



The Compassionate Friends of Canada

When A Child Dies...

National Newsletter - November 2019

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Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.

- Reverend Simon Stephens, Founder, TCF

Giving Back

As we approach Giving Tuesday, which falls on the Tuesday after the American Thanksgiving (Thursday, November 28 this year), we extend our thanks to a private donor from Metro Vancouver - Burnaby and the Montreal Chapter for their generous annual donation. Contributions toward the operating expenses of your National organization are not taken for granted; every one is appreciated.

At this time, we are also asking Chapters if they have members who could contribute in another way: through serving on the National Board of Directors. This involves giving of time – about an hour and a half per month for a teleconference meeting – and of caring – they would provide the board with representation and input from our far-flung chapters. Please, do give this invitation some serious consideration. New board members would not find themselves immediately thrust into positions of responsibility. They could serve as a Director-at-Large for as long as they wish. Their presence at the virtual board table, and their voice, would be appreciated.

Another Note to the Editor...

In a recent article, we encouraged newsletter editors to be diligent in obtaining explicit permission from the author before reprinting copyright or attributed material. In this article, we consider an author at the other end of the spectrum, namely “Anon E. Mouse”.

Many familiar poems, quotes or epigrams are attributed to an anonymous source, when a simple Google or Wikipedia search will often provide a specific author. For example, the poem “*Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep*” is usually listed in the obituary pages as anonymous or a native American prayer. In fact, this very moving poem was written by Mary Elizabeth Frye in 1932. Similarly, “*God’s Lent Child*”, frequently read at a child’s funeral, is usually attributed to “author unknown”. Originally titled “*A Child of Mine*”, it was actually written by Edgar Albert Guest and first published

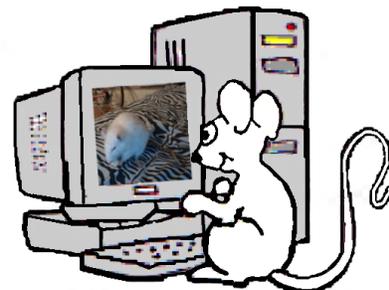
around 1930. "Footsteps in the Sands", including the phrase "that was when I carried you" can be attributed to Canadian poet Margaret Fishback Powers, although other authors claim slightly different versions.

The point of this article is not to recite a list of favourite readings, but to encourage due diligence before publishing unattributed material. As a minimum, checking whether an author truly is unknown, or whether the work is public domain, shows a professional approach that acknowledges a creator's ownership of their intellectual property. In a more pragmatic consideration, it could avoid a potentially embarrassing oversight or even unintentional copyright violation. Although "Anonymous" may seem to be one of the world's most prolific authors, it would be prudent to validate the claim.

And a Final Word

Some good news for newsletter editors. Anyone who has browsed the Grief and Bereavement section of a library or bookstore will have

encountered the name of Dr. Alan Wolfelt. He is the much respected grief counsellor and educator who founded The Center for Loss in 1984. He is also a much appreciated, prolific author. The good news? We have learned that he has given TCF permission to reprint his articles and to quote him in newsletters, on websites, etc.. Of course, there is the standard expectation for full and appropriate acknowledgement of the author.



"Anon. F. Mouse"

Facilitator Training

We are planning to conduct another toll-free telephone training session on Sunday November 17th, starting at 12 noon Eastern time. It is expected to run for about 1-1/2 hours and is open to both new and experienced Chapter Leaders and Sharing Circle Facilitators. If you would like to attend, even if you have expressed interest before, please contact NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net for the toll-free call-in number or to request a copy of the "Information for Facilitators" handbook. I can either send you a .pdf version via Dropbox for you to print and bind, or a hard copy by regular mail for \$15 to cover the cost of printing and mailing. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at NationalOffice@TCFCanada.net.

—Andy Bond

Worldwide Candle Lighting Day

Second Sunday in December

Are you planning a Candle Lighting in your area?

The TCF Canada website can help you get the word out.

Send us a detailed advertisement regarding your program - date, location, time, etc.

We will post it on the special events pages.

Forward details to:

Saskatoon@TCFCanada.net



A Simple Candle Lighting Service

We have so many new and emerging Chapters this year that we are running the same article this November as last year:

Is your chapter planning a candle lighting service? If so, let your local newspaper know. I have found that the North Shore News (our community newspaper) is always ready to send a photographer to take a picture of one of us lighting a candle in front of the framed image of our child. The caption in the newspaper gives notice of when our event takes place.

