st Wednesday every month *
Kamloops United Church
421 St. Paul Street, Kamloops

TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE

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NEXT MEETINGS 7:00 pm

October 10, 2012
November 7, 2012 *(Note 1st Wednesday)
December 5, 2012

Welcome

Especially to those newly bereaved who have joined us for the first time.

We are sorry we had to meet under such circumstances, but we are glad you found us. We would like to do all we can to help you through these times. We cannot hurry you through it or take away the pain, but we can help you understand more about what you are going through. Sometimes just knowing what you are feeling is normal can be helpful.

We are other parents who have experienced the death of a child and offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support material and a listening ear. We have learned the key to survival for bereaved families is communication.

We ask that you give us more than one meeting to decide if the Compassionate Friends is for you. It takes courage to attend your first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from other parents and siblings who are having or have experienced the feelings of grief that you are now feeling.

**In these days of bleak October,
Days when all the world grows sober,
And the fields have turned to yellow,
And the leaves to earth are blown;
Then, somehow, I seem to mellow,
And my soul, like some old 'cello,
Seems to strike a chord that's sweeter
Then it ere before has known.
And a sense of comfort fills me**

~ Edgar Guest



FYI ...

IMPORTANT NEWS: Starting in November we are returning to our former meeting night of the 1st Wednesday of the month. We will be in the same location, Kamloops United Church, 421 St. Paul Street, same time, 7:00 pm. For September and October please come as usual on the 2nd Wednesday

TCF Kamloops Annual Candlelighting Memorial Service December 9, 2012 @ 2:00 pm @ Kamloops United Church. It's not too early to mark your calendar for this important event. Full details in the Winter newsletter.

BC Bereavement Helpline

**Service(s): Helpline, referrals, information_Contact: (604) 738-9950
Email: bcbh@telus.net Website: www.bcbereavementhelpline.com**

Suicide Support SurvivorAdvocates@yahoogroups.com

Sibling Websites www.tcfatlanta.org/sibling.html

**Grief Works BC Service(s): Provides comprehensive support for the bereaved._
Contact: Kay Johnson at (604) 875-2741 Email: kjohnsoncw.bc.ca**

Grief Watch: www.griefwatch.com/life-after-loss



CONTRIBUTIONS:

THE UNITED WAY Contributions to The Compassionate Friends/Kamloops may be made through the United Way. This can be done directly or through payroll deduction. The Compassionate Friends Kamloops Chapter must be specified as the designated recipient. The United Way will issue receipts to individuals for these donations. We are given a total only, no names of donors, and so we thank everyone who donates in this way other means of donations can be made directly to The Compassionate Friends of Kamloops or through other employee charity campaigns. We thank all those who support us with their donations, helping to carry out the important outreach done in the memory of our children.
We Are A Registered Charitable Non Profit Organization. Receipts Will Be Issued For Income Tax copyright 2012



Lamps For The Journey...

October gave a party; The leaves by hundreds came - The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples, And leaves of every name. The Sunshine spread a carpet, And everything was grand, Miss Weather led the dancing, Professor Wind the band.

~George Cooper

And the seasons they go 'round and 'round / And the painted ponies go up and down / We're captive on the carousel of time / We can't return, we can only look behind / From where we came / And go round and 'round and 'round / In the circle game / And go 'round and 'round and 'round in the circle game. ~ *Joni Mitchell*

The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love, and be greater than our suffering. ~ *Ben Okri*

Fear grows out of the things we think; it lives in our minds. Compassion grows out of the things we are, and lives in our hearts. ~ *Barbara Garrison*

The fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace, and peace begins with a smile. ~ *Mother Teresa*

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. ~ *Song of Solomon*

I think it is difficult to say whether there is such a thing as hope or not. Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence.

~ *Lusin*

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. ~ *C.S. Lewis*

Each friend represents a world in us, a world not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born. ~ *Anais Nin*

Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children. ~ *Khalil Gibran*

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.”

~*Pema Chödrön*, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*

Live as if you were living a second time, and as though you had acted wrongly the first time.

~*Viktor E. Frankl*, *psychiatrist and holocaust survivor*

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared. ~ *Buddha*

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent. ~ *Victor Hugo*

Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace. ~ *May Sarton*



"Death Of A Dream"

by Dana Gensler, Lindsay's Mum

Lindsay Nicole Gensler, daughter of Phil & Dana Gensler of Kentucky, was born on May 23, 1989 and died on her due-date - May 25, 1989 --from Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome. We will love her always and forever feel her presence.

