



# GRIEVE HEAL GROW



**The Compassionate Friends Victoria AU Magazine**

Supporting Parents and Siblings after a Child Dies

**RAFFLE  
TICKETS  
INSIDE**



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**24 HOUR** Grief Support

**Telephone 9888 4944 - Freecall 1800 641 091**

Phones Staffed by Bereaved Parents & Siblings

**[www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)**





## The Compassionate Friends Victoria Inc

The Compassionate Friends Victoria is part of a worldwide organization, which was founded in England in 1969 and established in Victoria in 1978. It is a mutual assistance, self-help organisation offering friendship and understanding to families following the death of a child or sibling of any age and from any cause. The primary purpose is to assist them in the rebuilding of their lives after the death of their child or sibling and to support their efforts to achieve physical, emotional and mental health.

### Board of Management

President: Andrew Weatherhead  
Vice President: Lauren Foster  
Secretary: Dorothy Ford  
Treasurer: Daniel Bendel

### Board Members

Damian Marken,  
Jan McNess, Ian Zadow

### Staff

Chief Executive Officer: John Sedunary  
Education Officer: Karen Philippzig  
Events & Services: Jenny Galati  
Volunteers (Centre & Telephone): Sue Brown  
Volunteers (Groups): Andrew McNess  
Administration Accounts Officer: Paul Gadsden

***The Compassionate Friends Victoria***  
***Patron: Rhonda Galbally AO***

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### *TCF Magazine Subscription Renewal*

The Compassionate Friends Victoria Inc. provides this magazine at no charge to bereaved families, for the first year. When your subscription is due, we will send you an invoice for magazine subscription and membership for the next 12 months \$33.50, Professionals & others \$48. If you are unable to pay the subscription or no longer require the magazine, please tick the appropriate box at the bottom of the invoice. Please let us know if any of your details are incorrect. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Centre during office hours, by phone, fax, mail or email. Donations and Love Gifts are, of course, welcome at any time during the year and you may continue to use the reverse side of your mailing label for this.

**24 HOUR** Grief Support - Available on Telephone 1800 641 091 / 03 9888 4944  
Bereaved Drop In Centre Hours 9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday

**Disclaimer:** Unless expressly stated, the views expressed in articles, poetry etc. in this magazine are not necessarily the views of TCF Board of Management, staff or the editorial team. The editor reserves the right to edit any contribution. Permission is given to Editors & Chapter Leaders of The Compassionate Friends to reprint material from the magazine. We request that credit be given to the author & their TCF Chapter.

### The Magazine Team

Editor: Deb Gates

Layout & Design: SM Creative

Team Members: Betty Baker, Pat Burns, Judy Dowling, Jenny Galati, Trevor Faragher, Mary Weatherhead





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## Notice Board

contributions to the next magazine...

If you would like to contribute a Love Gift, article or letter for the magazine, please submit the written piece by the 1st of March, May, July, September, November or January for inclusion in the following magazine.

While we do have set themes for each edition, these make up only a small part of the magazine. Poetry, artwork and stories about your child are needed for every edition.

Also look for photos / artwork you have done for our front page

August / September 2016: Father's Day & Men's Grief  
October / November 2016: Infant Grief / Still Born

You can send via mail to:  
The Editor, TCF, PO Box 171, Canterbury, Vic, 3126.  
or email [jennyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:jennyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)  
or [debbins65@yahoo.com.au](mailto:debbins65@yahoo.com.au)

# Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Compassionate Friends Victoria Inc.

**Tuesday 20th September 2016 at 7 pm**

**173 Canterbury Rd, Canterbury (Melways 46 E11)**

Supper will be served after the meeting.

Some parking is available at rear of the building. Further parking in the street.

Reports will be accepted at the meeting and in the event of there being vacant board positions an election will take place to fill the ordinary board member positions for a term of 3 years.

The Board shall at its first meeting after the annual general meeting appoint from its members, a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer and a Secretary who shall hold office for one year and shall retire from the respective offices at the conclusion of the first meeting of the Board, after the annual general meeting next ensuing but are eligible for re-appointment.

Dorothy Ford

Secretary. 1 June 2016

**Nomination forms are available from the Centre for any member who is interested in being part of the Board of Management Please ring the Centre 9888 4944 or email [support@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:support@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au) for further information.**

**Nominations close 3 pm 15th September 2016  
Please note this is not a grief sharing meeting**



# Editorial Team

How do you like the new look of the magazine? We'd love your feedback as we fine-tune it, so that it becomes the best magazine it can possibly be for our members. Is there something you'd like to see in the magazine? Are there things we haven't got quite right yet? Please let us know by contacting the Centre or email me at [debbins65@yahoo.com.au](mailto:debbins65@yahoo.com.au).

As we move into the cold months of the year, it is often very easy to feel down or low. Lack of sunlight affects many people, even those who are not grieving. For

those of us who have lost loved ones and are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), I recommend trying to get some sun (and vitamin D) at every opportunity. Sitting in the sun, sheltered from the wind is one of my favourite things to do in winter. I really don't like being cold, but I really do like sitting in the sun.

Blessings and stay warm.

**Deb Gates**  
**Mother of Melissa**  
**TCF Vic Au**



## *Time*

*Where does the time go?  
I wish that I knew  
It feels like forever  
Since I last held you*

*Where does the time go?  
I'm really not sure  
It seems just like yesterday  
You went through that door*

*Where does the time go?  
I want to know why  
It is but a moment  
Since you said goodbye*

*Where does the time go?  
An eternity  
Or just a heartbeat  
Since you were with me  
Deb Gates*



# CEO Report June - July 2016



*To say there have been some changes in the last few months would be an understatement!*

## **Our new Home:**

Of course there is the purchase of our new home. Here's what is happening:

- We take possession in mid-June
- We will do some minor modifications to the ground floor to make sure it suits our needs
- The ground floor will be designed to make an ideal **drop in centre for members**
- Upstairs will be used for administration
- It is planned to move in sometime before Christmas (date to be fixed)

## **The Board:**

Firstly, I would like to thank Mary Dellios for her contribution to the Board. Mary was a valued member for over 2 1/2 years and was involved in many significant decisions.

Bruce Houghton has also left as his business commitments didn't allow him to continue. Bruce was also an active member of the Board and was involved in significant decisions (including the hiring of me!).

We welcome three new members: Sonia Aberl, Ian Zadow and Damian Marken. Each of them brings considerable business experience as well as their lived experience to the Board.

Which brings us to some interesting staff movements:

## **Karen Philippzig & Andrew Weatherhead:**

Karen resigned as President of The Compassionate Friends Victoria Board as of 2 May 2016. Andrew resigned as Education Officer at The Compassionate Friends Victoria as of 13 May 2016.

Andrew has returned to the Board (he was on leave from the Board, while on a fixed-term contract of employment with TCF). Andrew was appointed President by the Board on the 14th of May 2016.

Karen has been appointed into a permanent role as Education Officer at TCF. Karen held a similar role at Eating Disorders Victoria and so, brings a wealth of experience and contacts to the role. Moreover, Karen's marketing experience will allow us to expand the audience for our speaking team.

This has been a time of significant upheaval for Karen and Andrew as they change their roles. I thank everyone – Board, staff and volunteers who have helped them to adjust to their new responsibilities.

## **Sue Brown:**

I regret to have to announce that Sue Brown has decided to leave The Compassionate Friends after nearly 11 years of working with us.

Sue will look for new opportunities closer to home. (It took Sue over 2.5 hours to travel to work today! This is not unusual.)

Sue will be really missed by us all. We will miss her dedication to our members and volunteers – nothing was ever too much. We will miss the warmth of her greetings and the way she makes each of us feel so special. We will also miss Sue's absolute joy for life: her ready laugh, incredibly bright smile and witty sense of humour!

Please look elsewhere in the magazine for details of Sue's farewell.

## **Jenny Galati:**

I am pleased to announce that Jenny Galati will take over as our new Volunteer Co-ordinator. Jenny will work with Sue during June to make sure that there is a smooth transition.

This is both a happy and sad time as we see people take on new roles and others depart. However, I take comfort in knowing that no one is going too far and new opportunities have opened up.

## **John Sedunary**

Chief Executive Officer





# President's Report for June - July 2016



I am the new president of The Compassionate Friends. I might be a new name to you so here are some details about me, about my loss and about how I became involved with The Compassionate Friends Victoria.

I was born in 1949 in England. I have been married to my wife Mary for 43 years. We

had 2 children, Erica and Max. Erica has a son, Gavin, who is now 7. I was a physiotherapist until December 2012.

As a child, Max suffered from Attention Deficit Disorder and, as an adult, he was diagnosed as bipolar. Sadly, after many struggles, Max became an alcoholic. In late 2008, in a drunken stupor, Max broke his ankle and he was on pain medication after that which included codeine. I did not know then and I only found out much later that the combination of codeine and large amounts of alcohol can be lethal. Max died in March 2009. He was 26.

After Max died, every aspect of my life changed. Mary telephoned The Compassionate Friends (after someone suggested it) and I saw a look of calmness come over her that I hadn't seen before. Suddenly I felt connected with The Compassionate Friends.

I have some skill in public speaking and I was asked to join The Compassionate Friends speaking team. I said yes. Thank goodness I did because then I started learning about grief and about the differing grief journeys that others were experiencing. I started meeting people like Jon & Sue Stebbins who gave me great insight. I started noticing that this information and sharing with others in The Compassionate Friends was helping me sort through what I was experiencing. I will always be grateful for this. In fact, I did the group leadership and listening courses so that I could learn more. I am so lucky that I stumbled on to the support offered by The Compassionate Friends and to find that "We need not walk alone".

I joined the board in May 2013. In July last year I became a staff member as the Education Officer which meant stepping down from the board. There was a need to redevelop the speaking team and to regenerate the bookings for going to outside groups. It is so important to explain to non-bereaved people who we are, what we bereaved need and how grief really works. After 10 months, I am finishing as Education Officer although I will still be working a lot with the speaking team. I am privileged to have been able to work with the other staff at The Compassionate Friends. Karen Philippzig (who is an enormously capable member and outgoing president) will be the new Education Officer.

Now I am rejoining the board and I have been asked to take over the presidency. I am privileged to be following other presidents of The Compassionate Friends who have played a major role in the development of what we have today. I owe a lot to my good friend John Bradley who was president for several years until last December.

Best wishes to all of our members.

**Andrew Weatherhead**

President

[andrew.w@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:andrew.w@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)





# Walk To Remember 2016

This year the Walk to Remember was held on Sunday 17th April, alongside the Yarra River. We had approx 120 people attend this year's walk. Meeting at 11.00am with time to catch up while we waited for the walk to begin, we collected our T-shirts and flowers to carry and then we began the walk.

