



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS**

# KAMLOOPS CHAPTER

## Autumn 2013

"The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again." ~ *Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends*

**CHAPTER LEADER**

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**NEWSLETTER**

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**MEETINGS**

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday Every Month @ 7:00 PM  
Kamloops United Church  
421 St. Paul Street, Kamloops

**TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE**

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[www.TCFCanada.net](http://www.TCFCanada.net)  
Toll Free: 1-866-823-0141

**NEXT MEETINGS**

**September 4, 2013**  
**October 2, 2013**  
**November 6, 2013**

### **Welcome**

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

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

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.

*Autumn Joys by Douglas E. Daws*

The multi-coloured leaves of autumn,  
Offer beauty to a viewer's eye,  
But soon, the brisk November wind,  
To part leaf from tree will try.  
For with summer's season over,  
The shady canopy once green,  
Falls to earth, in reckless pattern,  
In familiar, gusty autumn scene.  
But fallen leaves, bring pleasures,  
For each passing girl or boy,  
Who wade through every leafy pile,  
To scatter leaves, with shouts of joy.

*From: A Gentle Man's Poems*



# ***FYI.....***

**OUR NEW SPACE:** We have been in our new space in the newly renovated Kamloops United Church for a couple of months now and it is working well for us. For those who may be new or haven't been out to a meeting for awhile, our meeting room is called the Ponderosa Room and is downstairs on the right hand side. For anyone having mobility issues there is a lift to the left of the entry way off St. Paul Street.

## **LINKS FOR ONLINE RESOURCES**

### **BC Bereavement Helpline**

**Service(s):** Helpline, referrals, information. **Contact:** (604) 738-9950

**Email:** [bcbh@telus.net](mailto:bcbh@telus.net) **Website:** [www.bcbereavementhelpline.com](http://www.bcbereavementhelpline.com)

**Suicide Support** [SurvivorAdvocates@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SurvivorAdvocates@yahoogroups.com)

**Sibling Websites** [www.tcfatlanta.org/sibling.html](http://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](mailto:kjohnsoncw.bc.ca)

**Alive Alone** Support for parents who have no surviving children. <http://www.alivealone.org>

**Grief Watch:** [www.griefwatch.com](http://www.griefwatch.com)

**Parents of Murdered Children** [pomc.com](http://pomc.com)

**Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support** [www.nationalshare.org](http://www.nationalshare.org)

**AN INVITATION:** Readers are invited to submit their original writings about their grief journey experiences. Many already use the therapeutic tool of journaling. Writing is not only healing for ourselves but sharing our experience is often very helpful for others on this journey. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please contact me (Arleen Simmonds) at [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca)

*When you write from the heart, you not only light the dark path of your readers, you light your own way as well.*

~ Marjorie Holmes

### **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 2013*

## ***FROM THE EDITOR. . . .***

*I had a very welcome letter a short while ago from Joan Conley who attended TCF Kamloops before making a move to Camrose AB. Joan was a regular contributor to this newsletter and has been a great mentor through her writings in her continuing journey with the deaths of her two sons. Joan has given me permission to put her letter in this newsletter. You will also find an article by Joan in this issue.*

Good morning, Arleen;

I am just now reading the TCF Summer issue of our newsletter.

The article "Signs After Suicide: The Red Butterfly" by Karyl Chastain Beal struck a chord with me, for three reasons.

My son Jeff gave a copy of "Chicken Soup for The Unsinkable Soul" to me, the Christmas before he completed suicide. He sat at my feet and said, "If anyone's unsinkable, it's you, Mom..." (Karyl is a contributor to this book. Jeff also wrote beautiful poetry, as Karyl's daughter Arlyn, did.)

Following Jeff's death, I spent hours sitting on our sunny patio, reading every book about suicide that I could get my hands on. Although I didn't know how the sun could continue to shine when my world was so dark, I was trying so hard to understand Jeff's decision...

