



**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*

### **CHAPTER LEADER**

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### **NEWSLETTER**

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### **MEETINGS.**

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

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

**June 6, 2018**  
**July 4, 2018**  
**August 8, 2018**  
**September 5, 2018**

### **TCF CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE**

Email [NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net](mailto:NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net)  
[www.TCFCanada.net](http://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.

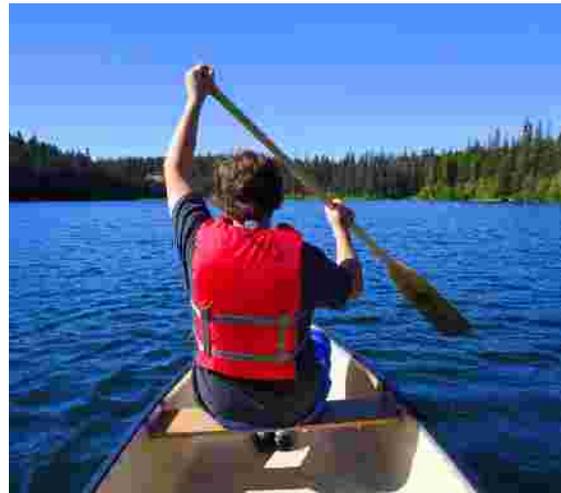
We are sorry we had to meet under such circumstances, but we are glad you found us. We would like to do all we can to help you through these times. We cannot hurry you through it or take away the pain, but we can help you understand more about what you are going through. Sometimes just knowing what you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

August is laughing across the sky,  
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I  
Drift, drift,  
Where the hills uplift  
On either side of the current swift

*Pauline Johnson from The Song My Paddle Sings*



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

**TCF Kamloops Facebook Page: [The Compassionate Friends Of Kamloops](#)**

**BC Bereavement Helpline Service(s): Helpline, referrals, information. Contact: (604) 738-9950 Email [bcbh@telus.net](mailto:bcbh@telus.net) [www.bcbereavementhelpline.com](http://www.bcbereavementhelpline.com)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Center For Loss In Multiple Birth (CLIMB) Inc. [www.climb-support.org](http://www.climb-support.org)**

**Change Of Information: If you have a change in your contact information—postal mailing address, email address, telephone, name, etc. or wish to be removed from our contact list please let us know by emailing Arleen at [waskamloops@shaw.ca](mailto:waskamloops@shaw.ca) or 250-374-2135 or Carol at 250-374-6030.**

**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](mailto: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.# 88618 1395 RR 0001 Receipts Will Be Issued For Income Tax copyright 2018***



## *Lamps For The Journey ...*

"The crickets felt it was their duty to warn everybody that summertime cannot last for ever. Even on the most beautiful days in the whole year – the days when summer is changing into autumn – the crickets spread the rumour of sadness and change."

~E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief. ~ *Aeschylus*

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief... For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free. ~ *Wendell Berry*

When we're looking for compassion, we need someone who is deeply rooted, is able to bend and, most of all, embraces us for our strengths and struggles ~ . *Brene Brown*

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time." ~ *John Lubbock*

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*

"Rejoice as summer should...chase away sorrows by living." ~ *Melissa Marr*

"Don't be ashamed to weep; 'tis right to grieve. Tears are only water, and flowers, trees, and fruit cannot grow without water. But there must be sunlight also. A wounded heart will heal in time, and when it does, the memory and love of our lost ones is sealed inside to comfort us." ~ *Brian Jacques*,

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

~ *George Elliot*

"Summertime. It was a song. It was a season. I wondered if that season would ever live inside of me."

