

IGNITE

THE FIRST RESPONDER'S LIFE GUIDE

APRIL 2022 / ISSUE NO. 4

FILLING THE
EMPTINESS

WHEN IS ENOUGH,
ENOUGH?

MY JOURNEY THROUGH
TRAUMA

Babes, Suicide,
Pinpoints, and Hope.

ENCOURAGEMENT
WITHIN MARRIAGE

UNITING FIRST RESPONDER FAMILIES

YOU MATTER!

IGNITE MAGAZINE

APRIL 2022 / ISSUE NO. 04

Lorie Gurnett – Creator & Editor

Sandra Grace – Editor

CONTENTS

- 05 EDITOR'S INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGE
- 06 FILLING THE EMPTINESS
- 14 WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?
- 19 MY JOURNEY THROUGH TRAUMA
- 25 BABES, SUICIDE, PINPOINTS, AND HOPE
- 32 ENCOURAGEMENT WITHIN MARRIAGE
- 38 HONORING THE FALLIN



**"My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths
of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed
body; all the days ordained for me were
written in your book before one of them
came to be. How precious to me are your
thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of
them! Were I to count them, they would
outnumber the grains of sand—when I
awake, I am still with you."**

– Psalm 139:15-19



Allan Dignard

Allan Dignard has been a career firefighter/paramedic for the last 24 years. He is a nutritionist, fitness nutritionist, and a first responder wellness coach. He works with first responders to help them get healthy and take back their lives.



Lorie Gurnett

Lorie Gurnett is a Soul on Fire. As a first responder's wife, she understands what it feels like to lose who you are to the role of supporter, wife, and the one to be strong for everyone else. One key thing she has learned over the years is that when you take care of yourself, you are so much more capable of helping your husband and others through their fears, purpose, identity, and self worth. Through her writing, speaking, and coaching, she seeks to encourage other first responder wives and their families.



Grace Fram

Grace Fram is the second of four siblings. She was born and raised outside Moncton, New Brunswick and moved to Grande Prairie, Alberta in May 2008. Now a single, proud mum to a magnificent 5-year-old boy, she makes ends meet by offering childcare in her home. Working with children brings her renewed appreciation of the daily miracles adults, often too busy, fail to recognize. She considers herself confident, strong, creative, encouraging, a free spirit, persistent, generous, and perpetually growing.



April Tribe Giauque

April Tribe Giauque chose to come out of darkness and stay in the light. Through her speaking, writing, and coaching, she empowers women to move from trauma to truth and from darkness to light. She helps them uncover their pain, fear, and shame; experience the healing journey; and become Beacons of Light. She lives in Idaho, USA with her hubby and nine children. She encourages all to *Show up Shining!*



Brock Andrew

Brock Andrew is 25 years old. He is married to Mia, and they have a 3-year-old, Linden. Brock was born and raised in a small town in Southeast Saskatchewan. He completed PCP (Primary Care Paramedic) school with Professional Medical Associates in Alberta, where he got his start in EMS. He hopes to enroll in ACP (Advanced Care Paramedic) school in the very near future. Brock and Mia have moved back to Saskatchewan to be closer to family and are loving every minute of it.

DIM REFLECTIONS

BY EDITOR: LORIE GURNETT

Ashes to ashes, tear after tear, wound upon wound. How deep do your scars go? We all have scars people see, but it's the scars that are hidden that cut so deep, defining who we are and how we respond. The open wounds can be mended, but the hidden ones are the ones that go untreated, lost through time. Right?

This is what I thought. But the truth is, the longer you bind up, push down, or try to silence those wounds, the louder and stronger they become. Each new scar builds on the previous. You implode. You shut down. Sometimes if you allow a brief opening, you lash out in uncontrollable rage or become a crying puddle on the floor. These wounds become a monster inside you, fighting its way out. Untreated, you will be empty, lost, lonely, or numb.

Have you felt this way? I have... In a crowded room, I feel so alone; the monster inside me grabs hold of my heart and slowly crushes it. Fighting to bring life, the pressure builds, causing my lung to scream for oxygen, feeling breathless.

But on the outside, hiding behind a dim smile, I fight to hide the tears that threaten to escape.

I could choose to numb myself, but then I'm not only numb to fear and pain but to everything. Meaning, no more heartache but no love, no laughter, either—just emptiness. This is no way to live. I must allow myself to feel again because without feeling pain, I trap myself in the pain, and I stop allowing healing.

When you look in the mirror, who do you see? Yourself? Fractured memories? A faint reflection of who you were...of a life lost through torment, pain, and fear? Yes! I see it all.

Through this fractured web, it's never easy to find yourself again. Without help, it can be impossible. Accept a helping hand; allow someone to hold you—to show you the way—so you can stand, take a step forward, and trust the only One who can put you back together. When you heal, you will be that much stronger.