One day, a lovely little butterfly floated by, nearly landing on me, and circling several times so that I couldn't possibly miss it. I closed the book on my lap, and just watched the butterfly as it circled. That butterfly stayed for what seemed like an eternity, circling and floating, coming closer and closer to my hands and my shoulder.

I do believe that was Jeff's way of saying goodbye to me...

Angel Hugs, Joan

## ***Sacred Stories: An Invitation***

Today I was listening to an interview on CBC radio with Shelagh Rodgers speaking with Lisa Moore about her 2010 novel, February. February is about the sinking of the Ocean Ranger oil rig off the coast of Newfoundland on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1982.

Lisa Moore talked about the families of those killed that day and how they have survived since that time. As she said, sometimes moment by moment or day by day. She said that she believes the reason so many years have passed before the stories of the Ocean Ranger have been written is that they are sacred stories.

There are as we know too well, stories that are so fraught with pain and held so close to the heart that there are no words to convey the loss. Sacred Stories. These stories take as long as needed to be expressed; sometimes years, sometimes never.

There is, if we can bear it, a great deal of healing in writing about the experience of losing a beloved child and the sacredness of their time with us; be it of years or moments.

And so I invite you, if you are ready, to share your sacred stories; not only for your own healing but also to encourage others that they are not alone and that their sacred stories deserve to be told and that the lives of those we cherish can still go on to help so many others.

If you care to share your story, poetry, remembrances of your child, sibling, grandchild, step-child.....just email me at [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca) or you can call 250-374-2135.

Arleen Simmonds, Newsletter Editor TCF Kamloops/B.C.



# *Lamps For The Journey...*

“Alas! we must suffer ourselves before we can feel for others.” ~*Émile Gaboriau*

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.  
~*Martin Luther*

Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. ~*Thomas Merton*

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.

~*George Washington Carver*

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

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.~*Khalil Gibran*

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.~*Winston Churchill*

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. ~ *Maya Angelou*

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. ~*Helen Keller*

We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.

~ *Mother Teresa*

Today, more than ever before, life must be characterized by a sense of Universal responsibility, not only nation to nation and human to human, but also human to other forms of life. ~*Dalai Lama*

Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity. ~ *Henry Van Dyke*

What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us. ~ *Helen Keller*

We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion. ~*Max de Pree*

There's something about October...../ Bittersweet is in the air,/ It's not the scent of exotic spice/ Just a feeling that strips me bare. ~*Arleen Simmonds*

We enjoy warmth because we have been cold. We appreciate light because we have been in darkness. By the same token, we can experience joy because we have known sadness. ~ *David Weatherford*

There is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and have recovered hope.~ *George Elliot*

There are only two days a year where you can not do anything: one is called yesterday, the other is called tomorrow, so today is the day to love, believe, do and mainly live. ~ *Dalai Lama*

You can survive...

Recently, a dear friend of mine lost her son to suicide. Unfortunately, this brought back memories of the loss of my two sons. The questions were there as my friend cried, "Why?" I couldn't tell her why; all I could say was that she may never know.

Why did my son take his life? Why was his older brother killed at work? These are questions to which I have never found the answers. I don't believe that God is a cruel God so I can't blame Him. Accidents happen, and sometimes surviving siblings take their lives. I was lucky to have my boys as long as I did. I value every memory, every picture.

I don't have the answers but I do know how to survive. I've found that talking with someone with whom you feel "safe" is a good thing. Writing about my loss has been a tremendous help and I am so grateful for the Compassionate Friends newsletter. In that venue, I felt "safe" in baring my soul. I walked and talked with a dear friend who later told me that he couldn't understand a word I said because I was crying so hard...but you know what? It didn't matter because he listened!

Surviving the loss of a child requires a lot of grief work. I wrote and talked and read until I was exhausted every night. Since there is emotional and physical pain and aching, sleep is so important at this time.

