

# Personal Story

Lisa, mother of Jason



BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY

## about grief

Our son, Jason, died a little over three years ago. I still remember when we got the phone call – I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I just thought, this can't be true, it felt like a bad dream; I'd spoken to him that morning and he seemed fine. He'd been a bit down and maybe a bit stressed about how things were going at uni, but we had no idea he was feeling that bad. So many times I've thought, what did we miss? How could I not have seen that he was going to do this? I just didn't think he was having such trouble with things.

Sometimes I miss him so much it's hard to bear. The pain can even make me feel sick at times. I used to think a lot about how a mother should be able to protect her children and that I must have failed him in some way. I kept going over little things – what he was like as a baby, how he managed at school, his teenage years – did we miss something, should we have done more? I just didn't understand it, and mostly I still don't. We loved him – how could that not be enough?

Also I worried about my husband and the other kids. I thought to myself, if I didn't see it was going to happen to him, what good am I to the others, how can I protect them? It was a blow to my confidence and even when I went back to work, I felt less confident for a while.

I found too that I was less interested in nearly everything for a long time. I had trouble caring for the family, cooking meals, all those things. I felt emptied out, unmotivated, shattered. I couldn't concentrate and I didn't think I'd ever feel joy or laugh again.

His father and I were distant from each other for a long time too. He didn't seem to feel as strongly about it as I did. He didn't want to talk and I needed to talk a lot about it. He'd get impatient with me and want me to stop crying and I just couldn't. I'd go into our son's room and just hug his clothes and cry. But this was hard for my husband. I think he wanted to help me but it upset him so much. He needed to be quiet and think and remember so we couldn't seem to reach each other for a while. Eventually I understood that he was hurting as

much as I was but that he needed to do different things to me when he was hurt.

Our friends were great initially, most of them anyway. But others didn't seem to know what to do or say. They stayed away and would avoid us if we saw them up the street or at school. I felt so lonely for a long time. I also felt that everyone must be thinking what a bad mother or bad family we were – this sort of thing didn't happen to a family like us, so there must be something wrong with us. It's the stigma I guess.

It's still hard now – I have some bad days still. His birthday, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day; they're especially hard days. Those days, I want him back. I want to be able to take back what he did.

But we have more good days now. We eventually went to counselling and also to a group for people like us – who'd lost someone to suicide. Sometimes I think it saved my life. Hearing others who were going through the same thing and being understood by others meant I didn't feel so mad and out of control with grief.

My husband and I also learned to talk to each other, listen to each other, and do what we needed to do. We learned how to say no to events and outings when we knew it would be too much and then sometimes we felt able to do things, but maybe we'd only go for a few hours. I guess we learned how to look after ourselves and we had to do this otherwise we couldn't cope.

I learned what to say when someone asks how many kids do you have. I say something like, we have three and one of them died. People tend to ask what happened and sometimes I tell them and sometimes I don't – depends how I feel and if I want to talk about it or not.

It's a hard road but we're learning all the time what to do and how to manage. My son will always be part of me and our family but we're learning how to live again and sometimes I can laugh now and not feel guilty and sad.

**For support services:**  
[www.supportaftersuicide.org.au](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.au)

### Support After Suicide

PO Box 79  
Richmond VIC 3121

Phone: 9427 9899

Fax: 9427 7119

Email:  
[aftersuicide@jss.org.au](mailto:aftersuicide@jss.org.au)

Web:  
[supportaftersuicide.org.au](http://supportaftersuicide.org.au)

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