We had 270 sweet days together. Nine whole months to get to know her and love her and imagine her. I remember the joy of feeling her within: stretching, turning, growing. Nights when her daddy would kiss my very big belly, "Now go to sleep, my precious one."
Perfect pregnancy. Perfect labor. Perfect dreams. And then she was born . . .

Terror grips my heart as I strain to catch a glimpse of quiet, blue, limpness. Cry, Baby Girl! A flurry of activity. A tiny whimper; a strong cry. Thank you God for answered prayers.

Three hours later: "Could you please bring our little girl to the room now?"

"Uh . . . we can't bring her out just yet."

I knew then. I knew! Long night. Brief visits to NICU. An emergency baptism. Dawn breaks and Life-Flight.

She's twenty-four hours old. A call: "I'm sorry. There's nothing we can do." What are you saying? "You better come! Quick!"

Speeding down the interstate at one a.m. Must get to her, must get to her. Quick! Silent craziness. Silent screams.

Oh my God, there she is. "Lindsay . . ." I sing. "Mommy's here. Can you open your eyes for me, Little Girl?"

So quiet. So still. So perfect. Oblivious to the gauges and alarms surrounding her to tell of impending death. Medication pumps, IVs, tangled arterial lines. Gentle whooshing of the ventilator. Rhythmic beeping of the cardiac monitor.

She's still my perfect baby, except half of her heart is missing. Big decisions to make. Dear Lord, don't make us say the words. Let her go. Let her stay. Let her go . . .

In a blur I take her in my arms, gaze into her face and whisper tender secrets just for her. Can she hear me? Does she know she is on her way to heaven?

She closes her white hand around my finger and sighs in relief. (Does death feel anything like birth?)

Her sweet daddy kneels beside us, weeping. Now he paces, gently swaying her in his arms, chanting nursery rhymes as his tears fall upon her cooling cheek.

Time races. Now again, creeps at a snail's pace.

Hold her with me, Phil, she's dying.

Oh . . . Sweet Little Lindsay. Poor little girl.

Tender lullabies to eternal sleep.

Her heartbeat is silent now. Mine thunders on.

Death of a Dream Continued From page 4

Tears and mourning and grief.
Nothing's the way it's supposed to be.
Discussing burials. Inspecting caskets.
Calling the priest about a funeral.

"Hello, Doctor? Her milk came in today. What should I do?" She should be nuzzling my breasts.
She's three days old, so we drive all over town looking for a white satin blanket. Satin, to wrap around our dead baby . . .

Slipping into the funeral home to see our Lindsay one last time. "Is she still dead today?"

"I'm sorry," they say in their well-modulated funereal voices.

"We've had some problems. You can't touch her."

How can I not touch her?

Friends come. Friends go. Must show them the guest of honor. Take a left to the front of the room. Here. Laying in a bed of pure white; forever dressed in pink. Surrounded by flowers. So beautiful. So still. So perfect.

Instead of congratulations, we receive condolences. I watch their lips form words, but barely hear what they say. Tears. Laughter. Endless chatter of other things. Other things . . . Too afraid to mention the precious baby in the tiny white box.
(Maybe we won't remember her cradle will be empty again tonight.)
Falling. Fighting blankness. "I don't want to leave her. I don't want to leave her." Help me, Lord. It's time to bury our baby.

No pall bearers, no hearse to carry our little box of dreams to the cemetery. Her daddy wipes at my endless tears. Her Grand-Jenny's hand upon my brow. Sun's so bright.

Deep down I feel a flicker of movement. But no . . . she doesn't live there anymore. Few got to hold her, few got to know her, but she existed! She is dead, but she is real!
I remember her birth, her sweet newborn scent, and the exquisite bliss of cuddling her. She looked in my eyes once; I heard her cry once; she grasped my finger once.
I said "I love you" and "I'm so sorry", and I kissed her good-bye again and again and again.
Good-bye? So wrong! So empty! We shouldn't be sitting here beside this miniature grave, clutching the little bonnet she wore as she died. Death is not a word to associate with newborn babies.
I remember nine whole months loving, as my heart beat for hers. Laughter, eagerness, perfectly innocent dreams.
Then our perfect baby, our Sweet Little Lindsay . . . is gone.
And our lives are changed forever.