Get in the shower and let the rush of water wash away your tears, your aches, the feeling that no one in the world knows how deeply you are hurting. The shower is a "safe" place, where no one hears your sobs, and no one asks questions or tries to express sympathy with words that mean nothing to you right now.

The one thing that is most important in recovery is that you need to feel "safe" whether talking, reading, crying, screaming or sleeping. Talk to that trusted friend. Let the shower wash away your pain. Take care of yourself. Let your caring friends hug you. Let the reading of other parents' losses make you aware that you are not alone. They've already gone through it and survived. So can you...

I love Life now; I enjoy Life; I appreciate Life so much more. Life is good!

"Thank you for filling a place in my life that no one else could." - Pam Brown

Written with love, in memory of my two sons Jim and Jeff,  
Joan Conley TCF Kamloops





**There is a haunting grace  
In one grief painted face.  
Pools of eyes adrift with unshed pain,  
Belie a hope they'll see their dead again.**

**There is a haunting grace  
In one grief painted face.  
Tracks of tears make streams of sorrow,  
Rivulets, running into an endless sea of tomorrow.**

**There is a haunting grace  
In one grief painted face.  
Seeking solace from all those others,  
Sorrow's companions, grief's sisters and brothers.**

**There is a haunting grace  
In one grief painted face.  
I've seen it many times, and can it be,  
That I have seen it mirrored back to me.**

*Arleen Simmonds/TCF Kamloops*

***For Grief*** by John O'Donohue

When you lose someone you love,  
Your life becomes strange,  
The ground beneath you gets fragile,  
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;  
And some dead echo drags your voice down  
Where words have no confidence.

Your heart has grown heavy with loss;  
And though this loss wounded others too,  
No one knows what has been taken from you  
When the silence of absence deepens.

Flickers of guilt kindle regret  
For all that was left unsaid or undone.

There are days when you wake up happy;  
Again inside the fullness of life,  
Until the moment breaks  
And you are thrown back  
Onto the black tide of loss.

Days when you have your heart back,  
You are able to function well  
Until in the middle of work or encounter,  
Suddenly with no warning,  
You are ambushed by grief.

It becomes hard to trust yourself.  
All you can depend on now is that  
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.  
More than you, it know its way  
And will find the right time  
To pull and pull the rope of grief  
Until that coiled hill of tears  
Has reduced to its last drop.

Gradually, you will learn acquaintance  
With the invisible form of your departed;  
And when the work of grief is done,  
The wound of loss will heal

And you will have learned  
To wean your eyes  
From that gap in the air  
And be able to enter the hearth  
In your soul where your loved one  
Has awaited your return all the time.

## **Dear Parents**

I suspect you are wondering how you will ever make it through this loss. You feel an overwhelming load of grief that you wonder if you will be able to survive, or at least maintain your sanity. It is absolutely horrendous. I do not know of any experience that is as wrenching and tearing as the death of your child.

Death first visited me when I was eight years old. My father just fell over dead of a heart attack. My mother died a year and a half later. I have lost a step father, a step mother and a father in-law to death. But of all these experiences, none has been as profoundly grievous as the death of our son. Nothing in my life has ever caused me to feel so ripped apart as the death of our son.

I remember driving home alone from the hospital the day he died....I remembered only because I could not stop sobbing.

I remember the burial; I could not stop sobbing there either. I remember a year later attending the memorial service for the child of a friend of ours; Marilyn and I fell apart and went to pieces all over again. We said to each other, "Will we ever get over this?" No. You don't ever get over it. You don't ever forget. In time you move beyond the pain, yes. In time you come to believe that you will survive and not lose your mind. In time you feel restored and whole again, yes. But you will never forget the loss of your child. I think that is good. We can move beyond, but we cannot forget; we do not want to forget. I think that is the way it must be.