~ *Benjamin Alire Sáenz*

I understood at a very early age that in nature, I felt everything I should feel in church but never did. Walking in the woods, I felt in touch with the universe and with the spirit of the universe. ~ *Alice Walker*

I think sometimes a person's spirit is so strong that it never completely leaves the earth but remains scattered forever among all those who love them. ~ *Chris Crandall*

"The greatest gift I can conceive of having from anyone is to be seen by them, to be understood and touched by them. The greatest gift I can give is to see, hear, understand and to touch another person." - *Virginia Satir*

" If you do not know, just listen. If you cannot understand, do not judge. And certainly, never vilify and humiliate someone who has been hurt with a hurt so deep that 'not even the depth and breadth of eternity can fill it.'"

~ *Charles Dickens*

# The Things I Have Learned About Grief Since the Death of My Child

? Grief is not an event, it is a process. It does not have a distinct finish line. It takes each person a different amount of time to do their grief work – each person’s journey is as unique as their fingerprints.

? Grief is unique for each person because of the relationship they had with the child who has died. That relationship was also unique. It is different for a father, different for a mother, different for a surviving sibling. Your grief journey will be guided by many things besides the relationship you had with the child who died. It will be influenced by your past life experiences (including previous losses); your religious beliefs, your socio-economic status, your physical health, the availability of a support network, and, in many cases, the cause of the death itself.

? People want you to be “over it” way sooner than you can ever imagine that as a remote possibility. They don’t seem to understand that this is not the flu and we don’t get “over it”, we learn to integrate it into the fabric of our lives. People want us to be back to our “old selves again” but what they don’t realize is that we will never be the same people we were before our child died. One of our tasks as we make our grief journey is to redefine who we are in this new reality that we did not choose.

? Grief is not a predictable journey and sometimes feels as though we are on a roller coaster. One day we may feel somewhat stronger and feel we are making progress, the next day we may crash and burn. Grief is sometimes like winding a ball of yarn – you wind and wind on it and sometimes drop it and it unravels before you – then it is time to start winding it up again. Grief can be like that. It is unrealistic to think that things will be “normal” again because they won’t be the “normal” we have always known. It will be part of our job to define our “new normal” – an existence without that child’s physical presence.

? It is important to remember that as we grieve, we must also mourn the death of our child. The two words are usually used interchangeably, but they mean different things. Grief is on the inside – what we are feeling inside. Mourning is “grief gone public” – in other words how we are allowed to express our grief outside of ourselves.

? We have a great need to tell and retell our story far longer than many people are willing to listen to us. We need to find safe places to tell our story and continue to talk about our child. This is probably one of the greatest values of a TCF Chapter. Being part of a TCF Chapter also helps to validate what we are feeling and helps to make us feel less alone.

? Pain is part of the grief process and cannot be ignored or “gotten around” if we are to heal. You must integrate and process the pain to get to the other side of it – to the place where healing can start taking place. There is a Buddhist saying... “In order to heal, you have to lean into the pain.” While grief and pain are inevitable in most people’s lives, misery is optional. I am sure you have heard the expression “we cannot change the wind, only the direction of our sails.”

? Remember that letting go of the pain does not mean letting go of the love you had for your child. That love will remain with you always.

? I think at some point each of us must make a conscious decision to heal. We must decide whether or not we want to become bitter or better. I believe each of us has the tools within us to heal, but we must listen to our inner voice to tell us how to proceed.

? Everyone seems to have an explanation for why this happened to you. It is a characteristic of our society that we want to be problem solvers, so people often feel they have to provide us with some kind of explanation. I haven’t met a bereaved parent yet who felt there was a reasonable and acceptable explanation for why their child had to die.

? I also think we need to be selfish as we grieve. By this I mean we must be good to ourselves, be patient with ourselves, look to what we need to do to move forward. Sometimes we get so busy caring for and nurturing others, we neglect to nurture ourselves. Remember, the word grief means “to carry a heavy burden”.

? We need to be open to the help others can provide. This is not a journey we need to make alone. Let people help you. Ask for help when you need it. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but an acknowledgement that you want to heal.

