

Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

Hope you are enjoying a good summer and some time to relax, swim, work in the garden, read a book or something else that is meaningful to you and which offers you comfort, peace and calm. Many of you will have had to go through that amazing heat wave. A few records were nearly topped and I understand some fell. I always find it amazing in Canada that if you stand on your front porch in the heat and wait six months, you will be freezing! I feel there is a magical component about all that. Either way, we get an important ice (no pun intended) breaking way to begin any conversation.

Enclosing the best of wishes.

Thinking of you,

Lynda

Loss of Twin in Utero.....

I have always had a hard time getting pregnant. It took a year for me to get pregnant with my son, now four, and half that time for me to conceive my now 19 month old son. My second pregnancy wasn't as simple and a-traumatic as my first though. When I had my first ultrasound, the technician checked the baby's heartbeat, etc and was just about to finish up when she said "wait a minute, what is this? we have two in here...let me check to see if we have more." I was shocked. I looked at that second little "star" flickering on the screen and thought *I'm gonna be a mother to twins...* Twins do not run in my family. When she indeed verified it was only two sacs, I think my husband, Tim, about fainted. We experienced all kinds of emotions. First, fear. Then excitement and then fear again. However, when the technician measured the second fetus, the numbers were very different. This baby, referred to as "twin B" by the tech, was much smaller and its heartbeat nearly half that of the other. When I asked what this meant, she said that sometimes one implants later and so forth but they would "keep and eye on it." I really didn't fear at this point. She said she would see me back in a week for another ultrasound.

So, in the week between my ultrasounds, we were thinking hard on name combinations and colors for the nursery and what car we might have to "up-size" to. We finally decided on Rowan and Owen if it were two boys and didn't really get much further than that. I had other names but none that really "stuck" like those.

We returned in a week for another scan, June 29, 2009, excited at another chance to see our babies again. Only, this time, we wouldn't leave with such pride and awe. The technician, a different one than last time, looked at "twin A" first. Everything checked out great and it had a very fast heartbeat, just like my last pregnancy. I thought to myself *another boy!* But it was too early to tell, you see, I was only 13 weeks along. Then, she shifted the probe to "twin B". When the sac flashed up on the screen, I immediately knew something was wrong. It was very still. No movement, no flickering star...just stillness. The technician paused and then said "no heartbeat. So sorry to be the bearer of bad news." The words were like a knife cutting my heart out but I could not look away from the screen and the fetus that, just last week was alive! I was confused and sad. Then, I got scared. The other fetus, what will happen now?

Long story short, I went on to realize that what had happened was a phenomenon called vanishing twin syndrome and it affects nearly 25% of all multiple pregnancies. I also found on subsequent scans that I had a placenta previa (a placenta attached over the cervix that keeps natural birth from occurring without risks) and would have to have a c-section. So, I got regular ultrasounds to see if the previa would move to allow me to try natural birth and at all the scans they would always check "twin B". The fetus got smaller and smaller until on one scan, it was nothing more than just a sac. Then, nothing at all.

I delivered traumatically at 32 weeks going into labor prematurely and with a nearly complete abruption. I rode to the hospital, hemorrhaging, with my hand placed on my belly, praying over and over not to lose this baby too.

I delivered via c-section at 9:59 Sunday, November 29, 2009 to a 3lb 10 oz little boy. We named him Owen, which means "little fighter." And that he was. He had to stay six weeks in the NICU as his lungs were not formed well enough for him to go home. Then, after two days on the ventilator, two blood transfusions, two days under ultraviolet therapy and six weeks later, he finally got to come home on oxygen.

He is 19 months old now and is the picture of health. No more tape on his face from the oxygen tubing, no more IVs, none of that for this little survivor. One day, I will tell him about his twin. My oldest son, Ashton, doesn't even know yet. Tim and I had decided that we would not tell them about it so there would not be feelings of sadness. But, when I thought about it again, I decided that one day, when the time is right, I will tell him.

I can't help but think his sibling, "twin B" was a boy. The name Rowan stuck in my mind when we were combining names in the week between when we discovered the twin had passed. Either way, there is one more child in heaven now. I can't help but think that one day, I will get to meet my little "twin B"...my "vanishing angel".

Angela

Questions and Suggestions.....

Questions: What about money and gift certificates? Do you ask the giver if they want them back or do you use it for funeral expenses? Thank you.

Suggestions: Hello, Very good questions. I am of the opinion that once given, a gift is now the possession of the receiver. If any of the gifts are money, I don't see a problem with using the money to help cover funeral expenses. The gift was given in good faith and if there is a loss following the gift, it is unforeseen and there is no obligation to return same. If the person having the loss wanted, they might donate the gift certificates, money or any part thereof to a charity of their choice in the name of their deceased. If I chose the latter option, I would then write a note to the giver letting them know about the donation of their gift. Gifts or gift certificates are sometimes chosen to be returned or donated by bereaved parents because they do not want any connection which may be perceived to exist between this loss and their next pregnancy.

