

Volume 9, Issue 1

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

A firefighter in silhouette is shown in profile, wearing a helmet and holding a hose. The background is a bright, intense fire with a large window or opening in a brick wall, creating a strong contrast and a warm, orange glow. The firefighter's gear and the hose are visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the view of the fire.

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A few weeks ago, my neighbor rang my doorbell at 10:30 pm. He informed me that a fire had broken out in one of the garages in our apartment building, and that everyone needed to vacate the building. The fire department had been called, and they soon arrived to put out the fire, which by then had engulfed everything in the garage and the attached apartment, blowing out the windows from the intense heat the fire generated.

The woman and her daughter who had occupied the apartment stood in shock as they gazed at all of their belongings, including a brand new car, going up in smoke. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but the tragic effects of this accidental fire changed the lives of these dear people in an instant, and touched the rest of us tenants too, as due to smoke damage in the other three flats no one could reenter their homes for nearly a week.

This close-up and personal experience was a sober reminder of how quickly life can change, and how important it is to be there for those who are hurting. It was very touching to see the immediate kindness extended to the woman and her daughter who lost everything, as well as to the rest of us who were displaced for a time.

This life-changing event made me more acutely aware of the needs of those suffering loss, and inspired me to dedicate this issue of *Motivated* to all those who have gone or are going through catastrophic circumstances. I hope these articles and stories will encourage them to know that there is light at the end of every dark experience, and that they will motivate all of us to always be ready to provide instant and ongoing support to those in need.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Juma's Story

By Louisa Scott, Middle East

Mr. Juma traveled from Aleppo, Syria to our city in the Middle East to join his brother and secure a safe place to live for his family. His brother, a formerly successful businessman, had moved here earlier and found work as a laborer in a local factory for a meager salary. As a result, his life's savings had dwindled down to next to nothing.

Conditions in Aleppo were deteriorating rapidly. Parts of the city were without water and electricity, medical care was limited, and there was "death everywhere," as Amnesty International described the situation in a 2016 report. Juma's children could not attend school anymore, nor play as in times past. At night, sleep was often broken by the terrifying sounds of bombing, shelling, and gunfire. Like many other families, they slept in a windowless underground shelter, as their home had been destroyed. The coming winter would bring new dangers of pneumonia, colds, disease, and possible injury or death. It was time for them to leave.

Soon after arriving in our city, he found and rented a little one-bedroom house without inside toilets in one of the vast slums on the outskirts of town. He then journeyed back to Aleppo to bring his wife and five children to the safety of our

country. Sadly, he never arrived home. One week after his disappearance, his wife received a call from his cell phone. The voice on the other side of the line simply pronounced that the owner of this phone is dead before abruptly closing the line. This was the last news she ever received from her husband and the father of her five children. She was shattered.

Heartbroken, Mrs. Juma and children traveled to our city just before the fall of Aleppo and they moved into the house he had rented for them. It had no electricity, was damp and full of mold, with a leaking roof and bitterly cold. All five children became ill with colds and flu. Friends immediately pitched in and gave food, clothing, and blankets. Within two months, they collected enough money to rent a small apartment for Mrs. Juma and her children, and a departing expat gave all of his furniture and appliances for just \$200.

Though they are still in the slums, they now have two bedrooms, a roof that doesn't leak when it rains, and beds for everyone. It was very precious to see people rally around this distraught widow and her now fatherless children, and a powerful example of how together we can make a difference for those in need. ■

Tragedy

By Sandra Walker, adapted

Written on April 16, 2013, a day after the Boston Marathon bombing

My mind has been spinning in the wake of yesterday's events in Boston.

The details of each tragedy are different. Different events occur. Different people are involved. Different emotions are touched. The unfortunate similarity is that all tragedies involve loss. And loss is difficult. More than difficult. It can mean so many different things all at once. The loss of life. The loss of feeling safe. The loss of visions for your future. The loss of love. The loss of physical abilities. The loss of personal property. The loss of a pastime you love. Loss.