FILLING THE EMPTYNESS

BY: Allan Dignard

My life with first response started out in EMS, I kind of just fell into the career. My dad was a firefighter when I was young, so I am a second-generation firefighter. Back in high school, I had no desire to go into the trades. Therefore, my dad suggested I go down to the EMS station, talk to someone, and look into doing a ride-along. I instantly refused, thinking, *I can't do that! I can't handle blood, vomit, and stuff like that.* Dad reassured me that this was not what I thought it was, so he encouraged me to go down. While at this EMS station, I interviewed a couple paramedics and got





set up for a ride-along. My first ride-along, I was instantly hooked. IT WAS AWESOME!

Being a young 18-year-old starting into this career, my biggest struggle throughout my journey was believing that I was a "Black Cloud." What I mean by this is, my whole career has been a multitude of the craziest calls you could ever think of. Other first responders who worked directly with me nicknamed me the Black Cloud because all the savvier, dramatic, and strenuous calls they had been on, always happened when they

worked with me. So, at the start I struggled with being a young kid who tried to make emotional sense of the chaotic world we lived in. Dealing with all the death, destruction, addiction, and all the emotional struggles that we as humans face on a day-to-day basis, became a huge emotional adjustment for me. I had never been exposed to this intense type of pain, suffering, and trauma as a child. I was fortunate to have loving parents who protected me from seeing and experiencing these types of tragedies. This career was physically

straining too. Being so young and going to people who were in bad places, for example financial or marriage struggles or perhaps addictions or sometimes suicidal. Having a young, inexperienced, innocent man come along to provide comfort, care, and reassurance that everything will be ok, challenged me to stretch myself both physically and mentally, pushing me to learn and grow so I could be a better help to those who were hurting.

One of my first calls I ever went on was a 6-month-old SIDS death, followed by a head-on collision surrounded by a lot of trauma and fatalities. Call after call started to pile up

and weigh me down. My first reaction to this trauma was to bury it. Many times, I would catch myself in the back of the ambulance crying, and I would wipe away the tears and reprimand myself, asking, "What are you doing? First responders don't cry. So, you can't cry!" I'm not sure where that thought even came from, perhaps from the perception of how others see first responders as superheroes. I mean, Superman doesn't cry, right? I tried to bury those feeling and forget about them. I started seeing human beings like a vehicle. My thoughts went to, *I am a mechanic and this vehicle was broken*. I needed to just fix the vehicle, so I completely detached myself from the human aspect of the situations, disassociating myself completely.

With this disassociation, not only did it affect me, but my family began to suffer too. Lost in this web of buried feelings and forgetting, this brought me to the point where I felt life just happens. As my experience grew, more and more things



"My dad was a firefighter when I
was young, so I am a second-
generation firefighter."
-Allan Dignard





started happening to me, personally. With lack of sleep and high stress, I began seeing things. Along with a back injury, herniated disk, two bulging disks, breaking my leg, I was suffering not only with physical pain but also emotional. At the time, I began to use food and alcohol to help numb myself, caused overweight issues, and became dependent on highly-processed and sugary foods to brighten my mood. I, ultimately, was not myself anymore. I was lost and stuck, becoming the job. I was cold; nothing stimulated me anymore. Minor injuries, stopped affecting me. Having no sympathy jeopardized my relationship with my kids. My patience was thin, and anger began to rule, making me quick to discipline my children and lash out verbally, abusing my wife. This whole time, I was oblivious to what I was doing and saying. This finally got to the point where I just pushed my wife away and shut her out, ending my marriage in divorce.

When I first realized I had a problem, I wanted to take my own life. I considered committing suicide. I thought there was no way out. Back from when I broke my leg, I got in the habit of laying on the couch and elevating my foot, this became a comfort for me. My son was at school, my daughter was home with me, and I was drunk. As my daughter ran by me with her long blond hair, I questioned myself, "What are you doing?" I was drunk, not parenting well, I was thinking of suicide, and I knew at that moment that something had to change. I put my drink down, and never picked it up again. Looking for ways to improve my lifestyle, I began with working out and getting physically



healthy; this was not an easy road. I fought my body and struggled with leaving my ego at the door. But starting back slowly, I felt good and alive again. Feeling the physical pain became my motivation not to give up and to make the necessary life-changes.

