

Prologue

Nicole had lost her will to live; she was dying. Our beautiful fifteen year old daughter was killing herself slowly with each passing day. I knew it was calculated and I was unable change the course of our lives. For the past year our family had been living in a nightmare and I wanted to wake up - NO W.

We sat on the couch, holding each other, tears flowing, our shoulders shaking with sobs. I tried to transfer my own strength to her frail body, but it was impossible. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't slow her journey from health and happiness to the dark tunnel of self-induced starvation that now engulfed her. At that point, she had lost nearly forty pounds. And she continued her cruel kind of suicide hour by hour, day by day.

Could we have prevented the tragedy that was unfolding before our eyes? I asked myself that every single day. My husband and I had prayed and cried for a miracle. We had tried to rely on our love for Nicole, God's faithfulness, professional counseling, and medical intervention to turn the tide. But nothing seemed to work. I was desperate to keep Nicole from becoming another statistic: one of the thousands who would live – and then die – in the seductive grip of an eating disorder.

After Nicole and I wiped our tears, I took a deep breath as she managed to get out a few words, but they weren't the words I wanted to hear.

"I hate my life. I want to die and I'm going to kill myself."

Up to that point, I had been afraid to tell this fragile child/woman that she had the power to choose life or death for herself. But it was true. And at that moment, I felt so frustrated and hurt that I couldn't protect her anymore. Nicole wanted control - I'd give it.

I responded, "Well, you're doing a darn good job of it. If you really want to die, we can't stop you!"

Looking back to that afternoon in 1997, I saw it as a critical turning point. This book is a true account of our family's struggle with an insidious disease that is largely misunderstood - anorexia nervosa.

As with all eating disorders, anorexia does not discriminate between the famous or the ordinary, the rich or the poor. But primarily it strikes young women who are bright, talented and

attractive. In fact, it is not an uncommon condition among models, ballerinas, skaters and gymnasts. These talented individuals are concerned with their physical appearance, especially their weight. Nicole wasn't an athlete, but she was a beautiful, bright, straight-A student.

Because we loved, because we kept hoping and trying, our family journeyed through the tunnel of despair and into the beautiful world of understanding, acceptance, and second chances. I pray that the following story gives comfort and help to others who may face this same journey. Some names have been changed to protect certain individuals' identities.

Chapter 1

Parenthood Isn't for Wimps

Our son was seven before my husband and I seriously contemplated more children. We decided to adopt the second time around, but were unprepared for the challenge that was ahead. We were fortunate to know two couples in our church who had been through the adoption process. They gave us confidence and valuable information.

At first, we attempted to adopt through Children's Services Division. But for some reason, even after two years' effort, we still didn't have a child. We were ready for the real deal. So Bob and I contacted Holt International Children's Services in Eugene, Oregon. Our home studies, autobiographies, and references were already completed, so things fell quickly into place. The only hurdle left was the wait, which grew harder over time. Bob and I had started to refer to the process as the 'adoption thing.'

Early on, our Holt caseworker asked us if we had a problem with adopting a child of another nationality. I guess that question had to be asked but it seemed a silly one at the time. I was ready to love a sweet baby born in any country. As far as we were concerned, a baby is a baby. And we wanted to provide a home for a child in need no matter the country or nationality.

Four months later, we were given two pictures of our future daughter; one was taken right after Nicole's birth; the other was taken when she one month old. In both photos our daughter appeared to be sleeping, but her sweet round face, thick black hair, and delicate fingers told us all we needed to know. She looked perfect and I loved her at first sight. I nearly wore those pictures

out over the next few weeks as I gazed at her beautiful, yet fragile face. I knew she was in immediate need of parents, and the wait became more difficult.

In those days Fax machines and computers were virtually non-existent. So we had to wait ten days for letters or important documents to travel by mail, one way across the Pacific Ocean. Because of the incredibly slow snail-mail, (or would that be whale-mail, as it was going across the water?) it took another forty-five days to complete the immigration, adoption paperwork, and airline details. Those weeks passed like years. I was an emotional mess. Pregnancy had not wreaked such havoc on my mind and body as the adoption process did. I lost weight, slept little, and cried at the drop of a hat. I kept expecting something to go wrong.

