

FOREWORD



When my mother asked me to write the foreword to her memoir, I wasn't sure what I would say. After all, this is her story and her take on what life with cystic fibrosis was like. And she has worked hard to get it onto paper in her own words. "Just talk about what it was like for you, especially having a mother like me," she jokingly said. So I decided to do exactly that.

Here's the thing: I could have had a miserable childhood. All four of my siblings were dying after all.

Huge pill bottles lined the cold cellar so that hundreds of digestive tablets could be choked down with every single snack and meal. There was the constant chorus of coughing and hacking, along with noisy medicinal inhaler masks and vigorous physical therapy treatments three times a day. Then the many miles and long hours going back and forth from Sick Kids' Hospital in Toronto to our house in Aurora, not to mention the family plans tailored or changed based on whose health was precarious at that moment.

And, of course, the black hole created when each child died.

But the truth is, when I look back, more than anything else I remember laughter. The house was always filled with it. Whether we were running around our old rambling house, or sitting down for home cooked dinners with an assortment of extended family and friends. Even when one of my siblings was going through a bad patch or went into the hospital for what we flippantly called a "tune-up" – we laughed ... a lot!

Like most mothers, mine is not perfect. She simply did the best she could in an impossible situation. And if she made sure of one

thing, it was that we believed we were lucky. Our family may have been dealt a bad hand but no matter what the challenge, she reminded us that others had it so much worse. And she could somehow always find the celebration in everything, however small.

For many years, I kept a saying tacked up on a bulletin board in front of my desk. "Death isn't the only way to lose your life." That is something of which I am certain. Anyone can squander the gift of time by wasting energy on what they can't change, instead of taking notice of what they do have.

That sense of appreciation is something I learned from my mother's attitude and her resilience. From her determination to take life day by day, and with gratitude that, while we didn't have everything we wanted, we had everything we needed.

With my own family today, life is good. I keep a little journal by my bedside and most nights I write about the six of us, healthy, together and safe under one roof, right here and now. It's enough and I am glad for it.

What I hope you get out of reading my mother's memoir is encouragement to live a life filled with appreciation: that you are inspired, as I have been, by her example of how simple gratitude can make life better.

Sheena Campbell
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