I have learned that we have to take care of ourselves first. As first responders and as parents, we tend to put everyone else ahead

of ourselves, be it community or family, because when people need help, we go. If we are not aware, we will slowly put our needs on the back burner, and we will get to the point where we stop taking care of ourselves. We lose ourselves in the career. (At first, the career can be very rewarding with high energy, adrenaline, service, respect.) We tend to get sucked into that superhero mentality. We can become addicted to those feelings. We identify ourselves as our role: firefighter, paramedic... Being lost in this, it is difficult to find our way back. When this role is taken from us through mental illness or other reasons, we are at a record-high of people taking their own lives because they feel there is no way out, thinking that *if I lose my career, I lose my purpose*.

If we can't serve ourselves, we can't serve anybody else. If we start the process of learning to take care of ourselves, we are giving permission to open up to receive help. This takes a lot of work, dedication, and strength because the last thing we want to do is appear weak. People say this is not seen as weakness, but with the stigma around mental health, is this our perspective or is this perception really there? The funny thing is, perception is based on our experiences. Our beliefs that first responders don't cry and they are superheroes were just that: I put those thoughts on myself, clouding how I see the world. If we go back to that self-care, we will know when something is off. We will become so comfortable with who we are that we understand when it is time to ask for help.





First response is a career of taking. The career will keep taking from you, whatever you give to it. If you are not filling your own cup, it is going to take everything from you. The job is amazing. It's a selfless career where we serve, and we serve people; but we need to remind ourselves that we are people too. We can't help anybody, if we can't help ourselves first. We can only give what we have. If we don't fill ourselves, we will eventually run on empty, which will, in return, develop hate, resentment, jealousy, depression, anxiety, addiction. And that is where we will end up.

Will you rise and have the courage to ask for help?

Article by Allan Dignard



Photo credit to Dan Sundahl from DanSun Photos

the only *fire* he can't put out
is the one he *started*
in my heart
heart



WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?

Lorie Gurnett

Do you know that feeling when the rug has been pulled out from under you? When the darkness closes in, your chest is heavy, the fight within has just left you, and it seems like you have no hope or strength? What do you do when you can no longer see any options, good or bad? Or if you attempt to make a decision, you or someone you love will be crushed? I have felt trapped in this same senseless battle of what can only be described as hopelessness.

I have been married for almost 22 years now. The fight is definitely real. I have learned that when you push down your emotions, put on the "I'm fine" mask, you are giving way to defeat.

The first time I felt this pain was way back in high school. Sure, I had a lot of acquaintances, but I held people at arm's length. I only had three close friends who I allowed to see me. But even with that, my pain grew because even those three had no idea





of my internal fears and struggles. I only shared my “happy” side, locking my pain away, shutting down my emotions, and silencing my cry for help; this nearly destroyed me. I almost took my life at the young age of 14, after my first crush suddenly died of a brain aneurysm. I felt so alone, invisible, and lost.

Until I met Jesus.

Not to sound preachy, but it is true. God was the only one who knew me inside and out. He knew and saw me. God is the one who picked me up and saved me from my darkness. But life did not get much easier.

Throughout my married life, my husband has been a member of the fire department, off and on, for over ten years. In our seventh year of marriage, depression slammed against us. My husband was drowning in the guilt and sadness of being on scene of many tragic motor vehicle collisions. His eyes glazed over, his silence filled the void built between us, and the only thing I could do was fall to my knees. I had to release control, surrender my husband completely into God’s hands. I prayed, “Do whatever it takes to bring him back to You. Pull the rug out from under him; do whatever it takes.” Within the next few



