

Frances Bromley

B.E.C.K.

A shirtless man with dark hair is laughing heartily, his eyes closed and mouth wide open, showing his teeth. He is outdoors, with a coastal landscape featuring a beach, ocean waves, and hills in the background. The lighting suggests a sunny day.

Learn how in times of grief or sudden change
ACTIVE LISTENING
might save *your life*
or the life of someone you love

Positivity warnings: Post-traumatic growth
Looking at, Listening to, Laughing with and
Loving the silver threads in LIFE

Trigger warnings:
Suicide, Mental Distress, Grief

photo by Hannah Bromley

I debated whether or not to put Beck's smile on the cover of this book, but as a close friend said to me:

"After being in beautiful places with beautiful sunsets, for months, I can still say that there's nothing more beautiful than a smile."

Ok, so I may be just a little bit biased, but I think my son's smile is up there among the best! 

To Beck,

I would like to offer you my thanks...

For the wisdom of a mother's hindsight that you gave to me by allowing me into your world when you felt suicidal. If only someone had taught me, you and your carers the value and purpose of the skill of active compassionate listening then, it might just have saved your life and the grief and trauma of so many in your community.

Also to my family, friends and community... for listening to my need to empower others with what I've learned while we are all right in the thick of it ourselves.

*Thank you all,
Frances.*

B.E.C.K.

July 2024 -a-

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I am writing this having lost my son to suicide and knowing myself the desperate life-crushing feeling of not understanding the purpose of life, and the feeling that my friends and family would be better off without me. I am sharing what I have learned - learned through sleepless nights of trying desperately to work out why my son took his own life - in the hope and strong belief that it will help our community to be stronger.

ANYONE

can have thoughts that make them suicidal
or want to harm themselves or others

Statistics say that 1 in 5 of us

have had thoughts of suicide at some point in our lives

however my hope is that

B.E.C.K.

will help you to:

Understand how and why we think the way we do in times of distress

Create your own unique safety plan (p14-15)

Build your resilience to live your fullest life

I encourage you to appreciate the power we all have to support the mental health of our communities, and how in turn our communities will be better able to support us should we ever find ourselves in need.

In December 2021, I sat beside my father in a care home as he took his last breath. Alzheimer's (Vascular Dementia) had changed how he was able to communicate with those around him. In November 2022, we found our 19 year old son Beck not breathing in our home, mental distress having led to him ending his own life. We will never know his reasons. I have fabricated my own theory, and his father, sisters, friends and community may also often challenge themselves with the whys, hows and what ifs in the darker moments of self-doubt. What I have learned is that my pain of loss is something I **personally** want to figure out a way to master. I want to share what I've learned and what I hope might help you if you're reading this.

My perspective

I want to stress that what I will tell you is only from my perspective. I am a mother grieving first the loss of her father, then the loss of her son - and yes, I've a shed load of guilt going on and I'm trying to find answers. But the reason I am writing this is that lots of the **things I have learned** over the last months **will, I believe, help our community to be stronger**. I've been shocked into learning this, and the designer and problem solver in me is trying really hard to make sure I distinguish between the things I can't change while having the courage to change the things I can. I'm still in the thick of it. I think about Beck and mourn the life he lost every day. I am learning that this is part of who I am and how my body reacts **at the moment** and how it's **normal**. I am constantly finding new ways to cope.

What I believe, by speaking with people, reading books, looking back on my childhood, is that the knowledge that might help someone who is struggling in the future already exists. I simply want to **EMPOWER** others to connect and share knowledge so that we can all help each other and ultimately ourselves.

What I have learned about suicide and mental health is that it's nicer and makes for a happier place if we don't talk about misery all the time. I've learned that we need **humour** and calmness and routine to feel better. (But also that I don't practise what I preach!)