I come to the walk each year with my family to walk in memory of my brother Val and my niece Danielle. The walk set off at 11.45. We walked along the Yarra from Anderson St down to Prince's Bridge, across the river and then back down the other side to the Anderson Bridge where we stopped for a small service. Lauren Foster, Vice President, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming along. Lauren read out a poem and after that twelve white doves were released. Then it was time to drop the flowers that we had carried on the walk into the Yarra, in memory of our child or sibling.

Following our service on the bridge we walked back to the start and Jenny and her team had BBQ lunch all ready to go. We all grabbed something to eat and then we were able to chat to each other again while we enjoyed our lunch. This is always a great time just to be able to talk to other people that have lost a loved one.

A big thank-you to The Compassionate Friends for putting this walk on every year.

**Irma Long**  
(Bereaved sister of Val)  
TCF Vic Au





## **Talking about suicide: Could I have done anything to prevent it? What can be done to prevent future suicides? How can I support family and friends after suicide?**

**Jon and Sue Stebbins**

[Parents of Matthew who took his own life]

In this article we are especially speaking to those who are living through the experience of a loved one taking their own life – and have a desire to understand more about this devastating experience. We are also speaking to those who want to help those affected by suicide.

The pain of losing a child, sibling or grandchild is the same no matter how our loved one dies – very intense, very enduring – and each death brings with it special issues that relate to the type of death. In running The Compassionate Friends Bereaved by Suicide support group for 17 years, we became very familiar with the special issues faced, and the challenging questions raised, by those who experienced a son, daughter, sibling or grandchild choosing to take their own life.

As might be expected, issues involved with handling the strength and intensity of the pain of the loss predominated. But close behind was the complex issue of responsibility, with sub-issues such as anger and blame and questioning of parenting embedded, raising heart-rending questions such as: Why didn't I hear her pain? Why didn't I see the signs? Was there something I could have/should have said or done? Why didn't the doctor/counsellor tell me about his threats of suicide? Why didn't he/she tell me they were struggling? Why was I so blind? What sort of a mother/father am I that I missed his/her signals of distress?

As we listened to these distressing cries of anguish, it became clear that the questions reflected a serious lack of knowledge about suicide in the community. Suicide is a scary subject to think about before you really have to, so the lack of knowledge is understandable. In the remainder of this article, we would like to briefly address this gap in community knowledge.

The discussion below draws on our own personal experiences following the suicide death of our son, Matthew, and our subsequent research and experiences working with many families affected by suicide. Out of our experiences we put forward six important messages that relate to understanding and helping with Suicide Prevention and Intervention (How do I recognise someone is thinking of suicide? What do I do to prevent it?), and offer one guideline on providing helpful Support after Suicide (how can I best support those left behind?).

### ***Suicide Prevention & Intervention***

#### ***Message 1 – Start from NOW***

The first and vital message is to start from NOW! When confronted by the loss of a loved one, most of us probably knew very little about suicide, and were very vague about the signs signaling possible suicide, and what to do even if alerted, and perhaps only knowing a little more about after-suicide support. We suggest that beating ourselves about the head is not helpful. If we want to be more prepared to help in the future, we should probably just accept our past lack of knowledge, and look to future understanding.

#### ***Message 2 – Know your attitudes and beliefs about suicide***

Like Message 1, this is also just preparing ourselves to become more equipped for involvement. We know that those who talk of suicide or repeatedly attempt, often succeed. So quick and confident action is needed, and being clear on where you stand on suicide will influence what you do. We suggest thinking through your answers (attitudes) to the following questions is a good start:

- (1) Does a person have the right to choose to take his/her own life?
- (2) Do you believe that a person contemplating suicide is thinking rationally or irrationally at the time?
- (3) Do you believe you have a responsibility to intervene forcibly to prevent a suicide?
- (4) What are you actually dealing with when you face someone contemplating suicide? What is happening in their world? What is happening in your world?

These questions do need careful thought, because the answers are not simple. Our answers to these questions are influenced by a personal belief that each person's life is precious, so we would start with Question (4), and the cold hard data on the world of people contemplating suicide is that they are at that time experiencing immense emotional pain. Which leads to Message 3.





### ***Message 3 – Know the mind of someone contemplating suicide.***

Confronted by someone showing great emotional distress and giving messages of suicide suggests that we need to get inside their world, with the starting point an acceptance that their focus is probably on pain, not on killing themselves. This suggests assertively (forcefully??) encouraging them to talk about this pain and what has brought it on.

So back to the questions. Whether they have the right or not to kill themselves [Q(1)] becomes irrelevant to us. What we want to know is whether they have had access to and looked at all options for dealing with their inner pain, so we would dig in to check this out. And our answer to Q (2) becomes “I don’t know whether they are thinking rationally or not”, but I will check out the clarity of their thinking. Finally, our answer to Q (3) becomes “yes” – if by ‘forcefully’ this means “assertively” digging in to find out if they have fully explored all “help” options.

### ***Message 4 – Know (& spread this message) that it is OK to be yourself. Who else can you be? Work from that.***

This message comes from data suggesting that most suicidal people have strong feelings of inadequacy. This means working towards instilling such messages as, “It is OK not being able to cope”. “It is OK to feel inadequate & weak at times”. “It is OK not to compete with some mythical perfection”. And most importantly, “It is not just OK to ask for help – it is vital!”

### ***Message 5 – Know the common causes or signs that MAY lead to suicide.***

More detail is available on the internet, but it is helpful to be aware that there are some signs that ring bells and need checking out. It covers such things as:

- Actions – Previous attempts, acting recklessly, overuse of drugs/alcohol, becoming distant, giving away things they care about.
- Messages reflecting very negative self perceptions.
- Environmental triggers – A traumatic event, loss of a significant person or relationship or role.

### ***Message 6 – Finally, if you fear someone is contemplating suicide, ask directly, get them talking, seek help, and debrief afterwards.***

It is very helpful knowing that most people contemplating suicide report immense feelings of relief when someone clearly indicates they have picked up their pain.



### **A Guideline On Supporting Families And Friends After Suicide**

In our experience, the core of supporting those affected by suicide is essentially the same as supporting those affected by any other trauma. That is, genuine caring combined with empathic, non-judgemental listening to help clarify the feelings and issues the individual is dealing with. This, we believe, is the non-negotiable starting point. But we would add that having some understanding of the special issues linked to suicide will add strength to your listening base, because this helps you to tune in faster and more accurately.

Of course nothing in life is absolutely certain, but in our experience, almost all those who admit to serious suicidal thinking will grasp any genuine helping hand that is offered. This is an important positive, because it means the door of hope is still open. Knowing this encourages you as a helper to be persistently assertive in assisting them find effective help – to keep that door of hope open.

Finally, as helpers we need to nurture ourselves, which means being very clear about our own boundaries – knowing when we have reached the edge of our capabilities, our emotional limits. Knowing when to say “It is time to pass responsibility on” – and cleansing our heads and our hearts by talking through the whole experience with a caring and competent debriefer.

### **An Important Acknowledgement**

We would like to emphasise that the thoughts and ideas expressed above are grounded in the stories of the many families we have shared and worked with over thirty odd years. The courage and determination we continually observed in their struggle to make sense of and rebuild after such a terrifying trauma has been for us both humbling and a strong motivator to continue working to improve our own understanding and support more effectively.

**Jon and Sue Stebbins**  
TCF Vic Au



# Brief Snapshot of Suicide in Australia

- Suicide is a prominent public health concern. Over a five year period from 2010 to 2014, the average number of suicide deaths per year was 2,577.
  - In 2014, there were 2,160 males (18.4 per 100,000) and 704 females (5.9 per 100,000) that died by suicide, a total of 2,864 deaths (12.0 per 100,000), which equates to an average of 7.8 deaths by suicide in Australia each day.
  - The highest age-specific suicide rate for males in 2014 was observed in the 85+ age group (37.6 per 100,000). This rate was considerably higher than the age-specific suicide rate observed in all other age groups, with the next highest age-specific suicide rate being in the 40-44 and 50-54 year age groups (29.9 and 29.2 per 100,000 respectively) and the 30-34 year age group (26.8 per 100,000). The lowest age-specific suicide rate for males was in the 0-14 year age group (0.3 per 100,000) and the 15-19 year age group (12.1 per 100,000).
  - The highest age-specific suicide rate for females in 2014 was observed in the 35-39 age group (9.2 per 100,000), followed by the 50-54 age group (8.6 per 100,000), the 40-44 and 45-49 age groups (8.2 and 8.1 per 100,000 respectively) and the 55-59 age group (7.6 per 100,000). The lowest age-specific suicide rate for females was observed in the 0-14 age group (0.7 per 100,000) followed by the 75-79 age group (3.4 per 100,000) and the 15-19 age group (5.3 per 100,000).
  - In 2014, approximately 75% of people who died by suicide were males and 25% were females.
  - Suicide accounted for 1.9% of deaths from all causes in 2014. In males 2.8% of all deaths were attributed to suicide, while the rate for females was 0.9%.
- See more at: <http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/facts-and-stats#sthash.hii4GCEj.dpuf>

The Compassionate Friends Victoria  
*"TIME OUT"*  
 Retreat Accommodation Program

*Affordable accommodation – for when you need some  
 "time out" from your daily life and the impact of grief.*

This program provides accommodation at a much reduced rate for  
 TCF members and their families who need – at fairly short notice –  
 an escape from their day-to-day grief.

Some properties are available for a couple of days mid-week,  
 or for a full week, at a greatly reduced fee.

Please call our Bookings Officer Andrew McNess at the Centre  
 - ph: (03) 9888 4944 or free call 1800 641 091 (Country Victoria) -  
 or email: [andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)  
 – for details and availability.



# Becoming a Volunteer!

When Abe, my eldest son, died, at the age of 19 years 11 months, I would never in a million years have thought that I would or could ever volunteer for The Compassionate Friends. In fact, I never even thought I would talk about him and my pain to anyone who didn't know him!!! How wrong I was.

In the beginning, I used to receive the magazines religiously and it was five years later that I entered the Centre and for the first time felt like I was home with friends and not alone with my pain still at five years. It was then that I decided I wanted to become a volunteer. This was not only to be with other volunteers, who have experienced the loss of a son, daughter, brother or sister, but to offer my support and give hope to those who are struggling with this new life they have been thrown into and that I have learnt to live with. I must say it has been one of the best decisions I have ever made and that was 14 years ago. My first duties were helping in the office, with mail, writing cards and other tasks that were required and I then undertook the training for the phones as well as the public speaking and have not looked back.

