



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

KAMLOOPS CHAPTER

Autumn 2017

"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

September 6, 2017
October 4, 2017
November 1, 2017
December 6, 2017

TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE

[Email NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net](mailto: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.

On russet floors, by waters idle,
The pine lets fall its cone;
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells alone;
And traveler's joy beguiles in autumn
Hearts that have lost their own.

~ A. E. Houseman



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FYI

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE TCF KAMLOOPS ANNUAL CANDLELIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE ON DECEMBER 3, 2017- 2:00 PM AT KAMLOOPS UNITED CHURCH 421 ST. PAUL STREET. MORE INFORMATION TO COME IN THE WINTER/CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

TCF Kamloops Face Book: The Compassionate Friends Of Kamloops

MISS FOUNDATION Providing C.A.R.E. [counselling, advocacy, research, and education] services to families experiencing the death of a child.

The Compassionate Friends of Canada www.tcfcanada.net

BC Bereavement Helpline Service(s): Helpline, referrals, information. Contact: (604) 738-9950 Email bcbh@telus.net 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

Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support www.nationalshare.org

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

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

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 As we are a non profit society with a very large outreach we have an extensive mailing list for our paper copies of the newsletter. The cost for printing and postage could be considerably reduced if those with computer capability would be agreeable to receiving their newsletter electronically. Getting the newsletter in colour is a bonus and the possibility is also to extend the size of the newsletter. So if you are of a mind to make the change please just email as above..

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.*# 88618 1395 RR 0001 *Receipts Will Be Issued For Income Tax copyright 2015*



Lamps For The Journey...

By all these lovely tokens September days are here, With summer's best of weather And autumn's best of cheer. ~*Helen Hunt Jackson*

My sorrow, when she's here with me, thinks these dark days of autumn rain are beautiful as days can be; she loves the bare, the withered tree; she walks the sodden pasture lane. ~ *Robert Frost*

The death of a baby is like a stone cast into the stillness of a quiet pool; the concentric ripples of despair sweep out in all directions, affecting many, many people. ~ *John DeFrain*

Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true. ~ *Charles Dickens*

Don't spend time beating on a wall, hoping to transform it into a door. ~ *Coco Chanel*

A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. ~*Christopher Reeve*

“It's so curious: one can resist tears and 'behave' very well in the hardest hours of grief. But then someone makes you a friendly sign behind a window, or one notices that a flower that was in bud only yesterday has suddenly blossomed, or a letter slips from a drawer... and everything collapses.” ~ *Colette*

To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless. ~ *Gilbert K. Chesterton*

When our children die, we drop them into the unknown, shuddering with fear. We know that they go out from us, and we stand, and pity, and wonder. ~ *Henry Ward Beecher*

“Friendship ... is born at the moment when one man says to another "What! You too? I thought that no one but myself . . .” ~ *C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

From the ashes a fire shall be woken, A light from the shadows shall spring; Renewed shall be blade that was broken, The crownless again shall be king.” ~ *J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring*

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

“We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.” ~ *Henry Melville*

“There is the solitude of suffering, when you go through darkness that is lonely, intense, and terrible. Words become powerless to express your pain; what others hear from your words is so distant and different from what you are actually suffering.” ~ *John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*

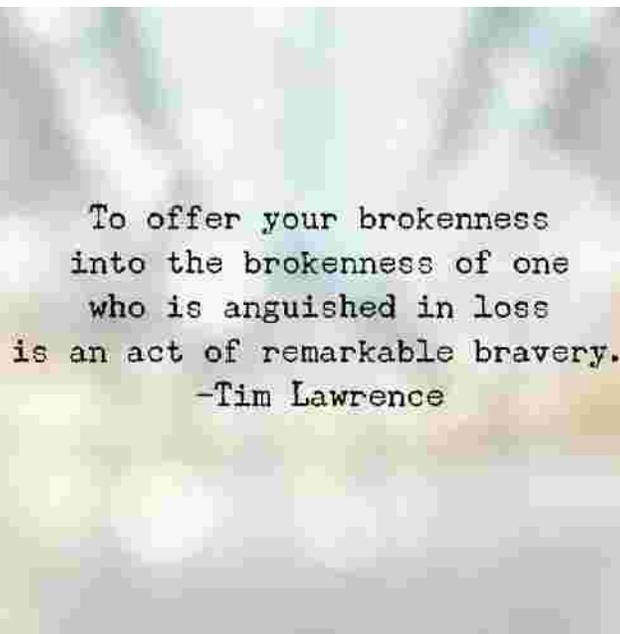
Nobody escapes being wounded. We are all wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not, 'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed, but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers. ~*Henri Nouwen*