At the same time, we need to **acknowledge that depression and the many many forms of mental illness are real**, and can affect any one of us. I am a glass half full kind of person: I like to find the positives... an optimist. I've recently discovered the glass is always full to the brim... the other half being air! So, to lose my son to suicide was a pretty immense test of that. I now know personally what it feels like to question my reason to live. I now know personally what it feels like to have anxiety and panic attacks... even though at the time I couldn't remember those things ever being part of my 53 years of life before Beck died. I personally did not turn towards stimulants and depressants to survive, so I can't write about their benefits or perils.

I can only share **MY** story... I can only tell you what I have learned. My goal is to inspire us all to treasure our role in the community and the ability we have to inspire and support ourselves and each other.

I have spent many many hours trying to figure out how and why Beck took his life. My mother's guilt blames myself... and I have found lots of research to back my theories, but the reasoning part of me knows that I was not the only influence in my son's life.

A child's community plays an enormous role in how their character develops, but the influences on that child will be unique to their background and circumstances.

For example, I went to a state school. My headteacher, when I was eleven, held a school assembly. The moral of the story that day was "**Let's agree to differ**". For me, it struck a chord: my parents were upset about things happening at home, having arguments that I could see had no right or wrong answer.

For me, that assembly was ground-breaking and is what I've used as a guiding principle in life. I looked up to and respected that headmaster like a father. BUT I was telling a friend this story recently and the same headmaster held another assembly and was talking about manners. He apparently explained how much more polite the English were than Americans because we use knives and forks and eat with our mouths closed! This school friend was an American... he had a very different opinion of that headmaster to me and certainly did **not** see him as a supportive father figure.

As part of **MY** need to survive **my guilt**, I have had to understand and accept that I was not Beck's only influence in his journey through life. To see that although as his mother I thought I knew what my child was thinking, and that I am therefore wholly responsible for his death, I didn't fully understand and appreciate all the things that made him unique... all the influences in his life, all his grief.

Grief

But what do I really mean when I say grief?

Instead of grief, think of a change to our expectations, of the life we had imagined being our future. I could be talking about a car accident while I was driving, the diagnosis of dementia, the break-up of a marriage. I could be talking about winning the lottery, a promotion at work, or falling in love. These are very **adult** sudden changes... note that they are both **positive** and **negative**. For a **child**, it could be falling out with a friend at school, getting a really low mark in a test. It could be getting a surprisingly high mark in a test, being introduced to a new skill that they could do really well, starting in a new class, or moving home.

As a **teenager**, it could be a change in their physical appearance as hormones kick in, people talking to them differently and treating them as an adult, realising

they don't have the same moral values as their carers, discovering and experimenting with the effects of alcohol, nicotine or other drugs.

Of course these changes aren't unique to these age groups... I've just used them as examples to try and communicate the expanse of the definition of grief and how one person's **pain** might be another's **joy**.

So, if I talk about grief... please understand that what I mean is any form of **CHANGE** that alters our current perception of reality and the future that we previously predicted. Read that again... it's a bit of a mouth full!

We often describe that experience of sudden change as Grief. Grief is often connected with death, but it need not be.

When we grieve, we have the things that we express that other people notice outwardly: like **anger**, **tears**, in fact **laughter** too, (people do strange things when they're in shock or are experiencing change), and we have internal emotions that unless we know a psychic, we only experience in our mind and body. We also have an intellectual ability to be aware of these automatic and learned responses.

We have our **gut reaction** based on our experiences in life and our **intellectual awareness** based on our understanding of life.

My gut reaction to Beck's death, from my mind and body, is dis-belief... that this can't be true, how can I change it, that I am guilty, what can I do to fix things... while my intellectual awareness allows me to understand that although I won't physically be able to hold him again, I will instead find another way to hold and cherish that bond I have and the joy he continues to give me.

Some of those gut reactions are because of the way our bodies are built... genetics... others are because of past experience and the things we learn as we live through life's natural ups and downs. I know from my PhD studies in my 20's about how neurons and synapses work in our brains and how they learn from experience and that they can be repaired and trained. We also need to appreciate that as we live, some lifestyle choices and accidents can also severely affect how parts of our brains function and these effects can be much harder to repair.