I truly believe that only those who have lived this nightmare can truly understand enough to offer genuine support, care and hope to those who need us. We also know that we will never 'get over it' but we do eventually learn to live around our pain and loss. If you are thinking of becoming a volunteer, and have passed the first anniversary of the loss of your son, daughter, brother or sister, we always welcome new volunteers. You may start with helping out in the office, undertaking easy tasks but would include any relevant training or assistance with a

'Buddy'. If you have passed the second anniversary, you may wish to undertake the Listening Skills Training or the Group Leader Training, to enable you to take the calls and offer support and hope on a different level. There are other roles also, which include Community Education, helping with events, such as The Gathering, Walk To Remember and many other tasks that may be of interest to you. If this is something you have thought of but feel a little nervous or anxious, we can meet privately in the library for a chat and I can provide you with any further information that you may need, otherwise if you would like to attend the next Induction Day, August 6th!!

Call me at the Centre on 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 or email me on [sueb@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:sueb@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au) Thank you.

**Sue Brown**  
Volunteer Coordinator and bereaved mother of Abe



## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

***Volunteers are the lifeblood of The Compassionate Friends – without them the organisation would not exist.***

It is through the sharing of their experiences – over the phone, support groups through companionship or via community education in its various forms – that volunteers directly support our members.

There is a great deal of indirect support provided to our members by volunteers – compiling and distributing our magazine, carrying administration at the Centre, editing and writing material for brochures/website/Facebook or being on the Board.

In fact, there is a host of ways a person can contribute to TCF as a volunteer.

***Some of the work may be able to be completed from home***

**Right now we are looking for volunteers to help us to:**

- Telephone support day time
- Streamline our administration
- Write policy and procedures
- Help with the relocation to the new building
- Conduct research into grief and bereavement related areas
- Write grant applications
- Help with the introduction with Office 365 – especially training
- Assist with the development of on-line training modules





# Talking with Sue Brown



***After nearly 11 years of outstanding service to The Compassionate Friends Victoria community, Sue Brown has decided to leave our organisation.***

An enormously popular staff member, Sue has had a huge impact on her colleagues, volunteers and our members. In this article, Board Member Dorothy Ford talks with Sue about her involvement with The Compassionate Friends Victoria and her approach to her role.

## ***When did you get involved with The Compassionate Friends?***

My eldest son Abe died in a road accident on Valentine's Day in 1997.

It was about five years after Abe died that I became involved with the Compassionate Friends Victoria. I rang the Centre after his death and I received the magazine, but due to my children being younger and me wanting to be by myself, I decided I didn't want to get involved. I decided that I didn't want anything to do with The Compassionate Friends, as I didn't want to be one of them! – a bereaved parent. I did not want to share my son with people who didn't know me or my precious son, so why should I share him with them? So I kept him to myself and my time was then taken up when my daughter had a serious accident, only six months later. I received the magazine regularly and I absolutely loved that I linked with it – everything that was written was what I was going through. It was after some time that I read of the opportunity to go to New South Wales to The Compassionate Friends International Gathering in Sydney.

I didn't know anyone and I thought no one would bother me, but it turned out to be the most amazing experience. I walked in alone into that massive room with people I had never met, never spoken to, from all parts of the globe and all walks of life, but feeling that I had come home.

There were hundreds of bereaved parents there and I felt that they were all my friends. I thought "this is what have been missing out on." It was then that I decided to volunteer at The Compassionate Friends Victoria, to become part of this unique 'family', and to be 'one of them'.

## ***Early involvement – realising that this is normal and 'it is the new world'***

I came into The Compassionate Friends Centre every second Thursday on my day off. I attended the Listening Skills training and also undertook the Public Speaking Skills training. I gave my very first Compassionate Friends presentation for the RSL Women's AGM: it was amazing! Up until then, I could never talk in public, especially about myself and my son Abe, so to do this was such a personal achievement for me.

I started volunteering at the Centre, doing the mail and other admin tasks, and then taking bereavement phone calls. This involvement was very good as it helped me feel not so alone.

I realised what I had missed out on all those many years. I could have done this much earlier and found a connection with people who are like me, who had been through what I had been through, but were also still OK to smile and cry, but not feel bad about those emotions. It was just like feeling that I belonged again.

I was going through what many go through – you actually feel like an alien on another planet because you have changed, you don't know who you are and you don't know what your world is anymore. But being at The Compassionate Friends Victoria was like 'this is the new world' – it showed me that these feelings were normal.

## ***On the job – flexible opportunities to help to rebuild confidence***

When I commenced my new role as Volunteer Coordinator in 2005, I was able to establish a really lovely connection supporting the volunteers and the bereaved families. For example, there are some volunteers who benefit from a



***"We are given a gift by every volunteer who comes through that door"***

***Sue Brown***

little bit of extra encouragement. It is rewarding to see people who are struggling a little bit, to be able to give tasks and encouragement to help them build their confidence.

Due to our experience, many of us lose our confidence, so it is a really gentle environment to help people feel a valued part of the organisation. We can create flexible opportunities, to take into consideration not just people's skills but also their different vulnerabilities and where they are in their grief. Being a bereaved parent myself, I am very aware that our volunteers 'have moments' as I also 'have moments' and at the end of the day we are all bereaved families with broken hearts.

So it is important to treat the volunteers with respect and dignity but also with understanding.

### ***Volunteers – we all have vulnerable moments***

Yes, that is important, even years after our loss. Driving into work this year, after Mother's Day, I felt very sad as I still miss Abe very much. I know he would be so proud of his brothers and sister, who also miss him very much. We all have vulnerable moments, no matter how many years pass.

I felt a great responsibility in my role, not just the administration part, but being sensitive and aware of the volunteers' vulnerable moments. I have had the great privilege to be working with some amazing people and supporting and encouraging the volunteers to support other bereaved families. It is a cycle and it is also wonderful when you have spoken to people early in their bereavement and then after a few years to see them come in as a volunteer. It really is an amazing feeling!

### ***Volunteers as individuals – crafting opportunities to contribute***

There is a good range of tasks for volunteers to do at the Centre, but you also have to understand that every volunteer is individual in their skills and what they are capable of and what they wish to partake in and it is so important to be aware of this. There are a range of opportunities for people who want to undertake admin tasks and also for those who want to work on projects that may relate to fundraising, the Time Out and other projects. The whole of the organisation works together in involving volunteers. The CEO might want a project done, as might Andrew, our Group Leader Coordinator

or Jenny, our Events Coordinator, etc. There are many tasks and roles for everyone. The only criterion is that they have passed the first anniversary of losing their son or daughter, brother or sister. To do phones or groups they have to have passed their second anniversary.

### ***Volunteer as gift giver***

When volunteers give a day or half a day to come into the Centre, either weekly, fortnightly or monthly, I see that as a gift for the organisation. We are given a gift by every volunteer who comes through that door. I like to encourage, I like to embrace and I like to treasure them for the work that they all do.



I do not see volunteers as free labour coming in to do jobs that we do not want to do. I see our volunteers as genuine, beautiful, caring people who come in to support not just the organisation but the whole membership, regardless of the role or tasks they are doing. It all benefits the organisation but primarily the bereaved families.

I tried to get to know the volunteers well; I listened and felt. It is vital that we get to know each person and their families, and be interested, because they have a life outside of The Compassionate Friends that is part of them. I believe it is so important that they feel heard, they feel welcomed and treasured, but also that they feel they are doing a job that is necessary to the organisation or directly to other bereaved families.



***"Sue B always so patient and kind with us - she will sit and listen to how we are feeling and share a laugh"***

***-Volunteer***

### ***Communicating with members***

Communicating with members has been a very important part of my role: I truly believe it is a delicate, but genuine process. It is vital that we speak to people with great respect and understanding what they genuinely feel – and that they are being heard and they are not alone.

With the grief calls it is most important that callers not only feel comforted and understood but also that they feel supported. It is also important that they feel hope, along with the knowledge that what they are feeling is normal for what they have experienced.

That is absolutely so important. They may be feeling terrible things and thoughts, including for example: that they are going mad, that they don't want to be here, is this real? Is this serious?

***Sue's wicked sense of humour bought levity to many situations and kept us all smiling..... She is an honourable person with whom you could share your innermost thoughts knowing there would be no judgements, just genuine care.***

***Anne Wicking – Former CEO***

I know that they are normal and that this is a part of our unique type of grief. I feel really blessed and honoured that I could share my experiences and that I could relate them to people. As a result, they felt understood, heard and had hope that they were not always going to feel like this.

Yes, they may be OK on one day and bad on the next, but the most important thing is that they felt heard, validated and connected with the person, either myself or volunteers, on the other end of the line and that the person truly understood as best they could.

At the end of the day to have someone truly understand, is priceless.

***It is really listening to those people, not so much sharing your experience with them- because I do not believe that is why they ring.***

Our callers ring to be heard and to be reaffirmed that their grief will eventually get easier to live with. I always made a point of not talking too much about my story or my grief with people.

A little snippet sometimes, but putting the focus back on them and their story. If they asked, I would briefly tell them and then get back on track to them. They are trying to cope with their own grief as much as they can and they called for support not to have my grief added onto their grief.

### ***The most important thing***

I think that the most important thing in the Coordinator's role at the Centre is that the volunteers do not just feel that they are coming in just to fill in and do jobs. I want them to feel valued, as they are great contributors to the organisation and how it develops and also to the bereaved families.

We have a few volunteers who come in specifically to write the anniversary cards. For the members who receive the cards it is beautiful to know, someone has remembered our loved one and writing cards is a specialised gift. Some volunteers find it very difficult to do the cards, which is fine, as there are many other tasks. I tried my best to give each volunteer tasks that suited their gifts. That is why it is most important that we get to know each volunteer personally.







***"The first time I spoke with Sue I knew I was in the right place. The warmth and care in her voice and the empathy in her words made me feel so comforted - I had found someone who finally got me. Thank heavens"***

***-Member***

### ***In conclusion***

Whilst I feel sad about leaving, I believe it is the right time for me to hand over the reins for someone to bring fresh and new ideas for the organisation and the volunteers. Driving from my home in Berwick to Canterbury is also taking longer and longer each morning and evening and I am getting older. I feel that the time has come to find a job a bit closer to home. I have worked since I was 15 and I am looking forward to having a break.

I can honestly say almost 11 years as coordinator has been amazing. I feel very blessed to have been part of people's journeys not just with the volunteers but with the members and I feel truly honoured to have worked in an organisation that has given support, comfort and hope to bereaved volunteers and members.

