



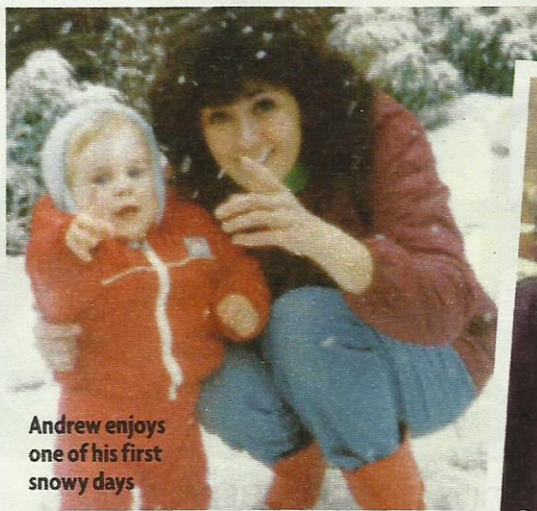
Christine feels her grief as strongly as ever

while life went back to normal for everyone else, that broken feeling didn't ease.

At first people understood and were kind to me. They realised that I was a grieving mum. But gradually, as time went on, things changed. There was a sense of my grief being awkward, that people were trying to push it under the carpet – that I somehow should have got over losing my son.

And that's what I want people to know, the reason I'm speaking out here. Because grief doesn't work like that. It can strike at the oddest times, it can cripple you, leave you literally unable to do anything.

Every morning, I'd wake up and remember my son was dead. The tears would come and they wouldn't stop. I'd break down in the



Andrew enjoys one of his first snowy days

shower, sob at the table over dinner or walk around the house clutching Andrew's jumper.

And it wasn't just when I was alone. I could be out with friends and the pain would strike. People told me not to cry, that it would be OK, but instead of being comforting, their words hurt. Nothing would ever be alright again.

Taking action

Determined to do something, I launched a campaign for justice for Andrew and other victims of this disease. I wanted more information about how it could be contracted – and I found out there could have been links between the disease and vaccines.

I put photographs of Andrew around the house, and Emma and I spoke about him constantly – sharing memories and precious moments from his life. It kept me going.

But that summer, six months after Andrew's death, Emma headed to London to go to university. And with her gone, my life felt so small.

By now, I was finding myself invited out less and the phone didn't ring as much. People started to avoid me on the street, too. Even in the supermarket, neighbours would pretend not to see me, then disappear down another aisle.

I struggled to understand it, even more so when one of my close friends cut off all contact with me, after telling me it was 'too upsetting' to hear about Andrew anymore. I couldn't believe it – how could my grief be inconvenient for her?

It was as though people thought I was looking for pity, when that couldn't have been further from the truth. The fact was, talking about Andrew kept him alive for me, and that was the promise I'd made to him before he died.

I kept working, kept raising awareness and kept trying to go on. As always, Emma was my rock, but every day, all I could think about was what we'd lost. There's a word for someone who loses a husband, and a word for someone who loses their parents, but there is nothing to describe a person who

From the heart



Before he became ill, Andrew was ambitious

loses a child – because there is no word that can describe the utter turmoil of it.

Once, at a dinner party a few years after Andrew died, someone mentioned that their son loved cricket. I chimed in and said, 'My son covered The Ashes for work.' He is always on my mind and I would have welcomed questions about him, but instead, the guest looked at the floor, blushing awkwardly, before changing the subject.

Perhaps she just didn't know what to say, perhaps she didn't realise that I wasn't trying to make anyone uncomfortable. But to me it seemed as though the world had simply moved on from Andrew's death – whereas I never would.

Now, eight years on, there are days when I smile and laugh – there are days when Emma and I go shopping or curl up on the sofa to watch a film. But I will always struggle. Recently, I bumped into a mother I know. When I admitted that I'd just cried for two hours, she looked shocked. 'Really? After all this time?' she said. I didn't even know how to respond.

The truth is that sometimes, I still wake up and the pain is so bad I can't get out of bed. Sometimes I still cry in the supermarket.

The world needs to stop being afraid to feel, and afraid to let others mourn. There

are thousand of mothers like me, who have lost their children. So here is my message – let people grieve. People have the right to talk about their loved one without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.

Let me remember Andrew. My son was taken from me. Don't take my memories, too. ♦

♦ **Christine's self-published book *Who Killed My Son?* is available from amazon.co.uk. Profits go towards the campaign, justice4andy.com, which supports families affected by BSE**

'What I've discovered is shocking'