



“Driving Holden Cars in Heaven”

I had always loved a good storm, especially when my family were all tucked up, safe and warm in their beds. But this storm was different; it pounded straight in to my heart, tearing my soul as it went. As I lay in bed listening to the rain as it ravished our tin roof, my heart pumped wildly and through the cracks in our blinds I could see the lightening as it flashed fiercely across the stormy skies. The thunder roared so loudly that I thought it vibrated our house. My pain was like this storm furious and unrelenting. It was a week to the day that we had left our precious Mick at the cemetery. I had watched the coffin slowly lowered into the hole, and I had walked away, leaving my boy to be buried in the ground.

Now as this storm raged around me, my heart contracted and leaped in pain – I worry is Mick cold or wet? Does he need me? Oh God: how will I live through this storm. My maternal instincts were on high alert, as my mind raced with fear, what could I do? It was moments like this, when the demons came to take you away. I pondered over our decision to bury him. Perhaps we should have had him cremated and then he could still be at home safe and warm in a lovely bottle in his room, were I could kiss the urn everyday. How insane my own thoughts sounded. All I knew in that moment was that he would never be coming home and his bed would never be warm again.

I was powerless to change anything and as a parent who had always been able to fix things or make things better, I felt I had failed – I had failed miserably because my boy was dead.

Quietly, not wanting to wake my husband up, I left our bed and went into Mick's. As I lifted the covers to slip under, I could smell him. Then I closed my eyes and let my other senses guide me. I could even imagine him close by. I felt the dents in the mattress were Mick's body had slept so many times. The contours of his shape left me in no doubt that his bed had been too small for him. I did remember him telling me his bed was far too small and that when he moved out he was going to buy a water bed.

Mick was 6 ft 1 ½ inches tall and at 17½ he still had plenty more inches to grow. I will never know how tall he was to become and at this realisation, my grief came tumbling out and in Mick's bed my tears joined the rain. My sobs were muffled by the thunder as I wept for him.

I wept for me. I wept till I had no more tears left and I knew that I would never enjoy a storm again. I must have slept for a while as I woke up as Tolsh (my husband) came into the room. The cold air raced over me as he pulled back the covers to join me. “Can you smell Mick?” I asked him. Tolsh nodded and reached for me, and in the comfort of Mick's bed we shared our thoughts and our pain. Over and over we would repeat our disbelief.

“I don't believe it.” These words were like a mantra that we said hundreds of times a day during those first few months. We slept huddled together and woke as the dawn light slowly crept in and embraced Mick's bedroom. We watched as the room came to life. We caressed his treasures lovingly with our eyes and we cried once more knowing he would never occupy this special space again.

It was another day – one week and one day since Mick left us, the sun had come up and miserably we got up with it.

A Kit-Kat wrapper and an empty Prima carton lay next to Mick's Nintendo and it was heart breaking to see the evidence that only days ago he was here enjoying a simple pleasure. I picked them both up and put them into a drawer – I remember thinking his DNA would still be on them and this made even rubbish a precious treasure. Today, 5 years later they remain in the same drawer and I still cannot bring myself to throw them out.

by
Jo Tolsher
Loving Mother of Mick
TCF Vic Au.



Mick Tolsher

Grieving, Healing and Growing

I don't believe any parent "gets over" the death of their child. It doesn't matter how old the child is when they die, the fact is that person was, and still is your child. I don't think we as parents ever get over something like that, how can we possibly. That thought to me is just incomprehensible. I don't think I will ever "get over" the death of my son Ben, I am learning as time goes on how to live with it. That for me is a day to day journey even now, eleven years after he died. It takes as long as it takes, we are all different. We all grieve for our child or children in very different ways. What one parent needs maybe another one doesn't.

When my son died I had five months off work. I just could not function, I could not concentrate enough to get even the smallest of tasks done. I was flat out trying to get it together to make myself a cup of tea at times. Yet, I know of other bereaved parents who go straight back to work after the death of their child or children. We are all different, we all need different things in all the stages of our grief.

The thing that I really miss now is that I don't have that special person, a child, who would be a grown man now of 30 around me. Ben was very close to me in many, many ways. In that special way a mother has with her son. He was always that special, special person who without even trying always said the right thing in times of a crisis. He was just on my wave length. No dramas, no fuss, he just knew me and I just knew him. He would just cut to the chase and tell it like it was. He was just great to have around. Sometimes too, if he thought I was on the wrong track about something or someone he wouldn't hesitate telling me to "get over it mum". That is the emptiness that I feel after so long without him. I miss my son with all the little things that made him my son. All that history together, he was here on the planet for eighteen years. We faced a lot together, his dreadful illness, hospital visits and operations, and all the other problems that come with family life.

So, no, I am not over the death of my child and I never will be. At best, I have learned in the main, to live with it. The grief is still there, it didn't get smaller and disintegrate with time, it is still in there. It is not as raw and bleeding as it was in the first few years but it is still there. The pain in my chest of a mother aching for he son has eased with time. But, the grief is still there.

Eventually, as time went on, I did go back to work, and slowly but surely I managed to re-build my life with the continual support of my husband, Ben's step-father and Compassionate Friends. It has been a long journey to get this far in my recovery. That is what compassionate friends did for me all those years ago, that is what compassionate friends does today, they assist us bereaved parents with grieving, healing and growing. Thank you Compassionate Friends.

Written by Barb Beames TCF, Vic – Aust
Mother of Benjamin McKenzie (18 yrs) died from illness in 1998.

Some Ways To Help A Grieving Spouse

Assign top priority to your marriage relationship.

Cultivate transparency, openness, and honesty.

Accept the pain that you feel. Be willing to share it and to listen to your spouse's expression of the pain he or she is feeling.

Be patient with your spouse and with yourself. Recognize that your spouse is probably not at the same place in the grief process as you, and that is okay.

Don't expect your spouse to be your only source of healing.

Keep working at communicating. Give special attention to your affection for each other. Learn and practice the gestures of love.

Remember to stay in touch physically; the importance of human touching and hugging is hard to over estimate.

Allow or create space in your relationship. Everyone is entitled to a degree of privacy with their feelings, including their grief.

Allow yourselves to enjoy life and each other.

Be willing to laugh together, as well as cry together. Work at finding some fun things to do together.

Help each other to remember that life is more than this child who has died. As important as this child is to you, and as much as you feel pain over his or her death, your marriage relationship is important too.

Howard
TCF, Norman,

