

When My Mum Died

Selena Naaniumotu

Something Terrible Happened

The first weeks of high school were an exciting time in my life. I felt happy to meet new friends. I was mature enough to look after myself. I cooked, did my laundry, and did my homework on my own. But something terrible happened: my mum died. I felt like part of me was missing. I felt sad and angry, and I couldn't focus on school. I started to feel like I was not smart like other students. I failed all my midterm exams.

Connecting with People

I decided to visit the school counselor, which helped me a lot. She shared how she felt when her mother passed away, and I felt like I was not the only one who was going through this experience. There are millions of people around the world who have felt this same way when their mother died. She encouraged me not to give up on studying. She asked me, "If you give up, who will your two little sisters look up to?"

Sometimes, I shared my feelings with my dad and my younger sisters. My dad has always been a mother to us since Mum died. He did all



the chores that Mum used to do, like braiding hair and ironing our uniforms. My sisters sometimes didn't understand that Mum would never return. They cried and told me that they felt lonely and incomplete without Mum. But we were lucky to have our dad. He always encouraged us to finish high school, and we all did it. I started to feel less alone and more alive.

Discovering Writing

Now I am attending classes at Portland Community College. Writing class is hard. I feel stressed when I don't know what to write about. Sometimes, I look at other students, and those old feelings come back. I think that they are smarter than I am. I sit in class, and I feel like my head is going to explode. But it turns out, writing class can be very helpful. Writing class helped me gain control of my emotions and taught me how to analyze things and look at them from a different perspective. Sometimes writing helps me recover memories. It makes me happy. After expressing my feelings in writing, I feel much better.

Keep Searching for What Works

Losing my mum made me search for ways to take care of myself. It helped to talk to my school counselor and to stay connected with my dad and sisters. And now I have discovered writing can help me stay connected to myself! There are many ways to cope with stress. You have to keep searching to find what works for you.

AFTER YOU READ: What strategies does the author use to cope with the loss of her mum?

Selena Naaniumotu is an ESOL student from Tonga. She currently studies at Portland Community College. She has not yet declared a major, but she is interested in criminal justice.

Connect with Others?

Yes! According to the National Institutes of Health, being connected to others is good for you! Whether it's family, friends, workmates, classmates, neighbors, or people you pray with or go dancing with, these relationships reduce stress, provide meaning, and help you through hard times.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3150158/>