It also must be that you wander sometimes aimlessly through the wilderness of anguish before you reach the promised land of peace and healing. It will take time. More time than we like to think. Each of us grievers needs to wrestle with the demons and dragons and despair of crazy thinking before we can begin to feel any kind of restoration and return to a sense of wellness. Pay no attention to those who would have you "get it over with" or "pull yourself together" or "get on with your life". Grieve your loss as you must, not as others dictate.

God knows I feel with you in your loss. I want you to believe that the feelings you feel are normal even though they may frighten you and cause you to think that you are losing your mind. In all this, love yourself. Embrace yourself; and if you have a spouse embrace each other. Share your feelings. Be patient with yourself and each other. And you will slowly move through the valley of the shadows and finally step into sunlight once again.

There are many of us who share your feelings. And even though you may not know us, believe that we walk with you in spirit on your journey.

*Dr. William Miller is a writer and pastoral counselor.  
His son Karl Andrew, died when he was 3 days old.  
Lovingly lifted from TCF, SWMB*

"Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human." ~Henri J.M. Nouwen

## Rituals By Pat Schwiebert, R.N. pat@tearsoup.com

There is nothing new or unusual about performing rituals. We've been engaging in rituals all of our lives, often without even thinking about what we are doing or why. We just do them because we've always done them, or because we would feel off balance if we didn't. They bring meaning to our lives in very subtle, yet profound ways. Putting a hand over your heart when a flag goes by in a parade, saying hello to the bus driver, kissing your loved one good night, attending a weekly religious service, walking to the store to buy the newspaper and then sitting down to read it cover to cover, taking your son to the first football game of the season, just like your dad did with you. These are examples of rituals that have been passed on to us or ones that we created ourselves to say "yes" and to help us feel grounded.

The rituals we engage in tell our own personal story of who we are as individuals and what we believe. They provide structure, meaning and connectedness. In grief rituals are a meaningful part of our healing journey. They help to reduce chaos (momentarily, at least) and bring clarity.

We think immediately of the public rituals associated with death: funerals, memorial gatherings, annual remembrance services, balloon lift offs, butterfly releases—occasions where crowds gather together to remember. These are good and important activities for us as a society as we acknowledge and affirm the life of a person who was with us for a season, but now is gone.

But it's the little rituals that we can do on our own that are private affirmations of our continued bond. They're filled with gratitude, memory, and awe, like kissing our departed loved ones picture before turning out the light, looking out the window and up at the stars and saying goodnight to the one who is gone, drinking your first cup of coffee for the day from her favorite cup, lighting a candle and saying "thank you", wearing his favorite sweater on Saturday mornings.

Most often rituals will include ingredients that are a natural part of our life. When we use them in ritual we render them holy.

Food, water, smells, fire, sound, space, gestures, the work of our hands, or articles of clothing take on new meaning when we cement our love to our departed loved ones in a symbolic way. Here are some ideas:

**Food:** serving to friends and family your loved one's favorite meal on your loved one's birth date.

**Water:** washing your hands when you are finished doing your grieving time for the day as a way of refreshing yourself for the other part of life that is awaiting you.

**Fire:** writing on paper thoughts that have been troubling you and then burning the paper

**Sound:** ringing a bell that you have designated to be their bell as a way of acknowledging your loved one's presence.

**Space:** going to the cemetery or a favorite place and having a picnic

**Gestures:** touching your loved one's handprint or winking at their picture on the wall.

**The work of our hands:** building a memory box or making a quilt using pictures or some of their clothing

My mind can think of hundreds of small things we do as we go through the day that we notice we do with purpose. It's what the intent is that makes any action a ritual.

It is good to go to that spiritual place where we can be alone and okay with who we are becoming. We have to learn how to become comfortable in our new skin before we can expect others to be comfortable with who we are now. Rituals can help us in this process.

Sometimes we don't recognize them for how they speak of who we are, our roots or how we need to be connected.

**Printed with permission from Grief Watch <http://www.griefwatch.com>**

## *We Are The Childless Parents*

I am the childless mother  
Lost between loving and pain,  
Lost to the promise of children  
Searching for answers in vain.