In Memorium ~ Stan Tash

Stan Tash, a valued member of our Kamloops TCF Chapter for many years, left us on August 12, 2017. Stan is survived by his wife Jeanna of 53 years, his son Michael and grandchildren Benjamin and Carley. Stan, along with Jeanna, has been an active and faithful supporter of The Compassionate Friends. Stan gave of his compassion, encouragement and support in loving memory of their son Jack who predeceased Stan on August 23, 1984. We send our deepest sympathy to Jeanna and all of the family. Our heartfelt gratitude to Stan, we will miss him.



“One of the most beautiful gifts in the world is the gift of encouragement. When someone encourages you, that person helps you over a threshold you might otherwise never have crossed on your own.” ~ John O’Donohue



WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE HAS DIED BY SUICIDE

John Hewitt, the author of *AFTER SUICIDE* says that a loved one's death by suicide leaves the survivors with a triple whammy. First, someone close has died, second, the death was sudden, and third, one has to deal with the additional pain and regret of suicide.

For the survivors of a suicide the emotional reactions are likely to be intensified. In addition to the painful emotions of grief, feelings of embarrassment, anger, guilt, rejection, and bewilderment are strong. Our society looks on suicide as an "unacceptable" way of dying. The phrase "committed suicide" bares this out. It almost implies that the person committed a crime. Both the person who suicided and the close family members are suspect. Thoughts that the person who suicided was emotionally sick or "not in his/her right mind" invariably follow. Many times the survivors are blamed for not preventing the suicide.

Frequently the survivors blame themselves. This usually results in guilt which can complicate normal grief. Survivors must face and resolve this guilt. If they don't they may never resolve their grief. They need to realize that they are not responsible for the suicide, no matter what they did or did not do. Suicide is an act completed in solitude—and only one person is responsible for it—the deceased. Just as no one can make another person take his life, no one can prevent a suicide without spending 24 hours a day restraining the potential suicide.

In addition to guilt, survivors of suicide struggle with the question "Why?" Rarely is there a satisfactory answer. Suicide is usually caused by factors that have accumulated over the years, not just one event. Circumstances come together and the person sees no way out. He may experience feelings of hopelessness and despair, or suffer severe depression. As a result his judgment becomes hazy or confused and he can't reason clearly. Those who suicide are not choosing death, but an escape from what they perceive as an intolerable situation. Since we can't know the persons inner struggle, we can't answer why.

If your loved one suicided, be especially patient and caring of yourself. You have suffered a deep wound that will take long and hard grief work to heal. Those who have survived their loved one's suicide advise facing the fact of suicide as soon as you are able. They suggest making reference to the suicide at the funeral. Avoiding the truth or denying that it was suicide only prolongs the inevitable, or sets you up for and never-ending falsehoods about what happened. Also, facing the truth helps you realize that you are not responsible and tells others the same thing.

Another suggestion for helping yourself is to read material on both grief and suicide. Two good books are *LIVING WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS DIED* by Doug Manning and *AFTER SUICIDE*, by John Hewitt.

Don't be afraid to reach out to others for help. Find a friend that will let you talk about your feelings and thoughts. Talking about what happened and how you feel is absolutely essential. Join a support group. Many cities have Survivors of Suicide (SOS) groups. Your funeral director or the pastoral care department of a local hospital may be able to put you in touch with SOS or some other appropriate self-help group. Some survivors of suicide seek the help of a professional such as a psychologist, social worker or a bereavement specialist.

