



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

KAMLOOPS CHAPTER



"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

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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

March 2, 2016
April 6, 2016
May 4, 2016
June 1, 2016

TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE

Email NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net

www.TCFCanada.net

Toll Free: 1-866-823-0141

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.

Music is a moral law.
It gives a soul to the universe.
Wings to the mind,
Flight to the imagination,
A charm to sadness,
Gaiety and life to everything.
It is the essence of order
And leads to all that is good
And just and beautiful.

~ Plato



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FYI

BC Bereavement Helpline Service(s):

Helpline, referrals, information.

Contact: (604) 738-9950 Email: bcbh@telus.net

Website: www.bcbereavementhelpline.com

Suicide Support

SurvivorAdvocates@yahoo.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 www.nationalshare.org

Canadian Parents Of Murdered Children

<http://www.cpomc.ca/>

Center For Loss In Multiple Birth (CLIMB) Inc.

www.climb-support.org

CONFERENCE INFORMATION:

TCF Annual Retreat at Seabeck , WA June 3-5, 2016 at the beautiful **Seabeck Conference Center** on Hood Canal . *Precious Lives ~ Treasured Memories*

Retreat Cost : \$220.00 per person (shared room) (2 nights lodging & 6 meals - Friday supper through Sunday lunch) Registration Due By: May 1, 2016 Space is limited . For more info about the retreat, call 206-241-1139 or email: tcfmarge@aol.com For information about Seabeck Conference Center , visit www.Seabeck.org . Those receiving this newsletter electronically will also receive the retreat poster and registration form. Those unable to access this information on the computer may call Carol at 250-374-6030.

The Compassionate Friends USA is pleased to announce that Scottsdale, Arizona, will be the site of the 39th TCF National Conference on July 8-10, 2016. "Hope Rises on the Wings of Love." The 2016 Conference will be held at the The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. We'll keep you updated with details on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience. http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Conferences/National_Conferences.aspx

This newsletter is also available in an electronic version. If you are able to change to the electronic version please email us at waskamloops@shaw.ca

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.# 0792895-09 Receipts Will Be Issued For Income Tax copyright 2015*



Lamps For The Journey...

"You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you." ~ *Frederick Buechner*

The world around you moves on as if your life never shattered, and all you want the world to do is say that your baby mattered. ~ *AJ Clark – Coats*

Sometimes grief sneaks up on you and whispers: I'm still here. Don't shame me. I deserve acknowledgement. I am the pain of your love. ~ *Tim Lawrence (TIMJLAWRENCE.COM)*

We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us so that we become increasingly resentful and afraid, or we can let them soften us, and make us kinder. You always have the choice. ~ *Dalai Lama*

"...I hear the sounds of melting snow outside my window every night and with the first faint scent of spring, I remember life exists..." ~ *John Geddes, A Familiar Rain*

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*

Use what talent you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best. .
~ *Henry van Dyke*

"The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt ." ~ *Frederick Buechner*

"Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment, until it becomes a memory." ~ *Dr. Seuss*

"When I say it's you I like, I'm talking about that part of you that knows that life is far more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch. That deep part of you that allows you to stand for those things without which humankind cannot survive. Love that conquers hate, peace that rises triumphant over war, and justice that proves more powerful than greed." ~ *Fred Rogers*

A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow. ~ *William Shakespeare*

The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone. ~ *Harriet Beecher Stowe*

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you. ~ *Carl Sandberg*

"Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy – the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light." ~ *Brene Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection*

One Foot Planted

I look behind me to the future, pitfalls shrouded in clouds and turns
Do I close my eyes and soldier years of grief and a mother's yearn?
In front of me is the past, a golden warm resting spot
Begging me to stay, with a tug on my arm and a happy thought

One foot planted in each as they slowly drift
I must find some way to see both as a gift
Through the present--as you lived each breath as a day
And a pocket of seeds each one a memory, sprinkled on the way

They guide me back and forth as my tears fall like rain
Then a pathway of memory blooms line the way from my pain
I will travel this path for my time on this earth
For there is no bond stronger than one formed from birth

*In Loving Memory of Mitchell Warren Harlock (son of Gina & Will, brother of Emily & Celeste))
Born Oct 8, 2000 and passed away from cancer on April 12, 2015.
By Gina Harlock in loving memory of her son*



Emily, Mitchell & Celeste



Gina, Emily, Mitchell, Celeste & Will

Gratitude

After much time, I recovered from our oldest son Jim's death, and I realized that Life was still good! I took great joy in continuing to golf and enjoying friends and family, and it felt so good to laugh again! That's when the "Gratitude" began...

