

Let's have the most difficult conversation of all - let's talk about death

The subject very few people want to talk about, the sum of all of our fears, the epitome of vulnerability and the one sure thing in our life - death.

Not talking about death does not make it any less scary or heartbreaking, in fact I would argue that it makes it more so.

And I believe embracing death actually helps us live far more fully, be more discerning with our time and priorities and less afraid of failure and judgement.

It offers the kind of perspective you will not find anywhere else in life, it cuts through the meaningless bullsh*t that clutters up our mind and introduces us to a level of clarity experienced by very few.

Sadly, many people only get to understand the wisdom that death offers when

they lie on their own death bed - too late to put that wisdom into action, the best you can hope for is the chance to pass it onto a loved one and hope they will listen.

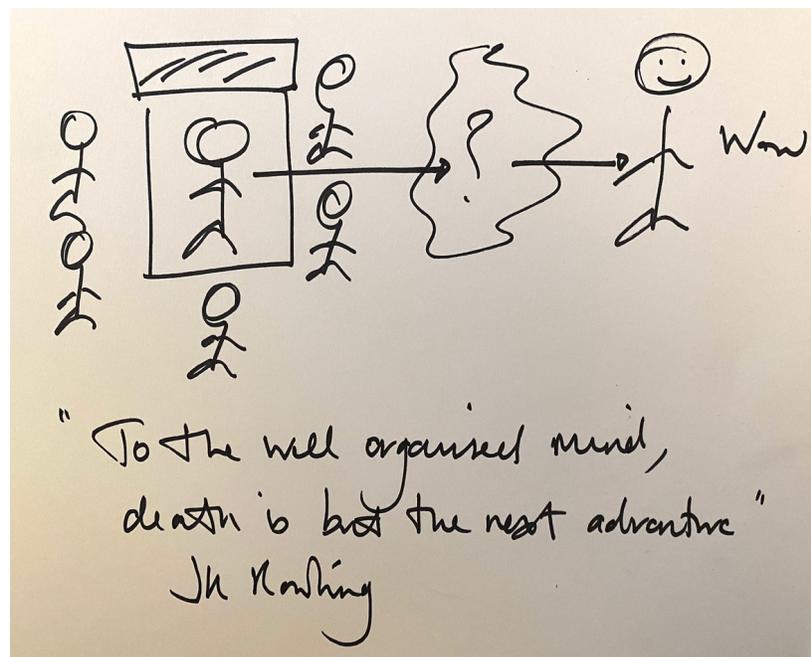
And even more tragic is that many people never get to hear the wise whispers of impending death, as their heads are filled with fear - of what lies ahead, of pain, of leaving loved ones, of what remains undone.

And families and friends are left bereft, isolated in bearing the heavy load of grief, with few people equipped to hold their hand and sit in the discomfort with them, often struggling with the trauma of the death they have just witnessed, which does nothing to alleviate their own fear of dying when the time comes.

So much pain, so much trauma, so much angst, all because we avoid the difficult conversation in the hope it will give us more joy and an easier path, when in fact it achieves the very opposite - fear, isolation and a deep, primal pain no words are equipped to describe.

I have shared my personal journey with death and grief in this email, along with the people, the places and the things that helped me 'stay afloat' until I was able to swim again of my own free will.

For anyone experiencing grief, loss, fear of death, confusion and despair, I sincerely hope you will find some words of comfort, inspiration and hope in here.



Experiencing the death of a loved one

By far the most defining and traumatic experience of my life to date, has been the death of my dad. Watching cancer slowly eat away at my strong, funny and utterly charismatic dad, as he descended to a place where no human could reach, was beyond devastating.