~Susan Chan, Rachael’s Mom, TCF Topeka, KS

*The acceptance of mortality in one’s life is no easy matter. But anyone who says he has accepted the premature mortality of his child is lying. There is an enormous difference between living with a child’s death and accepting it. The former takes a type of courage that few people understand. ~James Lee Burke*

## Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word— time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night.. Summertime Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs. We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures-there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes. ~Sascha Wagner

## Come, Rest Awhile

*Lucy Maude Montgomery*

Come, rest awhile, and let us idly stray  
In glimmering valleys, cool and far away.

Come from the greedy mart, the troubled street,  
And listen to the music, faint and sweet,

That echoes ever to a listening ear,  
Unheard by those who will not pause to hear

The wayward chimes of memory's pensive bells,  
Wind-blown o'er misty hills and curtained dells.

One step aside and dewy buds unclose  
The sweetness of the violet and the rose;

Song and romance still linger in the green,  
Embossomed ways by you so seldom seen,

And near at hand, would you but see them, lie  
All lovely things beloved in days gone by.

You have forgotten what it is to smile  
In your too busy life come, rest awhile.



## WITH MANY THANKS TO DAN NOORDMAN FOR PERMISSION TO SHARE THIS ARTICLE

The most tragic and traumatic losses life can deal out to a person is the death of a son or daughter. The death of a child means the loss of more than just a precious life. It represents the loss of future experiences and future hopes. No parent is prepared for the loss of a child, and when it happens, their world is forever changed. The grief, pain and anguish felt are acute and lasting.

In June 2015, our family suffered the tragic and traumatic loss of our beloved son and brother. Ayron was 23 years old when he passed away at home in his sleep as a result of an accidental Fentanyl poisoning. His death rocked the core of who we were; our lives forever altered. It left us stranded, abandoned, imprisoned and lost. We didn't just lose our son; we lost us too. In an instant we vanished with him. When you lose a child, the battle becomes not to lose yourself. It is kind of shocking when your world falls to pieces and everything and everyone around you carries on with life. How can the birds continue to sing? How can people carry on loving life?

"It is like you have become frozen in time and are now watching life like a movie .As the weeks and months roll by, life becomes more real again,but you will never forget that point in time where your life stood still." - Zoe Helen Clark

Two years ago, fentanyl was a word most of us knew nothing of; sadly today that word is heard almost on a daily basis as people from all walks of life lose their lives or their loved ones to this horrible poison. As a Police Officer in our City, I saw and knew about this poison that was slowly making its appearance on our streets. But, like many families, we didn't think it would happen to us.

As more families are affected by addiction, more and more families are left with the grief of losing a loved one. Every overdose death is someone's son or daughter. An overdose death can happen to anyone; it does not discriminate and has destroyed the lives of many children. Yet the unique experience of grieving an overdose death still hides out in the shadows. It is veiled in guilt and shame, stigma and discomfort. Families are left feeling guilty, shame, blame, anger and anxiety.

Due to the stigma of drug use and addiction too many people still view addiction as a failure. A failure for not only the addict, but of those people around the addict, the loved ones, the friends. They are seen as failing their loved one with addiction and must have done something wrong, or did not do enough. Parents are looked at with a biased sympathy and somehow the death of their child doesn't compare to a death of a child from an accident or disease. Every loss is personal and deeply internalized to the person experiencing it; there is no measuring stick capable of indicating whose is more painful. But parents of an overdose death are left feeling their loss doesn't rate the same as others. It is all tragic. Personal loss of a child should never have a pain rating. The real tragedy is that people get wrapped up and lose sight of who the person was underneath the stigma of an overdose death.

We need a culture change. We need to shift from a culture of shame and punishment to one of healing and wellness. In order to change our culture we need to change our beliefs and stigmas associated with overdose deaths.