Even though we tried to hide our frustrations, I was fairly sure our nine year old son sensed the tension. Still, he seemed genuinely excited and was over the idea that girls were dumb. We included him in the positive aspects of our experience as much as we could. Although there was still a chance that he would resent his little sister. That was a risk, no matter how she was delivered.

Finally, we were told that Nicole would arrive at the end of January 1983 so we made preparations accordingly. The baby's room was ready and so were our hearts. We double and triple checked the baby's room, shopped for diapers and formula, informed our friends and checked off the days on the calendar. The prospect of actually holding Nicole in just a few days after all this time was so exciting I could hardly sleep.

Then, as often happens, the plans changed. We received a phone call right after New Year's Day informing us that our baby would arrive at the Portland International Airport on the sixth of January, just five days away. Suddenly, I had three weeks less than I thought and I went into high speed.

My dear friend and neighbor, Donna, who was so supportive during my thirty month "pregnancy", had been planning a surprise baby shower for us. My husband, invited guests, and family knew about the upcoming party; I was the only one in the dark. The celebration, scheduled for a Sunday afternoon, went off without a hitch. And since our beautiful daughter arrived early, she was the focal point of the celebration.

SAMPLE CHAPTER and PROLOGUE OF “THROUGH THE TUNNEL OF LOVE, A MOTHER’S AND DAUGHTER’S JOURNEY WITH ANOREXIA” by DONELLE KNUDSEN

In this compelling book, you'll read touching details of an international adoption, learn possible causes of anorexia, steps for intervention, costs, how anorexia affects the entire family, and what difference, faith, fathers, friends, and most especially, unconditional love make. Great for the individual who wants to know more about eating disorders or self-destructive personalities. Tunnel of Love is also ideal for use in a small study group setting.

<https://www.amazon.com/Through-Tunnel-Love-daughters-anorexia/dp/0982678177/>

Top customer reviews:

[5.0 out of 5 starsTouching!](#)

By[Karen Fisher](#) on December 9, 2011

Format: Paperback|Verified Purchase

This is a touching book. It's not just a book about a girl with an eating disorder. It's about a family with one. When one family member has anorexia, the whole family dynamics change. But ultimately, this book is about love!

[5.0 out of 5 starsNever Give Up - The Rewards are Great](#)

By[Paul Eslinger](#) on March 10, 2017

Format: Paperback

It is easy to lapse into despair or cynicism when dealing with difficult children. This sensitive memoir shows it is possible to deal with problems and have both child and parent emerge healthy and well-balanced. I recommend this book.

[5.0 out of 5 starsBattling Anorexia](#)

By[Diana Langner](#) on March 26, 2017

Format: Paperback

Donelle passes on helpful knowledge to others by presenting to the world her enduring struggle, along with her family's, to help her anorexic daughter successfully fight the disorder.

[5.0 out of 5 starsWell written and informative](#)

By[LeRoy Clary](#) on February 22, 2017

Format: Paperback

The story of how anorexia touches more than just the one person. Well written, informative, and there is helpful information for any suffering with this problem.

[5.0 out of 5 starsThrough the Tunnel of Love - a well told story](#)

By[L. hippler](#) on May 8, 2011

Format: Paperback

Donelle Knudsen's memoir is a beautifully written sharing of true, relatable experiences from a mother and daughter's six year struggle with anorexia. It is a chronology of events in discovering and dealing with a daughter's anorexia. But she also shares how the experience affected her

entire family and herself, personally.

I would recommend *Through the Tunnel of Love* to anyone concerned about a family member facing anorexia, or who is just interested in a good story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Donelle Knudsen was born in Portland, Oregon, but has lived in Eastern Washington since 1988. She has written short stories, poetry, and memoirs, and owes her love of books and the craft of writing to her late father, who was never too busy to read to her or make visits to the library every Saturday. She earned a B.S. in Arts & Letters from Portland State University, graduated with High Honors, and is a six-time finalist and award winner in the Pacific Northwest Writers Association's and Oregon Writers Colony's literary contests. Her first book, *"Through the Tunnel of Love, A Mother's and Daughter's Journey with Anorexia"* was published in 2011. *"Between Heartbeats,"* her first novel was published in 2015 and *"Heartbeat Interrupted,"* the second novel in the Heartbeat Series, will be available on Amazon the fall of 2017. Donelle Knudsen is a wife, a mother, and grandmother of five.

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