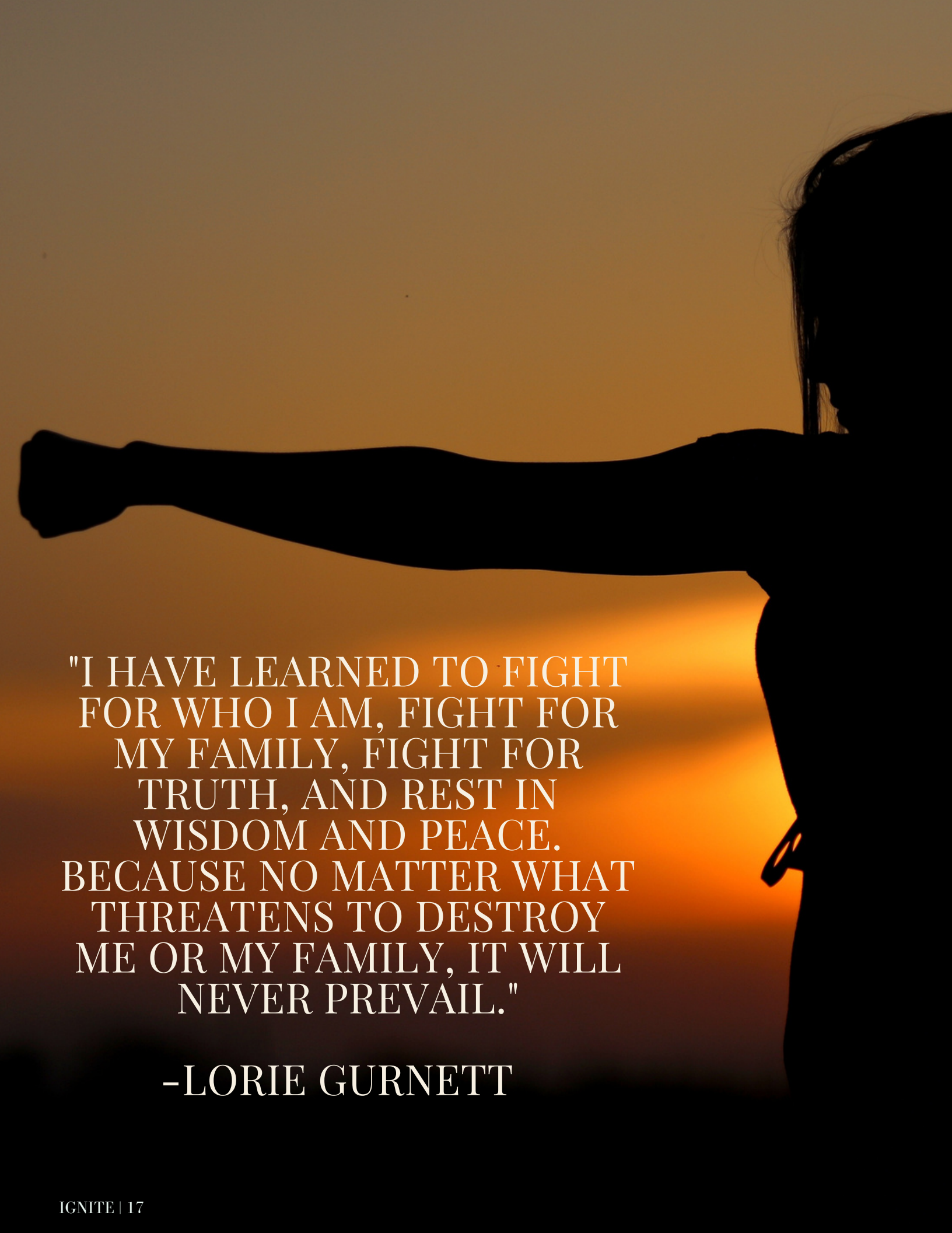
**“So, she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.’”
Genesis 16:13.**

weeks, my husband came home with deep gashes in his arms. He once locked himself in the paint booth at his work place and thought of ending his life. I prayed fervently and desperately. Hopelessness. The one time he attempted to reach out to someone, he mentioned he was doing terrible. The other person only smiled and told him to have a nice day while walking away. Following this event, he was walking to work thinking that I would be better off without him, he was such a burden.... I prayed!!!! As a vehicle approached, he made his choice, "I will just jump in front of this vehicle. It will be quick and everyone else's life can move on." I prayed for God to bring him home safely. As the vehicle got closer, he happened to look up and saw the elderly woman driving. A small whisper convicted him: "What gives you the right to ruin that lady's life?"

He continued on. Upon arriving at work, he was placed on permanent suspension. Meaningless and hopelessness cut deep. What were we to do now? We felt crushed and broken. Where was God in all of this? I'll tell you, He was answering my prayer; He was holding us all along. He brought us back to Bible school and revealed to my husband that since God loved him and died for him when he hated God, why would He stop loving him now that he was His child? This realization built a burning passion within him to reach those who were hurting and lost.

Throughout the next several years, we



A silhouette of a person with their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or prayer, set against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. The person's head is tilted back, and their arms are extended horizontally across the frame.

"I HAVE LEARNED TO FIGHT
FOR WHO I AM, FIGHT FOR
MY FAMILY, FIGHT FOR
TRUTH, AND REST IN
WISDOM AND PEACE.
BECAUSE NO MATTER WHAT
THREATENS TO DESTROY
ME OR MY FAMILY, IT WILL
NEVER PREVAIL."

-LORIE GURNETT

we were tested to almost our breaking points. We were challenged with grief in 2018. This was the year we lost nine people who were pinnacle in our spiritual growth and close family members, including both my father and father-in-law within three months of each other. The darkness surrounded us but could not destroy us. You see, the light of the Holy Spirit shines in our hearts; and where there is light, the darkness is forced to flee. Through all the pain, tragedy, trauma, fears, hopelessness, and grief that has slammed against us, we learned to get back up. Our strength is unified in the LORD, and nothing can ever separate that relationship.