The other devastating part of tragedy is that it hurts. Tragedy hurts everyone who hears about it. Hearts ache. Hearts and minds are confused, in denial, shocked. It hurts everyone who sees the images of the tragedy, or hears the details of the event. It hurts those directly involved.

Without a doubt, though, the most difficult part of a tragedy is that for many, their lives will never be the same again. Many of us, though our heart is heavy, can go on today as we did the day before. Yet, for those who were there, who experienced huge loss on so many levels,

today is day one of the rest of their lives. Today, they woke up changed. They woke up without a loved one, without an arm, without a leg, without confidence, without peace. Today is the first day of the rest of their life. Today is different. Every day forward from now will be different.

Although my personal tragedy was different, there is a universal experience, a universal pain that occurs. I will never forget what it felt like to wake up on the morning of November 21, 2011, and find myself in a hospital, unable to get up, without a clue of why I was there. Next, I found out that 16 days earlier, I had been in a car accident. That we were hit head-on. That the children were OK. That my husband was alive, but his brain was no longer showing activity and he would be removed from life support. Tears. Shock. Confusion. Pain. Tragedy is always that cold. It is always that shocking. It is always that stark.

I have never and never will begrudge those who have not had to wake up in a hospital bed, and who have not gone through a tragedy. People who saw the news story, or heard the story

in conversation, and whose heart hurt for what we were all going through, I would never wish it on you. The fact remains, however, that when you've been there, at that moment, at day one of the rest of your life, the level of ache in your heart is unbearable.

Through the last 17 months, I have had to teach myself to wake up and hope. Tragedy does not have to be the loss of hope. When I could not hope in the beginning, those around me hoped for me, fought for me. Eventually, I began to believe in hope again.

Although I cannot fix what has happened to the people in Boston, I can wake up with hope in my heart. Hope for peace. Hope for healing.

It would be easy after a tragedy of this type to wake up with hate. Bitterness. But I have chosen to wake up with hope instead. To go into the day, the world, and breathe hope into the people around me. It's never easy, and life will never be the same again, but hope keeps me going. ■

Four Ways to Help Children Overcome Tragedy

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



By Kathryn Seifert Ph.D., adapted

Last Wednesday, an 8-year old girl was in critical condition after she was shot in the abdomen by a classmate whose gun accidentally discharged in his backpack. While the immediate priority is her physical recovery, I couldn't help but think of the emotional damage that she and her classmates will have to overcome. As an eight-year-old child, how do you process being shot? How will her young classmates deal with what they saw?

As adults, traumatic events are shocking to deal with, but for young children, they may not even make sense. Their minds lack the experience and logic to understand the gravity of what happened, and this can lead to behavior problems later in life. Studies show that adults who commit violence today most likely witnessed violence as children, or were abused or neglected in early years. The ONLY way young children can deal with tragic events in a healthy manner is with the care, support, and guidance of an adult figure.

Everyone can help. Not just the immediate parents or caregivers, but the entire adult community; teachers, coaches, relatives, and family friends all play a part in a child's positive development. With this in mind, here are five ways adults can help a child overcome tragedy:

1) Focus on positive reinforcements. Loving care and support is vital to helping a child through tough times. Positive encouragement is very important and goes a long way. For parents, remember that a hug is often worth more than kind words alone.