One of the most important things families can do after an overdose or poisoning death of a child is to control the messaging. I recently read that when we think wrong, we believe wrong and when we believe wrong, we act wrong. The words parents use have a dramatic impact on the stigma surrounding an overdose death. The term "Opioid related death" should be used in replace of "Opioid Overdose" in order to avoid any suggestion that the death was intentional. The term "overdose" is sometimes associated with self-harm or an intentional act by the victim. The term "overdose" then re-victimizes the victim of an unintentional opioid related death and families are left feeling they need to defend their child or even worse, remain silent. With fentanyl and carfentanil now tainting the entire drug supply on the street, many of our children didn't even know they were ingesting these deadly poisons. A poison is any substance, including medication, whether prescribed or not, that is harmful to your body if too much is eaten, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin. An unintentional poisoning occurs when a person taking or given too much of a substance did not mean to cause harm to themselves.

With the poisons in the drug supply right now, anyone's child could die of fentanyl poisoning. This is affecting casual users of any kind of drug, people suffering from Substance Use Disorder and inexperienced teens and young adults. The statistics might tell you that hundreds of people have died to date in Manitoba from addiction and drug overdoses, but not one of those is just a statistic to those who loved them.

*continued .....*

Every loss is personal and deeply internalized to the person experiencing it; there is no measuring stick capable of indicating whose is more painful. It is all tragic. We decided that we did not want our life to be defined by Ayron's death but instead, inspired by his life. We move forward in time and remember the past. We no longer count the days since we last saw him, we count down the days until we see him again.

Ayron Wilder Noordman

1992/03/29 - 2015/06/28

Forever loved and never forgotten

*- Dan Noordman is currently in his 16th year with the Winnipeg Police Service. He is currently assigned to the School Education Section within the Community Relations Division where he volunteered to become the WPS's Fentanyl Education and Awareness Officer and has since become the Subject Matter Specialist on Fentanyl for the Winnipeg Police Service.*

*Dan's career path has provided him with investigational experience and training through which he has developed in-depth knowledge on Fentanyl, Opioids, and addiction. Dan has taken part in a number of Panel Discussions as an expert.*

*Dan is the recipient of several awards and recognitions including Kiwanis Top Cop Recognition, Winnipeg Police Commendation Awards, Coaching Manitoba Vince Leah Memorial Award and the 2016 Province of Manitoba Attorney Generals Award for Provincial Excellence in Law enforcement.*

*Most importantly, Dan is also a husband, father and grandfather. It is through his personal life, and his firsthand encounter of the tragic loss of his son that has resulted in him becoming a witness to the true effects of grief. But the thing with grief is that it can teach you compassion, kindness, patience, forgiveness, gentleness and understanding for yourself and others. Grief can be a great teacher.*

*Dan brings an undeniable and powerful personal message to listeners and is committed to educating and helping create awareness about the new dangers associated with Fentanyl and recreational drug use. Dan and his wife are hopeful that by creating awareness through education and community partnerships, further tragedies can be avoided.*

Loving lifted from March \* April 2018 \* WINNIPEG CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

### ***When Fathers Weep at Graves***

I see them weep  
the fathers at the stones  
taking off the brave armor  
forced to wear in the workplace  
clearing away the debris with gentle fingers  
inhaling the sorrow  
diminished by anguish  
their hearts desiring what they cannot have—  
to walk hand in hand  
with children no longer held—  
to all the fathers who leave a part of their  
hearts  
at the stones  
may breezes underneath trees of time  
ease their pain  
as they receive healing tears  
....the gift the children give.

~Alice J. Wisler, in *L.A.R.G.O.*



## ***Father's Day - It Will Never Be the Same***



Our precious daughter and only child, Jill Kathleen, passed away on September 3, 1990 from a brain stem tumor. She was less than three months over six years old. I think back to my own father's Father's Days. It's pretty hard to remember what we did. Maybe we went fishing or to a baseball game. I know I always told my dad I loved him, because I did. We probably always had a good dinner that day too, a favorite of Dad's no doubt. To me somehow Father's Day always meant at least part of the day devoted to house or yard work.

