

SUICIDE - A MOTHERS STORY



Artwork by John Krzywowski.

My name is Patricia and this is my story – my story and that of my two sons, Tristan and Ezra.

Tristan was born in 1974 and eighteen months later, in March 1976, his brother Ezra was born. They were not alike physically or in any way for that matter, but they were inseparable.

Tristan was bright, happy, positive, outgoing and sometimes over the top! Ezra was quieter, more reflective, shy, somewhat introverted and seemingly content to float along in Tristan's shadow.

Both T and E (as they were known) were extremely creative – painting and drawing, creating animations on their computers or sculpting – whenever time allowed. Their father is an artist and my mother was a pianist and a potter so creativity was in their genes.

Despite having achieved excellent results in their final examinations and having many choices available to them, both chose to follow their creative interests with Tristan studying graphic design at RMIT and Ezra choosing drawing at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Although their careers went in completely different directions, they remained in close contact continually flipping "Hey bro ..." emails to each other and sharing ideas.

As an adult, Ezra remained a complicated man and very reliant on Tristan.

After the breakup of my marriage in the mid 1990s I moved to Italy and it was while I was living there that this story really begins.

During my time in Italy, I worked as an English language teacher at the Military School in Perugia. Interestingly I actually felt I was closer to my family than I had been when I was living in Melbourne! Our phone conversations and emails seemed to be more meaningful as we were genuinely interested in what each were doing on the other side of the globe.

I have divided the remainder of this story into three separate parts as that is how it is in my mind.

DISTANCE

At six o'clock Italian time on the morning of January 15 2004, my phone rang. It was my ex-husband John yelling "He's gone!"

My recollection of that time is very hazy. While I do remember amazing kindness, my memories have a sense of unreality bordering on insanity. This strange sense of unreality seemed evident in all who had been close to Tristan.

GUILT

Tristan and I had always had an extremely warm and close relationship – we chatted regularly and flipped emails backwards and forth and I felt that I knew him inside out. He had told me of the relationship problems he was having and of his deep unhappiness and I had persuaded him to think seriously of joining me in Italy. We had a plan!

Looking back now I feel such a mix of loss, anger and guilt. Guilt because I felt that it would have been insensitive to ask too many questions, to scratch the surface. Guilt because I believed that all would be well, that he just needed a fresh start, a new beginning. Guilt because I did not recognize the depth of his grief, his despair.

ANGER

The third component of this historical part of my story is anger. The anger I felt was what kept me going, a deep seething, all-encompassing, raging emotion.

I still feel this anger at times. I believe that it is now an intrinsic part of me as is the feeling of loss – not seeing my mannish boy develop, not having his bright conversation, not having his IT assistance(!), not having his wonderful light joyous persona in my life.

Anger, guilt and loss

Three emotions I now hold as a part of my psyche.

As a result of what happened on January 15 2004, my life, the lives of my family members and of all those who knew and loved Tristan has been irrevocably changed.

I also have a daughter Tracey from a previous marriage. Tracey is 10 years older than Tristan and they had a really close relationship and although this story is primarily about my sons, I feel that I must include the profound effect Tristan's death has had upon her. These are Tracey's comments as she gave them to me: "the physical effect of the stress, the onset of Graves Disease", "I feel robbed, as though my only sibling was taken away", "I don't have the 'family' that I had, that I want" and "It made me fearful of answering the phone for a while – still does sometimes".

Ezra told me recently that he had never made a decision for himself whilst Tristan was alive. As a result of my experience since Tristan's death and observation of Ezra's decline, which I am powerless to assist, I have concluded that immense grief is indeed a form of insanity.

However while the deep sadness I feel when speaking of the loss of my boy is at times overwhelming, it is mitigated by the memories I have, warm happy, indeed joyous memories of his boyhood through to maturity. I am deeply grateful to have known him, to have had him as a part of my life for 29 years, to have been his mother.

I returned to Italy but found the distance from Australia, from Ezra, too unsettling for me to be able to continue my former life there.

A question that all of us who have lost a loved family member or friend in this way is 'why?' This is the question that wakes us crying in the night as we pore through our memories trying to answer the unanswerable.

The 'why?' that has totally changed our lives. The ripple effect of suicide cannot be underestimated.

Ezra has not yet recovered from his loss and in fact, he may never recover.

The message that I hope to impart by the telling of this story is one of love. We all need to realise that today is the only day, in fact this very moment, is the only moment that we can be sure of. We need to get into the habit of cherishing our loved ones, showing them how important they are to us and dispensing loving kindness liberally to all we are in contact with.

Tristan's final note included a message, a message to me – a message written in capital letters.

**SORRY MUM.
(MUM: THE ONLY ONE I HAVE EVER
LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY...)**

Patricia hopes this article will spread awareness and assist the education and motivation of those who read it to take action towards the prevention of suicide.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14

Disclaimer: This article was written and provided by Patricia Reilly (Masters in Educational Psychology - Family Counselling) at Beyond the Masks Counselling and Psychotherapy. For more information, please see www.beyondthemasks.com or contact Patricia at patricia@beyondthemasks.com



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Patricia Reilly - The counsellor with an unconventional approach for healing individuals, couples and families.

Patricia has been in practice for over a decade combining her professional knowledge, life experience and passion for helping people in order to provide the best counselling service possible.

In doing so, she has assisted children and families to develop various coping strategies to assist in navigating today's turbulent world. Her approach is empathetic, practical and insightful.

A focus of her work is the development of emotional intelligence, emotional resilience, emotional regulation and positive self-esteem.

The importance of learning to live life in the moment whilst taking the lessons of the past into account and looking forward to the future is also a recurrent theme of Patricia's approach with her clients.

Patricia provides her clients with a combination of personal growth, counselling, and psychotherapeutic methods including her unique use of Sand therapy, to facilitate emotional healing. She strongly believes that a happy and healthy mind/body connection is essential for life skills.

Patricia is deeply committed to helping each individual, whether child or adult achieve the very best version of themselves possible!

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