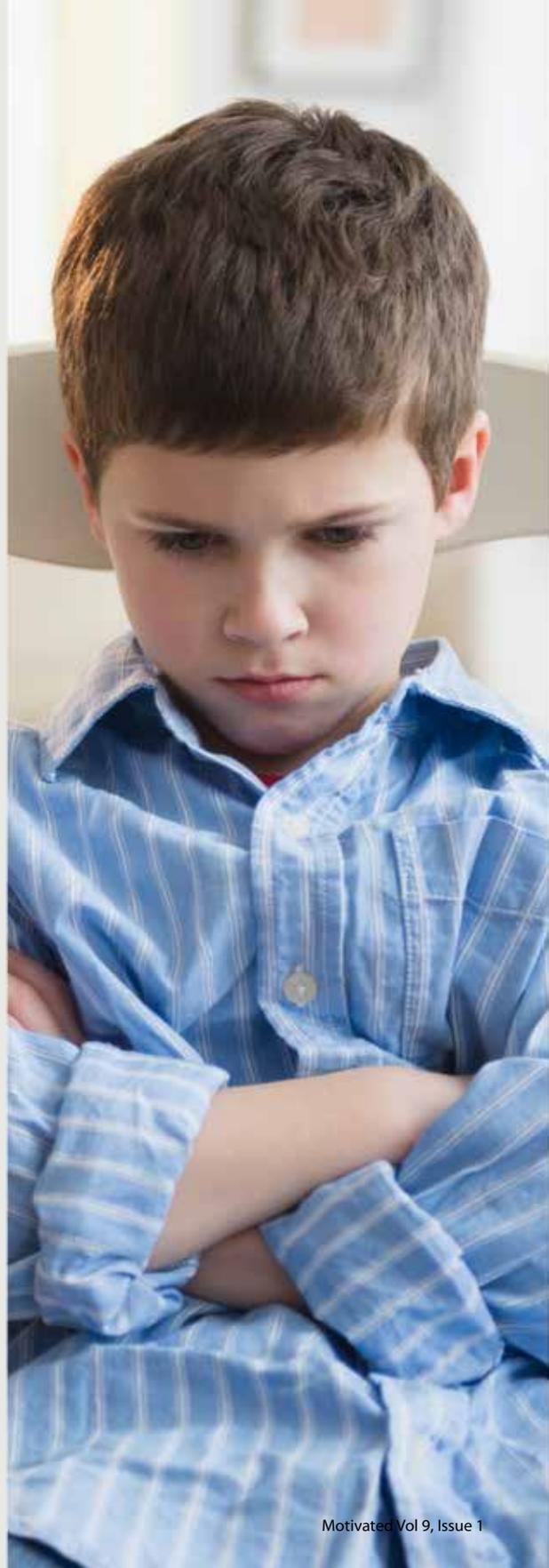
2) Maintain regular structure and routines. They provide children with a sort of behavioral baseline. Whether it's eating family dinner, a bedtime story, or

playing a game, keeping the routines the same will help children feel comfortable and secure because they are doing something that is familiar. The teacher of the classroom with the 8-year-old shooting could make use of this tip by keeping class time, playtime, and lunches routine.

3) Remember every day is a new day and a new opportunity. Dealing with tragedy can be manifested in so many different ways. Some children might become suddenly very angry, sad, or withdrawn, while others may show no signs for weeks. The key is to remain calm and patient if unusual behavior is manifested, and support the child through these times.

4) Understand that severe or ongoing problems require professional help. With the support of parents, most kids will recover from a tragic event after some time. However, some children will be more affected than others. If unusual or problematic behavior persists, mental health professionals have specialized training that can help children understand and deal with their feelings.

The fact of the matter is that adults cannot always prevent children from experiencing tragedy in their lives. The key is to support the child through tragedy so that the child can develop and grow in a healthy manner. Use the tragedy as an opportunity to build the emotional strengths that will be required to withstand future storms that, unfortunately, are inevitable. Hang in there for the long run. With your support and patient love and care, your child will be prepared for the storms of life. ■



MY HOUSE BURNT DOWN

One mother's heart-pounding true story

By Hollye Dexter, adapted

One November morning, I wake from a vivid dream. I sit up in bed, heart pounding, face wet with tears. My husband, Troy, asks, "What's wrong?"

"I was falling backward ... in this huge avalanche," I sob, "and everything I owned, everything I'd ever accomplished in my life, was tumbling over me, pounding and crushing me until there was nothing but dust."

"It was just a dream, honey." He wraps his arms around me.

Cissy, nine, and Taylor, four, are downstairs eating Cheerios. Cartoons hum cheerily in the background. The dogs are under the table, waiting to catch any stray crumbs. I try to shake the residual feelings from the dream. "Everything's fine; everything's fine," I say to myself, all day long.

