

## Ian's story

My name is Ian Zadow and I was a single dad for most of my daughter's life until she died at the age of 18. I have been married to my second wife Cathy for four years now and my story is about my little sweetheart, Lauren-Kay.

Teenage stupidity was a contributor that took Lauren-Kay away from me on Friday 22 October 2010 at the tender age of 18. She had been out with three friends and they decided it was a good idea to do some car bonnet surfing, while the car was moving. So there they were, two on the bonnet and one on the roof. I have to live with the notion of what possessed Lauren-Kay to do such a thing! Lauren-Kay fell off the bonnet and died straight away with massive head injuries and one of the others died while waving a car down to help.

It has impacted every aspect of my life. I feel like I have to restart the process every day and it becomes tiring. I'll go weeks feeling like I am doing better and then I have a set back that will last several days. I call that being ambushed.

That first year after Lauren-Kay's death was hard, very hard. I was in shock. I was numb. I was in pain. I was mourning. I was sad. I wanted to tell the story of Lauren-Kay to everyone. I thought that if there was a process or schedule to follow, and I followed it, Lauren-Kay would come back here. I really thought that.

There also was a period where I was a little suicidal. I just wanted to be with Lauren-Kay that much, that nothing else mattered. Although I have moved away from that space, I do have a much closer relationship with death now.

I was quick to see a counsellor or three. I say three as what I learnt is that if you are not getting anywhere or not feeling 'right' with one, then find another one as it's your life, your sanity that's at stake. The third counsellor is Lynne from RTSSV, whom I have been seeing now for almost two years. I am thankful for Lynne. Lynne is a tough but fair lady. She doesn't always take the surface answers of "I'm doing fine" - she challenges me to dig deeper. I also thought to myself that I need to respond to my grief covering all facets of my life. I saw Lynne as a professional, but what about the rest of my life?

I sought out another bereaved single dad called Tony to give me perspective and a vision of what's to come. I spoke to Miles, a close friend, who knew Lauren-Kay and was able to share special memories I had with her, and then John, a Christian friend, to help me make sense of my faith.

This second year has actually been harder than the first 12 months. It's real now, it's been two years and I haven't seen Lauren-Kay. I miss her. The sad reality is poking its ugly head through. Life is tough. I remember talking with Lauren-Kay about how tough life can be when she was younger. She replied, with that innocent child wisdom, "compared to what, Dad?" This puts it into perspective as everyone has tough issues in their life. I grieve my way and that's probably one piece of advice I could give any bereaved parent... read the books, talk to your friends but grieve the way you go about your (old) everyday life - if you are emotional, get emotional, if you are a talker, then talk. And don't always do what the good book says as the author may not have even experienced it.

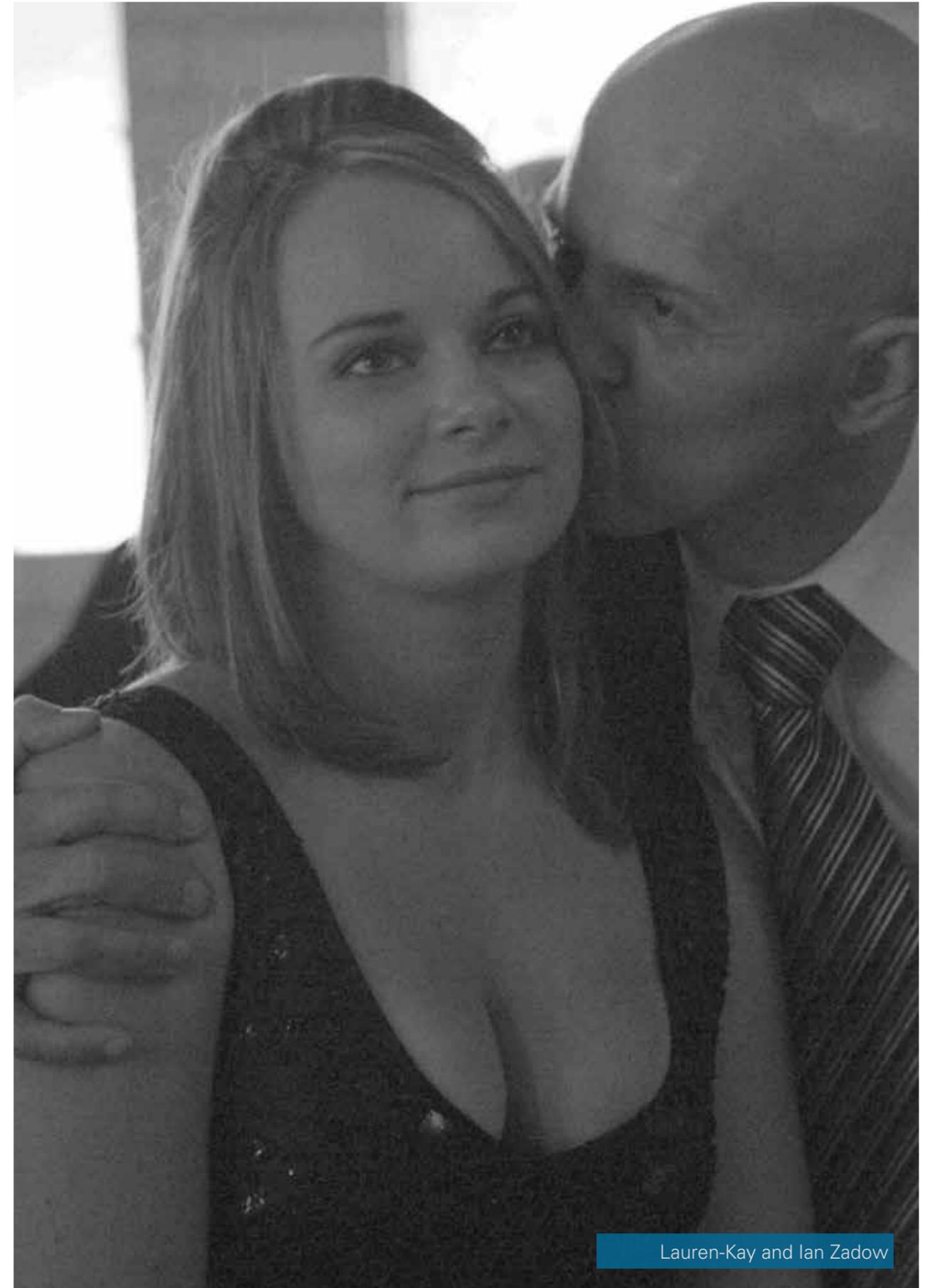
I know my grief is important and it will continue to be with me. I am realising that my life is going to have to grow around my grief if I want to live some sort of satisfying life. I'm not meaning to move on from Lauren-Kay or erase her from my mind, but I think as time is passing my grief is forming a part of me. Like my doctor said, it is part of my medical history now, it's who I have become. I have been in a rut throughout the depressive Melbourne winter and what is important to me right now is the present. I cannot change the past but I can create a new ending. I am continually addressing my pain with the help of Lynne, my friends, The Compassionate Friends organisation and Cathy as I have much to be thankful for in my life right now.

One of the hardest times for me is Father's Day. Father's Day advertising is everywhere, it's hard to miss, and it's agony for me. I mentioned ambushing when we went to London last year, I found out that Father's Day is celebrated on different days across the world and it was the day we landed!

My religion has been shaken, but not lost. I have hope that I will meet Lauren-Kay again one day and I do trust that God will continue to give me the gifts of faith and peace.

I am learning to cut myself some slack these days and realise that courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

**Ian Zadow**



Lauren-Kay and Ian Zadow