Many volunteers have touched my heart for the strength and courage that they carry and share. I will miss the volunteers and the love that is felt within the organisation and I will miss the members and the environment. It is a caring and nurturing environment and I know I will never work in such a loving place again.

### ***What does success look like to Sue?***

That very person who walks through The Compassionate Friends' door feels understood, connected and valued: everyone!




## ***"A special Farewell Afternoon for Sue Brown"***

*Afternoon Tea will be held at The Compassionate Friends 173 Canterbury Rd Canterbury*

***Wednesday 6th July from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm***

*Please feel free to come along to farewell Sue after 11 years of amazing work as  
The Compassionate Friends, Volunteer Coordinator.*

*We would like to take this opportunity to show Sue our appreciation for all she has contributed  
to our organisation and wish her all the best on her next venture. Can you please RSVP to Jenny Galati  
on 9888 4034 or by email [jennyyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:jennyyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au) by Monday 4th July*





# The Coronial Process

My son, Sam, was shot dead on 13th May, 2008. Not long after he died, I discovered there was going to be an inquest into his death. I was under the misapprehension that an inquest would take half a day, at the most. I thought even that was too long, so imagine my shock when I discovered that the inquest into Sam's death would be going on for three weeks, and spread out over a period of four months. (Some inquests are much shorter, a very few end up being a lot more involved.)

I received a letter from the Coroners Court in early March of 2011, to say that the first Directions Hearing would be held the following May. I definitely felt lost with regards to the legal processes, and learned about the coronial process as I went along. I asked Legal Aid to represent me in court, and even though it was a mandatory inquest, they rejected my plea for assistance five times. I then had to seek assistance from other sources. Lucky for me, a law firm was willing to help me, pro bono. If they hadn't, I don't know what I would have done.



It was very nerve wracking and surreal, walking into the courtroom on the day of the Directions Hearing. I quietly sat there, taking everything in, as I listened to my lawyers discuss matters with lawyers from opposing sides. When the court session ended, I discovered that there would be another three directions hearings to sit through. This was to ensure that all interested legal parties had received all requested relevant documents, the witness list was

finalized, and any other matters attended to before the inquest began.

Finally, the inquest date was set for the 4th December, 2011. On that first day of court, the courtroom was packed. "What am I doing here?" I asked myself. "Where can I run to and hide?" Alas, nowhere.

Sitting near the front row of seats was the person who had shot my son, and another young man who had been shot. It was very confronting for all of us, to say the least. I then went and sat at the table behind the "bar", which is where the lawyers all sit.

Going to court every day for three weeks, and listening to evidence over and over, was very distressing. There were arguments about what had happened, a lot of conflicting evidence, also other evidence that had gone missing. While all this was going on, I felt as though I was still stuck in the early stages of the grieving process, and unable to move forward from it.

Was that the end of it? No, unfortunately. There was a Submissions Hearing to sit through, then I had to wait two years for the coroner to hand down her Findings. So, from the time Sam died, to the time the Findings were handed down, was six very long years. The Coroners Court has reduced that time frame now, for which I am truly thankful. No family should ever have to go through such an ordeal.

I would like to leave others who are going through the horrible coronial process, with some hope. You may feel as though you are stuck in some dark and ugly tunnel, with no end in sight, but one day, it really will all be over. What kept me going, were my friends at The Compassionate Friends. Sue and Andrew, who were there with me from the beginning. Everyone else who helped me along the way, just by listening to me. I will never be able to thank them enough. I am now a volunteer myself, and I love it. I feel I am giving to others in honor of my son, as others have given to me.

**Bobbi Cobani**  
**Bereaved mother of my precious son,**  
**Sam 28/05/82 – 13/05/2008**

# BROTHERS & SISTERS



The Siblings Magazine of The Compassionate Friends Victoria

*Mourning is one of the most profound human experiences that it is possible to have... The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a loved one and to continue to treasure the memory of that loss is one of our noblest human traits.*  
- **Edwin S. Shneidman, famed American suicidologist**

*A feeling of pleasure or solace can be so hard to find when you are in the depths of your grief. Sometimes it's the little things that help get you through the day. You may think your comforts sound ridiculous to others, but there is nothing ridiculous about finding one little thing to help you feel good in the midst of pain and sorrow!*  
- **Elizabeth Berrien, Creative Grieving: A Hip Chick's Path from Loss to Hope**

*The reality is that we don't forget, move on, and have closure, but rather we honour, we remember, and incorporate our children and siblings into our lives in a new way. In fact, keeping memories of your loved one alive in your mind and heart is an important part of your healing journey.*  
- **Harriet Schiff, author of The Bereaved Parent**

Dear friends,

Welcome to the June/July edition of Brothers & Sisters magazine. This issue centres on the theme of "grief and avoidance" – what does grief-related avoidance look like? Can it be useful? When is it detrimental?

The article comes from the excellent "What's Your Grief?" site, a really personable, thoughtful and informative resource on grief and bereavement (there are more details on this site contained within).

As you will have already noticed, this edition also includes a range of insightful quotes on the nature of grief and the reality of loving attachments.

If you would ever like to contribute to Brothers & Sisters – whether it be an article, a poem or an image – please feel welcome to do so. (Please send to [andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au))

Best Wishes  
Andrew McNess  
Volunteers (Groups) Co-ordinator

**24 HOUR Grief Support**  
**Telephone 9888 4944 - Freecall 1800 641 091**  
Phones Staffed by Bereaved Parents & Siblings  
**[www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)**







# BROTHERS & SISTERS

## Understanding Avoidance in Grief

Authors: Eleanor & Litsa ("What's Your Grief?" website)

Website: <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/>

This article is found at: <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/avoidance-in-grief/>



Avoidance is an important concept for griever to understand. Some of you may remember we briefly touched on this subject when we discussed avoidance coping vs. taking a break from grief. Although this post made an important distinction, it didn't seek to explain avoidance and the ways in which this type of coping might impact one's experience and behavior in relation to the death of a loved one. We have a lot to cover today so instead of our usual introductory meandering I'm going to get right down to business.

### What do we mean by avoidance?

To avoid is broadly defined as, "To keep away from or stop oneself from doing (something)". At face value, this doesn't appear to be a complicated concept. You probably avoid every day, I know I do!

For example, I might avoid Interstate 695 on my way home from work because it's always congested. Then I might avoid an old acquaintance in the grocery store because I don't feel like talking. Finally, I might avoid getting in line behind a sniffing woman with a cart full of ginger ale, popsicles and cold medicine.

Now I want you to take a minute to think about this example and identify what you think I'm avoiding. Am I avoiding people and places? Technically yes, but why?

The real reasons why I steer clear of these specific people and places come from a desire to avoid the unpleasant experiences and feelings I associate with traffic, awkward encounters and illness.

When we talk about avoidance in regards to grief, we are usually referring to experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance is an attempt to block out, reduce or change unpleasant thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations. These are internal experiences that are perceived to be painful or threatening and might include fears of losing control, being embarrassed, or physical harm and thoughts and feelings including shame, guilt, hopelessness, meaninglessness, separation, isolation, etc. Now please note I say "perceive to be painful or threatening,". These judgements are often subjective and what is perceived as threatening to one may seem totally irrational to another.

### Why might griever engage in avoidance?

Griever must walk a gauntlet of traumatic memories, painful emotions, logistical issues, secondary losses, and so on. At first one might feel shackled down by the weight of all consuming grief, but over time find they have periods of semi-normalcy broken up by waves of grief.



# BROTHERS & SISTERS

The onset of a grief wave is sometimes predictable but often not and each new wave brings with it an ocean of unpleasant thoughts, reminders, sensations and memories. For many people, grief is the first time they experience emotions of this type and intensity and in response they may exhibit physical, behavioral and emotional reactions they aren't comfortable with. This may be particularly true for those who have yet to develop a reliable set of coping skills. Although grief is always unpleasant and uncomfortable, for some there are aspects that actually seem threatening and these perceptions can lead to attempts to control or avoid frightening feelings and reactions.

## A few examples:

- I avoid going to church because I fear the hymns will remind me of my loved one and I will become emotional in public.
- I avoid the street where my wife had her accident because I'm afraid it will trigger traumatic memories.
- I avoid the hospital because I fear the machines and people in scrubs will trigger overwhelming memories and I will panic.
- I avoid feeling the emotions of grief because I fear losing control or going crazy.
- I avoid going to sleep at night because I'm afraid I'll have nightmares.
- I avoid putting my son's belongings away because I fear I will lose my connection to him and he will disappear.
- I avoid being exposed to my son's belongings by putting them away immediately because I'm afraid if I see them every day the pain will never go away.
- I avoid feelings of grief around my partner's overdose because I fear I will find I'm responsible.

## What does avoidance look like?

- Substance use
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Throwing oneself into work, advocacy, volunteering, etc
- Staying busy
- Avoidance of people, places and activities out of fear of grief being triggered

- Avoidance or denial of feelings and emotions
- Grief that appears to be absent: lack of emotion and acting as though everything is fine

## When is avoidance useful?

Avoidance can be useful, especially when one is dealing with something as painful and enduring as grief. During the first few days after a death, feelings of grief can be overwhelming, yet ritual and tradition dictate that griever must get dressed, plan services, tie up loose ends, and deal with family and friends. I've often heard people say that they put off crying during these first few days because they knew if they started crying a volcano of emotion would erupt and they would be paralyzed.

Beyond the first few days after a death, griever must find a way to manage their emotions in the weeks and months that follow. Grieving parents never get to take time off and grieving students and employees are often back to their responsibilities within days to weeks after a loss. In order to manage responsibilities, be a functional family and/or society member and just generally get stuff done, it is often necessary to avoid certain grief reminders and triggers from time to time. Lastly, as we discussed in our post on avoidance coping vs. grief relief, sometimes it's just necessary to take a break from grief. This is a major tenant of the Dual Process Model of grief which says that griever must oscillate between confronting their loss (coping) and avoiding it (seeking respite).

## When is avoidance maladaptive?

Although we've noted that avoidance can be useful, for many it can become a harmful cycle that persists to the detriment of personal healing. Many mistakenly think that if they make efforts to avoid their feelings for long enough these unpleasant emotions will be kept at bay or fade away, when in actuality deliberate attempts to suppress certain thoughts often make them more likely to surface.

While one is busy trying to avoid and control their grief, their world gets smaller and more complicated. Fear of grief related thoughts and emotions can start to limit the ways in which a griever is able to fill their roles as a spouse, parent, friend, employee and society member and impacts their overall ability to be the person they want to be.