Your life has been drastically changed by suicide. Don't expect to be "over" it in weeks. Grief lasts far longer than society in general thinks—more than two years is not abnormal. You have special difficulties to overcome in your grief, which may make it even more prolonged. But, as one survivor said, "I had no choice when my loved one suicided. It was out of my control, but I do have a choice in how I heal myself." *Margaret H. Gerner MSW,CGC*

How does one measure how long it has been? By the number of sunsets or by the tears that have fallen? The sweet solitude of slumber gives way to morning-teared memories of all that used to be when I had you safe inside of me. Our time together is no more. Only God knows why you went away. Sometimes I forget you are no longer here as I lovingly whisper your name, and then I remember ... and life is not the same. ~Debbie Dickinson

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS

In our society we avoid talking about death. The death of a baby is even more hidden because it so violates our expectations. A difficult challenge for many of us is society's refusal to acknowledge that the loss of an unborn or newly born child is the loss of a unique individual. The fact that our babies were in the womb or in our arms for such a little while adds to the pain and isolation of losing a child.

However or whenever it occurs, a baby's death is a profound loss, and one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a parent will confront in a lifetime. Our attachment can begin before conception. When we lose a child, our hopes and dreams for the child have already become a part of our life. The loss of a child, regardless of gestational age, is a loss of part of our future.

Memories, so important for the bereaved, allow us to experience a more gradual good-bye. When a child dies before or shortly after birth, we have precious few memories. Our child is gone and we have very little evidence that he or she ever really existed. This abrupt hello-good-bye relationship makes grieving very complex and painful.

Unfortunately, many friends and relatives do not recognize the depth of the loss of an unborn or newly born child. Acquaintances may never have seen the baby and find it difficult to imagine our grief over a child we have never seen or perhaps held only briefly. Because so few people actually knew our child, our grief may be even more isolating.

Although nothing can take away the pain, it may be helpful to know what others have experienced or found comforting as they struggled to deal with the intense grief that followed the death of their child. As we travel this path, it may be helpful to seek out those who are supportive in helping us cope with the loss of our babies. May we reach out and comfort one another on this journey.

-
TCF, Vedugo Hills



The Myth Of Closure

Grievers often ask:

“When will I begin to feel better?

When will I return to normal?

When will I achieve some closure?”

Closure, our culture tells us, will bring about a tidy ending, a sense of completion. Some grievers hope that the desired magical closure will occur after the funeral or memorial service. Others are confident it will come once they have cleared out their loved one’s room. Or maybe after a special personal ritual.

Or perhaps after the first anniversary comes and goes ...” surely then we will have closure,” we think. The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to neatly seal away all of this pain. We would like to close all of the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings out of our life. We would like to put all of this behind us.

Closure. What an odd concept really, as if we could truly close the door on pain ..., turn the lock and throw away the key. The truth is far more complex, of course. Closure is for business deals. Closure is for real estate transactions.

Closure is not for feeling or for people we love. Closure simply does not exist emotionally, not in a pure sense. We cannot close the door on the past as if it didn’t exist because, after losing someone dear to us, we NEVER forget that person or the love we shared. And in some ways, we never entirely get over the loss. We learn to live with the loss, to integrate it into our new identity.

Imagine if we really could end this chapter in our life, completely. It would mean losing our memories, our connections to those we love. If we really found closure, it would ironically hurt even more because the attachment would be severed. And this attachment is vital to us ... the memories are treasures to be held close, not closed out.

Perhaps it is better to think in terms of healing. Yes, we can process our pain and move to deeper and deeper levels of healing. Yes, we can find ways to move on and channel our pain into productive activities. Yes, we can even learn to smile again and laugh again and love again. But let’s not ever think that we’ll close the door completely on what this loss means, for if we did that, we would unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And that would truly be a loss too terrible to bear.

by ~ Ashley Davis Prend, North Idaho,

Nothing can make up for the absence of someone we love, and it would be wrong to try and find a substitute; we must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation. It remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Making Sure Loved Ones Who Have Passed are Part of Our Present

by Allison Gilbert

One of the most uplifting gifts I've ever heard of giving someone in a time of loss is a wicker basket full of daffodil bulbs. The idea is for the recipient to plant one bulb for every year their loved one lived. Daffodils are the perfect flower for such a commemorative project: as perennials, they'll come back spring after spring — and they're virtually indestructible. And, the best time of year to plant daffodils happens to be right now, as Thanksgiving approaches.