We have the effects of emotional trauma on the brain to consider. Experts did brain scans of veterans from the Vietnam war who were suffering from CPTSD, (Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). They discovered that those suffering had parts of their brains inaccessible to the normal firing synapses around them: they basically looked dark and asleep when they were scanned. BUT when memories of the shocking events were triggered, these areas suddenly

lit up. When they were able to carefully access those closed-off areas, using different forms of therapy, the veterans were able to overcome the debilitating side effects of PTSD, and use the full capacity of their brains again.

So this is how I personally imagine the impact of grief and trauma on us...

When we suffer a big life-changing shock, we know what's happened intellectually... but our subconscious brain has gone **Aaaah...** scary things... not safe ... doesn't feel good... don't like... I need to protect myself... so I'll build a big **WALL** around that in my brain and I won't go there. We shut down thoughts that are too painful to remember.

When someone dies, we intellectually know they're not physically there with us... but our brains are wired for community living. We have this weird ability to be able to place all our loved ones at any given time. We do this subconsciously, without even thinking about it. So, when someone dies in a physical way, our **subconscious thoughts** start searching for them, looking in all the places they can, because it doesn't make sense that they're not there anymore. This happens even if we can tell someone what has happened, using our intellectual awareness of a sequence of events.

So we have two things going on - a big wall around the pain we can't face and our subconscious mind racing around trying to figure out what's happened.

And when the racing mind **hits** the wall of **pain**, we have a panic attack or anxiety attack until we realise what just happened and **race away** in the opposite direction.

This is the trick, I believe... we have to allow our brains time to do the gut reaction, wall building, racing around, subconscious work, while we keep functioning in as **healthy a way as possible**... also understanding that while our subconscious is doing all that work, it's taking a lot of brain power or physical energy.

Did you know that the average person's brain is **2% of their body weight**, but in normal conditions uses **20% of their calorie intake!** Just think of how much energy it needs when we are processing grief - no wonder we get cravings for quick fix food types like cake and other sweet treats!

When Beck died, my memory was terrible, I forgot words and I lost the ability to plan anything. This is gradually coming back now but it was incredibly frightening. I've since discovered this is totally **NORMAL!** I believe that parts of my brain were completely closed off to protect myself from the pain. My mind was working overtime trying to fix something that couldn't be fixed.

There are LOADS of methods to help you through this period... different things will help different people.

A healthy routine is super super important.

Think of a baby or young child... ask any carer... if you break a child's routine - either food pattern, sleep pattern, exercise - you see that gut reaction... temper tantrum. But apart from healthy routines for your body, another super important thing is expressing and **talking** about **your grief** and **having someone to listen** and **GUIDE** you in how they survived their grief in life. Lots of people do this intuitively with their family and friends: it's why living in multi-generational families often helps... but not every family does, and in England especially, I think we shy away from 'delicate' or awkward conversations about emotions.

This is all part of life and living in a community. Our community is also the musicians we connect with, the books we read, the films we watch... these can answer questions we might be posing to ourselves and will also help guide us. We must also be mindful that they might not all guide us to **SAFETY**... as they may be communicating for their own personal interests, not ours.

An essential part of **true communication and connection** with someone is **ACTIVE LISTENING**. When both people are actively listening - it's when sparks fly and we see their eyes light up, their emotions and language are in tune with the person they are communicating with - they seem to really hear and feel and connect with everything being shared.

In grief my ability to listen declined. I believe this was because my brain was busy figuring out the **CHANGE** and trying to make sense of it. But my **NEED for someone to listen to me increased**.

In grief, someone we might have got on brilliantly with before, we suddenly find we can't talk to anymore. Perhaps we are no longer able to be the listener we once were.