Then, our surviving son Jeff passed away...again, the tears and anger and guilt... for a long time, it seemed...I don't remember how long but it seemed like years, and may have been...but once again I realized that Life was still good! So, again I laughed, enjoying my family and friends, and favourite pastimes.

My husband Wayne was there to hug me and love me and comfort me when our boys died. We loved and hugged each other, shocked to realize that it had started with the two of us, and now we were back to just the two of us....certainly it was not what we had expected of our lives as we grew old together.

Now, I've lost my dear Wayne who was there when each of the boys died. No more hugs! Wayne would say, "That's 3 hugs today already! You're getting spoiled!"

While Wayne was in Palliative Care at the hospital, I spent time talking to the Hospital Chaplain (whose name is Jim!) One day, when I had asked the nurses to call him (it had been a particularly bad day for me and I had broken down), Jim came on the run. After I had cried, talked and calmed down, I started telling him how lucky I was to have such a loving family...and good friends...and so many things to be grateful for...

Chaplain Jim said, "Did you know that Gratitude is the highest form of Prayer?" So, apparently I've been "Praying" a lot for a number of years now...ever since I learned that Life is still good!

And it will be good again...I just need to work through this loss with the help of those who love me, and be Grateful for the time Wayne and I had with our boys, and for the time we had, just the two of us, at the end...

Written with love for Wayne,
Joan Conley,
Wayne's wife and Jim & Jeff's mom
TCF Kamloops, B.C.



© Kent Simmonds Photo

Why We Should Talk About Our Children Who Have Passed

Lexi Behrndt

It was dark, cold day in October. At least that's how it felt from my son's dimly lit hospital room. In my mind, I imagine it raining outside, the fog lining the windows and obscuring our view of college dorm rooms, sidewalks, the arboretum across the street. I don't remember many of the details of the day. I just remember holding my son's hand, weeping as I set by his hospital crib, watching the clock, praying and hoping for answers, and sitting with his doctors as we discussed the end of Charlie's life... His lungs were tired, and he was ready to go.

I've laid awake replaying those conversations, and replaying what happened only hours after, when a hand knocked loudly on our door in the parents' sleep room, and a nurse's voice told me to come quickly. I ran to his side only in time to be sat down in a rubbery hospital recliner and have my son disconnected from his oxygen support and placed in my arms. His heart gave out. He was done, and my wish was to hold him when it was time.

Before the death of my son, I didn't want to think about death. I didn't want to talk about it. As a mom, talking to other parents who had a child that died made me nervous, as if I could "catch" the bug, and something tragic would happen to my child.

I am not that person anymore. I have changed, and I have seen things from shoes that I never wanted to be in. No one wants to be in the shoes of the parent whose child died.

Standing on this side, I cannot think of anything more important than to talk about them. To say their name.

Charlie.

To talk about his favorite things. To talk about his personality. To smile and laugh and remember and never let his memory die. To talk about the impact he left, and how the echo of his life is still resounding in the hearts and lives he touched.

His legacy is just beginning, and if I have anything to do with it, it will only grow from here.

There is something so important— so healing for myself and other parents who have lost children to be able to share that child's story.

To be able to laugh at funny memories. To be able to mourn with another. To be able to celebrate and remember and value a little life that has gone too soon.

A few months ago, I met another mother, much older than myself. Her son was born still years ago. I asked her his name, and found out days later that **it was the first time in 35 years that anyone had asked her that question.**

This is not okay. We need to talk about these children. We need to brave the pain and talk about them for the sake of the parents and for the sake of that child's memory.

This is not the natural order. It isn't at all. Parents should not have to live on as their children die. Parents should not plan funerals or buy tiny urns or headstones for their child. Parents should not. *Of all the things parents whose children have died should not do, talking about that child is not one of them.*

For those who have no option, but to walk through the pain, I want to give you freedom today.

Freedom to talk. Freedom to share. Freedom to laugh and cry and remember and mourn and love that child openly, even in death.

You have freedom to say their name, even if you never had a chance to say it to them while there was breath in their lungs.

Say their name. Tell their story.

Cry. Laugh.

Celebrate. Hope.

Let's move past the stigma. Though in the past it may have been taboo to talk about a child who died, let's move on. Let's move on for the children, who deserve to be remembered. And let's move on for the parents, who deserve a chance to tell their story.

For those who can be a friend and a listening ear. Please do today. Mention that child's name. Send a note and let that parent know you are remembering. Sit down for coffee and relive special memories with them. We are all in this together. Brave the pain together. Remember together. Celebrate together.