When Jill came into my life, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me and when she left it, it was the worst that ever happened. Therefore, Father's Day will never be the same. I keep diaries and for Jill's last year and the years after, there are some very painful entries. But, before she passed on there are some interesting entries. When she was four, I noted that I got a card from her. Have it stashed away someplace. When she was five, she gave me a card but hid my present and couldn't remember where she put it. We went to a church picnic that year, and Jill had her "first date" with a neighbour boy from up the street. I played Monopoly with her in the evening; she won! I put her to bed and read her a bedtime story. When she was six she was sick, but could still get around pretty well. We made a big deal of the day. She gave me a "rainbow" colored, golf size umbrella for a present. I still have it because it's now very special to me. I'd rather get wet than see that umbrella wrecked on a windy, rainy day.

Since Jill is gone, Father's Days have been different. For the first three years our friends and relatives tried to console me as best they could on this day. In 1992 I wrote in my diary, "I'm not a Dad without you, Jill." Now I have to correct myself--I was a Dad and always will be one except that I had to bury my daughter. It's not the way it should be, but it's the way it is, and I can't change it. God, how I wish I could.

I don't cry as much anymore, but the feelings that will trigger the tears are just under the surface waiting for the right emotional circumstances. Dad,

you have every right to be sad, depressed, and heart broken on Father's Day, because you have lost a son or daughter who can never be replaced. I know because I'm one of you. If you try to work through grief (it is hard work) and not run away from it or stuff it somewhere, your pain will lessen as time goes by. The scar you have from the loss, however, will remain forever. The day will never be the same again, but you can make it different. Life isn't easy, and it isn't fair. But you can make it bearable by treasuring the memories of your daughter or son. Some of you, unfortunately, have lost more than one, but even one is too many. Treasure also the memorabilia of your daughter or son no matter how long they lived. Cry if you feel like it. I feel better after I do; because it makes me feel I'm not losing touch with her. Do whatever works for you. Think of how your son or daughter whom you loved and who loved you would want you to feel on Father's Day. Then plan and do something that will make you feel just a little bit better and dedicate it to your daughter's or son's memory. It's worked for me.

Michael Ebert, Bereaved Parents of the U.S.A.,  
Hinsdale, IL

### **A Dad's Wish**

I wish I'd never known the place where you rest.  
I wish I had known how desperate you were.  
I wish I could find the answers to three years  
of questions.  
Questions that never go away.  
I wish I had found more time for you  
Son  
I wish I could see your face and hear you laugh.  
I wish I'd been a better friend and Dad to you.  
Most of all:  
I wish I could have felt your pain,  
and been there for you  
when you needed me the most.  
If I had been, then maybe, just maybe  
my wish would have come true—  
I wish you were still here with us, Jeff.

My son Jeff died by suicide on April 9, 1999.

-Dave K. Pugmire, TCF Salt Lake City, UT

# Graduation Time

It's June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring "Pomp and Circumstance." Now there is a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you are strange?

As always you must follow your heart. So, go if you'd like to and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others. Just remember: That your instincts are the most important ones; that no one else can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think.

It was your child who died. This is your pain and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way - and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

Peggy Gibson,  
TCF Nashville, TN



## MEN DO CRY

I heard quite often "men don't cry"  
Though no one ever told me why  
So when I fell and skinned a knee

No one came to comfort me.  
And when some bully boy at school  
Would pull a prank so mean or cruel  
I'd quickly learn to turn and quip  
"It doesn't hurt" and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years  
I learned to stifle any tears.  
Though "Be a big boy" it began  
Quite soon I learned to "Be a man."

And I could play that stoic role  
While storm and tempest wracked my soul.  
No pain nor setback could there be  
Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby  
And helplessly watched my son die  
And quickly found to my surprise  
That all that tearless talk was lies.