A mother who's no longer willing to sing to her child, a father who's too afraid to teach his son to drive, a widow who's afraid to fall in love again, a daughter living in a house full of her parent's old relics, and a son hesitant to face sleep without





# BROTHERS & SISTERS

the help of a bottle of wine – these grievors are stranded, abandoned, intoxicated and absent and their inability to live in the present keeps them forever stuck in the past.

Avoiding seemingly painful stimuli might prove beneficial in the immediate, but it is a short term solution. It's like taking an aspirin to treat a broken arm; it may temporarily dull the sting, but if one doesn't address the broken bone they will never be

able to heal. In order to gain understanding, perspective and tolerance for the pain of grief, one needs to allow themselves to actually feel it, face it, and be present with it in the moment and in the future.

Thank you to the authors for their kind permission to use this article.

I know that's what people say -- you'll get over it. I'd say it, too. But I know it's not true.  
Oh, you'll be happy again, never fear. But you won't forget.

**- Betty Smith, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**

Every day I'll wear your memory like a favourite shirt upon my back.

**- Richard Thompson**

We cannot, after all, judge a biography by its length, by the number of pages in it; we must judge by the richness of the contents..... Sometimes the 'unfinished' are among the most beautiful symphonies.

**- Victor Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul**

## **SIBLINGS SUPPORT GROUP MEETING DATES:**

14 JUNE, 12 JULY, 9 AUGUST

We meet at 7.45pm at TCF Centre, 173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury

## **SIBLING RESOURCES:**

Books and DVDs related to sibling bereavement can be borrowed from The Compassionate Friends' library in Canterbury.

## **HAVE YOU READ ANY BOOKS OR SEEN ANY MOVIES OF INTEREST TO BEREAVED SIBLINGS?**

If you have a review you'd like to share with other siblings, please send it to us for inclusion in a future issue of Brothers & Sisters.

(Email: [andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au))





# The Compassionate Employer Awards

It has been 21 months now since the passing of our lovely daughter Sonia Miller (McGeachin). We are slowly starting to see some light in the days that were covered in darkness.

The support that both my husband and I have had from my employer Peter Taverner, Taverner Printing Services, has been outstanding. This has been the reason why I nominated Peter for The Compassionate Friends Employer Award.

Peter was always there to support us, going through the time before and after our daughter's passing with breast cancer, having to go to London 6 times in 2 years, often for 6-7 weeks at a time, and knowing each time that when I came home Peter kept my work as an Office Manager up to date.

The day of the award presentation was very special to us. I was very proud to have Peter there and recognised for the way he had supported us. If only there were more people in the world like Peter the world would be a better place.

Val & Howard McGeachin





The Rotary Club of Geelong Central  
is Proud Partner





Principal Sponsor

## 2017 Compassionate Employer Recognition Program Australia Nominations Now Open

The Compassionate Friends Victoria Inc., partner The Rotary Club of Geelong Central & Principal Sponsor Stafford Group announce the 2017 Compassionate Employer Recognition Program to be presented in March 2017. We are proud that Rotary is supporting this program.

TCF believes that employers who have shown extra care and compassion to employees – going above and beyond the normal policies of most companies in helping employees, who have suffered the death of a loved one, deserve to be recognised.

Nominations for the 2017 Compassionate Employer Recognition Awards are now open.  
Nomination Forms can be downloaded from [www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au).

Please forward your nomination by email or post no later than Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016  
For further information please contact Jenny Galati (03) 9888 4034 or  
email: [jennyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:jennyg@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)

Presented by The Compassionate Friends Victoria Inc.  
Supporting Parents and Sibling after a Child Dies.



# We Are One

Where do our emotions go to when we are assaulted by unimaginable grief? The tragedy of losing a child is a nightmare no loving parent can imagine - for more than a split second anyway. I have seen friends who knew my Alex, and acquaintances or strangers who cringe at the mere thought of losing their own child. They often close their eyes, turn their heads away and say; "I can't imagine. I don't know how you do it ('it' meaning survive) followed by "You're so strong... or I couldn't."

I was one of those parents before my beloved only child Alexander took his own life, nine years ago. So how did I survive? How do I survive this very different reality? Because it is totally different when you are eventually forced to acknowledge, that yes! Your child has died! He or she will not be coming back. Once the shock and trauma, mixed with endless emotions such as anger, blame, guilt, regrets, intense love, intense longing, helplessness, anxiety and so many more, start to ease, we are left shattered, exhausted, fragile.... lost. We feel broken beyond repair. Yet slowly, probably instinctively, and in desperation, we try to put back together a semblance of our previous lives. We try to re-establish some kind of order within our mind and soul. Our body suffers to the beat of our broken heart. Some of us become ill... and some worse.....

My own experience of survival, has been one of immense pain and immense growth. I believe, I believe, I believe. I believe my son is with me. I believe he lives within me and without me. I believe he has felt my pain and has guided me through my ego based, limited, blinkered view of what I thought was life and death, to a renewed understanding.

I thought death was final.  
I now know it is not.  
Love keeps us connected, "Love never dies."  
I now know we cannot be separated, whether we are aware of this truth or not ... "We Are One".

What my son has taught and continues to teach me is that there are two of us living in this body – our human and our spiritual. To be more specific, our human form houses our spiritual energetic force, that which drives our body, and it is this energetic force that is freed when we eventually leave our body behind. We call this force spirit, or soul, or essence.

I wholeheartedly believe our essence survives when we die and remains intact of personality and ongoing love for those left behind. I know my son Alexander cannot be separated from me. His essence is entwined with mine. Acknowledging this truth gives me great comfort.

I am founder of a beautiful secret Facebook group called Between Two Worlds. Our group description:

"Between Two Worlds, is a group created solely for parents who have lost a beloved child or children and who have a belief in the survival of consciousness. Although we offer a safe loving cyber platform, in which we can release and express our emotions and our continuing connection and bond with our child or children, we do not advocate that our group is a substitute for professional grief counselling. We can help add to your journey, by offering a safe space in which parents from around the world can join each other and offer resources gained and experiences embraced that have helped them along their grief path. With deep love based respect for each other, we share... we process and take on board what resonates with us and respectfully leave anything that doesn't... This way a beautiful positive balance of healing energy permeates our special group."

Our two administrators are Bev Sauer Wittler and Andrea Malkiewicz. These two wonderful women along with our group members, have become an indispensable part of my healing journey. Like a loving family, I treasure our relationship.

Andrea has two beautiful sons. Her youngest ~ Elliot, like my son Alex, died from suicide. In his mother's words: "Elliot already had one and a half feet in the spirit world before he left his body." Through his mother's heartfelt descriptions of her son, I am privileged to have felt a little of this remarkable young man's extraordinary insights into what he felt mattered in this world. And so much of what he shared was exemplary.



## We Are One cont

Andrea has given me the most healing gift in the form of a collage. While browsing through photos on my Facebook timeline, she saw something I felt deeply within, but needed to see in discernible form. She sent me a photo collage in which she halved and blended a picture of my face and one of Alex. We were both younger, but the similarity was uncanny, magical. This photo was and remains the most magnificent revelation and confirmation of our merged souls. I recently had it enlarged and framed, so that I can see it hanging on my wall every day, as a reminder that we are ONE. Thank you Andrea.

Throughout this grief journey, I have learnt to find ways to ease the turmoil which develops when I am engulfed with too many memories and thoughts that cause surges of painful maternal longing for my beloved child as he was. I am now able to honour his life by reminiscing over both positive and negative memories. But when they become too painful for me to manage, I tap into my intuition, or inner self, where I find a quiet peaceful place, offering respite and rebalancing my state of mind. It is where I go to feel, and consciously connect with my son.

I was inspired to write this article and share this precious photograph with you in the hope that it can help provide a little comfort in times of overpowering grief pain. It happened all of a sudden... While sitting on my couch looking at the photo from a distance, I suddenly realised that I had been looking at it as ONE person or entity. I had not been looking at it as two halves. I then looked at the two separate halves and surprisingly I saw a completely different picture ... of two people instead of ONE.

What we can learn or absorb from this, is that sometimes our intense grief pain can obscure the bigger picture, or at least a different picture. It is so difficult to let go of how we are used to seeing and feeling and to trust in the possibility of conceiving a different reality, of surrendering to a new awareness. This does not mean we do not fall backwards into our despair - it is human and natural for us to feel intense grief. It means that there is an anchor, a life raft, which is accessed by being open to our ongoing existence beyond the physical, beyond the material world, guiding us to the comforting realisation that consciousness is infinite.

**Laura Tomei ~ mother of Alexander TCF Vic Au.**  
**Author of: Footprints in the Sand – A Symphony of Grief (available in TCF library)**







# From The Centre

## MAGAZINE MAILOUT TEAM JUNE/JULY 2016

*Magazine mailout team April/May 2016*

*What a great job the magazine mailout team did to get the April/May magazine mailed out to you.*

*Many hands make light work. A very BIG Thank-you!!*

*Thanks, Yvette Cabral, Victor Cattapan, Karen Danielson, Sandra Green, Amanda Presland, Colin & Helen Styring and Dot & Peter Zeuschner.*

*Welcome to our new members on the mailout team.*

### **Drop in to the Centre**

You are welcome to drop in any weekday when there is always another member volunteer here between 10.30am and 3.00pm. If you'd like to come at lunchtime, feel free to bring your lunch, or we can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit or two. The library is a cosy and welcoming room and you are welcome to visit for some time for quiet reflection, or to browse through the books, which you are most welcome to borrow.



## DONATIONS

**Thank you to Marion & Ron Rudall for butterfly stickers donated in memory of their daughter Michelle.**

**Thank you to Janette Smith for her donation of hand-made cards and stamps donated by Pam Martin, Janette's work colleague, in memory of Janette's sons Zachary and Benjamin.**

**Thank you to Heather Black for stamps donated in memory of her son Phillipp.**

**Thank you to Michelle, Orhan and Aylin Ergin for the donation of various items in memory of their son and brother Sahin.**

**Thank you to Bernice Taylor for the donation of writing pad, butterfly stickers and various cards in memory of her daughter Michelle.**

**Thank you to Jan Graham for the donation of butterfly stickers in memory of her grandson Kane Doncon who passed away in 2012.**

**Thank you to Debbie Cooper for the donation of stamps.**



## Book Review

Jamison KR. *Night Falls Fast* – Understanding Suicide. 1999. Vintage, New York.