Let's do this together.

Find us on Facebook. To celebrate the lives of children gone too soon with us, please visit The Charlie Sawyer Project. If you are a grieving parent, we would love to share your child's story. Email us at thecharliesawyerproject@gmail.com or click on "Submit a Story" on our site.



The Jigsaw Puzzle

Every Christmas my husband Roy is gifted with several new jigsaw puzzles. He has an annual competition with his sister in law to see who will be the first to complete the identical puzzles they receive from her daughter, who seems to delight in the complexity of the puzzles she chooses.

This year's puzzle took a long time to put together. Some large areas were very grey and muted, tone on tone with some splashes of brighter colours. For some reason the colouration of this picture got me thinking of our son Kenneth. He has now been absent from us for more years than he was with us. Kenneth left us at almost twenty-four years and this October we will gather together to give thanks for the gift of his life for the fifty-second time.

Sometimes when I think of Kenneth it all seems so long ago that I wonder if I dreamt him. Like the puzzle, the past seems kind of grey, tone on tone, fuzzy. Other times there are memories that flash before me, brilliant in colour and clarity.

This is like remembering my own life. When I put all the little pieces together it really is like a jigsaw puzzle or a mosaic. There is light, dark, monotone and brilliance. Altogether it makes a picture that has taken a lifetime to put together. Sometimes like jigsaw puzzles some pieces get lost, dropped and hunted for; the picture isn't complete until all the pieces are found.

When I look at all the puzzling pieces of my life and try to fit them together I realize that although I didn't choose this particular puzzle it was mine to put together. If I had missed or lost those pieces that were Kenneth my puzzle would be incomplete and the picture not so beautiful without those splashes of brilliance that were him.

Arleen Simmonds, TCF Kamloops, B.C.

In memory of Kenneth and with gratitude for all the beautiful pieces of my puzzle that are my family.



PRAYER FOR SPRING

Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and new
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.
Help me face the harsh reality
of sunshine and renewed life
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.
Life has dared to go on around me.
As I recover from the insult
of life's continuance,
I readjust my focus to
include recovery and growth
as a possibility in my future.
Give me strength to break out of
the cocoon of my grief,
But may I never forget it as
the place where I grew my wings;
Becoming a new person
because of my loss.
Janice Heil Coquitlam, BC Canada

EASTER

Easter Sunday morning, early,
we gather at the river.
I hear the ancient words of hope,
the Hallelujahs of celebration,
the thanks for Son-Rising.
Can I be forgiven
if I only think of one son
who's only rising is in my heart?
I make my solitary way to the waters edge,
I throw my Palm Cross into the river
and watch it drift away;
much more slowly than he did
all those years ago.
Dear one, you still blaze across my sight
like the sun-rise on Easter morning;
filling me with gratitude that you
still rise with every blessed memory of you.

*Arleen Simmonds/TCF Kamloops, B.C.
In loving memory of our son, Kenneth Simmonds
Who drowned in the Thompson River, August 11, 1988*

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 Memory of Jordan Alexander Kiefer (8/24/88 – 12/13/05)

Lovingly reprinted from the Bereaved Parents website, <http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org> and their publication,

A JOURNEY TOGETHER

BEING THE MOTHER OF A CHILD WHO DIEDON MOTHER'S DAY

I am the mother of a child who died. And that makes Mother's Day very hard.

Recently I was talking to a mother whose child had just died. "What about Mother's Day?" she asked, through tears. It was hard to know what to say, because it's a terrible day for those of us who have lost a child. Other days of the year you can maybe make it a few hours without thinking about your loss; other days of the year you can pretend that you are an ordinary person and that life is normal. But not on Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day it's in your face that your child is gone forever. On Mother's Day you can't pretend you are ordinary or that life is normal. All the hoopla, all the Hallmark hype, the handmade cards and flowers and family gatherings, make it almost excruciating.

Our town has a Mother's Day road race for which I am eternally grateful -- especially because, in a demonstration of grace's existence, the start and finish are next to the cemetery where my son is buried. On my way I can visit his grave and say what I need to say and look yet again at the name we chose for him carved into stone. At the end of the race, they give all the mothers a flower; on my way home, I go back to the grave and lay my flower there. And then I move forward with the day.

See, that's the real challenge after losing a child: moving forward. It's almost impossible to envision in that moment of loss; how can life continue after something so horrible? But life does continue, whether we like it or not. There are chores to do and bills to pay; morning comes, again and again. So you pick yourself up and you live, but you are never the same.

