

Voices of Youth

Stories and Poems of Loss, Healing and Hope



What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose,
for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

- Helen Keller



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Marie Abbott, 2010

**Kelly
1987-2008**

The moment that you died
Our hearts split in two
The one side filled with memories
The other died with you.
We often lay awake at night
When the world is fast asleep
And take a walk down memory lane
With tears upon our cheeks
Remembering you is easy
We do it everyday
But missing you is a heart ache
That never goes away.
We hold you tightly within our hearts
And there you will remain
Life has gone on without you
But it will never be the same.



My name is Heather and my sister killed herself.

I was 14, she was 16. It was the worst day of my life. This is my story. The story of my grieving.

My grief was internalized, all the time. It took me about 2 years to finally put it into words, and even now after three years, I can barely find words to describe how I felt. It was anger in the beginning, I recall. Pure, unbridled rage that filled my soul with hate for the world. I cursed my sister. I cursed my family. I cursed the Gods, and I cursed myself. After a few years, that bubbling anger calmed into a tamer fire, allowing the rise of a range of other emotions. Pity, distress, depression, fear, loneliness, questioning, and guilt, to name but a few.

I barely remember the funeral. I remember the songs, and when they took the casket away. Music is very important to me, and I don't think me or my brother will ever sing again like we did that day. When I watched the hearse drive away, I allowed myself a few tears. The rain was pouring down, as hard as my parents' tears as we stood on the sidewalk.

Going back to school was the hardest thing I ever had to do. Even though my loss occurred in the summer, everyone knew what had happened. Things travel fast in a small community. Everyone knew my sister anyway, so they all knew what had happened. I never knew one could get so many pitying looks before. And not just pity and concern lined the peoples' faces; there also a fear, as distinct as anything else, that they showed. People assumed that I was next, that I would follow in my sister's footsteps. That, more than anything else, made school all but unbearable.

I have been through so many deaths in my life. I feel like the Gods' fool, a doll they toss around without regard for feelings or pain. But my sister's ridiculously pointless death mirrored our own pointless existence, for me. It made me open my eyes and see the world in a different light. Also, more than anything, it showed me how to live. Live out each day like you will never have another. Take any opportunity anyone gives you, provided it suits your best interests, of course. And don't waste time on untrue friends. The true friends you make will stick with you till the end of your days, and maybe even after, if you believe that.

I was afraid to talk to my family and friends. I am normally a very introspective person, and I like to deal

with things myself. I felt that I could handle my grief myself, without their help and support. I was also trying to protect my parents. I didn't want to bring my sister into the conversation because I was worried they would get upset. The friends I hung out with also used to be friends with my sister, so I couldn't bring myself to talk about her to them, for fear of upsetting them.

After having a panic attack at school, I was sent to the school psychologist to deal with my bottled up emotions. I was finally able to talk to someone about my sister, who was non-judgmental and did not know my sister. That, more than anything else, forced me deal with my grief rather than bottling it up.

Now, I do everything in my power to stay connected with my sister, by remembering her and keeping her memory alive. These I accomplish in various ways. To remember, I have a necklace and a book full of memories. The necklace is the main thing. My mom bought us "best friends" necklaces when we were little. We both wore them for a time, but I lost mine and never found it. My sister stopped wearing hers as well, but after she died I found it with the rest of her jewellery. Now I wear it around my neck at all times and never take it off. It reminds me of the good times we had together when we were younger. My sister also had this beautiful black dress that she loved and wore it whenever possible. It is going to prom with me this year. She died before she had the chance to graduate, so I will take her with me to my prom and graduation by wearing the dress she loved.

If I could talk to my sister again, I would tell her that I love her and that her reasons for leaving us were crappy reasons. I would tell her that my life was never the same after she left, and that I would have liked to have her see me through all of high school and past, until the day I die.

The hardest thing about her death is having to get on with my life without her there to give me advice and share gossip. And forgetting her face. I hate that the most, I think.

I'm sharing this story with you so that you will understand: time will not heal your grief. It will never take away the tears, the pain, the loneliness. What time will do is scar it over. It becomes easier to accept your loss and move on with your life with time. You just have to let it.



The Guy That Never Gave Up, Soon Became My Hero

'Meena?'

'Yes Misha.'

'I know what I've caused you is hell; to everyone, but especially you. You of all people shouldn't be going through this.'