Planting daffodils can bring bereaved parents enormous joy. Remembering promotes healing and taking proactive steps to keep your child's memory alive has the power to make you happier. Individuals who honor their connections to the past, who allow loved ones to remain present in their lives, almost always fare better emotionally than those who don't. Honoring past relationships has proven to have such significant restorative power that noted grief expert, J. William Worden, developed an entire bereavement-recovery theory about it. Worden coined the term "tasks of mourning." This concept not only includes remembering as a mandatory tenet, but also underscores the obligation of mourners to take control of the process of remembering. The mourner "needs to take action," he explains.

Many scholars argue the same. Yet every written source I consulted before I wrote my new book, *Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*, either didn't provide any specific guidelines for remembering or failed to provide enough. So this is why I wrote the book. To my knowledge, it's the first of its kind. *Passed and Present* is a practical and imaginative handbook full of ideas to keep a loved one's memory alive not only this holiday season but any time of year, day or night, whenever you feel that significant and recognizable pull.

Nature is one of the greatest tools we have to reinforce and celebrate our memories. According to a study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, individuals who spend time in natural spaces focus less attention on negative aspects of their lives and open themselves up to the kind of thinking that brings them pleasure including positive memories of loved ones. Gretchen Daily, co-author of the study, told me, "Never before have people been so detached from nature. There is growing evidence, however, that reintroducing nature to people who are deprived of it can improve mood. Many individuals feel better in a natural setting, perhaps because it helps them let go of pain."

Interested in planting your own memorial garden of daffodils? Brent and Becky's, a family-owned daffodil farm and distribution center in Gloucester, Virginia, offers the following advice for success: Begin by choosing a sunny spot. Autumn is the best time to plant daffodils because the bulbs prefer cool soil. If you're in a southern climate, stick with planting jonquils or tazettas, as these daffodils are better suited for warmer temperatures. Plant each bulb at a depth of three times their height, spacing them three times their width apart.

And, one last and very important note: Planting daffodils happens to be a great activity to involve friends, family, and neighbors. Not only will you benefit from the extra hands, you'll be able to use the time to invite conversation and share stories about your child. And, talking about family those who are here and especially those who are not is what the holidays should really be all about.

*Allison Gilbert is the author of *Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*, the first book ever written that reveals 85 innovative ways to remember and celebrate the family and friends you never want to forget. Learn more about Gilbert and her groundbreaking and uplifting work by visiting her website www.allisongilbert.com and following her on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/agilbertwriter/>), Twitter (@agilbertwriter), and Instagram (@agilbertwriter).*



Wake Me Up When September Ends

Summer has come and passed
The innocent can never last
Wake me up when September ends

Even without looking at the calendar, my body and soul takes note. I know the time of year by heart. It is the beginning of the school year. For nearly my whole life this time of year has signalled a fresh start, anticipation of things to come. A time for new shoes, fresh notebooks, sharp, unchewed pencils. All these things beckon of hopes and dreams, plans and goals for success and achievement.

Our son, Jake, died two months short of his high school graduation. We received his college acceptance letter the day of his funeral. Last fall, we watched his friends and classmates head off to college. Many of them came to say good bye to us; after all, we had “adopted” them as our sons and daughters now. Of course, we wished them well with a smile and a hug. Our hearts were aching to be lugging things into a dorm room, too.

So, September is here once more and I think about what Jake would be doing now. I think about all the parents for whom this time of year is difficult, also. I think of those parents who would be putting crayons into a cute little back pack, those who would be watching that first ball game of the season, and those who would maybe be encouraging a college grad to find that first job and begin paying off student loans.

Our sons and daughters have gone straight to the “Head of the Class” but we wish we were able to give them a hug as they achieve glorious dreams beyond our imagination!

As my memory rests
But never forgets what I lost...
Wake me up when September ends.

*Written by Laurie Dreier
From the TCF St. Paul Aug/Sept/Oct Newsletter*

Thanksgiving Prayer

Today, we give thanks for our friends,
Those that time has taken far from us,
Those we cherish now and those we have yet
to meet.

We give thanks for our family,
Those members who are with us in spirit
And those who are a distance away.