Imagine a **child** in a two parent family. Their grandparent dies. Intellectually, **everyone understands** this is a natural event, and they naturally grieve. During that grieving everyone processes their pain differently. Parents may become distant with each other or start to argue, they might no longer be as attentive to their child as they get lost in their own thoughts. While they are consumed with their own grief, which is entirely **natural and normal** remember, their child is not only grieving the loss of their grandparent, but **also the loss of the parents they knew before**. This leaves them confused and left to look to others in their community for support.

A teacher might have a model **student**, who suddenly stops listening in class. Dig a little deeper and that student might be about to move home, maybe their cat has just died, maybe there's something up with their home life.

Anyone

can have thoughts that make them suicidal
or want to harm themselves or others

An NHS Digital Survey found that
1 in 15 of us have attempted suicide
1 in 12 have self-harmed
1 in 5 of us have had thoughts of suicide

When we experience any significant loss
or CHANGE in our lives
our thoughts can become too distressing for us to manage

This happens when we are not AWARE of the resources that we have
available to help us cope

This is NATURAL and NORMAL

In that moment or period of time, our beliefs can make us want to
take actions that are unsafe for ourselves and for our community

These thoughts and beliefs can also take away
our *passion* for and our *right* to choose life

Know that these feelings will pass

But the same thing happens to us as **adults** as grieving is a natural part of **all stages of life** and it's our community that needs to be on the look-out for these cues. Who do you turn to in grief... someone you trust who will listen with compassion.

I personally don't believe that we can or should try and stop the grieving process... **we can't learn not to grieve**. But I do believe that we can learn how to support someone in grief and help **guide** them through it simply by listening carefully to their unique story, **without judgement**, and helping them to become aware of **their own ability** to cope. Only if it then seems appropriate should we **offer** other possible resources of support.

I also choose to believe that we can learn how to guide **ourselves** out of grief **safely** too. I believe that we can **learn** how to carefully take down those **walls** in our mind that at first **protect** us from pain so that we can access our **full potential** again.

If we are all **taught** better **active listening skills**, then those who aren't grieving can carry those who are... until roles are reversed... because it is inevitable that at some point in our lives, we will **ALL** grieve. It's a **natural part of life**... just as we fall as part of the process of learning to walk, and ultimately run... the experience of grief is part of the natural essence of life... so there must be a natural solution to grief: and **I PERSONALLY BELIEVE that the solution is to learn how to actively listen to ourselves and to others.**

LISTENING

There are many ways to describe listening. I'm going to use four: we all use all these at different times and each serves its purpose.

Competitive

We listen with the aim to better the other person with a competing story.

Combative

We listen so that we can then persuade the other person to agree with what we are thinking... trying to find ways to change their mind.

Passive

We're doing, or thinking about something completely different while we appear to be listening, so we're listening enough to say the odd 'yes' or 'no' at what appears to be the right time, but we don't really care about what the other person is saying at all.

Active Listening

And this is the important one.

We generally *see* what we look for and
hear what we listen for
using three types of listening...

Competitive

We listen so that we can reply with a better story

Combative

We listen because we want to change what the other person thinks

Passive

We listen but we're not actually interested in anything
the other person is saying

But there is a fourth...

Active Listening

In **Active Listening**, there are three basic skills that can be learned: Attitude, Attention and Adjustment.

Attitude

We have to be in a good mental state to want to learn. It's really important to realise that even if we think we know what the person is talking about, there is always something we can learn from the conversation.

Attention

It makes sense that we have to pay attention... which is often easier said than done. Some people have a short attention span (which most people can actually change btw). This is harder work than we think. You may have heard that we can pretend to be paying attention by mirroring body language and using eye contact, but these things come naturally if we really are interested and attentive.

Adjustment

Instead of assuming what the speaker is saying, we adapt to where they are taking us. We listen carefully to their unique story without judgement and repeat what they say in our own words to make sure we fully understand their point of view. We do this and affirm our understanding before progressing.

And then, if someone is in mental distress, there is the fourth vital skill of compassion.