In this important book, the author summarises literary, historical, anthropological, psychological, biochemical, genetic and epidemiological aspects of suicide, emphasizing the highly disproportionate suicide rates among those suffering from the mood disorders of depression, manic-depression and schizophrenia. It is written to help the general reader to understand the suicidal mind and to comprehend the effects on those left behind in a wake of unimaginable pain and unresolvable guilt. The inclusion of anecdotes about people, some famous, some ordinary, many young, illustrate important points. The book was published sixteen years ago and, with progress in medicine, must in some ways be out of date but these aspects are unimportant in the context of understanding of suicide.

This book should be read for three reasons. Jamison is professor of psychiatry at the prestigious Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore USA and a recognised world authority on her subject. The appendix, notes and bibliography occupy 117 pages in this book.

From the age of seventeen, Jamison has suffered from manic-depressive illness, has attempted suicide and describes her symptoms and difficulties with treatment. These experiences are fully described in an earlier book: Jamison KR. 1997. *The Unquiet Mind* – A Memoir of Moods and Madness. Picador, London. (Her main treatment is lithium, the use of which was discovered by an Australian doctor, John Cade, in 1949).

The third reason is that Jamison is also Honorary Professor of English at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, where she lectures every year.

Jamison writes with authority, personal and clinical experience and clarity. The book tells us what we need to know even if the subject is in some parts not easy reading and occasionally moving and disturbing, as it was for this reader. Nevertheless, the book is a great contribution to understanding, particularly for those of us in a family who have experienced desolation, confusion and guilt in the aftermath of suicide of a member.

Suicide is an often preventable medical and social problem. It is an increasing problem, particularly among rural and remote communities, even more so among indigenous Australians. What can be done? Towards the end of her book, Jamison writes:

‘There are many ways: the support of family and friends, religious faith, the passage of time, psychotherapy, or counselling, but one of the most effective has been through the establishment of self-help groups for those who have survived another’s suicide . . . These groups allow those who have been through the suicide of a family member or friend to get together and exchange support, information and encouragement about carving out a meaningful future. Listening to others who have survived kindred straits and eventually helping newer members to do the same is invaluable in learning to survive and do well with life. Many of the suicide survivors go on to become actively involved in school and church education programmes hoping to raise awareness about suicide and the psychiatric illnesses that can lead to it . . . All try to redeem some good from the awfulness they have known, and most succeed.’

Trevor Faragher  
TCF Vic Au

A copy of this book is available in the library of TCF in Canterbury.



# LOVE GIFTS

Our beautiful son, Chris.  
Even after 7 years it's still hard to believe.  
Not a day goes by that we don't think of you.  
Every day always in our hearts.  
Mum, Dad, Paul & Gran  
xxxx

In memory of my beautiful daughter Lisa  
and my gorgeous little grandson Jack  
both killed together 7th August 2014.  
Irma Turner.

## ***Love Gift Messages and Donations***

Love Gift messages can be made on the back of the cover leaf that comes with the magazine. Please limit your Love Gift message to no more than 30 words, counting the date as one word.







# What advice would you give?

People who haven't suffered a devastating loss don't seem to get it and it's often difficult to explain. So people continually blunder just when they're trying to be helpful. So how can people be helpful? What advice would you give to them?

Here's a do's and don'ts list. Do you agree with these? Would you add anything? Is there anything you wouldn't put on the list? We would love for you to tell us what you think. Please contact Andrew Weatherhead at [Andrew.W@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:Andrew.W@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)

## Things that are good to DO

1. Be available. Say "I'm here for you" and be there.
2. Be comfortable to sit with my grief.
3. Be compassionate: Foster a culture of compassion and understanding.
4. Offer practical support such as meals, shopping, gardening, errands, lifts, etc. especially in the early days.
5. Listen well. When I am grieving, one of the greatest supports you can offer is to listen.
  - a. **Listening is better than taking action.** Resist the thought that listening is an ineffective form of support, even though you won't always clearly see the benefits of your listening. It's often those actions, typically described as "active", that cause issues: the advice giving, the fairly trite platitudes (which, admittedly, can be easy to fall back on). Don't try and rush me through it and don't try to resolve my issues.
  - b. **Tune in** to what I'm saying—my issues, my emotions. It is not about drawing inferences or making diagnoses. It is about giving me the reassurance that you are tuning in and you are giving me permission to explore my issue further, to describe my pain, to have a better chance of making sense of it all and growing from it.
  - c. **Silence** can be good. Sometimes I need to talk about my grief and sometimes I just need you to be with me.
6. **Accept that everyone grieves differently.** Grief is a normal and natural response to loss but everyone grieves differently. My grief might look strange to you but it's my grief.
7. **Accept a wide variety of emotions** such as sadness, anger, confusion, fear, guilt, relief, etc. My emotions might seem wrong to you but they're my emotions. Varied emotions are a natural response to the death of a loved one.

8. **Use the name of my lost loved one** and make it easy for me to talk about my loved one and to use their name.
9. **Keep in touch.** Maintain thoughtful and honest communication. Check in regularly to see how I'm progressing and if there is anything you can do to further support me for many months or years.

## Things that are good to AVOID

1. **Avoid giving advice** unless I explicitly ask for it. Even then, be thoughtful and tactful. Unsolicited advice can feel like you're shutting me down.
2. **Avoid platitudes** such as "At least you have other children", "It was meant to be", "It's God's will", "Maybe God wanted another angel", etc. Well-meant statements like these are unhelpful and sometimes hurtful.
3. **Don't judge.** There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Especially don't say "you should..." or "you shouldn't..."
4. **Don't say "I understand"** or "I know how you feel". Individual grief is complex and varying all the time so that no-one can really understand how I might feel at any particular time.
5. **You can't fix it.** No one can take away the pain and sadness but knowing that you care is comforting and healing.
6. Don't assume. I might be feeling terrible on the inside but not necessarily showing it.
7. Use **my word** for death. It's what I'm comfortable with right now. It might be "died" or "passed away" or "lost". Whatever it is, it's the safest word.



# That life being my daughter

What you are about to read is true, yes, this actually happened. We are still learning to cope with every day life, as well as coping without our children, sister, brother, uncle, aunty, grandson and granddaughter, even after 13 years.

Before this event took place our life seemed 'normal', whatever that is. These kinds of tragedies only happen to 'other people', not us. This is the sort of thing you would read in the news.

I have not and will not come to terms with what has happened in my life but I wish for understanding and empathy. Everyone deserves the opportunity to prove themselves as worthy human beings and I believe I was one person who gave that opportunity to people, the motivation, encouragement and confidence to achieve anything they desired, giving them the time to speak, make them feel valued and focus on the good. No one has the right to pre-judge anyone, right?



How can anyone give a person respect when they have done the most inexcusable act by taking someone's life?

That life being my daughter's, someone I created out of love and gave birth to, my beautiful girl, Kate Amber.

It was just two months earlier that Kate's younger brother Jacob took his own life at the age of 16.

Kate was 22 years old when her life was taken from her and us, her family.

This was a criminal act of petty revenge, yes, inappropriate behaviour which as time passes is still too hard to understand or accept.

This someone has been protected from others while in prison. Why? For his safety!

Who protected Kate from him?

I have never given this someone my time for anger. He does not deserve my time. I did not and still do not have the energy to waste on him. This is not about him; it is about my daughter Kate not being here with us. I will never see her fall in love, get married, have children, and be the mother she always wanted to be.

All this was taken away from her and us!

How can you honestly give respect to someone for these actions?

This someone has had a very sad up bringing. This was all exposed in the court hearings, but does that give someone the right to take a human life away from loved ones? Why is it the mental state of someone has to be carried into court hearings? In a way, almost every one has some form of mental / emotional state. This does not give a person the right to take revenge on another human.

This someone has received counselling, education and help from all avenues while in 'protection'. Will he see his thoughts, actions and behaviours as normal or abnormal and change his thought process and behaviour for a future in the outside world or will he never recognise what he has done is wrong?

During court hearings and proceedings you find yourself not being able to look at the person on trial. Why is this? Is it for the fear of them returning the 'look', fear of them not being or showing any compassion or remorse towards the grieving family?

This someone was the first person sentenced in Victoria under legislation introduced in 1997 for deliberately lighting fires, the court said. The maximum penalty is 25 years' jail. This someone had been sentenced to 12 years' jail for starting a house fire which led to the death of two of its occupants, my daughter Kate and her friend.



# That life being my daughter cont

It was the first time a Victorian court has passed sentence for such an offence.

This someone appealed this sentence and a lower serving sentence was granted because of his 'mental health'.

What about my mental health!

He served 4 years and was then released. What happened to the 25 year penalty?  
4 years for two lives...

It's never going to be the same. We live in fear every day for our lives and we now expect the worst to happen.

All the court judge said was -

"It was important that the court endeavoured to discourage arson in all its forms with its potentially dangerous or fatal consequences."

"In sentencing you I take into account the traumas you have experienced in your early life as well as your mental state at the time of these offences."

"Further, I accept the evidence that persons with a borderline personality disorder will find imprisonment more arduous than normal prisoners."

"I also accept and have regard to the fact that your effeminate presentation may make you a target for sexual abuse."

"Additionally, I take into account in your favour your pleas of guilty."

"It is the opinion of the court that you are incapable of expressing mature adult remorse but I accept that, within your emotional capacities, you are genuinely remorseful."

To me now, 13 years on, it all seems a dream, surreal. Did this really happen? I guess it did because I don't have my beautiful daughter here with me.

Reading over testimonies and statements and the court findings, I see it as a joke, two lives taken and that is worth 4 years in 'protection'.

We live with this every single day and it will be like this for the rest of our lives. You lose hope in the system. You lose hope on life, but life does go on and that's what we must do.....Survive to keep Kate alive in others even when it shows up as that uncomfortable thing called Grief.

**Robyn Reeve**

**Mother of  
Jacob Marshall McGarry  
Suicide  
15 August 2002**

**And**

**Kate Amber Reeve  
Murder  
17 October 2002**

**TCF Vic Au**





# They Are Always There

They Are Always There.  
Death is the next stage of life,  
So try not to despair as they are always there,  
Living and loving still in another world,  
Close by their loved ones, hearing and watching,  
The connection is never really broken.  
This life may be short, but our love and spirit lives.  
They are not ever lost to us,  
We all go on to be together again,  
So, never despair, as they are always there.

Steven Katsineris, father of Chione. TCF Vic Au  
March 2016.



Life After Life.

Because of you,  
I know we all go on,  
there is no end,  
there is life after life,  
nothing ever really dies,  
it just changes form  
and is reborn somewhere else.  
And I know to, because of you,  
that we will be reunited someday soon.

Steven Katsineris. May 2012.

Father of Chione TCF Vic Au



## Dreams- Bridge to another World

"A single dream is more powerful than a thousand realities." J. R. R. Tolkien, New York Magazine, Nov. 20, 1978.