No matter what has sought our destruction, has only made us stronger. One truth I have discovered is how similar the pain and confusion can be when you face trauma, fear, anxiety, and grief. Both send you for a tailspin, try to sideswipe you, can leave you lost, breathless, and scared but never forgotten, never destroyed, and never abandoned. Always remember you are not alone in your battle, and when you have the strength to get back up, you will have the victory.



I have learned to fight for who I am, fight for my family, fight for truth, and rest in wisdom and peace. Because no matter what threatens to destroy me or my family, it will never prevail. I challenge you to take a stand—to fight for who you are and for your family. You are worth fighting for and when you have a strong relationship with God, the truth will always prevail.

Article by Lorie Gurnett



MY JOURNEY THROUGH TRAUMA

Grace Fram

Where does one's trauma begin? I have endured much throughout my thirty-three years, as many of us have. Diving in for clarity and healing, I imagine the chaos like untangling balls of yarn. Yes, it can be done, but the effort it takes can be exasperating and seemingly hopeless. To cut out matted sections would be a quick, simple solution, but that would leave me incomplete.

I also like to describe it as the *Wheel of Fortune* where the arrow rapidly flicks against the pegs of overwhelming thoughts, responsibilities, and the dreaded to-do list. An approach from anyone abruptly stops the wheel and the unsuspecting gambler is left to face

whatever section the arrow has rested in: maybe well and fine; maybe stressed and overwhelmed; maybe emotionally unstable. Perhaps you can relate to the suffocating fog, the short-circuited brain, the inability to focus, the hesitant decision-making process. I don't even know who I am anymore.

While some traumatic experiences I keep to myself, others I have recently found beneficial to share openly. As I write, we are approaching the one-year anniversary of an aggravated assault of which I was victim and my four-year-old son a witness.

March 30, 2021. I knew this was the day I was going to die. A giant stranger forced his way into my home and attacked me with my kitchen knives, mercilessly plunging the blades into my head, face, and neck. Without hesitation, I would give my life to protect my son and his friend, who was also there in the house. I fought back with everything in me. The struggle forced me to my knees on the floor. When I looked up, I could see out a small square of window to clear, blue sky and bold, white clouds; and I thought I was seeing them for the last time.

I never should have survived that day. Recounting the blessings from the moment I woke up that morning, my faith has been reawakened and I would be lying if I said I don't thank

"I accept the hardships, knowing there is always some good woven throughout. Having stared death in the eye, I realize tomorrow can be unexpectedly stolen."

- Grace Fram





God every day.

If the home invasion wasn't trauma enough, the judicial system since the attack has proven how small I am compared to my unpredictable, violent offender: he has been given attentive care and protection. He was very soon released, without accountability, back into our community and is attending secondary education courses.



The aggressive attack I suffered and this miscarriage of justice following are incomprehensible, and I hope you cannot relate to my journey.

Trauma, however, can be extensively relatable, regardless of its source. Removing emotional labels such as 'positive' and 'negative' helps retrain my brain. When anxiety creeps in on me, clearly something needs my attention, and it is not necessarily 'negative.' *Why am I feeling this way?* Often triggered by things I cannot control, I dissect each situation for comprehension. *What can I control?* A key practice to understanding myself is to face the rotten sensation rather than avoiding it. I have learned so much about myself since I began to accept and process all emotions instead of powering through, pretending all is well and nothing phases me. Masking thoughts, emotions, and values is a swift ticket to losing myself all over again. It feels so much better to admit plainly that I am not ok.

Self-talk can be extensively destructive and undeserved. I tell others how incredible they are and the benefit their lives offer to so many others. Why can I not give myself the same encouragement? Self-value: I am unique and beautiful, I deserve respect. Self-confidence: knowing where I stand and remain unwavering despite outside influences. Self-care: feeding my body nutrients, resting appropriately, healthy boundaries. We inherit so many beliefs without explanation. 'Just because' is not valid. If I cannot properly explain myself, I practice opening my heart and mind to growth.

I have reprioritized what is important to me rather than what other people think. It is my opinion that we have become grossly distracted, judgmental, and increasingly disconnected. We obsessively chase after things that, while perhaps important, are often not worthy of the value we've put on them.



I do not have answers, but I have learned to stand firm in my truth. Methods that work for me may be destructive for another, so I encourage those who are willing to put in any effort to improve their lives. It takes time, determination, and many failed resources. I



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HOWEVER, CAN
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REGARDLESS OF
ITS SOURCE.**



spent a few years 'sleep walking' on prescribed medication, all emotions numbed into a monotone daze. Doc said this was what I needed, so I didn't put much thought to it at the time. Looking back, it was horrible, and I refuse to dull my senses to that extent ever again. I put a lot of effort into learning how to cope with day-to-day life. A magnet on my fridge reminds me, "Healthy people feel." We all have good and bad days. Grief, anger, frustration, anxiety, sadness, confusion: these are part of being alive, and I will no longer suppress what makes me human.