This poem is one from a collection of poems I have written in a book titled "Heartsongs: After a Baby Dies".

"REMEMBERING"

M. Zimmerman/R. Zimmerman

Chorus:

**There was beauty in a place I once knew
Trees, streams and lakes were so blue
Remembering these things is a part of me
I won't have them again you see.**

Verse 1

**The touch of water from the lake
So cool and fresh I can't mistake
The taste so clean when I come up for air
Memories like this I want to share**

Chorus:

Verse 2

**The sounds of birds as they flew through the trees
Songs they sang floating on the breeze
Feeding their young with mouths open wide
Listening to them as I walked by**

Chorus:

Verse 3

**The smell of pine and shade from the boughs
Made me feel protected somehow
Thoughts as I lay under the wood
I would go back, back if I could**

Chorus:

**I'd go back if I could
I'd go back if I could
I'd go back if I could
I'd go back if I could**

The words & music for this song were written by the father & son team of Richard & Matthew Zimmerman. They write of a place in Northern Manitoba where both our families enjoyed good times at the lake. This song was used at Father/Grandfather Charlie Zimmerman's Celebration of Life. This song evokes memories of our son Kenneth also and his love of the lake and outdoors. In loving memory of Charlie and Kenneth.

Thanks Rick & Matthew for permission to use this lovely song. Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops, B.C.

September 14, 1999

How much have I learned since that horrendous day?
I've learned that I'm not alone in my grief,
That others have suffered, are suffering and will suffer
The tremendous loss of losing someone they love to suicide.
Two years later I also learned how grief can destroy
When your father, who couldn't deal with his grief,
Decided to end his pain and suffering too.
I've learned I wasn't as guilty as I had thought at first,
That your decision was yours alone,
That once made nobody could change it.
And I've learned to stop asking the "Why?" question ?
That question to which only you have the answer.
Some people said that I'd get over losing you in a year.
After that first round of holidays, birthdays, etc. I'd be fine.
Guess what ? I've learned just how wrong they were.
It's now the 10th year - the 10th year of holidays, birthdays, etc.
Certainly it's not as heart-wrenching as the 1st year or even the 5th .
But I'm still not over losing you and I'm still not "fine."
And I doubt that I'll ever get over losing you, that I'll ever be "fine."
I'm certainly not the same person I was before this all began.
I guess I've reached a "new normal" though and I'm going on with life.
Even though it's been the most difficult thing I've ever had to endure,
At least now I'm strong enough to help those who follow on this path.
But, oh, how I'd give up all I've learned for just another hour with you.

.. by Karen C. Kimball, Hingham, Massachusetts



As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look at the world for both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing
with flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.

*.. by Sascha. (Sascha's son Nino drowned at age 3;
years later, her daughter Eve died by suicide at age 21.)*

Grief By Annamaria Hemingway

How can we define what it means to enter the dark underworld of grief? We can use words such as pain, anguish, misery, shock, loss, and fear, but language itself cannot articulate the complex set of emotions that are experienced during a time of great loss. How is it possible to describe a metaphorical tidal wave that throws you onto the shore of a deserted island with no compass or adequate provisions, and leaves you stumbling, lost, and confused as you try to find your bearings? How can one give voice to the way the ice-cold arms of grief wrap themselves around you and penetrate your deepest defenses, leaving you shivering and numb? Grief is a land of shadows that speaks its own universal language - the language of suffering and sorrow that embodies the enormity of loss.

For every individual, "little" deaths can be experienced in every day life. The loss of a relationship, a job, or a cherished dream can bring great heartache, but none can equal the devastation of the death of a loved one. Nothing can remind us more of our impermanence in earthly existence, and that we have no control over the forces of nature that govern our own unique destiny.

Less than a hundred years ago, it was impossible to escape the reality of death and loss as epidemics of childhood diseases, shorter life spans and limited medical knowledge resulted in death and dying as being a part of everyday life. Support for those in the grieving process was offered by family members and the community.

Grief was acknowledged as an integral part of life and those in the mourning process openly displayed symbols of their grieving - as demonstrated in the Victorian and Edwardian eras when a black arm band or wearing "mourning" clothing for a certain period of time were a part of the rituals of grief.