We give thanks for
our expanding family,
For relatives need not always be family
And family need not always be relatives,
Love creates families.

We give thanks for our children,
For the ones who are here,
And the ones that live on only in our
memory.

We thank you.

Amen

TCF Madison Chapter

Autumn

Walter de la Mare

There is a wind where the rose was,
Cold rain where sweet grass was,
And clouds like sheep
Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.

Nought warm where your hand was,
Nought gold where your hair was,
But phantom, forlorn,
Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.

Cold wind where your voice was,
Tears, tears where my heart was,
And ever with me,
Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.



Coping with October

The coming of autumn with the beautiful colors of the leaves and their falling will bring different emotions to different families. Maybe your family had a tradition of driving through particularly scenic areas.

Maybe the child you lost was the one who raked the leaves. Perhaps all of this will simply be a reminder that winter and a barren landscape are coming.

Halloween is a favorite holiday for most children, but it can be hard for bereaved parents. This formerly innocent holiday, the yard “decorated” as graveyards with markers and ghosts and skeletons, the stories of unhappy spirits that must walk the earth, all have a completely different impact on us now.

Many of us have opened the door to give out treats and been faced with a costume so similar to one our child wore for a Halloween past, that either we really want to pull aside the mask to see the face behind or we want to dream that this was one last visit from our precious child.

Some parents have surviving children who still want to join in the fun and, oh, how hard to “trick or treat” when you feel the victim of the ultimate “trick”

Stop and Think what can you do differently? For autumn and its beauties & chores, what routines can you change? Hire someone or ask a friend who has been offering to help & asking for specific tasks. Maybe you could do it together

.For Halloween, take surviving children to a carnival (many schools and churches sponsor these). Or if a carnival was an every year event, go to the zoo or go door to door this year. If you don't have surviving children wanting to celebrate, maybe you can leave your house dark & go to a movie and skip this holiday. In any event, planning ahead will help you get through a difficult time.

*By Tracy Rhein, Bereaved Parents USA
Central Arkansas Chapter*

Remembrance Day.....

Dirge Without Music

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely.
Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,—
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses.
Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know.
But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.



Poppies for peace and remembrance.

Men Grieve Side by Side

By Pat Schwiebert, R.N. pat@tearsoup.com <http://www.griefwatch.com>

Some of the most touching statements I've heard around a child's death have come from fathers.

I remember a father telling how after his children and wife died in a house fire his buddies would come over and sit with him day after day while he drank himself unconscious only to wake up enough to crawl off to bed and repeat the process the next day. He never talked about his family. They never asked any questions.

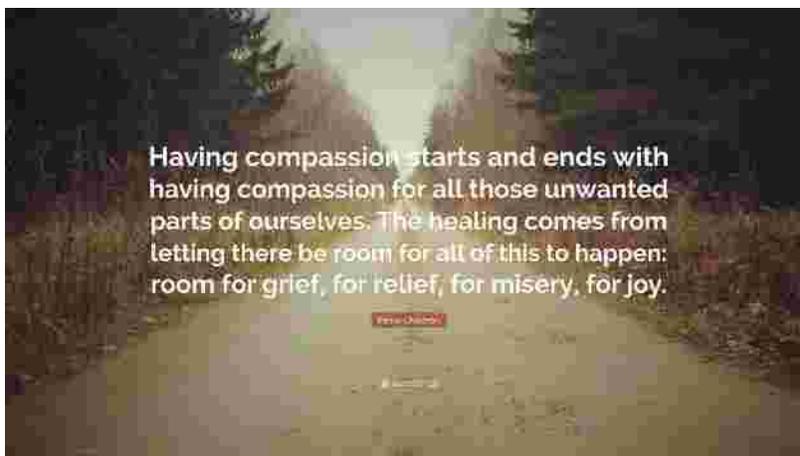
Another father told me how he spent the final month of his daughter's life frantically calling specialists around the country and doing research searching for a cure for his daughter's rapidly progressing brain tumor while his wife memorized every smile, every joke, every tender moment their daughter shared as she bravely faced the end of her life.

