



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

KAMLOOPS CHAPTER *Summer 2014*

"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 TCF

CHAPTER LEADER

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NEWSLETTER

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MEETINGS

**1st Wednesday Every Month @ 7:00 PM
Kamloops United Church,
421 St. Paul St. Kamloops**

NEXT MEETINGS

**July 2, 2014
August 6, 2014
September 3, 2014**

TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE

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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.

Idyl by Siegfried Sassoon

In the grey summer garden I shall find you
With day-break and the morning hills behind you.
There will be rain-wet roses; stir of wings;
And down the wood a thrush that wakes and sings.
Not from the past you'll come, but from that deep
Where beauty murmurs to the soul asleep:
And I shall know the sense of life re-born
From dreams into the mystery of morn
Where gloom and brightness meet. And standing there
Till that calm song is done, at last we'll share
The league-spread, quiring symphonies that are
Joy in the world, and peace, and dawn's one star.



FYI.....

This coming December 2014 the Annual Candlelighting Service will be on the 1st Sunday in December. The date will be December 7, 2014 – 2:00 pm @ Kamloops United Church 421 St. Paul Street.

**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**

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

Grief Watch: www.griefwatch.com

Canadian Parents Of Murdered Children <http://www.cpomc.ca/>

Center For Loss In Multiple Birth (CLIMB) Inc. www.climb-support.org

Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support www.nationalshare.org

This newsletter is also available in an electronic version. With the increase in postal rates we are asking if you would give consideration to receiving the newsletter via email. We will always make newsletters available by post for those without computers. Please email us at waskamloops.ca if you are able to change to the electronic version. Thank you.

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 2014*



Lamps For The Journey...

In light of the passing of Maya Angelou, and in celebration of her life, this page of Lamps For The Journey is dedicated to her enduring wisdom.

Sometimes the people whom we've know for only a short amount of time have a bigger impact on us than those we've known forever.

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back.

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Love builds up the broken wall and straightens the crooked path. Love keeps the stars in the firmament and imposes rhythm on the ocean tides each of us is created of it and I suspect each of us was created for it.

When we cast our bread upon the waters, we can presume that someone downstream whose face we will never know will benefit from our action, as we who are downstream from another will profit from that grantor's gift.

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

We spend precious hours fearing the inevitable. It would be wise to use that time adoring our families, cherishing our friends, and living our lives.

I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it.

Face our fears. We are able to say, 'I Have Fallen, But I Will Get Up.'

Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible.

"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good."

"As soon as healing takes place, go out and heal somebody else."

"The best part of life is not just surviving, but thriving with passion and compassion and humor and style and generosity and kindness."

And when great souls die, after a period peace blooms, slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration. Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us. They existed. They existed. We can be. Be and be better. For they existed." ~ *From When Great Trees Fall.*

The following letter was written by David John Bernreuter before he died by suicide on May 12, 1987. David, an astute 22-year-old, was unusually well-informed about his illness. By his own description of his feelings, myths and assumptions about suicide are shattered, and we are allowed an insight into his motivation to end his life. In granting permission for its use, it is the hope of David's family that the loved ones of other victims may find comfort in David's words.

Dear Mom, Dad, and Stephany:
First, some facts:

1. I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.

2. I KNOW YOU LOVE ME VERY MUCH. If love alone would have made me better, I would be the most well-adjusted man on earth. Please don't feel that you neglected to tell or show me how much you loved me.

3. YOU WERE NOT TO BLAME FOR MY CONDITION. I believe my mental illness was the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. A certain percentage of people, from all types of family situations have a major mental illness. It was just the luck of the biological draw that I happened to be one of them. Whether it was Major Depressive Disorder, Schizoid Personality Disorder, Manic Depressive Disorder, or Schizophrenia, my mental illness made my "life" unlivable. But you are not to blame for that. So please don't let yourselves feel guilty.

4. I KNOW THAT YOU WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS. It won't be easy, but you will have a lot of support from a lot of friends and relatives. Don't be like me, the ultimate schizoid loner. Count on the support of your friends and relatives. If you only knew what goes on inside my head. I know you will say that I "didn't try long enough or hard enough." I have been emotionally disturbed since late childhood. I now have a major mental illness. I tried as long and as hard as I could .I've had all sorts of suggestions, like: "Repeat positive phrases over and over again. Don't eat foods with yeast. Take Haldol. Don't take Haldol. Accept Jesus as my 'personal Savior.' Quit smoking. Get a girlfriend." And the list goes on and on...

