

# Essay on growing up with death on the horizon a lesson in loving life

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Baseball](#)



The Christmas parade is a big event in our town, a time of celebration of the season. December of 2005 felt extra special because as sixth graders, my twin sister Elizabeth and I were participating in the parade: I rode on a float with my baseball team, while Elizabeth rode on a float with her cheerleading team. With the festive crepe-paper colors in red, white, green on the floats, I felt like something special was about to happen as confetti drifted through the air all around us like magical snow. This feeling of the extraordinary did not leave me, and soon I found that my feelings were true. Our grandparents met Elizabeth and I after the parade and told us that what we had been hoping for, dreaming about, and praying about for the past two years was coming true.

I recall the day two years before the Christmas parade with total clarity. Elizabeth and I knew that our father had diabetes, a disease that affects every organ in the body. From a young age, both of us were taught the signs and symptoms of Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, and what we had to do if we were alone with our father when an episode occurred. We knew to give him juice, to get the neighbors to help us, to call Mom on her cell phone, or to call 911. Dad did really well and fought his disease, never missing our school functions, Elizabeth's dance recitals, coaching for my baseball team, vacationing, bike riding with the family, fishing, attending church, and he never missed work. Our life seemed so normal until that day.

That day, Mom looked nervous as she sat Elizabeth and I down to talk, but still she smiled. She explained to us that our dad was experiencing renal failure because his diabetes had affected his kidneys, he was going to need a transplant, and that his doctor was sending him to Charleston for further exams and treatment. Elizabeth and I had many questions because we were

worried about what this meant. We learned that he would be placed on the National Kidney Transplant Registry. Until he could get a transplant, he would have to be on dialysis, which meant he would be hooked up to a machine that would circulate and clean his blood, doing the job of the kidneys. He would be able to do this at home. Elizabeth and I were happy to hear that our grandparents, our Mom's parents, would be moving in with us. This would make things easier for everyone; Mom and Dad would be able to travel back and forth to Charleston for Dad's frequent doctors' appointments and tests, and Elizabeth and I would be able to go to school and still participate in all of our activities like baseball and cheerleading.

In those two years after Dad first found out he would need a transplant, I remember all the medicine and equipment delivered to our house. At night, he would hook up to his dialysis machine, and Elizabeth and I would get into bed with him, where he would read to us or we would watch a movie. My father is a strong man, and one of the things that impressed me the most during those years is that he was never angry, he did not blame God for his problems, or feel sorry for himself. He would fight to survive. He told Mom, Elizabeth, and me how much he loved us, and that even though our lives changed, everything would be okay. His attitude was so positive.

The day of the Christmas parade, we received the news that a matching kidney was found and Dad was going into surgery that day. He went in at 7pm, and our family was gathered at the hospital, waiting for news and holding each other's hands. Around 2:30am, the doctor came out and told us the surgery was a success. We all hugged each other so tight, I could not breathe. When I finally saw him in his recovery room, I felt a little sick to my stomach seeing

all the IVs and machines he was connected to, but he held up his hand for us to hold and opened his eyes and smiled.\n\nThat night, I realized another family had lost a dad, a mom, a sister, a grandparent, uncle, or aunt. Somebody they loved. Their family's loss had saved my Dad. Yet, I knew that the person whose kidney saved my dad had made the decision to donate his or her organs if the worst happened to them. I made my own decision that night. When I earned my driver's license, I did not hesitate to check " yes" to organ donation.