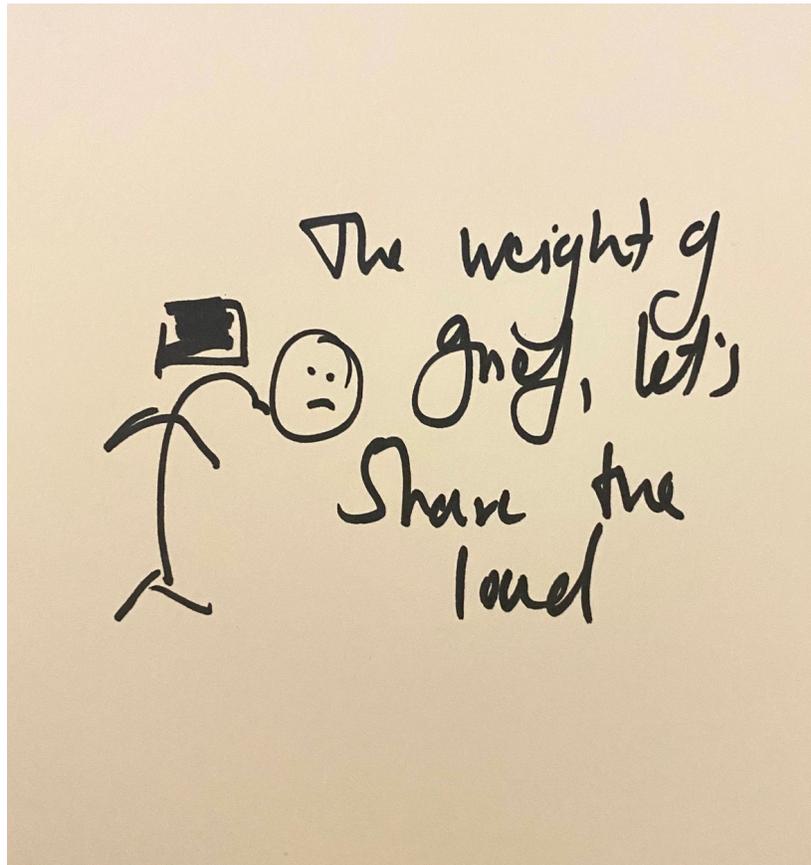
The process was excruciating to witness, made worse by the reluctance or inability (I'm not sure which it is), of the medical profession to have honest and open conversations about death - what would happen, likely time-scales, how we could support my dad, when to ask for intervention and when to let nature take it's course.

As a result we spent hours in and out of hospital, had numerous consultants diagnose different problems, kept hope when there was none and lost hope when there was some. It was nothing short of horrendous - we simply did not know what was a normal part of the terminal process and therefore required palliative care and what was a separate, acute problem that needed treatment.

People thought that by hiding the reality of what dying of cancer actually means, they were somehow being kind, sparing us the gory details, when in fact they were banishing us to a living hell - of not knowing, of not being prepared, of not being able to help my dad more. As Brene Brown poignantly says "being clear is kind and being unclear is unkind".

The first people to talk to me, honestly about the process of death, were the nurses in the hospice 24 hours before my dad died - sadly too late to make a difference to me, my family, or my dad.

And that's not ok - we really must have honest conversations about death throughout our lives, it really is the most loving thing we can do.



Coping with grief

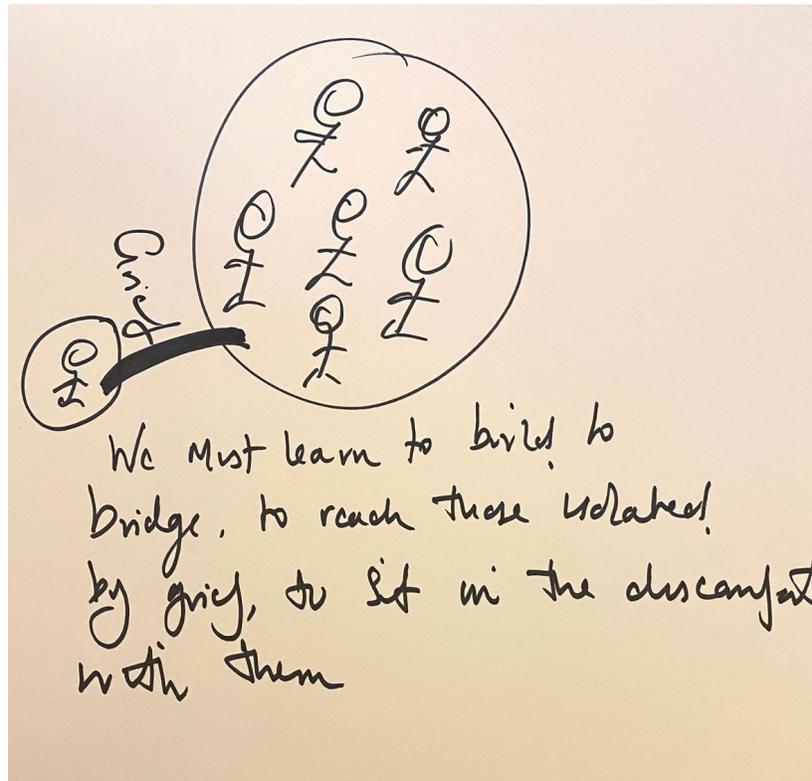
Not long after my father had died, when I was raw with emotion, vulnerable beyond my wildest dreams, lost to all including myself, wondering how on earth I was going to find the will to live, I stumbled upon Dr Kathryn Mannix's book, 'with the end in mind' - it was like bumping into an angel on a very dark night. Dr Mannix is a palliative care specialist who has spent her life helping terminally ill people, educating her peers on death and supporting millions of people like me, as they wade their way through the no man's land of grief.