Compassion

Here, our role as active listener is to help someone understand that they have the ability to help themselves, not to tell them what to do. They need to find their own methods, with our guidance and applying the three **As of Active Listening: Attitude, Attention and Adjustment**.

WARNING

There's an incredibly important point to remember here though. Active Listening takes **practise** and **hard work** and relevant **life experience**. It's incredibly hard to be an Active Listener to everyone all the time. As I've described, we need to apply the three As of **Attitude, Attention and Adjustment** while adding in the all-important **Compassion**. This is why we should **NEVER rely on one person** or one resource to be our active listener when we need one. The stronger our community of active listeners is, the more resilient we will all become.

It's not that it's our role to be other people's saviours through their grief and changes in their lives, but whether we want to be or not, we are **part of society**. By understanding how people's ability to listen changes in grief, ultimately we'll live in a community that **thrives together**... and if we guide our friends to be better listeners and explain why it's important, then we will all end up helping each other, and ourselves, in times of need.

What makes a skilled **Active Listener**

Attitude

Someone who *wants* to hear what we have to say

Attention

Someone who is not distracted

Adjustment

Someone who tries to fully understand us
by asking the right questions

Compassion

Someone who doesn't tell us what to do but helps us
to understand in a way that works for us

Important

Always remember...

It is virtually impossible
to be an active listener all the time
either to our own thoughts or for others
especially when we are in distress

This is why we must not rely on one person or resource
but instead start to build our community of listeners

Now, with this new-found skill of active listening, **YOU** can create your own **safety plan** or support someone as they create their own. It's very important that you **believe** what you write, so make it **personal**. You can use illustrations, pieces of music or you can paint a picture that answers the same questions. You don't necessarily need to be struggling with suicidal thoughts yourself for this to be an important process to follow. Remember that **grief can hit us ALL out of nowhere**, so we should all be **prepared**, just like preparing with First Aid training for physical illness and accidents.

Your safety plan will also **change** over time, so refresh it like you would an MOT for a car... put a note to update it each year/ each month... whatever works for **YOU**.

You create your own safety plan by answering these and similar questions. I personally believe that these three are the most important:

Who do I know who is a good listener?

What charities and support services, that fully understand the need to listen, **offer 24/7 services**?

Where can I go, close by, to find good listeners?

Keep a copy of the plan where you can **easily find it** when you need it.

In the weeks after Beck died I added the 24/7 text service **SHOUT** as a favourite in my phone. One conversation, I can laugh at now. Basically, the person I was texting was delayed in answering, but I rambled on, blindly unaware in my panic that no-one was answering. It highlighted to me that **simply thinking** someone was listening at the other end of the text service meant I was able to talk myself **into a better place**. I was then able to regulate my panic and understand how my gut reaction was affecting my mind and body. I've used the support service three times to date and haven't recently, but it's still there, as a reminder that there is **ALWAYS** someone out there who will listen and guide me to safety.

But don't trust me on this... **do your own research** too. The text service SHOUT is just one of many ways to access Active Listeners 24 hours a day but there are many others that offer face to face or digital services. **It's your life you are insuring**, remember, not mine.

In times of mental distress

PAUSE

Follow your safety plan
Find an **Active Listener**
Share your thoughts with them

Active Listening

is what I believe *might* have saved my son
who died by suicide aged 19

Active Listening

might help save
YOUR LIFE
or the life of someone
YOU LOVE

Safety Plan

A prioritised written list of methods to cope and sources of support we can use before or during a suicidal, self harm, or harm to others crisis

The plan is short
written in YOUR own words and is EASY to read

These are the most important questions when I write *my* safety plan...

- 1: Who do I know who is a good listener?
- 2: What charities and support services, that fully understand the need to listen, offer 24/7 listening services?
- 3: Where can I go, close by, to find good listeners?
- 4: What will I say or text or do to start the conversation?

Save *your* answers here, or where *you* can easily find them.