'Misha, it's okay. It's not your fault.'

'No, it really isn't. When I got cancer, I knew you'd be the one to crash the most. And you see now, I was right.'

'And you know what Misha? You helped me become so much braver; you brought out the strength in me. You made me realize what is actually important. And that's the best gift anyone has ever given me. And I thank you for that,' I said to him.

That was the end of our discussion for the day. He didn't know what to say but let tears fall down his eyes, like when rain falls into the ocean.

There's so much I could tell you about my brother, but there's not enough time. Laugh. Courage. Those two words describe my brother in the best way possible. His laugh brought joy to everybody around him. Misha would simply laugh at the roughest time, and he was able to get a smile on anybody's face. He was strong and full of courage.

My brother was the closest thing to me. We had the most in common. You can think, sure of course we both have lots in common because we're brother and sister but it's more than that. It's sharing the same blood, parents, family, house, initials, love, thoughts and passion; our passion to help others. At times we were filled with anger, but that's what siblings do. He was the closest thing to me.

April 21st 2007: this is when the nightmare begins, but this is also when we finally open our hearts and show just how badly we love each other. 'The biopsy has just confirmed our worst fear, Misha has been diagnosed with anaplastic astrocytoma; in other words brain cancer,' the doctor said to us. And no, this isn't a horrible dream, this is our reality.

After two years of continuous treatment Misha finally ended his battle with cancer and was now a cancer survivor. This was the best day of our lives. Misha was going to continue his studies in psychology and physics' at Carleton University.

But on June 23rd 2009, the nightmare comes back. My family was gathered for a meeting, the doctor had us all sit together around the computer screen. The doctor pulled up Misha's MRI pictures of his brain. The pictures seemed so different. I didn't understand what was happening.



The doctor said "I'm sorry Misha, your tumor has spread over towards the left side and is now crossing the midline of your brain. There's nothing we can do anymore." Tears started falling from Misha's eyes. And soon it was a thunder storm in his face. His eyes were drowning in his tears.

Shortly after they gave us this news, we sat down as a family and came up with our own 'bucket list'. In the coming weeks we began to cross items of this list. We did lots of activities together, and my favorite was sky diving. But regardless of what we were doing, I was happy just to be together.

He wanted to beat cancer so badly that it would leave him alone- forever. I looked at my brother very often, not because I was mad or angry at him, but because I wanted to remind him that he was still on my mind, that I loved him so much. I smiled. Yes, I smiled at a vegetable. Call me crazy, but if being crazy is what it takes to make my brother's heart smile, then I must be insane. I didn't let him see my pain.

I would have done anything to get the cancer to leave forever. But I couldn't. I never gave up on him. He was my brother, he was my hero. And, saying goodbye to my hero was never going to happen. So as I watched him die, I laughed, I smiled. We made jokes. But most of all, I reminded him, at the very last minutes on his life that I was his sister. And so, I did something we used to do at the age of 6 and 10. I painted his finger nails, red.

As I sit here ten feet away from my brother, trying to put an ending to this story, all I do is look into his eyes and see his sadness. But I know he'll be in a better place, he won't be suffering anymore. The story of my brother will never end. Every time I see a plane, a hockey player, a race car, I'll see my brother.

One thing I have left to say is: I love you Misha. I wish you could come back, but you can't. I'm making you proud, and I promise you, you will never leave my mind.

My hero left me.
 He vanished into space,
 The way a helium balloon flies up into the sky
 And you have no luck of ever seeing it again.
 He was supposed to protect me
 From the evil people on this planet.
 He was supposed to hold me,
 As tears formed on my face uncontrollably,
 He was supposed to help me get myself together
 He was supposed to be the big brother
 And having myself feed him like a little baby,
 Was not how it was supposed to be.
 Who was I now supposed to look at for support,
 Who was going to make fun of me so bad
 It would make me stronger.
 Now that he's dead,
 Who's going to embarrass me at my wedding?
 Who was going to baby sit my kids,
 He was supposed to be big and strong,
 But he remains fleshless
 And out of sight.
 Mom and dad, you both were supposed to depart
 our lives first,
 Why was it him?
 And not me.
 Why would this disease take over someone so
 wonderful?