At first, we are different because of our raw sadness. But over time, the sadness moves from our skin into our bones. It becomes less visible, but no less who we are. It changes into a wisdom, one we'd give up in a heartbeat to have our child back. We who have lost children understand life's fragility and beauty. We who have lost children understand that so many things just aren't important. All that is important is those we love. All that is important is each other. Nothing else.

It can feel very lonely, being the parent of a child who died. Especially on Mother's Day or Father's Day. We feel so different from those around us, all those happy people with children the same age our child was, or would have been. But over the years, I've come to understand that I'm not alone at all.

There is a wonderful Buddhist story about a woman whose son gets sick and dies. She goes to the Buddha to ask him to bring her son back to life; I will, he says, if you bring me some mustard seed from the home of a family that has not known loss. She goes from house to house but can find no family that has not lost someone dear to them. She buries her son and goes to the Buddha and says: I understand now.

That is what I understand now. It doesn't make me miss my son any less, or Mother's Day any easier. But it helps me make sense of it; loss is part of life. There are no guarantees, ever. Our children, and all those we love, are gifts to us for however long we have them.

I understand now too that we are together in this, all of us, in joy and in loss. It's the connections we make with each other that matter -- it's the connections we make that give life value and help us face each morning. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "We are all in the same boat in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Years ago, I chose words to say each time I go to my son's grave. It makes it easier to have a ritual. And over the years, the words have come to mean more to me. They aren't just about grief anymore. They are about who I am, what I have learned, and what I can give.

"I will always love you, " I say. "And I will always be your mother."

By Claire McCarthy, M.D. Pediatrician, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School

Fatal Fentanyl Overdoses Pull Moms Together

Group of mothers calls for greater access to naloxone, an antidote to opioids

By On the Coast, CBC News Posted: Jan 10, 2016 10:00 AM PT

External Links : MomsDU (Note: CBC does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of external links.)

"I looked around, I could not find him. And then I saw a light coming under the bathroom door and I opened the door, and there he was."

Petra Schulz found her son Danny dead last year after he overdosed on fentanyl. The 25-year-old had unknowingly taken the drug thinking it was OxyContin.

Today, Schulz is part of MumsDU, a small coalition of mothers from across Canada whose children have been afflicted by substance abuse and who are advocating for better treatment.

"We are not ashamed of our children, of who they were and what they did."

"They were wonderful children and we feel, in order for others to get the help that they need, it's important for us to speak out," Schulz said. 25-year-old Danny Schulz was found dead last year after he overdosed on fentanyl.)

Overcoming grief and guilt

When Jennifer Woodside's son Dylan overdosed on OxyContin laced with fentanyl last year, she said she couldn't bring herself to tell people the truth about what happened. "I would just say that my son had died, and that it was an accident," said Woodside.

"Losing a child is a horrible experience, but losing a child in this way is devastating, because you blame yourself. 'Why couldn't I save him? Why did he have to do it one more time?'"

But slowly she came to feel she was "shortchanging Dylan" by allowing what she considered a misplaced sense of shame to silence her.

- **Drug-related deaths focus of new B.C. bereavement group GRASP**

"I'm proud of Dylan. He was a good person. He was the boy next door." "This can happen to anybody, because addiction really doesn't have any boundaries. It doesn't seem to care."

Jennifer Woodside's son Dylan overdosed on fentanyl last April. Woodside is the co-founder of Moms United and Mandated to Save Drug Users, or MumsDU. (Supplied)

Woodside said the recent spike in fentanyl-related deaths in Canada has made MumsDU's mission all the more urgent. "[Dylan] was the beginning of the wave. Now it's the full force gale here."

She wants naloxone, a kind of antidote that counteracts opioid effects, to be more readily available.

"If Dylan had had naloxone available, we could've given him an injection like an EpiPen. That would've given him 15 or 20 minutes to get to the hospital to get treatment." "I don't want his death to be in vain."

To hear the full interview with Jennifer Woodside, listen to the audio labelled: Fentanyl-related overdoses draw moms together in advocacy. with files from the CBC's Idil Mussa

Teen and Young Adult Grief *from Grief Watch <http://www.griefwatch.com>*

COPING WITH TEEN GRIEF

Every year thousands of teenagers experience the death of someone they love. Statistics put the number around one in ten adolescents between the ages of ten and eighteen having experienced the loss of a close loved one. Many of these losses are sudden, such as a friend or sibling dying in a car crash, or a parent dying of a heart attack. Due to the fact that teens are in the process of forming their identity, a death of a loved one is likely to have an impact on the rest of their life.

The sense that the loved one who is lost was someone who was helping the teen to form their identity will have a lingering affect on the identity they form.