Some people believe that in certain dreams we connect to the spirit world. That during sleep, when our conscious minds are resting, our spirits wander free in another spirit realm. And if we have departed loved ones there, we are able to communicate with them in this dream state.

My daughter Chione was hit by a car that left the road, while she was walking home from school with her

mother and siblings on October 13, 1989. She died in hospital the next day, two days before her sixth birthday.

One day, a few months after Chione's death I began to have some remarkable dreams. In these amazingly vivid dreams I was in strange, yet very reassuring places. I had no anxiety or fear and it actually felt very exciting, but also calm and comforting. Sometimes in these dreams I was with Chione, as she took me and showed me around a city full of glass and bright lights, with libraries and communal meeting places.



# Dreams- Bridge to another World cont

Other times we walked by creeks and waterfalls and through lush grasslands and forest lit up in sunlight. In some other dreams I was in a seaside village surrounded by woodlands, while in others I was alone in a house, apart from it being filled with a variety of wildlife. It was shady and cool inside the house and warm and sunny outside in the luxuriant garden. All the surroundings in these dreams were new to me, but somehow they were also soothing and familiar. I kept having these same dreams over and over. Maybe these wonderfully idyllic places were from my past lives. Or this is my other home in the spiritual world where I will return after this life, to be reunited with Chione. I don't know, but it all certainly felt very natural to me.

I know some people say that when someone close to us dies and we have dreams or things happen, it's just coincidences or our minds being over-active. But over time these dreams became more tangible and could not be merely explained away as the imaginary escapes, needs and adventures of my grief stricken mind. In life Chione was a very sensitive and caring child. She was always helping people. So it was that in the afterlife through the dreams she started to pass on messages to me, about things that would happen the next day and these often involved doing something to help someone. Frequently, these were people I didn't even know.

Each day I took our German shepherd dog Sabra walking in the remnant woodland opposite our house. One night I had a dream and in it Chione told me I'd find some money near the old, abandoned house there. I didn't think about it the next morning. But as usual I took the dog for a walk in that area. On the way back I stopped near a plum tree at the back of the house for a while, thinking and, had a cry. As I stood there I scraped my boots into the ground and eventually looked down. In the soil were some tattered clothes, some coins and a \$10 and \$5 note, about \$20 in all. How this is possible I do not understand, but I do know that this incident really happened.

Another night in early January I dreamt she told me to buy a poster of an eagle that I would see in a shop and to give it to Jamie. Jamie was a local small businessman I had got to know and became friendly with since Chione's death. His brother had died in an accident and so we had a lot of shared feelings. I didn't know where or how I would find this poster, or why I had to give it Jamie. The next day I was walking past a shop in Greensborough and saw the eagle poster I had dreamt about in the front of a rack of posters. I promptly bought it and despite feeling a bit nervous took it to Jamie. I walked into his

shop and with some unease said Chione told me to buy it and give it to him. I hoped he would understand. I was pleasantly surprised that he didn't think I was mad and said he knew who it was for. He explained that a family friend of his who had died was obsessed with eagles and his room was covered in posters of them. He said he would pass it on to his mother. Later I got a card from this young man's mother thanking me for the poster.

Later, on January 31, (1999) I dreamt that Chione told me I would meet this woman whom I had briefly met more than a year earlier. She had worked at a place where I had done a computer course. We had only spoken a couple of times to say hello and so I barely knew her. I didn't even know her name and I had not seen her since then. I didn't understand this message or the reason behind it. The next day I was walking along the main street of Greensborough and to my great shock passed this particular lady. She saw me and we smiled at each other. I was a bit taken aback and didn't quite know what to say, so I didn't stop. After I passed her though I felt very guilty that I didn't stop, as she was the woman Chione told me I'd soon meet. I went into a shop and when I came out some minutes later I passed her again. She looked very sad. This time we both stopped and talked for a short while. We then went to have a coffee and chatted some more. She told me her brother had killed himself and how difficult life had been since then. I told her about my circumstances. We talked for a long time and in our shared sorrow comforted each other. I knew then why Chione had told me about this lady and the reason I would meet her. It was so typically Chione still helping people out, by way of me, even though she was in another place.

These same sorts of dreams continued through the next few months. The dreams and other incidents were essential in helping my family and me endure Chione's death. Through this vital contact from Chione, these specific dreams and the special things that happened after them were enough to prove to me of Chione's existence after her death. And with these dreams and various later events that happened I was convinced that we do live on.

"There is no death, only a change of worlds." Chief Seattle (Native American).

**Steven Katsineris father of Chione April, 2016.**  
**TCF Vic Au**



### **Time does not bring relief; you all have lied**

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) was an American writer of plays, short stories, libretti for opera and poems, especially sonnets. She was acclaimed in the 1920s for her romantic poetry on the age-old themes of love, sex, death and nature. She is best known for one of her shortest poems, which summed up her early life.

My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends  
It gives a lovely light!

Her popularity and her poetic reputation declined in the 1930s, displaced by the modernism of TS Eliot and WH Auden. After the death of her husband and illnesses and a car accident, she became addicted to drugs and alcohol. With the rise of feminism, she has regained recognition as a gifted writer.

In the following sonnet, Millay defies the convention belief in closure, that time heals grief.

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied  
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!  
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;  
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;  
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,  
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;  
But last year's bitter loving must remain  
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.

There are a hundred places where I fear  
To go, – so with his memory they brim.  
And entering with relief some quiet place  
Where never fell his foot or shone his face  
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"  
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

Trevor Faragher  
TCF Vic Au

### ***Letters of Appreciation June/July 2016***

1. Thank you for all your assistance in the mail re the death of our son Tony.  
Kind regards Mr & Mrs Tom Jackett
2. Thank you for all who put the last magazine together. I thought it was a great one to read.  
Dot Zeuschner
3. Thank you so much for your beautiful cards each year in memory of my son Greg Paterson (Pato).  
Michelle Loughhead





# Phone Friends

If you are having a bad day or if you just need to talk to someone, please feel free to call any of the people listed below. They would love to hear from you. Compassionate Friends Support Groups, along with Group Leaders' phone numbers, are listed on pages 30, 31 & back page of this magazine.

## City & Suburban

**24 Hour Grief Support Phone: 1800 641 091 / 03 9888 4944**

<b>Altona</b> - Josie Paris	9398 2052	(Charles 20, Road)
<b>Jewish Faith Contacts</b> - Sonia Gurwitz	9578 4709	(Stephen 36, Drug Overdose)
<b>Rowville</b> - Dianne Freshney	0401 764 021	(Granddaughter Lucy 2 ½ yrs, Illness)

## Country Victoria

<b>Geelong</b> - Jan & Norm McNess	5243 6906	(Jeremy 26, Plane Crash / Airforce accident)
<b>Gippsland / Traralgon</b> - Trish & Trevor	0407 873 703	(Suzanne 21, Transport accident)
<b>Hamilton</b> - Margaret Bell	5572 2303	(Stewart 29, Transport accident)
<b>Horsham</b> - Diane Lewis	5382 4724	(Julianne 19, Electrocution)
<b>Korumburra</b> - Barry & Sue Hanson	5655 2459	(Kirsty 16, Illness)
<b>Mildura</b> - Lynne Cromer	5022 8068	(Richard 22, Suicide)
<b>Warragul</b> - Bev Foster	5622 1949	(Natalie 23, Suicide)
<b>Bendigo</b> - Cathy Smith	5474 2364	(Michael 21/2, Epiglottitis)
<b>Blairgowrie</b> - Lyndsay Takacs	5913 0350	(Ashley 18, Road)
<b>Euroa</b> - Bette Phillips	0409 788 883	(Dean 19, Electrocution)

## Tasmania

**Bereaved Parents and Siblings in Tasmania can call**

TCF Centre On Freecall 1800 641 091 For support 24 hours a day 7 days a week

**Launceston** - Lee & Peter McBean (Belinda 16, Car)

## TCF Australia

<b>ACT &amp; Queanbeyan</b>	0419 137 818	
<b>New South Wales</b>	02 9290 2355	4th Floor, Room 404, 32 York Street, Sydney 2000
<b>Queensland</b> - Brisbane Chapter	07 3254 2585	505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm 4005
<b>South Australia</b>	0448 487 347	
<b>Western Australia</b>	08 9486 8711	City West Lottery House - 2 Delhi Street, West Perth 6005
<b>Western Australia</b> - Wendy Nani	08 9725 0153	Bunbury
<b>TCF Mandurah</b>	08 9535 7761	Mandurah Lottery House - 7 Anzac Place, Mandurah 6210
<b>TCF on the internet</b> - USA <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> - New Zealand (email) <a href="mailto:tcf.otago@xtra.co.nz">tcf.otago@xtra.co.nz</a>		
United Kingdom <a href="http://www.tcf.org.uk">www.tcf.org.uk</a> - Canada <a href="http://www.tcfcanada.net/">www.tcfcanada.net/</a> - Netherlands <a href="http://www.vook.nl/">www.vook.nl/</a>		
Belgium (email) <a href="mailto:tcf.belgium@skynet.be">tcf.belgium@skynet.be</a>		



# Support Groups

## Social Support Group Meetings

These meetings provide bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents the opportunity to meet in a safe environment with others who have "been there", who understand and care. If you are intending to come along to a meeting for the first time, please contact TCF Centre on 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 (country Victoria and Tasmania).

## Social Support Group Meetings

These group meetings are not for "formal" grief sharing. We instead meet at a cafe. Everyone is welcome. If you are intending to come along to a meeting for the first time, please contact TCF Centre on 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 (country Victoria and Tasmania).