- Meena, 16



On that dreadful day in April of 2008, the 7th to be exact, I did what I did every Monday since the month of January. I went to my classes at university, talked with some friends at lunchtime and went back to my apartment. During the day, at the approximate time of death of my mother, I had a chill that went up my spine. Around 8 p.m. my neighbours from across the road from my parents place called me and asked if they could come to visit me. They told me that they needed to bring me back home because I was needed for a couple of days.

On our way back to our hometown, I was asking questions and trying to figure out what was happening. The ideas that went through my head were that the roof had collapsed from all the snow from the winter, or someone broke into our home, maybe that my grandmother passed away from an illness or that my brother died from his drug abuse (either an overdose or the fact he did not pay his dealer). They would not answer me and only told me "You will know when you get home". We finally got home and I saw vehicles of some family friends in our driveway.

At that moment, my Dad told me that my mother had passed away, that she took her own life. I was in total shock, like in a bad dream, but it was reality. I remember only throwing my coat in my room and later almost smashing an ashtray, but beside that, the sleepless night is almost a blank. I only recall doing things like going through some things like life insurance papers, what clothes to choose for the wake, and just simply trying to figure out what was happening. In so many ways, I was lucky that my neighbours came to get me, because by the time I got home, I already had sympathy messages on Facebook, from people in town. The news travelled quickly of my mother's death.

Five months and three weeks after my mother's death, my brother took his own life. On Monday the 29th of September 2008, I came back home from school, around 7pm. I saw that my uncle's minivan was parked in our driveway. I was wondering what was going on, but then my dad told me that my older brother had been missing for at least 36 hours. Around 10 pm, two police officers came knocking at our door. They told us that they found my brother. He was dead. He killed himself by hanging, just as my mother did. They stayed well over an hour with us to talk and to comfort us. Saturday November the 4th was his funeral. One hour before the service, we welcomed the last of the people to pay their respects. After the funeral, we buried his ashes. They ended up in my mother's arm, as he was at birth.

I was 21 years old when I lost my mother Claudette and my brother Christopher.



This is actually the only poem I have ever written. It was an assignment I had to do in high school and the theme was Triumph so I figured my biggest inspiration was the journey I lived with my dad's passing.

On January 6th, years ago,
My world as I knew it took a life-changing blow.
The clock was ticking and his pulse was slow,
He'd put up a fight, but it was time to let go.
What's life without him? The questions kept coming.
I felt terrified; I couldn't believe this was happening.
Love, joy and comfort he always did bring,
To lose him so soon was no easy thing.
I felt I was stuck in an endless scary dream,
Unable to wake up or even scream,
I was going through the motions, living like a machine,
Lonely without him, how pointless life did seem.
Confusion and sadness, anger and fear,
Sorrow and anguish came with many tears.
Yet with time I am healing, and this much is clear,
I want to make him proud and persevere.
Life isn't easy, but I'll be okay,
Thanks to his love, I am who I am today:
Strong and determined and ready to say,
I'm all set to go now, and find my own way.
I wish he was here, but it's so nice to know
That no matter what happens, wherever I go,
He'll always be with me, through life's highs and lows;
I'll never forget you, my father, my hero.



Moving Forward: A Note on Comfort Zone Camp

I am wearing my Dad's old torn green sweater and sitting on a bench so wet the butt of my jeans are drenched through. I am smiling. There is a nine year old camper on either side of me. They are gap-toothed and half my age, yet we have something in common, unseen by the naked eye. Each one of us lives in a family that is now missing a member.

We have spent the past week together at a camp created for children who are grieving just like us. Everyone's story is different. I think back to the third night of camp, when my campers excitedly pulled pictures off their shelves to show each other the faces that now live on only in photographs and memories. I recall Byron, the girl who liked to discuss grief the least, asking me who was in the photo album on my bed. I showed her some pictures from the years when I was a camper and some pictures of me with my Dad. "You look little in these pictures," She said. I told her my Dad died when I was twelve. "It's okay," She said, "My Dad's dead, too."