Her book and subsequent video's that I watched, were a critical part of my recovery process - to know that someone understood, I was not alone in my trauma and that things could be different.

It was a beacon of light when I had all but given up - for anyone facing death, living with terminally ill loved ones or who simply want to honour death far better than we currently do, I urge you to read her book and watch her videos.

She is nothing short of an angel in human form. Please click on the link below to read more about her.

With the end in mind, Dr Kathryn Mannix



Sharing my grief

Around the time I discovered the work of Dr Kathryn Mannix, I had also started blogging about death and grief - somehow putting words down on a piece of paper helped, like a swollen river that needed somewhere to flow lest it flooded those around it, I needed to allow my feelings out and the silence of the written word was hugely therapeutic for me.

My blogs on this subject are not worthy of a Booker prize in terms of literary achievement, but they are worthy of humanity - of speaking my truth and in doing so allowing others to hear theirs and to know that they are not alone. The responses I got to my blogs were of great comfort, in sharing my pain I was able to connect with others who also shared that pain, but it also helped to reduce some of their pain just by the very act of saying 'me too' - perhaps one of the most profound terms in the English language, when it comes to creating psychologically safe spaces, for others to truly share their vulnerability.

And it was these early responses and the realisation that nothing can possibly change if we do not a) recognise that it is broken and b) take action to create the change, that gave me the confidence and motivation to share the reality of grief, raw and in the moment, via my vlogs.

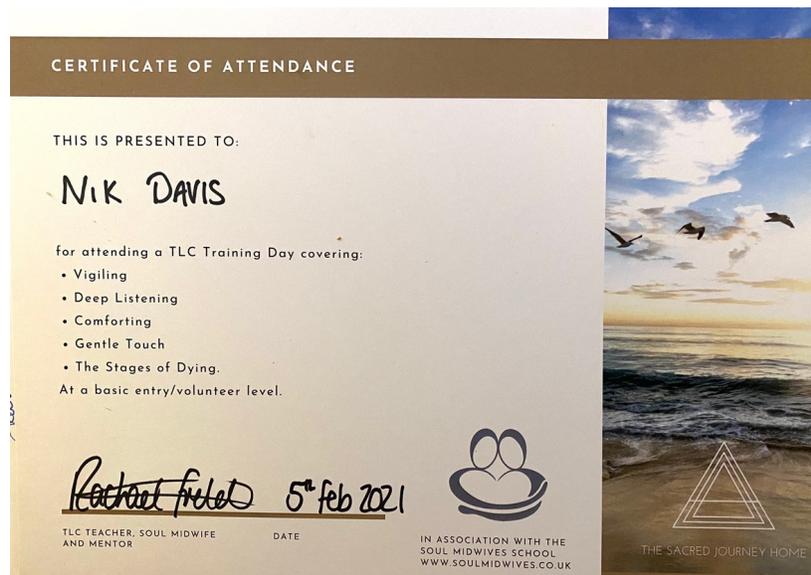
And the very act of sharing such an intimate part of me was surprisingly liberating, but most wonderful of all, inspiring and comforting to others,

struggling with their wounds, their pain and their vulnerability.

It is now nearly 5 years since my fathers death and I continue to write and vlog on this subject, to help me, to help others and to change the way we think about and deal with death in our society - so that no one else has to experience what we did as a family, all because people insisted on avoiding the difficult, but oh so necessary conversations.

My vlogs on why it's so important to talk about death

My blogs on grief and death



Using my experiences to help others

They say there are not any coincidences in life, just paths that are meant to cross for a reason. I was looking for more spirituality in my life after my dads death, I have always been spiritual but somewhat of a bystander it has to be said.

In the immediate aftermath of his death, when some days I could hardly breath so intense was the pain of loss, the realisation that I would not see him again and the deep hurt I felt when he asked me to leave him alone as he entered the final stages of dying (which is common as the dying often struggle with leaving those they love, as well as witness the sadness they have no choice but to leave behind), I reached out for support to 2 friends who had been helping me with my spiritual development - Brigitte and Sarah. I was beyond blessed having these people in my life and so very grateful that I allowed my curiosity to lead me to them, before I knew what was to come.

Brigette

I visited Brigette frequently to mediate, receive spiritual guidance and try to make sense of a world beyond the human realm, as my overriding objective was to find a way to reach my dad in whatever world he has gone to - I have always instinctively believed in our souls, more so than god for me, the higher being that I have to answer to when my time on earth is done, is my soul, in all its purity, knowing only love and compassion, that is the mirror that will reflect back to me all that I am and all that I have done, for better or worse. And the thing I believe with all my heart is that whilst our human experience is finite, the soul can never die.