These are links that will show you other styles of safety plan that you might prefer...the flashcard by [NHS Mersey Care](#) is clear and easy to fill in.



www.papyrus-uk.org



www.every-life-matters.org.uk



www.merseycare.nhs.uk

When your thoughts become too distressing for YOU to manage

PAUSE
Follow your safety plan

Find an Active Listener

Share your thoughts with them

Once you fully understand the crisis
only then can YOU be guided
or guide others to SAFETY

These are three FREE 24/7 UK listening services
available anytime, day or night



Call Hopeline
0800 068 41 41



www.papyrus-uk.org

shout
85258

text SHOUT to
85258



www.giveusashout.org

SAMARITANS

Call 116 123



www.samaritans.org

If we all **practise** our listening skills with family and friends and our **communities**, we will naturally develop our resilience and ability to listen to ourselves and others and be more aware of the times when we need to find a good listener and the qualities to look for. This is where Beck, who supported so many with his smile, personality and ability to listen to others, can still help us now.

In crisis, when I can't forgive myself or others for the things that have happened in the past and my fears of what might happen in the future are taking control of my emotions, then I try and use **B.E.C.K.** and my own **unique safety plan** to help guide me...

B. Believe in the **NOW** and trust in the future. I take a moment to look at, listen to, laugh with and love the world around me in the moment.

E. Examine my thoughts with compassion, remembering that all forms of non-forgiveness (guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness) are based on what I **think** happened in the past, while all forms of fear (unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry) are based on what I **believe** will happen in the future.

C. Convert -ve to +ve by holding hands with my companions be they my pen, books, musicians, friends, family or my wider **Community**.

K. Kindness is King as I empower others with my Kick Ass solutions. And by Kick Ass I mean a karate kick with a smile on my face as I knock out the pain.

I take courage from the fact that I choose to believe **Post Traumatic Growth** is real and a force to be reckoned with.

What I am sharing, here in this book, is one of my solutions to the grief and trauma I have experienced, and I hope it will **EMPOWER** others.

The **Beck Bromley United** legacy football event in Beck's home town of Leek, planned for his birthday each year, is an example of a solution offered by Beck's wider family of friends and his community.

Your solutions to grief will be as **UNIQUE as you are in this world!**

I encourage us all to find ways to **embrace and thrive** in the pain of loss. I now walk with Beck, safe in the knowledge that my son is now free to walk, run, surf, skate and strum with everyone wherever they are.

To find active listeners or improve your active listening skills
EXPLORE...

This 5 minute animated summary of the book
"You're not listening" by journalist Kate Murphy



FREE Mental Health Training courses and
Local Face to Face and Digital Wellbeing Services
like those offered by

Zero Suicide Alliance - www.zerosuicidealliance.com

Changes Health and Wellbeing - www.changes.org.uk
and Andy's Man Club - www.andysmanclub.co.uk



[Zero Suicide
Alliance](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com)



[Changes Health and
Wellbeing](http://www.changes.org.uk)



[Andy's Man Club](http://www.andysmanclub.co.uk)

It's not in my nature to share the depths of my pain, but reading the account written by Beck's elder sister, I realised that sometimes sharing what we all feel **helps others to know they're not alone** and that their feelings are normal.

She wrote:

"I think I've felt every emotion since losing Beck.

I've felt broken, not just my heart but my whole body.

I've felt angry. Angry at the help we begged for and didn't receive. Angry at other people for being ok, for sharing their stories of how they survived, how come they got to get through it and Beck didn't? Angry at people for complaining about their family or their siblings when I would have done anything for him to be there annoying me like siblings do.

I've felt overwhelming guilt. The type that wakes you up in the night with a racing heart. It doesn't matter how many people tell me in different ways that it wasn't my fault, he was my little brother and I wasn't there to save him. I don't think I'll ever not feel that way.

I've felt moments of happiness, and then immediately ashamed that I could be happy without him. For a long time, I'd know that a 'good day' would always be followed by a period of bad days, as if I'd use up all the happiness I could find and would have to balance it out with feeling terrible again.