After school, I drop Cissy at a friend's for an overnight visit. As I drive home, my chest muscles seize. I wonder what is wrong with me. Maybe I need medication or go back to therapy.

By the time I walk into our house, I can barely breathe. I think, if I nap, I'll feel better. I fall into a deep sleep, but when I wake, I am still edgy.

Troy, Taylor, and I have dinner. After Taylor's bath, I zip him into his pajamas. Then I read his favorite book, *The Grouchy Ladybug*, and sing to him

until he falls asleep. Outside, a full moon hangs in the sky. It shines like an icy sun, giving me an ominous feeling.

In the next room, Troy and our friend Donna tune their guitars; we are preparing for a gig. We sing in three-part harmony, with Donna and Troy playing. My throat is tight, my breathing shallow. I'm not hitting my notes. Donna asks, "What's up, girl? You're not yourself."

I tell her about the dream. Donna touches my arm. "Hollye, we don't need to do this now. We can reschedule." Troy holds me. "Everything's OK, honey. You're safe." He knows these are the best words to say to me. Safe—my entire life, that's all I'd ever wanted to feel.

We walk Donna downstairs. The living room is dark, so I flip the light switch. Nothing happens. "Must've blown a fuse," Troy says, and goes to find a flashlight.

By the glow of the fire in the fireplace, I see smoke backing out of the chimney, filling the room with an eerie haze. I crack a window.

"We heard crows making a racket in the chimney..." I say.

"They probably built a nest up there—that's why the smoke is trapped." Donna stands by the front door. "You guys want me to stay?"

I wave my hand. "No. Everything's

fine.” She hugs me and leaves.

In the hall, Troy shines a light on the breaker box. As he flips a switch, a buzz sends us hurtling backward. “It’s gotta be a fuse ... I can fix it.”

“Please!” I say. “I have a bad feeling. Let’s get an electrician here in the morning.”

I wash my face, brush my teeth, and get ready for bed. Ordinary things on an ordinary night, but I am still anxious, eyeing the full moon. I sit on our bed while Troy falls asleep. Angel and Munchkin curl on either side of me, purring. Agitated, I walk the house, checking for ... for what? I wander into the kids’ room. Taylor sleeps, and I pull the covers around him and kiss his forehead.

I walk downstairs to check the hearth. The fire is almost out. I climb upstairs and fall back into bed, but an hour later, panic wakes me. I wander the halls. It is still in the house, too still. A thin veil of smoke lingers in the air. I force myself to go back to bed.

Within an hour, I am awake again. I stand in the kids’ room. The house seems smokier than it did before, but how can that be when the fire burned out hours ago? I crack a window, return to bed, and fall into a dead sleep.

Inside the Inferno

I hear screams. It’s Troy. “Hollye! Get out of the house!”

Hearing the panic in his voice, I bolt upright. I run to the bedroom door and swing it open, and I am blown back, knocked to the floor. Searing heat and black smoke overtake me, burning my skin. Through the deafening roar of fire,

a smoke alarm whines like a mosquito. I gasp for breath and crawl across the floor, gagging. The smell of that fire is something I will never forget. It is not the cozy smell of a campfire but the putrid stench of synthetic carpeting, drywall plaster, and household appliances melting, the toxic cloud of our life disintegrating.

Without knowing how, I have Taylor in my arms and am at his bedroom window. When I open it, ashes and smoke blow through as the heat is pulled toward us. There’s fire behind me, a 30-foot drop to concrete below.

Troy shouts from another window, “Hold on! I’m coming—I’m gonna jump!” Then the sickening sound of bones against cement. I scream his name, but he doesn’t respond. I start to cry, but there is no time for panic.

I lower Taylor out of the window as far as my arms will stretch so he can breathe. I hold only his tiny hands, his body dangling. I am in the center of the firestorm. I choke, spitting out black grease. Blisters rise on the backs of my legs; the pain becomes unbearable. I have to do something. But there is no grass below, no trees or bushes.