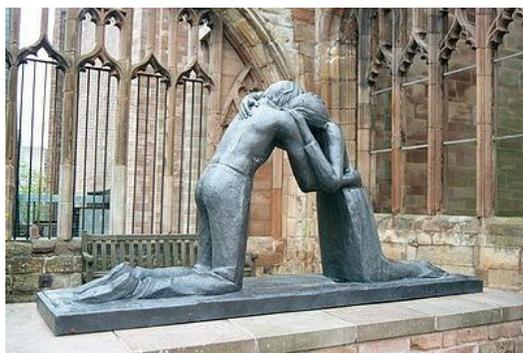
I am the childless mother  
Caught between courage and fears,  
Left without bridge to the future,  
Finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father  
Caught between courage and fears,  
Left without bridge to the future,  
Finding no sound for my tears.

I am the childless father  
Lost between loving and pain,  
Lost to the promise of children  
Searching for answers in vain.

We are the childless parents  
Sharing the grief and the night,  
Sharing the darkness together,  
Waiting to walk in the light.

~Sascha



*Reconciliation*, by Josefina de Vasconcellos,  
in St. Michael's Cathedral, Coventry.

## *Giving Thanks*

*I cannot hold your hands today,*

*I cannot see your smile.*

*I cannot hear your voices now,*

*my children who are gone.*

*But I recall your faces still,*

*the songs, the talks, the sighs.*

*And story times and winter walks,*

*and sharing secret things.*

*I know you helped my mind to live*

*beyond your time with me.*

*You gave me clearer eyes to see,*

*you gave me finer ears to hear,*

*what living means, what dying means,*

*my children who are gone.*

*So here it is Thanksgiving Day,*

*and you are not with me.*

*And while I weep a mother's tears,*

*I thank you for the gifts you were,*

*and all the gifts you gave to me,*

*my children, who are gone.*

~ Sascha Wagner

*O Lord that lends me life,  
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.*

~William Shakespeare

## *As Time Goes By. . . Twenty-Five Years Later*

Somehow it never occurred to me twenty-five years ago on August 11, 1988 that I would see myself in the far distant future writing about this long journey without our Kenneth. I couldn't see surviving more than one day at a time. In the beginning when I saw other Compassionate Friends who were five year survivors it was incomprehensible that they had even been able to go on living at all.

But here we are; twenty-five visits for every occasion and anniversary to the lake where we took his ashes. Death day, Birthday, Father's Day, Mother's Day, any day at all. Scatter our roses, release our balloons, drink in the beauty of nature while silently contemplating and communing with his presence. We never say much, we don't have to, we know each other too well.

There have been lots of changes since that terrible day; joys of new grandchildren, a great grandchild. Other sorrows and leave-takings of precious family members and friends. Life having its way.

We go on, we live, we laugh, we cry. But never for a moment do we forget to bring Kenneth's precious memory forward with us in all of our celebrations, sorrows and everyday situations that make us recall his laughter and funny sense of humour. We look at his pictures, hear certain songs, see a reflection of him in a smile, eyes, hair, eyebrows, lips, DNA all over the place!

As August 11 is the anniversary of Kenneth's death, so October 30 is the celebration of his birth. Kenneth would have turned 49 this year. It seems impossible to equate that age with the fun-loving, happy 23 year old he will forever be.

And so we go on twenty-five years later. Some things have changed; the acute pain of new grief softens into the ropy scar of an old battle wound. Sometimes it unexpectedly screams like the phantom pain from a severed limb, but only some times. Most times that dull ache is overcome by the joy and thanksgiving of having this loveable, quirky, all too human among us. The circle is unbroken. Thanks be.