In contemporary Western cultures, the disintegration of the family unit and local communities, combined with advancements in health care and a longer life span have resulted in society adopting the concept of ignoring death, the dying and the bereaved. This approach leads to fear and alienation and leaves us traumatized and feeling alone when the inescapability of death that can claim those of any age or circumstance touches our lives. Grief has its own timetable and is unique to each individual. When we enter the dark abyss of grief, the world we thought we knew becomes an alien planet, and life has no meaning. Time freezes and becomes suspended in a series of flashbacks that replay past cherished memories. They are entangled with an ache so deep that it threatens to submerge you. Often feelings of guilt accompany the loss, guilt for all the things unspoken, and all the things left undone.

Even the world of dreams offers no respite for the pain that invades our psyche, rarely sleeps, and leaves us tossing and turning through so many dark nights of the soul. Our only companion is often fear, an uninvited guest that accompanies the floods of tears that prick their way through hollow, smarting eyes.

Grief reflects not just something or someone that has been lost from the outer world, but can also mirror a similar death in the inner world of the individual, as hope and faith become victims to the ravages of some invisible force that silences the voice of God or a higher power, which surely has abandoned and deserted us.

The author, C.S. Lewis, described his own similar feelings in a diary that he wrote following the death of his beloved wife. These writings were later published in the book "A Grief Observed," in which Lewis recounts his painful journey and his struggle to reconcile the death of his wife to his strong religious convictions. He commented: No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. at other times it feels like being mildly drunk or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. What does everything matter now?

C.S. Lewis eventually emerged through the stages of grief and loss to find that his religious beliefs had strengthened and that he had become a radically changed person through his profound experience.

Grief Continued from page 8

Grief has a timeless quality and although the pain will lessen, the memory of a great loss becomes forever etched within our deepest being. Rather than trying to escape or ignoring the inevitability of grief touching our lives, we can become strengthened through understanding that grief, like love, ultimately has the power to transform and can offer us the chance to learn what it means to be most authentically human.

The Buddhist scriptures illustrate this teaching in the story of a woman who came from a poor family, and was looked upon with contempt by her husband's relatives. When she gave birth to a son, their disdain changed to respect. However, a few years later, the son died, and the woman became distraught with grief.

She searched everywhere for a cure that would bring her dead son back to life, but could find none. In her despair, she visited the Buddha, to see if he could help her. The Buddha told her to go back to her community and collect a mustard seed from a household where there had been no death. The woman searched for days, believing that if she could fulfill the Buddha's request, her son would be returned to her. But she eventually returned to the Buddha empty-handed, and realized there was no cure for death; it was an irrevocable part of life that everyone had to experience. As he lay on his deathbed, the Buddha reminded his followers of the impermanence of life, and how all things would eventually decay and perish. He encouraged people to accept death as a motivating force that provides a foundation for living life consciously and well.

Grief is the most painful experience we can suffer in this lifetime. It is a deeply emotional struggle to become reconciled to the reality of loss. No conciliatory words or advice can make it any less agonizing. The hand of grief will change your life forever but for those in the grieving process, perhaps some comfort may be gained from the notion that grief can enable an inner strength to emerge in each of us, and can ultimately make us more fully conscious human beings.

Author of *Practicing Conscious Living and Dying: Stories of the Eternal Continuum of Consciousness*

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www.missfoundation.org

Joy and Sorrow

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

Is not the cup that hold your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed. ~ Kahlil Gibran

Memories of School Starting

The time has come to send my 14 yr. old son, Kevin, off to high school. To most parents this would be done with a few tears and an understanding that this is another letting go phase on the road to adulthood. To me, however, it has been a week filled with "lots" of tears, anxiety, worry, fear..... well, you get the picture. The memories of sending another son off to high school 10 years ago only to have him die by suicide 3 months into the school year have been overwhelming and I was completely caught off guard from the onslaught. My sensitive, yet strong son, Robert, lover of the ocean, was overwhelmed 10 years ago and completely caught off guard also at this major life change....well, you get the picture here too.

My consolation and comfort is that Kevin is strong both emotionally and spiritually and very ready for this next step in his life. I cannot let Robert's experience influence the success I feel awaits his brother. Kevin and I are both "well seasoned" by life experiences that have grown us both and hopefully equipped us both for the journeys ahead. For those parents who are experiencing the anticipation of school starting back, whether it's memories of past school years or sending one off to school, my prayers are with you.