My brain searches for options. If I hold Taylor while I jump, I could crush him. I have to let go of his hands. I know that if I do this, he may break bones or suffer a bad injury. But if I do nothing, I will burn to death, and he will fall. Stretching my body to make his drop as short as possible, I lower him as far as I can, until I’m holding just the ends of his chubby fingers. The smoke is so thick, I can’t see him. I beg God to protect him. I let go. At that very moment, Troy shouts, “Drop

him! I'm here!"

I scramble out the window. I take a deep breath, then fall. I hear the thump of a hip against concrete, but it's as though it happened to someone else. I feel nothing. Troy yanks me to my feet. Taylor is clutched to his chest. "I caught him," Troy says. We look at each other in disbelief. We are alive.

We run. All three levels are consumed, flames shooting out the windows. A neighbor cries, "I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!" She screams, "Her little girl is in there!"

Cissy. Cissy. I am disoriented, doubting my own memory. I grab Troy's arm. "Cissy's not in there, right?" I become hysterical, squeezing my son, who is silent and dazed.

Troy grips my arms and says in a firm voice, "Hollye, she's at her friend's house. Look at me, Hollye! She's safe!"

Troy will later tell me that I repeated this scenario many times that night. There is mayhem in my head, mayhem in the street. I watch as our life goes up in flames. Troy wraps his arms around Taylor and me. He whispers, maybe to himself, maybe to me, maybe to God. "We will come back stronger."

I want to believe him, my sunny, optimistic man. But that morning, he was the one who told me my nightmare was just a dream. Now I am wide-awake, and the nightmare is real.

Up From the Ashes

Days after the fire, I wake to the smell of stuffing and the sounds of the Macy's Thanksgiving parade on TV. Is it Thanksgiving? I sit in my mother's kitchen. "Morning, sweetie! Coffee's

made. Want some?" she offers.

All week long, cars pulled up to my mom's house with donations. Calls come from friends, and they suggest a benefit concert. By night, Troy and I are plagued with nightmares. By day, we're surrounded with love. We've been given the chance to feel something most will never know—to be held by hundreds of unseen hands—a comforting yet overwhelming sensation. Here we are on this day of giving thanks, grateful, yes, and also tired of being grateful and needy.

We spend the day digging through bags of stuff. Some people used the fire as an excuse to get rid of junk, and this helps us laugh again.

Used underwear? Bonanza!

A bag full of jockstraps? You shouldn't have!

A wet suit? Skis from the 1970s? We're homeless. But thanks!

Later, we shower and dress. With the kids looking sharp in their outfits, the doorbell rings. My mom answers it and returns to us. She says, "There's a guy from the Red Cross here."

It turns out the Red Cross had been at our fire that night, providing food and water to the firefighters. We hadn't contacted them, but the Red Cross doesn't wait for you to ask. Our representative, Frank [not his real name], is stocky, with a salt-and-pepper beard. "Right now, you're in what's called the honeymoon phase of tragedy," he says. "You're surrounded by people showing up to support you. Donations are coming in. You're getting phone calls every day. But soon, those things will taper off, and you'll be left picking up the pieces." He

hands me a name card. “We’ve arranged some free counseling for the four of you.” He gives us bags with toiletries, and teddy bears and blankets for the kids. “Here are gift certificates so you can get personal items like underwear and socks.”

There is something about Frank’s ease that makes my shoulders relax. He is the first person we’ve talked to who gets it. He understands we have no driver’s licenses, no bank cards, no birth certificates. He knows utilities have to be canceled and mail rerouted because there is no house where the charred mailbox stands. He gives us directions and advice on how to begin again.

We go to my aunt Laura’s house for dinner, Troy with a sprained ankle, and me with a bandaged wrist and a burned ear. Aunts, uncles, and cousins descend upon us with hugs and sniffing. We chat in the kitchen, and every time Troy and I cough from smoke inhalation, we receive more hugs and choruses of “Are you OK?” Somehow, after meeting with Frank, I feel I am.