I know that the above suggestions were made with the best intentions, but they lack an understanding of what mental illness is all about. That's why I found something in common with other people who are mentally ill. When they told me how being mentally ill affects their life, I understood, because my illness affected me in the same way.

If I were to tell Uncle Ray that I had bought a gun, that I felt suicidal, he would have no alternative but to call the hospital and the police. And before you know it, I'd be back in the hospital. I'd rather be dead.

It's not like I killed myself because I didn't get an A on an exam or because I broke up with my girlfriend. Those are the kinds of depression that have a reason to happen. My depression comes without any help from the outside. Nothing bad has happened to make me depressed except my depression.

It's not like I did this "on a lark." I've had over a year to think it over. But I can hardly expect you to understand about something I myself don't understand. I don't know why I am the way I am. 'The man who didn't see it through.' That is what this is. If given a chance to choose between an eternity in heaven or another go-round as a human of earth, I'm certain I would choose the latter.

And now for the business part of this suicide note: Cremate and scatter me (I don't care where). All my money goes to you. Everything else, too. Do with it what you will, but may I suggest sending a portion of my worldly goods to a mental health research foundation of your choice."

As David requested, the family sent a donation to a mental health organization in hopes that someday a cure will be found.

Permission to reprint from the February 1989 issue granted by Bereavement Magazine, 5125 N. Union Blvd, Suite 4, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80918. Phone: 888-604-4673.

Graduation

For many of us June signifies "graduating," whether it is from preschool, high school, or college. Some of us may have surviving children who have reached this bench mark, yet deceased children who never had the opportunity to participate in these events; therefore, a bittersweetness dwell in our hearts.

I am one of those persons to whom I refer. This month my oldest son is scheduled to graduate high school, since he has outlived his older sister by ten Long /short years. My anticipation of the event scares me, to say the least ! How will I be able to keep my composure; will I be able to see him smile through my flow of tears; will my youngest children understand ?

Most of all, I want to make this a day for him. Not a day of living in the past. It won't really matter how many tears fall, I know they are from my heart. And best of all, I know my son will understand without even mentioning Janna's name, because he has grieved with me, I have not forgotten that, and he knows his sister will be proud of him. My youngest children will know too why I cry; they have grown to understand that their mother yearns for what has been taken away. It's on days like this graduation that I realize my children will always be an integrated part of my mourning and for that I am truly grateful. (Perhaps we have all "graduated" into a level of understanding and compassion for each other.)

I know I will survive this important day, and I know there will be many more like it. There were many times I thought I would never survive, I remember thinking that surely my heart would break into tiny pieces. Those times have passed. (Perhaps I have "graduated" also, for now the "sweetness" finally lasts longer than the "bitterness.")

Andrea Simoni, ~ TCF Cumberland Co., NJ



To Honor You

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath.
And start another day without you in it.
To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile
And the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.
To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love,
I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.
To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked,
And sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.
To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back,
Risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.
You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.
So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.
Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

*Connie F. Kiefer Byrd
In Loving Memory of Jordan Alexander Kiefer 8/24/88-12/13/0*

A Father's Love is Priceless

This will be my husband's third Father's Day without my son, Todd. My husband and I married when Todd was eight years old. Todd's biological father had little in common with him; my son desperately needed a role model who also provided guidance and structure. One of the reasons I decided to marry John was his real concern and love for my son.

As Todd grew, he and John took many trips together....fishing in Canada and meeting Jimmy Doolittle, skiing in Colorado together, going to car shows, car parts swap meets, always attending Autorama in Houston. Todd confided in John that his dream was to rebuild a GTO and enter it in Autorama. John took Todd to the "Pac Man" Tournament in Houston where Todd placed in the top 10 in the city. These were excursions that Todd and John shared.

John taught Todd how to change the oil and other fluids in a car, rebuild an engine, handle a hammer, measure twice and cut once, use a Shopsmith and other electric tools, lay a solid ceramic tile floor, read a blueprint and so much more that every boy should know.