And still I cry and have no shame  
I cannot play that "big boy" game.  
And openly without remorse  
I let my sorrow take its course.

So those of you who can't abide  
A man you've seen who's often cried  
Reach out to him with all your heart  
As one whose life's been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see  
Their loss of immortality.  
And tears will come in endless streams  
When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

## That First Summer Vacation

Summer time is here and with it you may be planning a vacation. If you have recently suffered the death of your child, that first vacation can be very difficult. I would like to share with you our experience the first time we took a vacation after our son, Paul, died. I have included some suggestions to help you through your first vacation and to help you plan around your grief. If any of you are planning a vacation, here are some suggestions that may help.

- Be gentle with yourself. Don't expect too much on your first vacation. Remember as bereaved parents, the first time we do anything without our kids is tough whether it be going to the movies, shopping or on a vacation.
- Plan to do some grief work because you will, planned or not. Give yourself time enough on the trip if you have a bad day so that you can just do what you feel like doing.
- Know that your child will be on your mind day and night just as he or she is at home. Our grief goes with us.
- Plan to do something your child would have loved to do, but did not get a chance to. Plan this in his or her memory.
- If you plan to visit relatives for the first time since your child's death, remember they mean well even if they seem insensitive with their remarks. They have not lost a child and can't see through your eyes.
- If you have other children, remember them. They are also having a hard time coping on this vacation. Plan some activities that will be especially for them.
- Be especially careful to communicate with your spouse. Plan a vacation that is suitable for both of your needs. Remember you are both grieving for the same child, but we all grieve differently and in our own way.
- If you have been maintaining your child's grave site and feel guilty about leaving it unattended, let a family member or friend see to it while you are away. You need not feel guilty and it could fill a need for one of your family.

– Dianna Hammock, Central Coast, CA

## A Walk At Walhachin

We went down to the river at Walhachin,  
past the green and gentle fields,  
the graveyard of orchards of the past.  
At the bottom of the dusty road  
we come to the rocky river shore.

As I walk slowly and carefully, feet sliding,  
trying to keep a clumsy purchase  
on the boulders large and small,  
I think of how it was for you  
on that fateful day.

Did you walk confidently,  
your young legs striding out,  
hurrying to reach the river's edge?  
Were you filled with the joy of a summer's day  
eager to cast your line in that age old ritual?



Do I step where you stepped?  
Am I standing on the very stones  
where you slipped and were yourself cast  
into the river, swept away by  
its swift and tumbling currents ?

I look around me, can this softly flowing water,  
this blue sky, this gentle and calm landscape,  
be the scene of horror that changed us forever?  
How can so much beauty and sadness co-exist?

Part of our hearts are left at Walhachin.  
Looking down I can see a replica of mine,  
broken, imbedded in the never ending stones at  
Walhachin.

Arleen Simmonds, TCF Kamloops, in Loving Memory of  
Kenneth 30/10/64 – 11/08/88

## THE UNIVERSE OF GRIEF

About ten months after my only sister died, I began to feel things other than grief and shock. It was as when a long fever breaks: You feel neither good nor strong but you wake up and have your mind back. I knew then I could return to my work as a filmmaker with some ability to focus and reason. It was obvious to me before I even began what has now become "the Secret Map of Surviving Loss" what my subject would be: The subject would be grief.

Grief, in its many faces, had been the unparalleled master of decades of my life. My sister as well as my father had been ill on and off since before I finished high school. My mother is legally blind so much of keeping the family glued together depended on me. The needs of their illnesses often intensified at the same time. A quarter of a century after their original diagnoses, Dad died and then Michelle three years later.

During those years, I came to intimately know the face of anticipatory grief, how it hovers around during the downward cycle of diagnosis, decline, crisis, repeat, and how it tests one's endurance. I knew the lightning-like face of grief that reveals in instants the true character of everyone around you. I knew grief's venom and the way it paralyses and numbs. I knew its relentlessness. I knew its irrationality. I knew the physical nature of grief.