If you are intending to attend a group meeting for the first time, please call TCF Centre on 9888 4944 or 1800 641 091 (country Victoria and Tasmania)

### We welcome your feedback.

*If you have any feedback or concerns about our support services, please speak with your group leaders.*

Or alternately you can contact TCF Centre:

- Re. Support Groups – AndrewMcNess  
(Co-ordinator [andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:andrewm@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au))
- Re. Telephone Support Line – Sue Brown  
(Co-ordinator [sueb@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:sueb@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au))
- John Sedunary  
(CEO [johns@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](mailto:johns@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au))

**Special Note:** In consideration for those who need to tell their stories without distraction, we ask you not to bring your children to the groups. The two exceptions are the Siblings Group (over 14 years) and the Canterbury Bereaved by Suicide support group. We thank you for your understanding

# Group Dates

## Support Groups June 2016

Wed 1st	- 1.00pm -	Eltham
Thurs 2nd	- 7.00pm -	Wodonga
Thurs 2nd	- 7.00pm -	Mildura
Fri 3rd	- 1.00pm -	Rowville
Mon 6th	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved by Suicide (Canterbury)
Tue 7th	- 1.00pm -	Bendigo
Tue 7th	- 7.00pm -	Ballarat
Mon 13th	- 7.30pm -	Melton
Tues 14th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Evening
Tues 14th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Siblings
Wed 15th	- 7.00pm -	Men's Space (Canterbury)
Fri 17th	- 7.30pm -	Gippsland
Tues 21st	- 7.00pm -	Portland
Tues 21st	- 7.00pm -	Sunshine
Tues 21st	- 7.30pm -	Hobart
Tues 28th	- 7.30pm -	Geelong
Wed 22nd	- 11.00am -	Canterbury Daytime
Wed 22nd	- 7.00pm -	Bayside
Thurs 30th	- 7.30pm -	Castlemaine

## July 2016

Fri 1st	- 1.00pm -	Rowville
Mon 4th	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved by Suicide (Canterbury)
Tue 5th	- 1.00pm -	Bendigo
Tue 5th	- 7.00pm -	Ballarat
Wed 6th	- 1.00pm -	Eltham
Thurs 7th	- 7.00pm -	Wodonga
Thurs 7th	- 7.00pm -	Mildura
Mon 11th	- 7.30pm -	Melton
Tues 12th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Evening
Tues 12th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Siblings
Fri 15th	- 7.30pm -	Gippsland
Tues 19th	- 7.00pm -	Portland
Tues 19th	- 7.00pm -	Sunshine
Wed 20th	- 7.00pm -	Men's Space (Canterbury)
Tues 26th	- 7.30pm -	Geelong
Wed 27th	- 11.00am -	Canterbury Daytime
Wed 27th	- 7.00pm -	Bayside
Thurs 28th	- 7.30pm -	Castlemaine

## August 2016

Mon 1st	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved by Suicide (Canterbury)
Tue 2nd	- 1.00pm -	Bendigo
Tue 2nd	- 7.00pm -	Ballarat
Wed 3rd	- 1.00pm -	Eltham
Thurs 4th	- 7.00pm -	Wodonga
Thurs 4th	- 7.00pm -	Mildura
Fri 5th	- 1.00pm -	Rowville
Mon 8th	- 7.30pm -	Melton
Tues 9th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Evening
Tues 9th	- 7.45pm -	Canterbury Siblings
Tues 16th	- 7.00pm -	Portland
Tues 16th	- 7.00pm -	Sunshine
Tues 16th	- 7.30pm -	Hobart
Wed 17th	- 7.00pm -	Men's Space (Canterbury)
Fri 19th	- 7.30pm -	Gippsland
Wed 24th	- 11.00am -	Canterbury Daytime
Wed 24th	- 7.00pm -	Bayside
Thurs 25th	- 7.30pm -	Castlemaine
Tues 30th	- 7.30pm -	Geelong

## Other Support Groups

Hamilton: for dates and venue, please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091  
Horsham: for dates and venue, please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091

## Social Support Dates June 2016

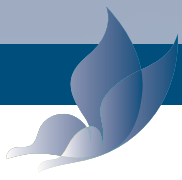
Tues 7th	- 11.00am -	Southern Peninsula
Thur 2nd	- 7.30am -	Men's Brekkie (Canterbury)
Tues 14th	- 10.30am -	Geelong
Tues 14th	- 10.30am -	Bayside
Wed 16th	- 11.30am -	Healesville
Thur 23rd	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved By Suicide Social Dinner (Box Hill)

## July 2016

Tues 5th	- 11.00am -	Southern Peninsula
Thur 7th	- 7.30am -	Men's Brekkie (Canterbury)
Tues 12th	- 10.30am -	Geelong
Tues 12th	- 10.30am -	Bayside
Wed 20th	- 11.30am -	Healesville
Thur 28th	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved By Suicide Social Dinner (Box Hill)

## August 2016

Tues 2nd	- 11.00am -	Southern Peninsula
Thur 4th	- 7.30am -	Men's Brekkie (Canterbury)
Tues 9th	- 10.30am -	Geelong
Tues 9th	- 10.30am -	Bayside
Wed 17th	- 11.30am -	Healesville
Thur 25th	- 7.30pm -	Bereaved By Suicide Social Dinner (Box Hill)



# Support Group Locations

## Support Group

### Meeting Addresses

#### Ballarat:

Mt Clear Church of Christ (Church Hall), 1185 Geelong Road, Canadian

#### Bayside:

Highett Community Centre,  
2 Livingston Street, Highett

#### Bendigo:

Old Playgroup Building (near John Bomford Centre), Crook Street, Strathdale

#### Bereaved by Suicide (Canterbury):

TCF Centre, 173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury

#### Canterbury Daytime:

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury,

#### Canterbury Evening:

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury,

#### Canterbury Siblings:

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury,

#### Canterbury Men's Space:

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury,

#### Canterbury Bereaved by Suicide:

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury,  
contact Jenny 0409 276 305

#### Castlemaine:

Maternal & Child Health Centre,  
Lyttleton Street, Castlemaine,

#### Geelong:

Noble Street Uniting Church,  
26-42 Saffron Street, Newtown

#### Gippsland/Morwell:

Salvation Army building,  
57 Bridle Road, Morwell

#### Hamilton:

for date and venue,  
please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091

#### Hobart, Tasmania:

"Roydon" Historic Building, 13 Patrick Street,  
North Hobart, Unit 4 at Rear (Please take the  
laneway beside Roydon to the last door on  
the right)

#### Horsham Wimmera:

for date and venue,  
please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091

#### Melton:

Djerriwarrh Community House,  
239 Station Road, Melton

#### Mildura:

MADEC Community Centre, 133-137 Madden  
Avenue, Mildura (Please ring front doorbell.  
Doors at MADEC are locked after 5.30pm.)

## Support Group Cont...

### North East Suburbs:

Eltham Library Community Room, Panther  
Place, Eltham

### Portland:

Star Theatre, 40 Julia Street, Portland

### South East Suburbs:

Bridgewater Centre, cnr Fullham Road &  
Bridgewater Road, Rowville

### Western Suburbs:

Salvation Army Drop-In Centre,  
42 Devonshire Road, Sunshine

### Wodonga:

Girl Guides Hall, Victoria Street, Albury

## Social Support Groups

### Bayside:

Nutmeg Tree Cafe, 23 Station Road,  
Cheltenham

### Bereaved by Suicide Dinner Group (Box Hill):

Box Hill RSL, 26 Nelson Road, Box Hill

### Canterbury Men's Brekkie Group:

U-Cafe, 135 Maling Road, Canterbury

### Geelong:

Brioche Cafe, 175 West Fyans Street, Newtown

### Healesville:

for venue,  
please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091

### Southern Peninsula Lunchtime Group:

for venue,  
please contact TCF Centre 1800 641 091

## Help Wanted

### Event Help

**We are looking for volunteers who have had some back ground in helping out with events. Whether it's the lead up to an event or helping with an event on the day, I would love to hear from you. Please call or email**

**Jenny Galati on 9888 4034 or  
jennyng@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au**

### Marketing Help

*We are looking for volunteers who maybe have a back ground in marketing. Some of the things we need help with are media, Facebook and Internet. Do you have some ideas on how we can get the TCF name out? If you have some time to help out please call or email Jenny Galati on 9888 4034 or jennyng@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au*

### Bunnings BBQ Coordinators

*We are looking for 4 volunteers to become our Bunnings BBQ Co-ordinator. When we have a Bunnings BBQ, we would like to have 1 person in charge in the morning and a second person for the afternoon. At the moment we are holding 2 a year at Box Hill but we are looking to also maybe run some from our group areas, such as Eltham, Highett, Melton and Sunshine.*

**1. Morning Person** - who will collect tub and drinks from the centre, buy the shopping for the BBQ, order the sausages and bread for pick up on Sunday, prepare the onions the day before BBQ and collect the bread and sausages on the Sunday morning and supervise other volunteers.

**2. Afternoon Person** - who will supervise other volunteers, pack up and freeze the left over sausages, do the washing up and return the left over drinks, tub and money to be banked to the centre. If you think you can help please call or email Jenny Galati on 9888 4034 or jennyng@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

### Community Fundraising

*We are looking for members who are interested in holding their own Community Fundraiser. Over the years we had members who have done a fundraiser in memory of their child, whether it is a dinner dance, a trivia night or doing a fun run. What ever you would like to do, I am here to help you help us. Please call or email Jenny Galati on 9888 4034 or jennyng@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au*





# Compassionate Employer Awards 2016

These awards have been held for the last 13 years and now to date we have recognised 198 well deserving companies. This year's award nominations came from 5 VIC, 1 QLD and 1 TAS employers with a total of 7 employers receiving a Compassionate Employer Recognition Award this year. The companies have been recognised for showing extraordinary compassion in the workplace after an employee at each of the work places experienced the death of a loved one. These awards were held on Tuesday 22nd March at Leonda By the Yarra.

The awards program was developed by The Compassionate Friends (TCF) Victoria to publicly recognise employers who had gone above and beyond standard bereavement practices and hoped to encourage similar support from all employers. A big thank-you to our speakers for this year's awards, Karen Philippzig – TCF President, Doug McDonald – Geelong Central Rotary President, Dr Rhonda Galbally – TCF Patron and Jim Kianidis – Worksafe.

"The awards are not only about recognising compassionate employers, but also equipping them with the practical tools to help them successfully assist a bereaved employee. There are clear benefits for treating people who are experiencing difficult times with compassion: They include soft benefits like morale and loyalty. But they also include hard benefits like productivity and turn over. Everyone at some point in their life will experience the death of someone close to them. Employers don't need to be an expert in bereavement as we at TCF can assist through advice and education." said John Sedunary CEO of The Compassionate Friends. And last but not least a big thank-you to our performers Angie Hart and Tim Heath for your lovely performance for "Don't Be Shy" and "Pictures of You". You always make this a very special event. The information kit is free to all employers across the state and can be easily downloaded by visiting [www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au)

*Next year's award nominations will OPEN in July.*



**2016 Compassionate Employer Award Recipients:** Kingborough Council, Kirrae Health Service, National Australia Bank, Taverner Printing Services, The Royal Melbourne Hospital – Environmental Services VicHealth and Wallarano Primary School

**TCF would like to thank the ongoing support of the awards:** Rotary Club of Geelong Central, Stafford Group, Optimum Recruitment, Leonda By the Yarra, Flowers of Canterbury and Eastern Press

## The Compassionate Friends Victoria

173 Canterbury Road, Canterbury VIC 3126

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