But most of all, John showed Todd how to love a woman and children with his heart and soul. He never actively gave instructions....his example of gentleness, small gifts, sweet compliments, thoughtfulness, cheerful attitude and perpetual optimism helped to shape the man that my son became.

At Todd's wedding rehearsal dinner, my dad asked each family member what they would like to say to the bride or groom. John tried to express his feelings to Todd but his tendency to wear his emotions on his sleeve overcame him. He ended up in tears. After the speeches, Todd came over and hugged John; I snapped a picture of that moment. It will always be a treasure to John and to me.

After he married, Todd and John continued to do things together. They went to car shows, worked together on projects in Todd's home and our home. At family gatherings they would sit and talk about the world, business activities, career goals and their optimistic dreams for hours at a time.

The last project that Todd and John did together was put up signage for a company that I had inherited from my Dad a few years earlier. They drove 1,000 miles to get there. Those five days were great for them both. Todd worked hard helping John get the signs mounted and winterizing the company's building. He picked out memorabilia that was my dad's to bring home and keep. It was a sentimental journey.

On the trip home, the unthinkable happened. The cruise control was set at 70 mph; a vehicle in the right lane suddenly swerved into John's lane, tapping the Dodge Durango's right front quarter panel. John's automatic reaction was to swerve away from the drifting vehicle. For reasons yet unknown, the airbag deployed, the Durango launched across the median at 70 mph, skidded into the oncoming traffic, slammed into a semi trailer, rolled over and landed on its wheels. Todd suffered massive head injuries and injuries to the right side of his body. John was bruised from the airbag but refused medical treatment.

And so after heroic efforts on the part of an angel nurse who witnessed the accident, Todd was transported to a hospital. The doctors worked feverishly to bring him back. He was stabilized and loaded on a life flight helicopter, but he died a minute later. John was still standing at the heliport when the helicopter landed. "He's gone", they told him. John screamed and cried as he walked alongside the gurney into the hospital. John stayed with Todd for a long time after he died. He talked to him. He called me. He talked to Todd some more. He continued to ask Todd "Why? Why did you die? Why wasn't it me?" This question still haunts him.

So this Father's Day I will remind John how much he did for Todd, how much he contributed to shaping the man that Todd became and how much Todd loved him. There is little else that I can say to this gentle man who wears his emotions on his sleeve, contributed so much to the formation of a very special man and loved my son with all his heart.

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF Katy, TX In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Father's Day Is Still a Time for Celebrating

A long time has passed since I've enjoyed a holiday—or for that matter any special occasion. With Father's Day coming up shortly, I've decided that this year I'm celebrating.

The kids used to love when special occasions came along. I can still remember Stef's eighth birthday, only three months before her death, and how proud she was when we told her she could invite her best friends over for a birthday party. She wore her prettiest blue trimmed party dress with the lace ruffles.

The games they played still stick in my mind. There was “pin the tail on the donkey” and then “Simon Says.” I remember clothes flying everywhere in a contest to see which child could put on a complete set of clothes fastest over her party clothes. I remember the hotdogs, punch and cake, the party favors. I remember Stef's giggles.

The memories also wander back to the party our family threw for Stephen's fifth birthday, only three days before the accident which also claimed his life. I still have the picture in my mind of that goofy orange cap someone had given Steve. He loved it, but it was at least two sizes too small. When he tried to put it on, the bill of the cap was up and Stephen flashed us one of those impish grins that reminds you of Spanky and Our Gang.

As I'm writing this, the tears are flowing down my cheeks remembering the good times we had together.

A lot of things changed when the kids died. Christmas, Easter, birthdays all became days other people celebrated. But not us.

I've done a lot of thinking since then. I know Stef and Steve are in a better place than I could ever imagine and that every day is a holiday for them. In my mind, I think Stef and Stephen would be sad if they felt their Mom and Dad couldn't celebrate life anymore.

Pat and I now have another son, Christopher, plus we have our fourth child on the way. We're trying to rebuild our lives and I feel we have been blessed along the way. Of course, Christopher is too young to understand Father's Day, but even without him here, I would still consider celebrating Father's Day.