Because of this simple publicity, we always have new parents at our ceremony.

Our own chapter newsletter lets regulars and newcomers know that they should bring a framed photo of their deceased child to be displayed and then taken home. In preparation for these photos, we set up a tiered display, made of bricks and boards, covered with large red tablecloths and decorated with poinsettias.

When parents arrive, we invite them to write their child's name on a cardboard star and hang it on a small lighted tree, and to leave their child's photo on one of the red tiers.

After some welcoming words, and the reading of the TCF Credo, we ask parents to introduce themselves in the way we do at regular meetings: "My name is _____. My child _____ died _____ years ago from a falling accident, at age 18."

Then we light four symbolic candles (before the ceremony begins, the organizer has asked four parents to read a few sentences about the candle's significance, and then to light it.) In the handed-out program, the words that go with the candles are reproduced.

1.**RED CANDLE:** "As I light this red candle, let it symbolize **LOVE**. Love that we had for you our children, a love we still possess and a love which we are willing to share with others."

2.**BLUE CANDLE:** "As I light this blue candle, let it symbolize our **COURAGE**, courage first for taking the risk to be parents, and then our decisive choice to survive after our child or children have died."

3.**GREEN CANDLE:** "As I light this green candle, let it symbolize **GROWTH**, the growth that we have made since our child's death. We are in the process of adjusting to a new life, a new world, and accepting new horizons without our child's presence."

4.**WHITE CANDLE:** "As I light this white candle, let it symbolize **HOPE**, the hope we all have that some day our hearts will again possess joy. That we will once again know peace in our lives as we keep the spirit of our child in our hearts."

After the lighting of the four candles, one of the leaders says the following:

"The light from these four candles symbolizes the paths which we have chosen, the paths of Love, Courage, Growth and Hope. Walk with us, holding our hands, hearts, and spirits as we accept the greatest challenge life has to give. You will be our courage, you will watch us grow, through your love and our love combined, we shall find hope. These candles remind us not only of what we have lost, but also of what we had."

Now people are invited to come up one by one to light a candle for their child (or children). The parent, or parents, lifts the child's photo off the display. One of the leaders hands the participant a tea-light in a glass cup. The other leader lights it as the parent holds it forward. The parent holds the candle and the photo (facing the gathering) and says something like: "This candle is for Jeremy, whom we miss every day." Or, "...who always loved Christmas." Whatever comes to the parent's mind. The leaders have already lit candles for their children and said a few words, thus modelling the shortness of the speech.

Some of us light candles for bereaved parents who could not attend.

Participants are invited to respond in unison reading the "We remember them" line in the prayer below (from the *Gates of Prayer, Reform Judaism Prayer book*). (On printed handout.)

We Remember Them

At the rising of the sun and at its going down

we remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter

we remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring

we remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer

we remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn

we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart

we remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share

we remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live;

for they are a part of us as

we remember them.

A musical piece is then played—either a recording or, if you have a guitarist who sings, let him/her lead you in “This Little Light of Mine.” For a piece of recorded music, we usually use Karen Taylor’s “Precious Child.”

Everyone is now invited to partake in coffee, goodies and conversation.

–TCF North Shore (Vancouver) Chapter



Bright idea:

“Just breathe,” we are told. But how to do that when we are literally “choked up” with emotion? At a recent sharing meeting, one of our members led us through a very simple breathing exercise, the Out Breath:

Sit in a comfortable position, with your eyes either closed or softly focused in front of you. Breathe as usual, mentally noting “breathe in” and then “breathe out”. After a rhythmic pattern has formed in your mind, switch the order of your attention. Now, note “breathe out” followed by “breathe in”. What we noticed as we did the exercise was that our out-breaths became deeper, creating more space in our lungs for a deeper in-breath. This deeper, regular breathing led to a feeling of calmness in body and in emotions. How simple, and yet how effective.

–TCF Victoria Chapter

Year-end Greetings from TCF Canada

Wishing you strength and comfort for the holiday season. For suggestions of how to cope at this difficult time, please read the article “Holiday Survival” which can be found on our website www.TCFCanada.net.