My son Robert, loved the ocean and had the opportunity to swim in both the Atlantic and Pacific and shores in between. His ashes were scattered off the coast of NC, his favorite beach and I visit often bringing him flowers. I too love the ocean and thank God for creating such a vast body of water that represents both our anger and our peace and every emotion in between.

Barbara Parsons Mom to Robert Parsons 11/7/76-11/24/91 and to Kevin Parsons, most precious gifts
Lawrenceville, GA TCF

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

**There's a path runs through the river,
many miles, and fathoms deep.
Endless days of weary travel,
restless nights in search of sleep.**

**Out of depths of churning waters,
the climb is long and steep;
slippery stones along the bottom
pierce the soul and make us weep.**

**When we reach that other shoreline
our journey doesn't end,
others struggle in that river,
reach out and grasp a friend.**

Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops

In Loving Memory of Kenneth Bruce Simmonds October 30, 1964 – August 11, 1988

Kenneth drowned while fishing on the banks of the Thompson River at Wallachin

Fall by Karen Chambers, Marietta, GA



Fall has always been my favorite season: Shorter, cooler days, drives through the mountains to look at the beautiful colors, raking and jumping in the leaves, football, bonfires, camping, walking in the dark crisp air with a scary mummy or a beautiful princess collecting candy from each door, handing out candy to the sweet little scary faces that come to my door, getting together with family and diving in to the turkey and other delectable goodies prepared, waking up at 5AM to get a jumpstart on Christmas shopping with all the big after Thanksgiving sales. All the things that make the fall so special to me are also the exact things that made it so painful after Anna died.

The shorter days meant less light and my days were dark enough already. Cooler days just seemed to reflect my loneliness. Driving anywhere just seemed to bring on the tears - don't know how I saw to drive through the tears. I couldn't see the beautiful colors because my world was colored with pain. No energy to rake or jump, I stayed exhausted. No desire to go to football games, build fires or camp - my only desire was to have her back. Halloween became its' own monster. I couldn't understand the fun in dressing up as a ghost or bloody, mutilated body parts or to put tombstones up in the front yard. What's with that anyway? I wanted John to continue to enjoy this holiday and dress up, but oh it was hard to see him wanting to be something that looked like it was "back from the dead"! I was thankful there weren't many trick-or-treaters that year and that none of Anna's friends came to the door. I wasn't sure how I would have reacted to them.

If I thought Halloween was a monster, how was I going to make it through the Thanksgiving BEAST - I mean feast? Thanksgiving is all about family being together (and the turkey of course). I have a large family and all the chairs were taken, so even though we didn't have a literal empty chair, there was a lot empty in me. I'm sure everyone there felt that heavy emptiness, but no one said anything - it was indeed the elephant in the room. I couldn't stand it; no one mentioning her name, but I was so new to this, I didn't know how to bring a ritual into the holiday: I wanted one. I wanted desperately for everyone to acknowledge that absence. Not saying anything just made the burden heavier. When my brother-in-law asked to say the blessing and sounded so really thankful for "our" wonderful blessings, I wanted to shoot him and in my heart I did, but there at the table I just died inside .again. Needless to say I didn't get up at 5AM to catch the sales, I probably didn't fall asleep till 4. I was anticipating Christmas alright, but it wasn't with excitement, it was with dread.

This is my ninth fall without Anna here. This fall will be very different from those first ones. I have grown some, healed some and have learned something since that first fall. I hope that you will not make my mistakes and that you make some preparations for the holidays. This year the coolness is a relief after the summer heat. The darkness has been replaced by beautiful memories, Heavenly gifts, great love, family, friends and faith. The world is beautiful to me now, though not as beautiful as that one that I get to spend eternity in with all of my family including Anna. Energy has returned and I enjoy outdoor activities again. I love to remember Anna and how she loved being outdoors. John is too old for trick-or-treating this year, but I will love seeing the sweet scary faces come to my door once again and even though it will bring some tears, I will enjoy looking through photos of Anna in all her various costumes and remembering how she loved Halloween. All the "back from the dead" stuff will still be somewhat bothersome to me, but I dismiss it as "they don't know", nor would I want them to. I will boldly give thanks for Anna at the Thanksgiving table and speak her name freely throughout the day as I recall many memories. I will visit the cemetery with Lamar and I will talk to her and tell her how much I love her. I am even excitedly anticipating Christmas this year. I miss Anna, I will ALWAYS miss Anna and I know I will be with her again, but right now, I am here. My son, my husband and my family are here. There is a lot of beauty here and a lot of need here. I hope to recognize and absorb the beauty and make myself available in service to the needs of others.

