

# FINDING LIFE AFTER SUICIDE

## A widow's journey

Julie's 42-year-old husband Cameron died by suicide in 2011

BY JULIE MJELVE, adapted from the book,  
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### Self care articles for the bereaved

From the award-winning  
Grief Diaries book series



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### I learned from my experience

I met James Cameron Mjelve in 2005 while we were both living in Edmonton. At the time he worked for a laborer's union. We married in 2007 and had three beautiful children together, one boy and two girls. In 2009, Cameron decided to go back to university and finish his education degree.

In 2010, Cameron was in his second year when I began to notice he was struggling more with the course load. During Christmas break Cameron seemed different, a little off from his usual self. Perhaps a little depressed, but nothing to be overly concerned about.

In January 2011, our youngest daughter was born with a disability and the stresses of life became overwhelming for Cameron. He began to struggle even more with his university courses.

On July 21, 2011, my husband died by suicide. We were both forty-two at the time and our children were three, two, and five months old.

There is much that has changed in my life from losing a spouse. Perhaps the first is that I've had to learn how to use the word *widow* when speaking about myself. That alone has been a

tough adjustment. I've become single again and I've had to learn how to be comfortable in a room full of couples. I've had to become comfortable in a room full of widows. I've had to become comfortable crying in front of both those groups of people.

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### It has been a difficult experience, losing a spouse.

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I've had to face major decisions for myself and the children alone. At times this has been very stressful, especially when I had to make decisions which impact my children's health or our financial stability. It has been so difficult not having anyone to bounce ideas off of.

Friends will always tell you they are there to help you and listen, but it's still not the same. I miss my friend who shared everything with me.

But I have learned from my experience, and developed a stronger decision-making process. As a result, I have been able to become more confident in the decisions I make.

Another way my life is different is that I simply cannot do the things I want to do. I cannot run to the store at 10 p.m., there is no one to watch the children.

I cannot sleep in on a Saturday if it's been a tough week of being up in the night with sick children.

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**Even something so simple as taking a vacation has become a major undertaking.**

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Not only is there no one to help me with the children, but there's no one for me to share the experience with. Even if we as a family are on vacation and the children are enjoying themselves, who did I get to tell about my experience?

Life is lonely. I don't have anyone to share even the small moments with. There is no spouse who laughs with you or remembers with you. There is also no one who touches you.

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**Yes, the kids hug and climb all over me, but it's different than the simple loving touch of a husband.**

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Life has been different and even difficult, for sure. But I also see it as an opportunity to grow.

Although my life will never be what I dreamed of, I am discovering there is a new life that I can make. It unfortunately doesn't include my husband, but it does include my children and we take Cameron's memory with us wherever we go.

And we are learning that we can still live a life that is full of meaning and adventure, even if it wasn't the life we originally chose.

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**And I do feel like I have a choice.**

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We live in a society that is very focused on couples. This is not the life that I chose, to be single at forty-two years old, but I also feel like I'm presented with a choice on how to react.

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**I can sit and wallow in self-pity and despair over broken dreams, or I can get up and start life over again.**

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I will always, always remember my husband. I will always grieve his loss. I will still cry over his loss. But I will choose to keep on living and to help my children find their life as well.