Brahma Kumaris Spiritual Centre

Brigette understood my pain, she was also an ex nurse and had had helped many people as they took the journey from this world to another. Brigette suggested a spiritual retreat at the Brahma Kumaris centre, a wonderful place in Oxfordshire which runs purely on donations and helps people embrace spirituality at their own pace and in their own way. I was so lost and so desperate for respite for the overwhelming grief and sadness, I knew something had to change, otherwise I would simply cease to be. So, I embarked upon a 2 day retreat at the centre. It was a difficult but transformational experience. I spent much of my time locked in the toilet texting my husband (as no mobile phones were allowed), constantly threatening to leave. Prior to the retreat, I used every excuse in the book not to go, but my husband refuted each one, gave me the keys to the hire car and waved me off. I learnt about the real world of spirituality, where you have to go deep inside and look at what is really there. I attended numerous lectures and resisted the one on ego and attachment enormously. I took copious notes, slept deeply and finally realised that there was no way around grief only through it.

I didn't truly process all that I had learnt straight away, there was simply too much. But slowly over time, the lessons came to me and I realised just how much work has been done during that retreat. I was due to go on another one last year, but sadly with covid that has not been possible, so I am attending a weekly on-line class to further deepen my spiritual practice - it's still bloody hard but somehow I just know it's the right thing for me to do.

If you are interested in the centre, please click on the link below, there are numerous on line events, all free which you can attend:

[Brahma Kumaris Spiritual Centre](#)

Sarah

Sarah had a slightly different but no less transformational approach to spirituality. She is a healer through the use of crystals. I have no idea what happens when I lay down in her treatment room and am covered in the crystals my chakras are crying out for, but I do know that I am renewed and alive at the end of each session. Again Sarah works purely on donations, the same as the Brahma Kumaris centre, you simply pay what you can afford. Before and after each healing session with Sarah, we talk - they were deeply moving conversations, which helped me understand, process and transition to a life without my dad. Sarah held my hand, wiped my tears, was forever and still is on the end of a phone or message and was a fundamental part of my recovery from the abyss that I found myself looking into.

I am so looking forward to the day when I can visit all of these beautifully loving places and people again, to keep taking the next best step and be all that I can.

You can learn more about Brigitte on her facebook page here:

Brigitte Harrison energy and light worker

You can learn more about Sarah on her facebook page here:

Sarah Dickinson Crystal Healing

Soul Midwifery

And I guess the final step thus far in my journey with death and grief, is when I discovered the concept of soul midwifery through a gorgeous soul I met on instagram, when I was searching for a spiritual guide.

The universe conspired so that in all of the many 1,000 of instagram pages and posts, to introduce me to Rachael who runs Eva and Alma. I reached out to Rachael to connect and during our conversation she told me about soul midwifery, as she is qualified as one. Just as we have midwives who help bring life into this world, we also have midwives who help souls leave this world, with love, compassion and grace. I was instantly intrigued. I looked into the concept which was started by Felicity Warner. Sadly, at that time the retreats and training were outside of my financial capacity, but it was an idea that remained firmly rooted in my mind.

And then only a few weeks ago, I saw that Rachael was running a virtual Tender Loving Care (TLC) course, the first step on your journey to training as a soul midwife. I took the course last week and my instinct was confirmed, this was definitely one way I wanted to help others - perhaps the most precious gift any of us can be given, the opportunity to help one soul take the step onto their

next adventure. Having done this initial course I can now volunteer in a hospice, to support the dying and their families in a non-medical, loving and compassionate role. I have also embarked upon an access module which will allow me to start the full soul midwifery training, hopefully in the spring. Supporting others when they are at their most vulnerable and constantly being reminding of our own mortality, is a blessing which I am happy to embrace.

If you would like to know more about Eva and Alma, a well being and spiritual guide, please click the link below:

Eva and Alma

If you would like to know more about soul midwifery, please click the link below:

Soul Midwifery

The length of this email, I hope conveys the depth, diversity and support there is to cope with death and grief - I have only touched on those things that I have had first hand experience of, I know there are so many more groups, resources and individuals out there all waiting patiently to help you, should you need it.

I sincerely hope that in sharing my journey so far, you will find hope, love and inspiration, that even in the face of death, there is much life still to be lived.

With love

Nik x

Please do feel free to share this email with anyone you think may benefit from it.

People can subscribe on my website to receive their own email and also download any they may have missed at the link below:

<https://nikdavis.com/>

Once the month I will send a round up of the most pertinent information, observations and discoveries I have found, whilst experiencing this mad thing called life, in my 'let's cut the bullsh*t' newsletter.

During the month, I will send emails on various topics depending on what is on my mind on any given day - death, grief, the menopause, parenting, love, work, humanity, transformation, mental health to name but a few.

The core theme is that they are all written and sent with a genuine desire to help others and encourage us all to own our stories, our truth and ourselves.



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