Next to me now, Byron tugs on my arm. The night is dark. The bonfire in the center of the benches is the only source of light; every flashlight has been turned off. When my campers are called to the fire we toss the carefully worded notes to our loved ones into the bonfire. For years I tried to fit every thing I never said to him onto a note card. Tonight, my note is brief: *I love you, Daddy*; I don't have to say everything now. The flames wink as I blink through tears. I wink back. The oldest of my campers (she is nine and three-quarters) squeezes my hand. She repeats what I have told her every night of camp. "It's okay to cry; everyone here understands." I truly hear this mantra for the first time. I hug her and repeat the words back. The campers begin to shake with heart-wrenching sobs. I try to comfort them, to ease the heavy burden on their little souls. I wish I were an octopus; two arms are not enough to hold them.

The fire has gone out and we have stopped crying. I lead the girls back to our cabin. Just like little girls at any other camp, they are fatigued from playing capture the flag earlier in

the day. I hold a small hand in each of my own. Two of the girls have their arms around each other. I squeeze the two hands I'm holding, the girls squeeze back. I am grateful to see the cabin light, a small beacon leading us to the home we have created.

The girls race into the cabin so they do not let the bugs in. They giggle as only nine year old girls do. I take their lead: laugh and move forward.

Father's Day Tears

Happy Father's Day, Daddy
 Heaven hugs from a red balloon;
 a jotted note on a store bought card from me to you
 a handmade gluey macaroni and cheese
 picture frame
 holds a photograph
 of your boyish laughter
 and me dancing on your toes.
 Papa I had to tiptoe through childhood
 yet I'm always playing tug of war
 so those years will take me back to you
 but these tears don't take me up to you.
 I believe you did not know you would die
 or I am sure
 you would have found the strength to say goodbye.
 Your eyes spoke volumes for the years you could
 not see
 but I was only paying attention
 to the rattling breath
 to the green tinged skin
 to the skeleton man
 who was of my kin.
 So much has changed
 since you've been gone
 I'm completely different
 not the same at all
 and Daddy it's all your fault.
 For if you hadn't died
 I'd have given you the red balloon today
 I'd have hugged you real tight
 (I tried anyways but ashes just don't feel right)
 I'd have made you breakfast in bed
 and I'd have bought you a card.
 Because I don't color anymore
 my gift would not be messy with glue
 but my wrapping would show
 I'm only about as neat as you
 were.



Your Clothes Are In Somalia

This evening mom and I went through your closet
a man from Somalia needs clothes
and I guess it's selfish to want pants that no one ever wears
to hang on a hanger never unhung.
We found a nice black suit
and your best button downs
but there are moth holes in the suits
and the buttons are missing.

While the buttons fell off
I danced everyday just because you were gone so I could
without making you mad about the whole house shaking,
then I quit dancing at all because you were gone so it hurt to feel the whole house shaking.
And I cried at every birthday because time passes so slowly without you
but the clock beside my bed ticks anyway.

While I tied all your ties together so they couldn't escape
your gardens became over grown with weeds and dead plants:
the neighbors complained about the long grass,
the paint on the house began to chip,
and the porch you built rotted.

As Mom gave away your winter boots and old slippers to your friends
dust fell on your comb.
I sleep in your green tee-shirt
and none of your clothes smell like you
they all smell like dust,
you smell like ash
and I like cutting the grass because you smelt a bit like that.

So I picked your three favorite shirts, and the pajamas
you wore for a month before you died
and put the rest into a plastic bin
after sewing on the buttons
and patching up the holes
and mom sent your clothes
to the man from Somalia.

Your closet looks empty
I tried hard not to cry
but it looks like you, all gone.



You

You smell like
cologne without the scent
of cigarettes that
stained your teeth.

It's been too
long since I've seen
you but I
count the days
(365 times 3.5
equals how many tissues,
flowers and regrets?)

like they're the only
thing that matters.

Your box burned
a hole through my
t-shirt and singed my
heart with lines
of memories and
words left hanging in
the air

before
you left.

I manage
to open your box
(which, indecently,
has you all over it)
while a puff of
feelings mixed with
ash rises up.

I cradle you(r box)
to my chest, sink
in the earthy smell of
it and recall
all of the memories that
seep into my pores,
long forgotten.

It tugs at my heart,
wanting to be forgotten
and wanting to be remembered
all at once.

More than one sigh
leaves my lungs
as I remember
that

you still smell
like cigarettes to me.

For A Moment

The way he answered my
question made me think it was
you. I closed my
eyes and you were there,
smelling of cigarettes and the aftershave
you used every day.

