

Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit of Hope, Healing and Forgiveness (Chicken Soup for the Soul)

By Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Tom Lagana

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Previously available only through free distribution to prisons, this life-changing book is the result of charitable donations from sales of Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul and gifts from thousands of individuals.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jack Canfield is co-creator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series, which includes forty *New York Times* bestsellers, and coauthor of *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*. He is a leader in the field of personal transformation and peak performance and is currently CEO of the Canfield Training Group and Founder and Chairman of the Board of The Foundation for Self-Esteem. An internationally renowned corporate trainer and keynote speaker, he lives in Santa Barbara, California.

Mark Victor Hansen is a co-founder of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

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The Sunray Catcher

Today, in the prison chow hall, I overheard a young female officer talking to another officer. She was talking about her special little girl. Seems this little girl was standing on the front seat of her car the other day, grabbing at the sunrays as they reflected off the windshield. When her mother asked her what she was doing, the little girl said she was trying to catch a sunray for her mom as a present. Both officers agreed on how special moments like that were. The other officer then asked if this mother got to spend time with her special little girl.

"No, but when my career gets back on track, I'll have more time to spend with her, when she is older," said the young mother. I wanted to scream and tell her that mother to spend every single second she possibly can with her child, but I couldn't. Maybe after you read what follows, you will better understand.

It's the awful truth, as it happened to me. It starts with an unwritten letter -- a letter I can never send:

Dear Kent,

As I look at you, I see your hair is nicely combed. I remember the hours and gallons of water we used, trying to train your hair. It always seemed to have a mind of its own. I can see that scar on your lip; hardly shows now, too. We were worried about that. You were such a brave little man when I took you to Dr. Nordquist to get those three stitches in it. I was the one who almost fainted when they started sticking you with that needle. The nurse even made me leave the room.

On the way home, I told you that you could have any treat you wanted, for being so brave. You wanted a cup of coffee, "Like big men drink," you said. My five-year-old little brave man, drinking coffee in the Rainbow Restaurant, just like big men. It was our secret; lucky Mom never found out, huh?

You have grown tall and nice looking. Grandpa always said you were going to be a big man. Guess what I'm proudest of in you? It's your kindness to all things. When we found out that your little dog, Porkchop, was epileptic, you were so happy that you cried. You had seen

Porkchop have fits many times, and we were sure he would die. For three years after that, you faithfully gave Porkchop his pill every day.

I remember the day you helped me fix my pickup. We sure got greasy -- Mom wouldn't even let us in the house for lunch, but we fooled her. We went to the store and got a pizza, then lipped off to Mom and your two brothers, while eating it, still dirty. Yes, that was fun. We laughed a lot that day. I found out later that you did save a piece of pizza for your little brother; it was our secret too.

I've always been proud of you for so many reasons, Kent. Your silent kindness and strength, your loyalty, your soft heart, and secrets you shared with me. I remember how you used to lay across my lap with your shirt pulled up, exposing your bare back. I would trace my fingers lightly over your skin; it seemed to almost hypnotize you. I had done it many times when you were a baby, to get you to sleep when you weren't feeling good. Guess you just never grew out of liking it. I liked it too.

I remember the day I came to tell you that I was going away for a long time -- going to prison. You stood silently, listening with your head bowed and tears in your eyes, asking why. You hugged me and ran up into the woods, to your secret fort, crying. I cried too that day, Kent. I was ashamed of myself, and of breaking your heart.

You did write me and sent the colored pictures you drew in school. I had them on my cell wall for years, and yes, I bragged about them to my friends. I have lain awake many nights wondering who was teaching you to drive, who was your first girlfriend, and how I would tease you about her, as if I were right there with you. I'm sorry for missing so much of you, Kent.

*Love,
Daddy*

As I stood looking at my special little boy, in a light gray coffin, I was dressed in bright orange coveralls. Prison guards were beside me. I wanted to reach out and touch him just once more, but the chains on my wrists wouldn't allow it.

It took a mortician to cover that cut on Kent's lip and get his hair to lay down. I'm so awfully sorry for missing the last eight years of Kent's life. If only I could have another chance to be the daddy he wanted me to be -- the daddy he deserved. If I could just tickle Kent's back once more, or share some secret with him, or tease him and hold him for just a few minutes. God, I would gladly die for the chance.

Kent was killed when he was crushed under a tractor in an accident near Kelso, Washington. He is buried in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, near the only tree there. So, if you are ever near that cemetery, and see a six-foot, five-inch, two hundred and seventy-pound beatup old man on his knees beside that grave, praying to God in shame, you will know why.

Hopefully you will better understand why I wish he could have read this letter, while he was alive. There are so many things I should have told him. So much time I should have spent with him.

If you have a special child in your life, please don't, for any reason, miss one single second with that child. Don't let what happened to me happen to you. Those moments are so awfully important.

To the lady officer, with the special little sunray catcher -- please believe me when I say, "For God's sake,

spend every single precious moment with your child, now! This could be your last chance, because sometimes very special children don't get any older."

Ken "Duke" Monse'Broten

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