Since I've decided to accept this fact, I have found life gradually easier to navigate. I accept the hardships, knowing there is always some good woven throughout. Having stared death in the eye, I realize tomorrow can be unexpectedly stolen. Much of my energy goes into spending this moment without regret. Especially when I feel like I am drowning, I want to assimilate all the beauty that surrounds me.

Article by Grace Fram



FREE OFFER!

THE PRESSURE BUILDS, THE FEAR TAKES CONTROL, HARD TO BREATHE...

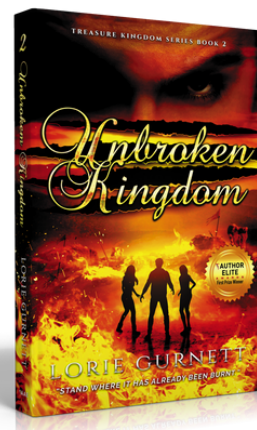
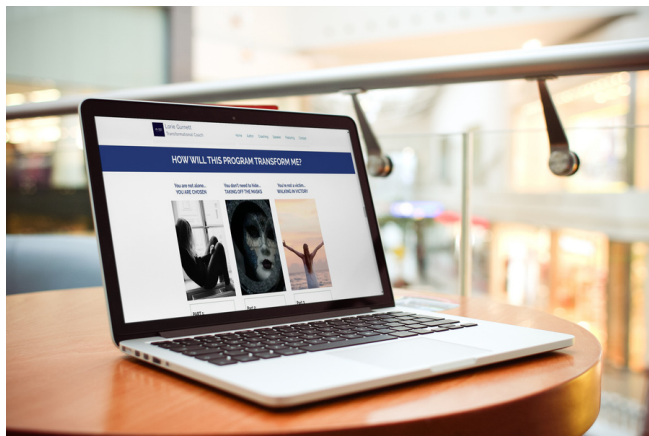
Do you let go? Do you feel weighted down or trapped by fear?

Do you feel stuck?

I am offering a free 30-minute coaching call. If you are interested in booking, please send me an email, and we can set up a time that works for both of us.

STOP THE SEGRAGATION! YOU ARE WORTH FIGHTING FOR, AND YOUR WORDS AND FEELINGS HAVE VALIDATION.

Book your free coaching session at lorie@authorloriegurnett.com



THE STRUGGLE

- Feeling alone
- Feeling invisible
- A victim
- Insignificant
- Feeling fearful
- Lost
- Defeated
- Crushed

THE TRUTH

- Feeling chosen
- Feeling seen
- A victor
- valued
- Feeling courageous
- Focused
- Confident
- Determined

Are you ready to take back control and courageously step forward into who you are created to be?

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BABES, SUICIDE, PINPOINTS, AND HOPE

BY: APRIL TRIBE GIAUQUE

As I entered the hospital with my third son, that's all I could feel. I was swollen, tired. There was a pressing weight on my heart—more than a young mom of three should be given. But during that night, March 26, 2001, my son, Isaac, was placed on my chest, and a pinpoint of hope was handed to me.

This beautiful little baby did not yet have a name. I searched my heart and found his name whispered to me: Isaac. We gave him his middle name of William after my dad, and as Isaac looked at me, he seemed to say, "I'm here."





Here, he was born—full of life. As he nursed, I searched the Scriptures for the meaning of his name. I came across Genesis 21:3,6, and I felt in my heart this saying: “may God laugh,” or, “may God smile on him.” I looked away from the words on my worn bible and back to him. I smiled at him. I prayed there that he would never forget how my heart smiled at his birth—how he was a pinpoint of hope for me in my darkening marriage. He smiled right at that moment. I knew he was filled with light.

Suddenly, the ringing of alarms in the emergency room sounded off, shattering this memory of my son’s

birth. My eyes flashed open; I searched the monitor for the alarm and then back to my 20-year-old son lying in a bed, writhing with belly pain, with a few wisps of tears squeezing from the corners of his eyes.

My mind instantly played back the soundbites that fell from his lips earlier that night: “dark place...
No hope...
Just so sad....
Lonely, stop the... ” His voice catching; him shaking and breathing heavily with wet eyes.

Suddenly the doctors and nurses pelting questions:
“In the past few weeks, have you wished you were dead?”

“In the past few weeks, have you felt that you or your family would be better off if you were dead?”

“In the past week, have you been having thoughts about killing yourself?”

“Do you have a plan ...?”

I reached over and held his hand as the IV went into his left arm. Fear. That hollow, hopeless look into the darkness. Where was Isaac’s light? I searched those blue-yellow eyes from the side as the doctors and nurses spoke with him. I looked for light—a pinpoint—just a hope of it!