What I did not know was grief's purpose. I did not know that grief, like swelling after an injury or the fever of infection, was part of a mechanism and process of coping, adjustment, and restoring balance. Ironically, I could not understand this because I was in grief.

Looking for some understanding and comfort as well as some direction, I did what so many people do. I sought out a bereavement group for the people I thought were exactly like me; I sought out a group for sibling loss.

That is what we do, especially when we are shattered. We look for ourselves in the faces of other people. We begin to rebuild with the little bit we still know about ourselves. We identify with what we have lost. Widows seek spousal loss groups. Adult children seek out parent loss groups. Parents who have lost children seek out child loss groups. Hospices and grief support organizations encourage this self-seeking sameness by creating counselling groups along these divides.

Unfortunately for me, it did not work out. I could not find myself in people exactly like me. There were no sibling loss groups available at our local hospice at the time. Instead, I had to broaden my mirror. I had to find myself among losses of all kinds. I found a general loss drop-in group at another hospice.

I went for a year. Over the course of my time, there was a woman grieving her son, quite a few people grieving spouses and partners, and another handful grieving their mothers. Poor deceased dads in my group did not get too much play.

Although our losses defined us quite a bit, it made no difference who each of us had lost. We bonded all the same as we shared too many things; we shared grief.

This meant we were all in shock. We all had secondary losses. We all had moments which triggered intense grief. We all suffered with haunting images and guilt. We all dreaded the holidays and special days. We all spoke of signs or dreams of our loved ones or wondered if we would have them.

This was an enormous comfort to me. Sharing grief in grieving company kept me moored to the shores of the human world. I could not tie on elsewhere. The death that had forever ended communications with my sister had also ended communications with people I had known for years.

continued....

Those people, family, friends, and acquaintances, went on as I once did, with a level of intensity on the entertainments and gossip of the day which now seemed strange to me. They had little curiosity or interest in how death had touched and shaped me. I had nothing to say to them and they in turn said nothing that did not seem irrelevant and shallow to me.

I had been changed and there was no going back to my previous innocence. This is one of the many things that grief after death does. It initiates one into an order of humans that share heavy knowledge: The absolute certainty that all will be lost. Part of the experience of grief is digesting this knowledge. All grievers slog through a valley of nihilism at some point with thoughts ranging from "Why get out of bed?" to "Why ever do anything ever?"

As I emerged from the intensity of grief, I realized its great deception. As chaotic, meaningless and drifty as one's suffering feels, something very orderly is going on the whole time. Like the tribal initiations unfold in which the young are borne away from the village and abandoned somewhere out in nature with the task of finding their way home, so are we.

First we are disconnected from our loved one who has died, then from our familiar circle and finally (for at least a moment) from all sense of our previous purpose. We are taken against our will to a strange and scary place. We are required to develop perseverance and survival skills. We are required to traverse a world beyond all that is previously known and to develop a new maturity and be changed. This happens whether you have lost a child, a wife, a sister, brother, husband or mother. Whether it is your best friend or most difficult relationship that is gone, you will be initiated.

After just a few months in my group, I felt gratitude and good fortune that I did not get what it was that I thought that I wanted, that I did not find that sibling loss group for people exactly like me. I am in the comfort and the company of all good grievers now as we each learn the lay of the land every day and our paths forward in it.

As anyone who has been in grief can tell you, no one can give you the map of the place. One can only be told the list of creatures that live there: strange signs, secondary losses, guilt, triggers, shock, and more. There is no predicting how you will meet them. It is up to you. What you can be assured of, however, is that you are taking part in an ancient ritual and that the grief that flows through you and the person next to you in the group is the same as the sun that on better days shines on you both.

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*‘The reality is that you will grieve forever.  
You will not ‘get over’ the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it.  
You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered.  
You will be whole again but you will never be the same.  
Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.’  
Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and John Kessler*