I still remember the Father's Day a couple of years before Stef and Stephen died. With their mom, they had searched all over for something special for me, finally deciding on a T-Shirt that proclaimed “World's Coolest Dad.” I still wear that now faded shirt on occasion despite the many grass stains and grease marks. When Father's Day arrives, I think I'm going to pull that old T-Shirt out and wear it.

I'm going to lay down out in the grass, letting the warm breeze hit me. And I'm going to pretend I'm being caressed by Stef and Steve. I'm going to remember . . . and I'm going to celebrate!!!

Wayne Loder TCF Lakes Area, MI

“T here is a sacredness in tears. T hey are not the mark of weakness, but of power. T hey speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. T hey are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love”. ~ *Washington Irving*

When Your Infant Has Died

The death of your infant has shattered your hopes and dreams for the future. It has sent shock waves through your body; this is one of the most difficult times in your life. It may seem as if the world has stopped and everything is moving in “Slow Motion.”

Infants are not supposed to die and so it seems especially difficult to understand what has happened. If your baby was very young or not yet born, some people may discount your grief. They may assume that because you did not have time to develop a long-term relationship with your baby, your loss and your pain will be less. Sometimes a miscarriage or stillbirth is not even acknowledged by other family members and friends. These assumptions only increase the pain and feeling of isolation. You did however, have a long-term relationship with your child, if only in your mind.

You dreamed of watching your child grow up and you anticipated being a parent for a long time. It is important to understand that you won't get over the death of your baby; you will learn to live through it. There will always be moments of intense pain as you remember the birthday, the anniversary of the death and as you mark the passing of events you had planned to enjoy with your baby. Be prepared for these moments of grief and do not be alarmed as they continue throughout your life. Parents do not stop loving a child simply because the child has died. There are many things you can do to help yourself through grief.

Acknowledge your loss and begin to accept the pain of grief. Try to live through it, not avoid it. Postponing the hurt simply intensifies it later. Take care of yourself; allow yourself to begin to heal. You will laugh again and enjoy life once more, but it will take some time. Do not be disturbed by your first laugh, it does not mean you have forgotten your baby, and it does not mean you are over your grief; be patient with yourself.

Create a ritual to help you remember your baby. Lighting a special candle on important days, establishing a memorial fund in your baby's name, or donating a toy, money, rocking chair or time to a special charity all may help you commemorate your child's life. Right now you may want to talk to someone who has traveled his or her grief journey a few miles ahead of you. It really helps to know you are not alone, or crazy or a failure. And if you have misplaced your Hope for a while, borrow it from a friend. Grief lasts far longer than anyone expects; be gentle and kind to yourself. Your baby has died, but you did not lose the love you shared; even though death has come, love never goes away.
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T iny W arrior

**Y ou never saw the spring ny love
O r the red tailed hawk circling high above
O n feathered wings ny love
Y ou only knew the snow
Y ou never saw the prairie
G rasses bend and blow
A nd undulate like the
S himmering indigo sea
Y ou never saw me
Y our eyes were closed so tight**

Sharmagne Leland TCF/St. John

Reflections About Time And Change

I often wonder what people are thinking when they say, “You’ll get over it.” Sometimes, it sounds to me as if they are talking about a case of mumps or my despair at income tax time. But what can they mean when they say it about my grief? Maybe they mean that grief is just an interruption of life. Their theory seems to be that life is basically happy – buying stuff, working, watching TV – and that a time of death and grief is an un-natural sad time in that happy life. I cannot agree with that view

Time can lessen the hurt; the empty place we have can seem smaller as other things and experiences fill our life; we can forget for periods and feel as if our child didn’t die; we can find sense in the death and understand that perhaps this death does fit into a bigger design in the world; we can learn to remember the good and hold on to that.

But we can’t “get over it,” because to get over it would mean we were not changed by the experience. It would mean we did not grow by the experience. It would mean that our child’s death made no difference in our life.

There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish writing. Those Jews had the custom of rending their garments – literally tearing their clothes – to symbolize the ripping apart that death brings. But the question was raised, after the period of mourning, could you sew the garment up and use it again? The teachers answered yes, but when you mend it, you should not tuck the edges under so it would look as if it has never been torn. This symbolized the fact that life after grief is not the same as before. The rent will show. The next question was, can you sell that garment? The teachers answered no. The rending and mending of our life is ours and others cannot wear it.