*In loving memory of Kenneth Bruce Simmonds  
He went fishing for the last time on the banks of the Thompson River.  
October 30, 1964- August 11, 1988*

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. “

~ From *The Song of Solomon*



## *The Back-to-School Pressure Cooker*

Labor Day can put siblings into their own back-to-school pressure cooker. Whether this is the first year, or later, our kids may be dealing with questions and comments from peers/ teachers, and/or counselors about their brother or sister. Or perhaps no one is talking, because no one knows what to say. Feelings of loneliness, being different, being left out, can surface, and sibling rivalry.

Remember, if you will, how intense it could get between all your children. What kind of competition existed between them during the school year, or what comparisons were made: athletics, grades, friendships, extra activities? That kind of emotion is often forgotten when a child dies. But as your children go back to the classroom, or the athletic field, they may see those reminders each day.

When they bring home these feelings, positive and negative, they need a place to express them without being judged, or compared to their sibling. We want to remember good. But we have to remember that no child was always good! To forget that is to make a martyr of our dead child – possibly at the expense of our living children.

Our surviving children need special support at this time of year, too. They need to be reassured that they are still lovable – that they can be forgiven for any anger or resentment they may feel toward their brother or sister... that perfection is not a requirement for loving. They need to be reassured that they are separate, unique individuals, not imperfect replacements for the child who died. They need a safe place to talk, to let out their own concerns and anxieties and fears. They too are grieving and need a lot of support, especially during this back to school rush.

*Lovingly lifted from TCF Vernon B.C.*

## It's Halloween

It's Halloween again  
And fall is in the air  
I stopped by the store today  
I saw costumes everywhere

I saw fairies and goblins  
Frogs and toads alike  
And then there was the little ghost  
I closed my eyes real tight

I felt the tightening in my chest  
Remembering that Halloween long ago  
When you picked out the little ghost  
The eyes had to be just so

I touched the fabric with my hand  
Memories came flooding through  
Of that last Halloween we had planned  
When I was going to be a Goblin for you

I felt the tears start to sting  
And knew I had to leave  
Halloween always brings back  
Memories from grief unseen

You left me a week before Halloween  
Your ghost suit is still in the box  
Sometimes I try and open it up  
But something always makes me stop

Each year as I watch the children come by  
I always look for a little ghost  
Thinking of how happy you'd been  
Wearing the costume you loved most

Maybe I'll just take a peek  
If I'm up to it this year  
And touch the fabric one more time  
From that Halloween from yesteryear.

Sharon Bryant

In memory of my son, Andy Dunbar  
Jan.22, 1972 - October 24, 1977



# The Grief of Grandparents

By Helen Fitzgerald, CT

There is no bond greater than the bond between parent and child. When a child dies, the pain of parental loss is near the top of the scale of human grief, and there is an immediate outpouring of sympathy and concern for the bereaved parents. But other grieving family members, including siblings, are often seen as secondary players who must provide support to the distraught parents. Among these forgotten grievers are the grandparents.

In many families, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are every bit as profound as those between parents and their children. The death of a grandchild also ranks high on the scale of human grief – but it is rarely acknowledged. There are few books or support groups addressing the grief of grandparents, and bereavement counselors who specialize in this kind of grief are rare. Grandparents are usually left to cope as best they can.

When a grandchild dies, the anguish of grandparents is doubled. Their grief for a son or daughter suffering this tragic loss only compounds their pain at the loss of a beloved grandchild. Grandparents who outlast a grandchild struggle with a death that seems out of order; they may cope with survival guilt, perhaps wondering why they couldn't have died instead. Moreover, a grandchild's death chips away at a grandparent's assumed legacy. Most of us hope to make a mark in the world, and the achievements of our children and grandchildren are a part of that dream. When one dies prematurely, that loss resonates through the generations, and like the bell in John Donne's poem – "it tolls for thee."

Many families are fractured by divorce, violence or mere inattention, and struggling single parents are hard pressed to provide the consistent and unconditional love that children need. Grandparents fill the role of the enduring presence, the ones who are available and who can be depended upon for affection and support. The deep, nurturing love shared by many children and their grandparents is a bond that is extraordinarily painful when broken by death. It is a grief out-of-sight, but nonetheless powerful.