“When people kill themselves, they think they’re ending the pain; but all they’re doing is passing it on to those they leave behind.”
– Jeannette Walls

Depression, fear, pain, drugs, and sin are tools that the adversary loves to play with. When he mixes up batches of his most toxic formula and prepares tiny samples of it along the pathway of life, you look at it at first and wonder, like Alice Through the Looking Glass, *if I just take a bite of this sample, what will happen to me?*

For Isaac, he found what he was looking for; it began to numb and distract him from the pain that should cause him to seek help. Instead, he started the spiral of drugs, alcohol, and depression that landed him at this place where he was planning to take his life.

Have you ever listened to someone share his darkest thoughts, secrets, and pain with you before? It is like watching a movie and wondering when the scene will end. As a mom, and out of empathy, I felt the small measure of his pain; and as it was about to overwhelm me, I reached out in prayer for the Savior.

I placed this pain and heartache on the altar for Him to carry. I know that Christ can carry this and rescue Isaac, but he needs to want to go in the direction towards light and hope.



"THIS BEAUTIFUL
LITTLE BABY DID NOT
YET HAVE A NAME. I
SEARCHED MY HEART
AND FOUND HIS NAME
WHISPERED TO ME:
ISAAC"

-APRIL TRIBE GUIUQUE

Regardless of that, I knew I could hand the Savior this pain so that I wouldn't have to carry it and still be there for my son. But for my son, it was just the beginning of his possible journey towards the light.

Quietly, as the questions died down and we were left together waiting for the next step, there was an imperceptible pinprick of light from his eyes. It was the tiniest pinpoint of hope, and I saw it in the sea of darkness in the depths of his eyes. It was as if I were staring into the deepest, blackest space to see it suddenly as a single star in the darkest night—it was Christ's light reaching to him.

Suddenly, my mind was filled with the gentle strains of the Christmas Hymn, "Infant Lowly." And my tears fell freely behind my mask, allowing more light to bounce off towards my son, and he became calm.

The lyrics say:

Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
Noelle's ringing, tidings bringing;
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all;
Christ, the babe, is Lord of all!

**Fear: That hollow,
hopeless look into the
darkness. Where was
Isaac's light?**



He was born for you...for you, Isaac—for you!

As the night in the ER wore into the morning hours, we were finally released. His pain was there, but his hope, his pinpoint, was shining towards him. I tucked him in and hugged him, giving him all my love. That all came from Christ.

For as I heard the words, the pain, the poor choices, the angst, the fear, and the deep loneliness, of only having one friend...I had to be his earthly anchor. His faith could not hold to Christ's love—yet—for he has been away for so long. However, as I watched the pain and hollowness of my son, I felt the strength of the Lord was given to my shoulders to hold up the situation.

I prayed to have God take this from me; I was not strong enough to hold this. And suddenly, I was



tightly yoked with Jesus; and I could hold fast to Isaac, and Isaac could hold to the pinpoint of hope and light. I felt such patience and peace as I was with him, even as the plan to take away his life was shared in front of me.

Christ was there and there were angels—my family members who have passed on: Ellen,

Erma, Ann, Jack, Howard, Dale, and Annis, who were praying me up as I held the light for Isaac. Isaac found the will to look at the pinpoint and follow it. I found the will to amplify the pinpoint of light we found on Friday night...and help Isaac's life improve.

Friends, The gospel is here, is true, and you will be free from this deep, deep hollow sorrow too. How?

Because Christ the babe was born for you—for you!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzPKmz0p_sY

This morning, I found this pinpoint in this version of my favorite Christmas hymn over the weekend as I cared for my son who wanted to end his life, and I have held fast to it. There is no hope on earth, but there is hope in Christ—He is born for you. That pinpoint of hope is all my son has right now, and I will hold his hand as he holds to it. Christ is born for you.



My mind instantly played back the soundbites that fell from his lips earlier that night: “dark place... No hope... Just so sad.... Lonely, stop the...” His voice catching; him shaking and breathing heavily with wet eyes.

Article by April Tribe Giauque

ENCOURAGEMENT WITHIN MARRIAGE

BROCK ANDREW

Hello, I'll start with a quick intro of our family and then get into things. My name is Brock, I have a wife, Mia, and daughter Linden. At the ripe old age of 18, Mia and I were married in January of 2016 (I know that's crazy young).