No, we don’t get over it. We change and grow. Our life has a difference, which is ours alone. Perhaps as compassionate friends we can help each other make that difference, the kind of difference that increases the world’s supply of compassion, love and healing. *Dennis Klass, St. Louis, M*



**When everything is dark, when we are surrounded by despairing voices,
when we do not see any exits, then we can find salvation
in a remembered love, a love which is not simply a recollection
of a bygone past but a living force which sustains us in the present.**

**Through memory, love transcends the limit of time
and offers hope at any moment of our lives.**

~ Henri Nouwen

August 11, 2014 marks the 26th anniversary of our son Kenneth's death by drowning. He has now been gone from us longer than he was with us in life. I think about all the other anniversaries that have passed and the rituals we have followed. Ritual is very comforting; we can rely on doing the same things in the same order that have a very special significance to us and our loved ones. There is order, continuity and comfort in ritual. It doesn't change and disappear like so many other things in life, or so we think.

Even though I really like what we do as ritual I have learned to not get totally hung up on having it play out perfectly every time, things happen that we hadn't planned on. It doesn't make the occasion less meaningful. The trick is to focus on the end result and just go with the flow; it doesn't pay to let a little hiccup spoil our intention. We have had a hiccup or two. Something happened a few years ago to underline that. I wrote the following for our TCF Kamloops newsletter.

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

While preparing for my annual ritual in commemorating the 21st anniversary of our son Kenneth's death I was taught a lesson in laughter, humility, and the letting go of rigid rules of ritual!

On the Sunday closest to the actual day, I purchase the most perfect long stemmed red rose I can find, no baby's breath, no leafy fronds, just the single rose in all its perfect beauty. I then put it in a lovely pottery vase Kenneth gave me and put it on the communion table at church. This, as I said has been going on for 21 years, no deviation from the ritual. We then take the rose and a balloon and go to Paul Lake as a family to mourn his loss and celebrate his life.

This year started out no differently, the day before, I bought the rose, put it in the vase and put it on the coffee table all ready to take it to church the next morning. We left for church in a bit of a flurry and there were things to attend to when we got there. I finally sat down in the sanctuary ready to enjoy the pre service hymn sing. I picked up the order of worship and there was the notice I had put in dedicating the rose on the communion table in memory of Kenneth, I checked it over to make sure it was ok and then looked up at the communion table. NO ROSE! I had forgotten the rose, it was fifteen minutes before the service, no time to go home and get it! What to do, what to do! I'm in a spiral! The ritual to which I'm so attached and committed won't happen!

I told my friend Mona about my predicament. Mona suggested I see if there was a suitable rose in the church garden. Oh relief, this might help. I went outside to the back lane and in a sunken flower bed the church garden ladies had planted several rose bushes, red, pink and white. I spotted one white rose that was growing singularly and not in a cluster, I just had to have a single rose! It wasn't elegant, kind of small and fluffy, but nevertheless better than nothing.

Well as I mentioned the garden is sunken with a cement border separating it from the lane. I always seem to forget that I am not as tall as I like to think myself, (five foot two would best describe me), and I thought I could just step down into the garden. Big mistake! I somehow found myself lying on my back in the rose garden, like an overturned turtle, looking up at the sky saying words that shouldn't be uttered in a church garden!

I started laughing at the picture I made. I thought of Kenneth who delighted in laughing with me at myself for some of my goofier moments. I thought of my recently deceased older sister who used to say to me "pride goeth before a fall, my girl!" I'm sure there was laughter in heaven and I climbed out of the rose garden full of humility, but with a smile, clutching my single white rose.

The rose made it to the communion table in a humble little glass bud vase. It was so beautiful in its simplicity. A symbol of love and laughter, no longer a poor substitute. My friend Mona said the white rose symbolizes mother's love.

I guess the lesson I learned that day is not to get caught up in being so rigid about these rituals, as if any deviation might mean that we hadn't honoured our loved one as we should. We still have the pain of our loss but we also have the gifts of laughter, humility, flexibility, but most of all the Love, that's the core of our remembering.

Laughter in Heaven and Earth!