If you are a grandparent who has lost a grandchild, you have every reason to grieve deeply. Life is complex, and many of our fundamental questions have no apparent answer: Why do such bad things happen? What is the meaning of such pain? For now, your task is to mourn the death of this child and to take care of yourself as best as you can. If you want help, look for a book that addresses parental grief and substitute "grandparent" as you read. Perhaps your local hospice, faith community or mental health center has a support group for grieving grandparents. If not, ask them start one. There may be other grieving grandparents among your friends and neighbors, and you can share your common grief and mutual comfort.

Above all, be patient with yourself, and:

- Don't try to suppress your grief. Stoicism won't work.
- Select the relatives or friends who give you comfort, and tell them how you feel.
- Don't accept a comparison of your grief to that of others; grief is unique to each person.
- Take time off from your grief occasionally. Go visit a friend or take a short vacation at a place that you love.
- The loss of a beloved grandchild is a severe blow, but avoid thinking that life has no more to offer. Some of the world's grandest music and literature were created out of personal tragedy. Find your own expression of your loss and your search for meaning — see if you can create your own requiem.

It is important that you find ways to fill the void in your life. The worlds of literature, music, and art are can be sources of great comfort in a time of grief. Think of the great works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven; what comfort they can bring! If you have always wanted to paint, take some classes and dedicate your efforts to the memory of your grandchild. Sign up as a volunteer for a local hospital or food bank. Helping others can strengthen the nurturing identity that has been injured by this death. By putting your pain to work, the good that comes from it can heal.

When a great loss hits us, we are numbed and life seems meaningless for a while. But with the passage of time, we again begin to see that life is still worth living, not just for others but for ourselves, as well. Just as you loved a grandchild, there are others — friends, neighbors, and even strangers — who await your love. For all its cruel twists, this life is still the only one we are given.

You have every right to be a survivor and to make the most of each day and each year. I suggest you get started today.

## *War – And Peace?*

*by Douglas E. Daws*

Young fractured bodies on a blood soaked ground,  
Are silent now, for in death, there is no sound.  
But the wretched, grieving mother's cry,  
“Not him dear God, not him! O why?  
It's over now, the conflict has been won,  
Again, this gross evil that is war, is done.  
Vile greed and hate, will now depart for a while,  
But widows and children, have no cause to smile,  
For them, a love starved void, for future years,  
No sweet caress at Valentine's just endless tears.  
It's over, but where is this victory that's been won ?  
War will return to claim another mother's son.



## *Remembrance Day*

*by Douglas E. Daws*

They marched again, upon a cold November morn,  
As they had proudly done, so many years ago.  
Now they march in homage, to a fallen friend,  
Not to raise the sword, and fight an evil foe.  
They marched again, to steady beat of drum,  
That led them up a tree lined hill,  
To where a granite column bore the name,  
Of those in youth, whose mortal blood did spill.  
Those who fought and died on foreign soil,  
And in the battles of the air and sea,  
To give a gift, to all mankind, this special day,  
Of hope, and love, and precious liberty.  
They stood in silence, at the appointed hour,  
To hear the solemn notes the trumpet played,  
And prayed again for friends of youth,  
Who do not see the peace, their sacrifice has made.

*Taken from A Gentle Man's Poems by Douglas E. Daws  
Douglas E. Daws from Kamloops, B.C. has authored several  
books of poetry and is a regular contributor to The Senior Connector.*

## How Do I Know That I Am Getting Better? (For Teens and The Rest of Us)

Progress through the grief process is so slow that it is sometimes difficult to know if you are getting anywhere. There are times when you may feel as if you are taking one step forward and then two steps back. It's a common feeling. If a member of your family has died, I would expect all of your family to be experiencing something similar. One person told me that she feels as if she is riding on the pendulum of a giant clock, swinging back and forth through her grief. Meanwhile, the clock ticks away the minutes, the hours and the days. She also said that time itself was really weird for her: in some ways, it was going by so fast that she couldn't believe that it was seven months since her dad's death; in other ways, the time seemed to drag. Fast and slow at the same time – that's what you can expect your recovery to feel like. Also expect that you will keep going back and revisiting your grief occasionally, especially at big events in your life. In times, those visits will be less painful than they were the first time around.