Working in the oilfield and looking for a change, we started looking at options. I was on a volunteer fire department and loved every minute of being in the truck and helping people, so I thought if I could make that a full-time gig, why not? I started EMS not knowing it would become my passion, realizing on my way to fire school that I loved medicine and never left the industry. Like the majority of the people in the First Responder role, I love helping people, the opportunity to be the best part of a terrible situation, that calming presence in turbulent rooms. I also have a love for adrenaline, fast pace, never-the-same work; and aside from a few frequent flyers, EMS gave me those things. Of course, there is give and take; and as much as EMS has given me, it can require more in return, especially with any form of family waiting for you at home, which is what I've been asked to speak to.

I would like to preface this: I am not an expert in marriage or EMS for that matter. I'm simply here in hopes that you may relate to some of the challenges that the First Responder life has presented us and find some encouragement.

- Time away from home. At the start of my career, I was excited to get on the wagon and run in some calls. I was hired on as a casual in a city eight hours from home. Eager to work, I would pick up a week's worth of work at a time and make the commute happen. With a newborn, this was incredibly straining on us both. Eventually we were able to eliminate that

commute, but in the midst of that transition, there was much tension from exhaustion, miscommunication, and just sheer disconnect from being absent. On top of that, Covid hit; and to save you all the explanation of a long chain of events, simply put, I needed more work. Finding a second casual spot about four hours away, the commute began once again. After endless prayers for more work, I landed a full-time spot one hour from Mia and Linden, so obviously we jumped on it.



“Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive a great reward – an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3: 23-24



Living in the station for four-day tours had its challenges. Leaving Mia and Linden in a new city with no real connections, aside from my brother, was tough. We lived on FaceTime and phone calls trying to stay connected which, depending on the tour, was easier said than done. What I didn't know, being away from home, was while I was fulfilled with work and my station family, Mia was struggling with being at home alone with a six-month-old and no support system: both our families 15 hours away in the next province and a Tele-husband on FaceTime. I was oblivious to this until Mia had an emotional break.



- **Time at Home.** I'm regretful it took as long as it did for me, as a young husband and father, to realize that I was giving into EMS what my family deserved. Mia and I did some reflecting and found two main issues. The first issue we identified was that I had a terribly hard time disconnecting from work while I was home. My mind was always four days ahead thinking about my next tour. I reached out to some of my mentors in the industry who gave me some great advice for separating home and work, which I'd thought I was doing great at. I would refuse to talk to Mia about some aspects of work: the "dark stuff." However, it was exacerbating another issue we came to identify later. This second issue was the notorious PTSD. I had unintentionally created a "no fly zone" between Mia and me by establishing an expectation that we don't talk about work. So Mia, trying to respect this unspoken rule, didn't mention the subtle changes she was noticing in me: irritability, inability to enjoy things I usually loved, and an overall distance from her and Linden when I

“BEING DEEPLY LOVED BY
SOMEONE GIVES YOU STRENGTH,
WHILE LOVING SOMEONE
DEEPLY GIVES YOU COURAGE”
- LAO TZU





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was home. Mia eventually brought it up, and I'm so thankful she did. We were able to utilize resources from work to navigate it together. Eventually, I was able to make home time strictly Mia and Linden's time. When I finally figured it out, being able to "switch off" my work brain and not worry about my next tour allowed me truly to enjoy home time and focus on being present with my girls. Mia was so patient and understanding while we figured out how to navigate this very new territory. It may sound cliché, but this felt like a breakthrough early in parenthood and my career.

- **Self reflection.** I think everyone knows that self reflection is very important, but what we realized was that we needed to reflect on ourselves as a couple, as well, which can be insanely uncomfortable. We looked at the things that were going well and had tough talks about the things that were causing major tension in the marriage. These



conversations became easier and easier over time and eventually turned into a bit of an inside joke. Just being real with your partner while putting aside defensive mentality can change the way of an entire conversation. Remember that emotions have to be felt. There is no right or wrong emotion in the moment; it's how you react to feeling those emotions that you can control.

We are far from done learning how to navigate marriage, but that's part of the fun. If I had been told three years ago that I would be writing an article on marriage, I would've laughed in disbelief. But here I am on the other side of our first of many trying times. If we can do it, so can you.

God bless

To wrap up, we want to leave you with a few things we have learned so far.

- Communicate freely and frequently
- Leave work at the door. Decompress to your spouse for a designated time to allow you to move on with your time off and not have to dwell.
- Ask for help. Be it a close couple you can confide in, professional help, or otherwise, you're not alone.
- Give it your all. Be vulnerable, be uncomfortable, be 100% invested with your spouse.
- Count. Count to five, or take a big breath and think before responding. Think with love.

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IN HONOR OF OUR FALLEN HEROES

Michael Arrasmith

Alan D. Basso

Tonya Sue Bruscher

Gilbert J. Buerk

Patrick Coyle

HEROES

“Heroes are made by the paths they choose,
not the powers they are graced with.”

— Brodi Ashton, *Everneath*