If this is your first or among your first falls of your grief, please know that my thoughts and wishes for peace are with you. I can't take the pain away, but perhaps I can share some lessons learned. First I have learned and have heard confirmed by so many others that the anticipation of the holidays is much worse than the day itself. Making plans can help lesson some of the anxiety leading up to them. I hope that you can incorporate some rituals into your holidays that will keep you from having to carry the weight of that "elephant" all by yourself. Let your family and friends know in advance that you anticipate the holidays will be painful for you, but that they can help by not being afraid to speak your child's name and not to back away from your tears. If your family asks a blessing or some words of thanks before the Thanksgiving meal, meet with the person that will be speaking before hand and tell them not to leave out your child. You may want to light a candle on the table or leave an empty chair at the table. These actions acknowledge the absence and acknowledgment is necessary because it emphasizes the significance of the loss and affirms their continued presence in our lives. Rituals help us to remember our child/sibling in loving, healing ways that honor their lives. They give us something to do when we don't know what to do. They are symbolic actions that give expression to that which is too deep and too big for words. Rituals can be a special service that you plan or something as simple as spending a little time in the photo album. My rituals are simple: saying her name in prayer, visiting the cemetery and making certain there are English peas on the table.

I hope you will find some rituals that speak to you, your child/sibling and the relationship you share.



Trick or Treat

The night is dim
And the pumpkins grin
At the children on the porch
The doorbell rings "Trick or Treat" they sing
My heart burns like a torch.
The Dracula's face
And a princess in lace
Are peering in at me.
How I'd love to ask "May I lift your mask?"
And hiding, there you'd be!
You'd get such a kick
From that silly trick,
But disguised you must stay.
In the wind that blows
My heart still knows
You're playing October charades

--Kathie Slief TCF Tulsa, OK

Paul Lake In October

(Our son Kenneth drowned while fishing at the age of 23. We chose to scatter his ashes at a secluded part of Paul Lake. For every special anniversary we go to Paul Lake to remember him and take part in our own special ritual. One year very early in the morning on his birthday, October 30, we found the lake to be incredibly beautiful.)

We went to Paul Lake on your Birth-Day,
where nature received you at your ending.
We went to celebrate your beginning
and all the blessings in between;
it seemed fitting.

The day was crisp and clear and blue.
The lake was still and silent.
Mist was rising from the surface,
clinging, slow dancing, reluctant to let go,
white gossamer, cotton candy pulled thin
by angels making an ethereal net to capture you,
revisiting the playground of your youth.

We walked down the trail to our special place,
avoiding roots, stepping over logs,
jumping down the bank to the water's edge.
I wonder how long my aging legs will make this trip.

Now is the moment to throw your rose,
far as she can your sister hurls it,
but it does not go far, staying close,
sending its ripples instead, it bobs on the surface.
We skip rocks; go rose go, all we see are wider ripples.
Is this a metaphor for you and us,
holding on and letting go, the ripples of your love
ever wider with the years, blessing us?

As we stand, together but alone, we feel your presence;
you are there in all the beauty of the day.
A duet of ducks fly in airborne salute over the mist
that is letting go and slowly lifting from the lake.
You are in the sunlight that dapples the trees
and hanging moss, ever moving, playful, dancing,
circling round us wherever we turn.
That's how you are to us now.

This is your Birth-Day.
Thank you for your gift.

*Arleen Simmonds TCF/ Kamloops, B.C.
In Loving Memory of Kenneth Simmonds
October 30, 1964 -August 11, 1988*



A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

By Jim Hobbs

Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell.

We still have much to be thankful and we should remember that. But now, Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge our missing child, for what ever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays.

If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery. I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.



The ultimate goal of the grief work is to be able to remember without emotional pain and to be able to reinvest emotional surpluses. While the experience of grief work is difficult and slow, it is also enriching and fulfilling. The most beautiful people we know are those who have known defeat, suffering, struggle and loss and have found their way out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity and Understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Remembrance Day

THIS WAS MY BROTHER

This was my brother
At Dieppe
Quietly a hero
Who gave his life
Like a gift,
Withholding nothing.