I've felt sad. Sad with my own grief, even more sad watching as the people I love hearts break, knowing that there's absolutely nothing I can do to make it any better.

I've felt numb. This was a weird one, especially after feeling every emotion so strongly. The things that have always fuelled and driven me, made me feel nothing at all.

I've felt anxious, exhausted, drained, lost, damaged, hopeless.

What's crazy is that all of these emotions feel completely insignificant in comparison to the feeling of missing him.

This feeling is too big to describe in a couple of sentences. Whoever said that time is a healer definitely wasn't talking about this part of grief. The more time that goes by, the more I miss him, knowing I'll never get to give him a big hug and tell him I love him again is almost unbearable..."

I've shared what our daughter wrote here, with her permission, as I have also felt all this and more. Time may not be a healer; it **has** however given me the chance to learn and to grow. **For me**, it's been reading and searching for answers that's helped **ME** survive my own **personal** overwhelming guilt and sorrow. I have to laugh at the things I read that sometimes set me back. One book, all about the science of happiness, also asserted that of course of all the things that are hardest, if not impossible to recover from, are the loss of a child and the loss of a parent to Alzheimer's. Thank goodness they didn't also mention suicide. How to set someone up to fail! That said, that book revealed a method that helps with my guilt and blame; a five step process to master forgiveness, which **I am** going to try and adapt to figure out **how to forgive myself**. I'm also learning about **post-traumatic growth**: how trauma can lead to such a dramatic change in our way of thinking that it can transform us, **for the better if we let it**.

I've learned that each of us has a unique set of core strengths developed through our life experiences.

I've also realised that the worst days and moments for me are generally

companions of lack of sleep, food, exercise and routine, or anything that raises my heart rate through anxiety like deadlines and pressure at work.

Writing allows **ME** to privately draw myself out of sadness and brain dump worries, (as long as I focus on the purpose of writing in the first place, and give myself time to slow my worries).

Talking with the **right people** at the **right time** allows me to process the sadness and lift it from my primitive obsessing and into the present common-sense world of self help.

I have a playlist that only has songs that make me want to **dance**.

Crying in the shower, **I personally find**, is great... albeit mixed with the dribble of water from an electric shower that Beck always hated.

Creating artwork, for me, is a fantastic immersion distraction to give my mind a rest.

Helping other people and trying to share all I've learned over the last year is the thing that personally **gives me most reward**... ok, that and sneaking the odd chocolate sugar rush!

I am not saying the bad days aren't bad, and I mean really **life crushingly bad**, but I'm gradually figuring things out - and if I can do what's meant to be impossible, then my real message to all Beck's friends - and to others experiencing the shock of loss, be it loved ones or a way of life, is to say that what we all feel is totally **NORMAL**. I am offering my **hand** to give you a lift and maybe we can all share our pain and our tricks of survival with our communities so that we can all **stay safe, learn and grow together**.

I believe that I learned all of the above by actively listening to myself and other people who have **experience** of trauma, grief and loss.

Therefore in order to **build our resilience** and to live life to the **FULL**,

learn...

**ACTIVE
LISTENING**

I'll leave you with my own version of the **Serenity Prayer**.

I found the original first in a book and then again offered by a fellow dog walker a week later when I was sharing my pain and they were being my active listener. My version isn't actually a prayer as I found it hard to believe any deity could take the life of my son by suicide. I've chosen to believe **everyone** has the ability inside themselves to create **powerful change for the better**. This is why, when things are really tough, I try and stay in the present and repeat...

I *pause* and accept the things I cannot change
I have the *courage* to change the things I can
I LISTEN to life's lessons that teach me to understand
the difference between the two

I *embrace* the joy in life and EMPOWER others to do the same

... and I offer this silver thread. For me, it's a reminder that however fine it may be, there is always something to be found that glimmers.

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inspiring and informative
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