Arleen Simmonds TCF/Kamloops, B.C. *In memory of Kenneth Bruce Simmonds October 30, 1964 – August 11, 1988*



Summer Time, Vacation Time, Family Time

I'll bet you never dreamed that there would ever be a time in your life when you would not welcome vacation from work.., and the day-to-day hassles of routine living. It's probably a shocker to you that the slow pace of summer, cookouts , softball games, etc., are now a nightmare. Everywhere we go, there are kids out of school enjoying their leisure time, and our bodies jolt as we search for our own absent child who enjoyed this time of the year with a passion!

Surrounded by summer fun, a bereaved parent needs only look around and there are painful memories at every corner. When we are faced with all the living, loving, happy families with their children, the anger boils within and we feel very cheated. And this year we are afraid to go back to the beach cottage we've visited every year, or to the favorite mountain retreat where we laid around for a week and relaxed, or the amusement park where the kids had to ride every ride and see every attraction, no matter what the temperature was. Yes, fear of our memories, fear of too much time to think, fear of too many kids, fear of bursting inside from our pain.. .all of these feelings are part of the first few years of summer vacations for bereaved parents.

It's been nine years now for me, and I need to tell you that it will get easier, but I found that for the first few years I needed to consciously change some of my routines in order to deal with my fears. I could not visit the same places we had visited when Todd was with us. We tried new experiences in new places with new people. That isn't to say there weren't some downtimes; however, the faster paced vacations worked better for us . I could not allow myself too much time to think. I enjoy those weekends away now, but for the first few summers I had to dig in the yard, repaint lawn furniture, rearrange the garage, and the multitude of busy projects we'd been putting off for the lack of time. That was a better vacation for me than forcing myself to go somewhere and feel miserable.

You've read it a hundred different times, you have to find your own way and your own peace—leave yourself room to escape if it becomes necessary. If you can find any enjoyment and relaxation, relish it.. .you deserve it, and it does not mean you don't care. It simply means you are healing. Now I walk down the beach and enjoy the solitude, or laugh when I see a toddler, or listen to the joy of kids laughing, and it warms my heart. Yes I miss him, but I know he enjoyed every minute of this season, and I know that's what he'd want for me

... And thank God, I can do it once more!

Brenda Holland, TCF, Concord NC



How Can They Move On?

By: Traci Morlock
BP/USA Bereaved Sibling
St. Louis, MO

How can they move on? Every day I realize that while my brother's death may have touched many people's lives, they seem to be able to just pick up where they left off and continue with their lives. For me, it has been so much harder.

I learned this week, that last year, my brother's girlfriend had gotten married. While I am very happy for her to have finally been able to love again, my happiness is also filled with a little jealousy. I think of my brother at some point every day. Does this mean that she has forgotten him? I have asked myself this question all week. I hope that she hasn't and at least remembers the good times that they had sometimes. I find it hard to think of her with someone else, but she was so miserable for so long, she deserves a little happiness. I was also told that she is pregnant and is having her baby soon. When I heard this I almost cried. I think that was harder than finding out that she was married. Then a real jealousy kicked in. I thought, "Hey, what about Sean's baby?" He'll never know the joy of being a parent. After mulling this around for a while, I realized that everyone must move on.

Sometimes I feel as if I can't go on another day because I feel so much pain. That pain is not so strong as it was two or three years ago, but it does come back to visit now and then. When Sean first died, a few of his friends came over a lot. Over the past few years, that began to happen less and less until his friends stopped coming at all. One of his friends still comes by or at least calls my mom at Christmas. Another puts presents on his grave occasionally.

I know that a lot of people cared about my brother, but I think that knowing him for 19 years and being as close as we were has made it all the harder for me. I know that he watches over our family and is always with us. I know in my heart that moving on is not the same as forgetting. I hope with my heart that all who knew Sean still spare at least one thought for him once in awhile. While I wish every one of his friends much happiness in their lives, I hope that they will never forget.



"You will lose someone you can't live without, and your heart will be badly broken, and the bad news is that you never completely get over the loss of your beloved. But this is also the good news. They live forever in your broken heart that doesn't seal back up. And you come through. It's like having a broken leg that never heals perfectly—that still hurts when the weather gets cold, but you learn to dance with the limp." ~Anne Lamott