WHY IT'S SO HARD TO GRIEVE AS A TEEN

The teen years are complicated enough under normal circumstances. From hormones and body changes, to peer pressure, social expectations and academic demands, being a teenager is hard. In many cases, all the stress leads to fighting and strained relationships. When you add a death into the mix, the sense of being completely overwhelmed is multiplied.

Teens can feel guilt because they were fighting with the loved one prior to the death, or can feel alone because they have been fighting with the adult that they would usually turn to for emotional support.

NO LONGER A CHILD, BUT NOT YET AN ADULT

It is easy to view a teen as the child that they were not all that long ago. Many parents and close family members and friends may be tempted to treat them that way. A teen will cope with grief better if they are acknowledged as someone old enough to grieve deeply. On the other hand, although a teen may look like an adult, it does not mean that they are ready to grieve as an adult. They still need extra support and guidance on a consistent basis to make it through this complicated process.

Putting expectations on a teen that they should be strong for those around them, or that they should be the one to care for the family following a death, will likely make the teen feel that they do not have permission to grieve like those around them.

IMPORTANCE OF AN ADULT'S GUIDANCE

Though teens are often trying to assert their independence, a time of grief is one in which it can be helpful to rely on an adult for guidance. Teens will watch how adults react to a loss in order to gauge how they should respond. If adults are open and honest with teens about their feelings, then the teen is more likely to be willing to share their feelings as well.

Trying to spare teens grief by choosing not to discuss the loss in front of them will not stop them from grieving, it will only reinforce a tendency to keep feelings bottled up inside. With the help of a trusted adult, such as a parent, family friend, therapist, or school counsellor, a teen can learn important lessons about the joy and pain that come from truly caring about another person.

GAINING THE TRUST OF A TEEN OR YOUNG ADULT

The easiest way to gain a teen's trust is to take the time to listen. Let them know that you care about what they have to say and acknowledge the depth of their grief. Don't tell them how to grieve, instead listen to how they are approaching their grief process, and share with them what has helped you during your times of grief. Let them know that it is natural to feel sad, or frustrated, or angry. Also, let them know that they shouldn't feel guilty if they sometimes feel happy too.

OFFERING RESOURCES For most teens, books and research are a way of life. The majority of their time is spent in class or working on homework. While providing access to websites or books about grief can be a way to show a teen that you know they have the skills to work on their grief on their own, it is important to reiterate that you are there to talk to, and that you hope they will share their feelings with you as well.

ACTIVITY IDEAS Activities are a great way to help teens process their grief. There are a variety of different activities that prompt a teen to take the time to think through what they are feeling and why. Once a teen starts processing, they are more likely to share their feelings with you. If a teen would rather just talk, they will usually let you know. Some possible activities you could try are:

- Start a journal, diary or blog
- Write a story, poem, song or eulogy
- Create a memory book about the loved one who died
- Create a collage using words and pictures from an old magazine
- Visit a hospital or nursing home

SUPPORT GROUPS AND PEER COUNSELORS

For most teens, their trusted group of advisors is their friends. They often believe that adults are unable to understand what they are going through, and that only peers of the same age group can comprehend how they feel and what they are going through.

This mentality makes peer counselors and support groups the ideal settings for many teens and young adults to process their grief. For many teens are the sources of comfort, acceptance and support that they need.

SIGNS THAT IT MAY BE TIME TO SEEK OUTSIDE HELP

Making the distinction between the normal mood swings and experimentation that most teens go through at some point and the signs that a teen is struggling to cope can be difficult. Here are some signs that might indicate that a teen could use some outside help to process their grief.

- Isolation from friends and family
- Changes in behavior or appearance
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Lack of motivation, skipping school, or dropping grades
- Sudden change in who the teen associates with
- Overwhelming social, family or academic pressure
- Depression or unusual levels of anxiety
- Talk of suicide or a fixation on death
- Constant feelings of anger or guilt
- Reckless sexual behavior
- Drug use

I don't know why.
I'll never know why.
I don't have to know why.
I don't like it.
I don't have to like it.
What I have to do is make a choice about my living.
What I do want to do is accept it and go on living.
The choice is mine.
I can go on living, valuing every moment
in a way I never did before,
or I can be destroyed by it and,
in turn, destroy others.
I thought I was immortal.
That my family and my children were also.
That tragedy happened only to others.
But I know now that life is tenuous
and valuable.
So I am choosing to go on living,
making the most of the time I have,
valuing my family and friends
in a way never possible before.

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from the book,
My Son, My Son,
by Iris Bolton, whose son Mitch died by suicide