Following are some clues that will help you to see that you are beginning to work through your grief. These ever-so-slight clues can be missed unless you are aware of their importance:

- You are really in touch with the finality of the death: You don't have those moments of thinking she has not really died, hoping that she is on a trip. You no longer burst into the kitchen looking for your dad to be sitting at the table with a cup of coffee.
- You can review both pleasant and unpleasant memories. So often when a loved one dies, people want to talk about and remember only the good stuff, when, in reality, not everyone or everything is perfect. There are things about the deceased you realize that you don't miss at all.
- You can drive somewhere without crying the whole time. It seems that when a person gets in a car and starts driving, it is easy to get into a hypnotic state, start thinking, and then cry. Many people tell me that driving is a time when they really mourn the loss of a loved one.
- You realize that painful comments made by family or friends are made in ignorance. People often don't know what to say after a death, and sometimes say exactly the wrong thing. People who have not experienced what you have really don't have a clue about what you are feeling. Still, they want to be helpful. You're making progress when you come to realize this.
- You can look forward to holidays and birthdays. You and your family have settled back into old rituals and customs or even developed some new ones.
- You can reach out to help someone in a similar situation. It can be very healing when you can turn a tragedy into something useful by being able to help another person.
- The music your loved one listened to is no longer painful for you to hear. When you turn on the radio, "that song" is no longer a bridge back to the pain.
- Some time passes and you have not thought of your loved one. Yes, this is a sign that you are moving on. It means that you are getting on with your life and letting the past be the past. It doesn't mean that you will ever forget your loved one.
- You can enjoy a party, a good joke, or the sunset without feeling guilty.
- Your eating, sleeping, and exercise patterns have returned to what they were before the death. When once again you have a routine or schedule in your daily life, you know that you're making progress.
- You no longer feel tired all of the time.
- You can concentrate on homework, reading a book, or watching a favorite television program.

- *Continued from page 14*
- You can find something in your life to be thankful for, even something as simple as the beginning of a new day.
- You feel confident again.
- You can accept things as they are and do not keep trying to return things to what they were. You and your family have changed since the death, and you are no longer trying to go back and recreate the past.
- The vacated roles your loved one played in your life are now being filled by others or even yourself. This is happening while, at the same time, you know that some roles will always remain vacated – and that is OK with you.
- You can enjoy experiences in life that are meant to be enjoyed.
- You can acknowledge your new life and even discover personal growth from your grief. You are a better person because of it.

Taken from *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends* by Helen Fitzgerald, Fireside, 2000.



### ***A Beginning***

One day you wake up and realize you must have survived because you are still here, alive and breathing. But you don't remember the infinitely small steps and decisions you took to get there. Your only awareness is that you have shed miles of tears on what seems to be an endless road of sorrow. One day, one glorious day, you wake up and feel your skin tingle again and you forgot just for an instant that your heart is broken . . .  
 . . . and it is a beginning.

*Susan Borrowman  
 TCF Kingston, ON*

# World Suicide Awareness & Prevention Day

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

from 12:00pm - 4:30pm

at Riverside Park

**FREE BBQ at Noon!**

Please join us for this first ever event in Kamloops and help us bring suicide out of the shadows

ALL DAY kite making & kite flying memorials, music & entertainment, wellness activities, education & awareness,

## Schedule of FREE events:

12:00 - 1:30 BBQ Lunch

12:30 - 2:30 Drumming, Music and more

2:30 - 3:30 Zumba, Yoga and more

4:00 - 4:30 Closing Remarks & the first flight of the Memorial Kite