His youth... his love...
His enjoyment of being alive...
His future, like a book
With half the pages still uncut—

This was my brother
At Dieppe—
The one who built me a doll house
When I was seven,
Complete to the last small picture frame,
Nothing forgotten.

He was awfully good at fixing things,
At stepping into the breach when he was needed.

That's what he did at Dieppe;
He was needed.
And even Death must have been a little shamed
At his eagerness!

Mona McTavish Gould (approximately 1946) Canadian Poet & Author Mona McTavish Gould is best known for "This Was My Brother," a tribute to her brother Lt.-Col. Howard McTavish, killed in action at Dieppe (August 1942).

Sadly young Canadians, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters are still paying the ultimate price like Howard McTavish, like books with half their pages still uncut.



They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them

~Laurence Binyon

Ask Dr. Paulson-August 2012

Mary A. Paulson, PhD, is a bereaved sibling as well as a child and adolescent psychologist at Harding Hospital in Worthington, Ohio. Her question and answer column, aimed at bereaved siblings and the family that loves them, appeared in TCF's national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone* (and previously TCF's National Newsletter) for 15 years. She has now retired from writing this column and Dr. Heidi Horsley, licensed psychologist, social worker, and bereaved sibling will continue answering sibling related questions in *We Need Not Walk Alone*. Thank you to Dr. Paulson for her dedication in support of bereaved siblings.

Q. My younger sister was killed two years ago in an auto accident. I was driving and I'm not sure I can live with the guilt.

A. I believe that guilt is a very misunderstood emotion, and it can be devastating. I believe there are two kinds of guilt; rational and irrational. Rational guilt occurs when you intentionally commit an act that you know will have a negative impact/effect on someone else. That feeling of guilt comes over us to motivate us to make changes, to make different choices next time, and to become better people. Irrational guilt is the guilt we feel when something occurred that we did not intend, or that was out of our control. It does not cause a long-term positive effect, but actually can cause a very negative effect. It usually leads to self-doubt, self-deprecation and can lead to self-pity. If you apply the test: Did I act intentionally? Did I mean for this to happen? I think you will hear a resounding "NO!!" You obviously love your sister very much, and I'm betting she loved you too--loved you so much that she wanted what's best for you--to see joy, love, friendship, kindness, happiness, and yes, self-love, self-worth, and self-esteem. Some day you will have an accounting to her for how you spent the rest of your life. Please don't tell her it was spent on guilt!

We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends. Copyright 2003-2012.

Tom Was 16

At the time of his sister's death, Tom was 16. Four years later he wrote the following in response to an English assignment. This class was instructed to write about the best or worst experience in their life. [I believe] it shows vividly the depth of feeling that young people experience at the death of a loved one.

"The experience I am about to write was without a doubt the worst experience I had ever dealt with in my life. I would not wish this experience on my worst enemy or even the likes of a (sic) Yotala Komanie. I am speaking of the death of my oldest sister, Mary. I am not looking for pity because it's over with and I have no problem talking about Mary or her death.

"I was sound asleep, warm and comfortable, probably dreaming about a very pleasant experience. All of a sudden my pleasant dream was interrupted by a real-life nightmare. My mother asked me to come out to the living room. At that time I had no idea what was going on, although I did know there was something drastically wrong when I heard the earpiercing, heart-stopping cries of agony from my younger sister. My mother then looked me squarely in the eyes and said, 'At one o'clock this morning, your sister was killed in a car accident.' When hearing this and seeing the looks of disbelief on the other members of my family, I knew that this wasn't a sick joke. I felt a growing weakness in the back of my knees, accompanied by a sharp pain in my chest. For the first five to ten minutes I didn't say or do anything. My memory was carving a clear picture of the scene in my mind. Then I had a deluge of mixed emotions racing through my head.

"At the time my family and I were living at the lake. I got a distinct surge of energy. I wanted to scream obscenities at the world. Then I wanted to swim the length of the lake. "I had a combination of thoughts and energies that frustrated the hell out of me. There was no way to funnel them into an act or words. I could go on forever, but I think I've made my point. The overpowering feelings of loss and frustration made this, without a doubt, the worst experience of my life."

-by Tom Schoeneck, brother of Mary from *Hope for Bereaved: Understanding, Coping and Growing through Grief*