Beautiful memories are wonderful things,
They last till the longest day
They never wear out
They never get lost
And can never be given away.
To some you may be forgotten
To others a part of the past
But to us who loved and lost you,
Your memory will always last.
~from an obituary

The Magic & Mystery of Death

by Mike Robbins

In the past few weeks, two important people in my life suddenly passed away. These deaths have been shocking, sad, and painful for me. And, in the midst of sadness I've once again been reminded of the mystery and magic that I often experience when someone close to me dies.

I find death so mysterious because it doesn't make much rational sense and often seems so random and unfair. I also find it frustrating that we don't do a very good job in our culture of talking about, dealing with, or embracing death. It's seen by most of us as a universally "bad" thing - awful, tragic, painful, hard, and negative in most cases. While all of these things can be and often are true for us about death, especially when the person who dies is someone we love and care about and/or happens to be someone we consider "too young to die," there is so much more to it than just this.

As I've also experienced these past few weeks and at many other times in my life, there can be a great deal of magic, beauty, and joy that comes from death. Due to the fact that we often avoid it, don't want to talk about it, or would rather not deal with it (unless we are forced to do so) - we miss out on the magical and positive aspects of death and in doing so we aren't able to live our lives as deeply and with as much freedom as we could if we embraced death more fully.

Why we avoid dealing with death

There are many reasons we avoid dealing with or even talking about death. From what I've seen and experienced, here are some of the main reasons:

- It can be very painful, sad, and scary
- We often aren't taught or encouraged to really deal with it - just to simply follow the "rules" and rituals of our family, religion, or community in order to get through it
- We don't know what to say, how to react, and don't want to upset people
- It can be overwhelming for many of us to consider our own death, or the deaths of those close to us
- We aren't comfortable experiencing or expressing some of the intense emotions that show up for us around death

- Our culture is so obsessed with youth, beauty, and production (in a superficial sense), death is often seen as the ultimate "failure" - the complete absence of beauty, health, and productivity
- It challenges us to question life, reality, and our core beliefs at the deepest level

For these and many other reasons, death is one of the biggest "taboo" subjects in our culture and remains in the "darkness" of our own lives on a personal level. Sadly, not dealing with, talking about, or facing death in a real way creates a deep level of disconnection, fear, and a lack of authenticity in our lives and relationships.

The magic of death

What if we embraced death, talked about it, or shared our thoughts, feelings, questions, concerns, and more about it with the people around us? While for some of us this may seem uncomfortable, undesirable, or even a little weird - think how liberating it would be and is when we're willing to face death directly.

One of the highlights of my life was being in the room with my father and holding his hand when he took his last breath about 10 years ago.. It was incredibly sad, but at the same time deeply intimate, personal, and beautiful. He was there when I came into the world and I got to be there when he left. And, by facing death in a direct way - we can learn so much about life and ourselves, as I did when my dad died. As one of my mentors said to me years ago, "Mike, if you live your life each day more aware of your own death, you will live very differently." This is true for all of us.

There are so many beautiful lessons that death teaches us, even in the midst of the pain, loss, confusion, anger, fear and more. When we're willing to embrace death and remember that everyone and everything in physical form will eventually die, we're reminded to:

- Appreciate ourselves, each other, and life - RIGHT NOW
- Let go of our attachment to other people's opinions, our obsession with appearances, and our self consciousness about many superficial aspects of our lives
- Connect to others in a deep, intimate, and vulnerable way
- Speak up, go for what we truly want, and live in the present moment
- Be grateful for what we have and for life as it is, not "someday" when things work out perfectly (which never happens anyway)

Death can be one of the greatest teachers for us in life - but not if we spend most of our time avoiding it because it can be painful, scary, or uncomfortable. Take a moment right now to think about some of the important people who have died in your life. What did you learn from them both through their life and their death? What gifts have you been given in the form of tragedy in your life? How could embracing death more fully impact your life in a positive and important way?

As we consider these and other questions about death, it's obvious that the answers aren't simple and easy...neither is life. However, when we're willing to engage, embrace, and deal with death (and life) with a true sense of empathy, passion, and authenticity - we're able to not only "make it," but to actually learn, grow, and thrive - regardless of the circumstances and even in the face of death.

Mike Robbins is the author of two best selling books, Focus on the Good Stuff (Wiley) and, Be Yourself, Everyone Else is Already Taken (Wiley). He empowers individuals, teams, and organizations around the world to be more authentic, appreciative, and successful through his keynotes, seminars, writing, and consulting. Mike and his work have been featured in Forbes and on ABC News. He is a

regular contributor to the Huffington Post and Oprah.com. To learn more about Mike and sign up for his free newsletter, visit www.Mike-Robbins.com

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On the Net.....

Melissa Bissing has a blog sharing her story of one of her triplet sons having a crisis, his subsequent loss and donating his organs so that other children may have a chance at a healthy life. It is beautifully written and a touching tribute to her four special boys. Dad, Mel, has also shared some thoughts and events.

<http://bissingfamily.wordpress.com/2011/05/28/he-doesnt-have-a-heart/> by Melissa Bissing in Milwaukee

Owen is 19 months old and he lost his twin brother, Rowan, in utero by 12-13 weeks. They have an older brother, Ashton.



Please feel free to write to me about anything at all. I can be reached at loss@multiplebirthscanada.org ~ Lynda