

No Man is an Island – a mother's story

No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.
Famous words by John Donne. We may not always realize how much of an impact what we do has on others.

In November 2013 I lost my son Signaller Jonathan Hosken, who was based at Burnham Military Camp, to suicide. This is about my journey since that horrific news came to me.

To lose a loved one is always difficult and no matter why we lose loved ones we naturally have many questions that we ask to try and make sense of our loss. As Jonathan's mum, I would like to say that losing a child – no matter their age – is unbelievable – it isn't meant to happen at all, we are supposed to pass before our children. And losing our child because they choose to pass is so hard to get our heads around. We carry our babies for nine months while we dream of how they will lead fulfilled lives. Then we nurture them close to us as young children before sending them out into the big wide world fervently praying that they will make choices that lead to love and fulfilment. If they make choices like Jonathan made, it is gut wrenching. And rightly or wrongly we question what we could have done differently that might have saved him. Even though I know in my heart that Jonathan, and Jonathan alone, made the decision to end his life.

This is part of a message I wrote to Jonathan two years after his passing. It holds as much relevance now as it did seven years ago:

It has been two long years since the tragic day when we lost you. And though you may have thought we would soon forget you, every single day you have been remembered in one way or another.

You may have thought those you left behind would be unchanged by losing you. But we have all changed because we lost you. Your passing has affected many people deeply.

As time has gone by it has become easier to talk about you, the funny things you did, the experiences each of us had with you. The tears don't come as often. But they do come because we will always grieve the loss of you, a beloved and integral part of who we are. Sometimes the tears come out of the blue. It may be a smell, a sound, a song – it could be anything. Sometimes we can relate it to you. Sometimes we cannot. This is part of each of our lives now.

We miss you deeply and love you to the moon and back, Son

He waka eke noa – we are all in this waka of life together. What affects one person, affects the whole crew. We depend on each other. From the depths of my mother's heart, I plead with you to seek the support of the rest of your crew whenever the urge comes to you, either for yourself or for your mate(s). Whatever you decide to do will have a major affect on the people around you, the people you love. It is unavoidable.

Ngā mihi