At dinner, we hold hands, and everyone thanks God for looking out for us. Then it comes time for the prayer. Aunt Laura and Uncle Bob always say grace. We bow our heads, waiting for the opening line. Instead, Aunt Laura says, “Troy, would you lead us in prayer tonight?”

We all jerk our heads up. After a moment of hesitation, he says, “Yes. I’d love to, actually.” He begins, “Dear God, we thank you for this meal tonight and for all the love in this room. We thank you for our family and friends, for the opportunity to be here together”—he pauses—“and that we are alive.” His voice breaks. “Please, God, help me get back on my feet, so that I can give back.”

I squeeze his hand tight. There’s a loud chorus of “Amens.” A few of us wipe tears away as we pass the mashed potatoes. ■

STEPS TO HEALING FROM TRAUMA

By Martin V. Cohen, Ph.D.



Whether you are a crime victim, have been involved in an accident or natural disaster, or were the victim of abuse, the resulting trauma is similar. Pervasive fear and feelings of helplessness are natural reactions to events you had little or no control over. “I was totally traumatized,” and “I thought I was going to die,” are among the most often used phrases used to describe such occurrences. Fortunately, there are ways to overcome the “aftershocks” of traumatic incidents.

• **Recognize that your symptoms are normal reactions to abnormal circumstances.** Although you may feel like you are out of control or “going crazy,” in reality, you are experiencing what are called post-traumatic stress symptoms.

• **Talk about your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the traumatic events with people you trust.** Then, talk about it some more. Keep talking about it until you have no need to talk about it anymore.

• **Do whatever it takes to create a feeling of safety and tranquility in your immediate environment.** Do you need to sleep with a night light on for a while, or does a discipline of meditation, or listening to soothing music help?

• **As much and as quickly as possible, resume your normal activities and routines.** Traumatic events can throw your life into a state of chaos. Structure can provide feelings of security as you etch your way back to stability.

• **You are in a recovery process.** Give yourself the proper rest, nutrition, and exercise. If you were recovering from the flu you would not forget these health tips, so do the same for yourself as you recover from traumatic stress.

• **Become aware of your emotional triggers and learn to cope with them creatively.** You may have a flashback to your trauma by engaging in a similar activity, or going to a similar place. Recognize that you are experiencing an emotional trigger and engage in positive self-talk: “This is frightening, but I am safe now.”

• **Try to find a deeper meaning in what happened to you.** True, you were victimized but you can become a

survivor. What have you learned from your traumatic experience? Record these insights in a journal or voice them in a support group that is sympathetic to your situation.

• **Seek therapy.** If you can’t stop thinking about what happened; if you are always feeling anxious and on guard; if you find yourself avoiding your normal routines, or if you are experiencing some of the other symptoms of post-traumatic stress, you can probably benefit from professional help.

• **Be patient with yourself.** Healing takes time. Your recovery will have its ups and downs. Accept that you are in a recovery process that will take time.

By following the steps outlined above, you will emerge as a survivor. Your traumatic experience can make you a stronger and wiser person. The potential is there for you to learn and grow in ways you may not have considered had the trauma never occurred. ■



Through it all

NOTABLE
QUOTES



We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.

—**Martin Luther King**

We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.—**Kenji Miyazawa**

Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being.

—**Albert Schweitzer**

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.—**Chinese Proverb**

The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.

—**Epicetus**

Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it.

—**William Hazlitt**

Even if happiness forgets you a little bit, never completely forget about it.

—**Jacques Prevert**

Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.

—**Thich Nhat Hanh**

It is only in our darkest hours that we may discover the true strength of the brilliant light within ourselves that can never, ever, be dimmed. —**Doe Zantamata**

Use what you've been through as fuel, believe in yourself and be unstoppable!

—**Yvonne Pierre**

Have great hopes and dare to go all out for them. Have great dreams and dare to live them. Have tremendous expectations and believe in them. —**Norman Vincent Peale**

I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars. —**Og Mandino**

