

# BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

## Making Peace with Grief and Suicide

### Finding Strength, growth and spirituality from loss and trauma

Tara Lal is a full-time firefighter in Sydney and a physiotherapist and certified Mental Health First Aid instructor. Tara is trained in suicide prevention and has managed the psychological wellbeing program in Fire & Rescue NSW and is currently working with researchers at UNSW and the Black Dog Institute on a program aimed at developing resilience in firefighters.

Tara published her first book "Standing on my Brother's Shoulders – Making peace with Grief and Suicide". This memoir is best described by Alex Garland as follows:

*"A deeply affecting memoir. Tara's courageous book tracks the nature and processes of destruction, and more than this, the crucial reconstructions that can follow."*

Tara writes deeply of her own experience of surviving trauma and the discovery that it has the potential to become a spiritual and healing path which allowed for greater meaning, purpose and connection. Her own childhood was scarred by loss and tragedy. Her mother died when she was 13 and her father suffered from a debilitating mental illness that saw him hospitalized for lengthy periods during her adolescence. Devastatingly, her beloved brother took his own life when she was 17.

Tara writes honestly about her struggles and the destruction that followed particularly after the suicide of her brother Adam. Most inspiring was her reconstruction "of self" that followed. Tara found meaning and purpose in life and continued bonds with her brother, Adam. It was through the words her brother left behind in his diaries that Tara found the essence and impetus which gave her the determination to restructure her life and continue living life in a positive way.

Tara dissociated herself from the trauma of the suicide but her awareness of protecting her much loved brother from the stigma of suicide was paramount for her. Adam was "Perfect" and Tara wanted to continue that focus of him. Tara became very aware of self-preservation and created her own band-aids. Tara ran and kept busy as a means of "coping". Mostly, Tara missed the comfort that her mother provided and hid in relationships that felt safe for her. Fear became a predator – both physically and emotionally – Tara realised that she needed to combat the fear to move forward.

The physical fear was easier to deal with and solitude became a focus for her as this forced her to "stop" and "just be". Emotional fear and core fears began to surface and slowly Tara was able to peel back the layers. Once she discovered the triggers, Tara then recognised that it was necessary to take a step back. The depth of struggle was proportionate to the growth she was experiencing.

The most powerful thing for Tara became the writing of the memoirs. The discovery that vulnerability and strength go hand in hand assisted to combat the emotional fear. The writing of all the memories put all the jigsaw pieces together and gave her a sense of "self". The realisation that understanding and self-compassion were very important for growth and the reconstruction of life.

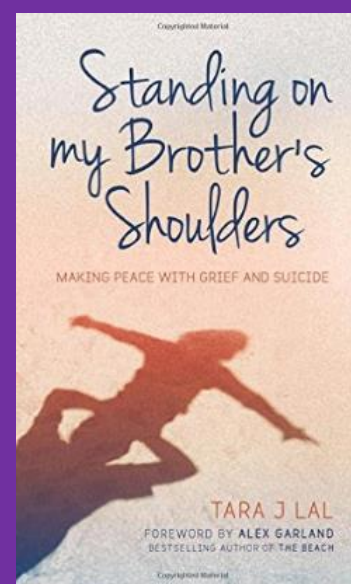
The reconstruction involved Tara realizing she had a rich life. There was beauty in her wounds and this was the formation of who she was. To say "I am" was a most defining moment. Tara realised that it was not grief that defined her. Connection was profound in the reconstruction and gave Tara meaning and purpose in life, bringing the internal and external worlds together. This allowed her atheistic belief to connect to her spirituality. The realisation that all she had found were the things that her brother had struggled with. The pinnacle realisation was that 28 years later she could see what life gave her not what it had taken from her. A very inspirational memoir.

<https://www.facebook.com/tarajlal>



For further information please contact Patricia Thomas, Bereavement Consultant on (02) 9649 6423 or email [patriciat@catholiccemeteries.com.au](mailto:patriciat@catholiccemeteries.com.au) or visit [www.catholiccemeteries.com.au](http://www.catholiccemeteries.com.au)

*Life is  
changed not  
ended*



*"Everything finds its  
place. Just as the  
colour and the beauty  
do so does the pain"*

Adam Lal

*Death does not  
end our  
story...  
Death does not  
end our  
relationships*