Your eyes crinkled as you smiled at
me and I could feel the lump in my throat
ache after being ignored for so long. I hated
that feeling but more importantly
just for a moment I hated you,
for being there. You were gone
for so long and you fluttered in and out
of my mind every day,
taunting me without meaning to.

He laughed
and so did you, the same laugh that meant you
were kidding around.
I tried to laugh with you but couldn't because
I knew you could be gone in an instant,
like an old reel of tape that has been used
again and again,
exhausting all the memories from it.



Only You

I opened the well
 And all the tears fell
 That I had been keeping inside
 As well as the truth
 That I know I've lost you
 But that gives me no reason to hide
 I look all around
 Eternally bound
 Without any more of your hugs
 People say hello
 Little do they know
 It's only you that I think of
 Things they will change
 And so will the pain
 Your passing leaves me with now
 I want you to live
 And through me you will
 As much as this new life allows
 There's so much to say
 But this is no time or place
 To let everything that I feel out
 I'll live the way you wished
 Each day I will reminisce
 Because you gave me so much to write about

No One

I wish I could see you
 I wish I could say goodbye
 I wish I could hear your voice
 Say you love me one more time
 If you were here I would take you
 To our old favorite place
 Lately it's been empty
 Without your smiling face
 I wish you were here
 Without you life feels wrong
 But if you have to go I want to come along
 It's one of those things that can't be done
 Without you, it's like I have no one.
 You made me who I am
 You taught me how to see
 The beauty in life itself
 That seemed so strange to me
 A part of me has been missing
 I don't think it can be found
 When you left me I was angry
 Bawling my eyes out on the ground
 I wish you were here
 Without you life feels wrong
 But if you have to go I want to come along
 It's one of those things that can't be done
 Without you, it's like I have no one



When I was 17, I met Sheri through a mutual friend and we hit it off instantly. We hung out almost daily even though we did not go to the same school or work at the same place. We both loved coffee houses and poetry and so that is what we did. From the moment I met Sheri I knew that she had Cystic Fibrosis, I even knew a great deal about the disease as I had studied it in my grade eleven health class. I think that Sheri liked that I had knowledge of the disease and that she did not have to recite all the info to me before being friends. Even in light of this disease she lived every day like she had 80 years left in her life.

We continued to find new adventures and in March of 1994 we went to Montreal for March Break where we met tons of people, partied almost every day. Sheri charmed everyone that she met, people liked her instantly and she was the life of every pub and bar that we went to. She could make a siren sound with her throat and at one bar we had all the patrons of the bar chanting her name and buying her shots, I carried her out of the bar that night.

It was in Montreal that I witnessed the extent of Sheri's treatments. The equipment that we had to lug on the train was too heavy for Sheri so I dragged the oxygen machines for her. Every night we made time for her to do treatments and I used the device that beat on her back to loosen the mucus that would harden in her lungs. It was in Montreal that we got into a teenage girl tiff and when we got back to Kitchener we did not talk for a couple of weeks, in fact things were strained between us for awhile.

In May we were talking again and things seemed better, she had plans to go with a friend to the beach and I decided to meet her there. When I got to the beach I learned that she had stayed home because she was not feeling well. I called her when I got back and she assured me that she was just under the weather and that she would be back to her old self again soon. The following Friday I got a call from her older sister letting me know that Sheri had been admitted to the hospital with another lung infection and that she did not want anyone to come up and see her. I respected her wishes but on Sunday her sister called again to tell me that Sheri's organs were shutting down and that they did not think that she would survive the week.

I felt destroyed, I did not know how this could have happened. I went up the hospital and tried to get into the room but the nurse would not allow me since Sheri was in ICU. Sheri was a fighter and her oxygen levels started to go up and we all had hope that she would get better. On Wednesday however her levels plateaued and on Friday June 10th at 6:30 pm Sheri was taken off of life support and she died.

I felt like my heart had been ripped out. My parents tried to comfort me by telling me that they knew someone in high school that died but that was not helpful, this was my best friend, not just someone. My school counsellor did not help either, it was the end of the year when she died but in September if I was struggling the counsellor just told me to sit in the office until I was ready to go to class. My other friends said things like "at least she is no longer sick" or "she is in a better place" but she was not with me and that was what hurt. I continued to talk to her mom for about a year or two but it came to a point when I felt like seeing me was causing more pain than good.