Yet another father described how he didn't want to leave his wife and travel to another hospital in the ambulance with his sick newborn baby, so he told the staff he couldn't go because he couldn't find his shoes. They told him to go without his shoes.

These stories speak of how men are not encouraged to feel and so resort to numbing the devouring pain of grief. They speak of how fathers try to fix things for their kids in an effort to help them dodge death. They speak of how torn they can feel when they need to be in two places at once, and how they fear the prospect of getting into unfamiliar territory where they feel all alone and expected to make life changing decisions.

As a culture we have made inroads to understanding how differently people grieve. We have recognized that our gender, or how we have been raised, may have something to do with how we grieve, but still we are surprised when a father emotes or cries more than a mother. Fathers still think people expect them to buck up and hold things together for the family. Men tend to agree they want that too. It gives them a sense of control when everything else around them seems out of control. But they do want people to know that they are hurting too. That just because they look okay it isn't over. That their lives have also changed. They may not talk about it as much as their partners but they feel it just the same. Men grieve side by side. Women grieve face to face. A man typically wants you to be there with him, to not be afraid of him and his pain, not to pity him, maybe to play a game of golf or have a beer with him, and to be willing to listen if he wants to talk. Men are strong, and they are also tender.

I'm in awe of how they bravely face the future while living in the present.



What a Son Will Tell His Mother about Grieving the Death of His Sister

My son's only sibling, Maggie, his younger sister, my daughter, died almost four years ago, suddenly. She was twenty-two; he was twenty-seven. Perhaps because he is a man who does not easily talk about his feelings, we usually share our grief in oblique ways, but those moments are nonetheless intimate and meaningful.

However, this past summer, when I was visiting my son and his girlfriend, Jacqui, for a week, we had a chance to talk about his grieving more directly. He was relaxed, on vacation from his teaching job, and we pattered around his new house, making a garden, and enjoying being together. We spoke often of Maggie and slowly, as we worked side by side, we made our way around to talk of how it is now, this grieving his sister. Here's what he told me:

"I've had a broad reach about all the things that were going to be affected by Maggie's death right from the beginning. I thought about the immediate losses and into the future; maybe that's just me and my personality, but I cast a wide net into the realm of all that Maggie's death was going to touch. And I knew it was never going to go away. I'm not sure that my grieving has really changed a lot; once the initial shock wore off the depth of the grieving has been pretty constant, which has surprised me.

The process of becoming an only child is a lot of things. Obviously, it's not always like that for everyone who loses a sibling, you might go from being four to being three, but for me, I'm the only child now. I always consulted with Maggie about stuff, family stuff and life stuff, and I miss that. No one else knew me like she did. The other part is thinking about my parents' getting older and being now the only potential caretaker and the prospect of doing that from a distance and alone is daunting. Having all the attention on me is weird and sometimes hard; it's not like everything got doubled when Maggie died, but just knowing that all family-oriented business and conversations are falling just to me is sometimes a lot. There's no divide and conquer going on when it comes to the kids and Mom and Dad.

Having someone who you were expecting to have through all the big life events not be there is really what gets me the most. Maggie won't get to come watch my soccer team play and she won't ever visit us here at the new house. She'll never know Jacqui. Jacqui is very receptive to Maggie still being a presence in our lives. It's really nice that she has dreams sometimes about Maggie and almost feels like she knows her. I do wish that they had known one another so that Maggie could be more of a person to Jacqui than just an idea. Obviously Mom and Dad have been important in helping with processing the grieving, but a lot of my support has been in Mike, who has always been a surrogate brother but now he's really filling the role of the person who has known me the longest in a sibling kind of way. And I can really talk to him.

I find I have very little patience for drama and fighting, especially among family members. I just think: Get over yourselves. Family has always been important to me but now those relationships are more important than ever and the little problems and differences are not worth getting worked up about. We just have to love each other."

It's hard living over five hundred miles from my son, but I make an effort to be with him often and for no specific reason other than that with this child, I can love him in person.

Meg Tipper, September 2012

Meg Tipper's book about the first year of grieving Maggie's death is entitled *Standing at the Edge: A Year of Days After Sudden Death*. Article from the Newsletter of BP/USA, A JOURNEY TOGETHER www.bereavedparentsusa.org.