I do think about Sheri all the time and there have been times in my life when she has been truly missed or times that I have made sure that she was remembered. I have included some poetry I wrote about her when I was 18.

Graveside

Sitting alone beside you
As you lay still
Wanting you to comfort me
While I cry at will

Darkness surrounds me
In this lonely place
As I sit with your memory
And picture your face.

So many lives
Just taken or lost
Lying around me
I sit and I talk.

There is only silence
I hear no reply
But the wind in the leaves
Where the spirits fly.

Your body lays quiet
As I sit here and cry
Yet I feel you are with me
Your soul did not die.

- Melissa



Jesse and I first met when we were in middle school. I was in grade six, 11 and he was in grade 8, 14. My friend had a crush on him; so on the day of her birthday, I caught his attention while he was playing basketball. He came over and I shyly whispered, "It's my friend's birthday. She really likes you. Will you come and say happy birthday to her?" Jesse and I walked across the field to go find my friend who had run off to hide. While all our friends were huddling around her, Jesse and I stood off to the side and started talking. That's where it all started. Highview Middle School; back by the baseball diamonds.

We spent those long summer days together. From chasing each other around the swimming pool, splashing and having diving competitions, to playing tag in the playground. The summer came to an end and we lost touch over the winter months.

I couldn't keep him off my mind and I was constantly wondering what he was up to. I wanted to see him and get to know him. I was hanging out with my friend and was thinking about Jesse. My friend asked me his number and then stole my phone. She dialed the number and pushed 'talk' and shoved the phone to my ear. "Hi. Is um Jesse there?" I spoke nervously to his mom who answered the phone. "Hello," he answered the voice in his matured voice. I had a huge grin on my face. I got butterflies in my stomach and beads of sweat form from the nervousness. "Hi Jesse, this is Krista. Remember me?"

We went skating and tobogganing down the escarpment stairs. He was there to wipe my tears when my parents and I were fighting. The first movie we ever went too – I still have the ticket stub. He took me places I had never been. It was just me and him against the world.

We lost touch again and I thought it was over for good this time. I remember the day I ran into him again. I was on the bus headed to work. I felt a nudge at my leg. I looked up to see Jesse standing in front of me. I stood up and we started to catch up right away. We got off at the next stop which was still a few blocks from work and he walked with me. I gave him my number and told him to get in touch. Low and behold, he got in touch.

One night while walking home, Jesse mentioned that he went and looked at an apartment. "I asked if I was allowed to have a cat because my girlfriend wants one." He squeezed my hand and looked at me with that smile of his. I looked up at him, "Girlfriend? Since when was I your girlfriend?" He let go of my hand and skipped a few steps in front of me and turned to look at me. "Yeah, about that...I guess you didn't get my message about how we needed to talk." I was confused, "No, I didn't. What is it about?" He bit his lip, "Well, I wanted to tell you that I didn't want to be friends anymore." I could feel my eyes fill up with tears as he spoke the last few words. This was the moment I had been waiting for, the end once again. Quickly he grabbed my hand, "I don't want to be your friend anymore because I want you to be my girlfriend, silly," as he wiped a tear that fell. I was so mad! How dare he joke around with my feelings, but I was so excited. I look back to that day and it still brings a smile to my face.

It was a Wednesday night at 1:15am when I woke up to my cell phone vibrating on the nightstand beside my bed. I noticed that the caller display said the name of my dad's office. I was so confused at to why he was calling me so late. I answered the phone still half asleep. I answered not expecting what he told me. "I have some bad news." His words were spoken slowly and so clearly that I had to question them. "Bad news? What do you mean? Is everything okay?" "Amanda just called and..." 'Amanda? I'm confused.' He fell silent. The racing of my heart was the only sound you could hear in the dead of the night. 'What is it?' I ask impatiently.

"It was Jesse...He was hit by a drunk driver this evening...and ..." I sat up; suddenly awake, questions flying out of my mouth. What? What happened? Where is he? Is he okay? What's wrong with him? Is he going to be alright? Answer me! My lips trembled with every word that came out of my mouth. Tears formed. Silence. "Dad?"



"He didn't make it...I'm so sorry." The phone fell to the floor. My world came crashing in. Tears streamed my cheeks with no sign in ending anytime soon. Unable to comprehend the words that just came from his mouth, I just sat there. In shock. In denial. Devastated. I could not comprehend it. I had just seen him. I had just heard his voice. I had just kissed his lips. I had just held his hand. I had just held him tight and felt his warm embrace. I had just heard those three important words 'I love you.'

My life...would never be the same. I managed to my feet and made my way downstairs...My body crashed down the last few stairs; unable to hold myself up, unable to hold the pain in. My roommate ran out of her room at the sound of me crashing. I sat, legs curled up rocking myself back and forth at the bottom of the stairs. Threw tears and sobs, I remember trying to explain... All I could manage was; 'He's dead, He's dead.' Confused, she starting asking questions...it was not time for questions as I myself did not know all the details...all I knew was he was dead. I cried, she joined, we cried. As I rocked back and forth the only word that came from my mouth was 'Why?' "Why him?" "Why now?" "What did he do so wrong? I was offered no reply, no answers. This was my first love, my best friend, my world...and I lost it all in a matter of moments.

My parents called and told me to stay put. They were in their car and on their way up to get me: "Pack a bag....and I know it's the last thing you want to think of, but pack something to wear to the funeral.' Hearing those words finalized that what he was telling me was truth and this was no prank. Those were the longest two hours of my life. While waiting, I decided on a walk to attempt to clear my head and my rambling thoughts. As I walked, I laughed, I cried, I was silent, I mumbled, I yelled out to God asking 'why?' I was a mess. It showed on my face, in my words, through my tears.

Anger	Frustration	Hate	Loneliness	Emptiness
Resentment	Miserable	Helplessness	Hopelessness	

The list could go on and on. It didn't take long for these feelings to overwhelm me. Looking back, the days seem to all be one big blur. I didn't sleep much. I was in a daze. Seeing his family hurt; seeing the pain in their eyes. Everyone tried to help each other out, yet none of us really knew what to do or how it would help. The neighborhood kids put together a bike rally the day of the viewing – a nice way to remember Jesse. 15 minutes before the first viewing, my mom and I stood in Staples folding little memory cards together. The manager helped fold and started some small talk. She was surprised to hear it was my boyfriend and that I was still standing and functional. I kept myself busy, barley stopping to take in a breath. The funeral home was packed; the line never ending out the door for both viewing times. It made me realize the impact Jesse had on so many lives.

There are no words to even describe how this has affected my life. I could tell you all the physical things I have noticed; trouble with friends, family, relationships, on medication now, emotionally drained, but to really dig in deep, to read my thoughts, sometimes I don't even know. The emotional toll it has taken and is still taking on me and will probably continue to take on me.

Getting involved with M.A.D.D was probably one of the best things I have done with the loss of Jesse. It took me almost a year to reach out to someone and I thank a school project and my friend for it. I was invited to go to their victim impact weekend. I was nervous as I wouldn't know anyone, but I decided it was something I need to do for myself especially because it was after the one year mark. The weekend was very emotional and healing. I was able to meet people who have dealt with loosing someone or having their life impacted by an impaired driver. I helped with the Strides for Change walk/run that was in June and just recently have started speaking to students in high school settings. Every time I talk, it helps me let go of the emotions I keep inside. It is healing for me. Another large project I am working on is having Campaign 911 signs ejected in the Hamilton, Ontario area. I plan on being involved with M.A.D.D for a long time to come as it helps me and every person that hears my story might make them think before making the decision to drive impaired.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to those who shared their stories: Sarah, Christine, Kiriana, Will, Casey, Jonathan, Heather, Meena, Linda, Melissa, Krista, Annie and teens from the “Living and Learning through Loss” program.

Linda, Sarah, Christine, Will and Nathalie: thank you for participating in the review process.

Christine: thanks for making this resource accessible online.

Deborah and Hilda, thank you for welcoming me into the Bereaved Families of Ottawa office with such kindness. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the idea of creating youth-friendly resources and make it a reality!

Marie Abbott
September 2010

What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose,
for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

- Helen Keller

Grief is a path that we all come across at one point or another. Regardless of whether we want to or not, we must travel along it. This path is one that is unique for each person: the hills and valleys and the twists and turns fall in different places. It is not possible to hurry along the path nor can we step off it and return to the way things were before.

While it is important to always keep moving forward, no matter how gradually, it is also valuable to look back and see how far we've come. – **Marie , 20**

