



Climb every mountain

The grief counsellor on Grenfell Tower, a Highlands holiday and remembering her friend, Diana

I DO A STRANGE JOB, choosing to sit opposite people who are suffering untold pain following the death of their child, partner or parent; listening to their frightening stories in the hope that I can support them. Strangers often say that I must be used to it, or that I should learn to protect myself. The truth is, I would be no good as a therapist if I armoured myself against my clients' pain, and in return I have received far more than I have ever given them. But the Grenfell Tower tragedy has really shaken me. There is something about the scale of it, the speed of it, the unstoppable destruction of so many lives and families on a normal evening, that is hard to comprehend, and I continue to feel the fear of it.

Going there, seeing the blackened ghost of a building, knowing that there are still burnt bodies in it, and that those people's deaths were witnessed by hundreds of families, residents and neighbours, is unbearable to think about but impossible to ignore. Yet the kindness of strangers, neighbours, even people from different countries,

is the one aspect of this devastating tragedy that can give us all hope.

I HAVE BEEN TO a number of festivals and bookshops this year, speaking about people who have loved and lost, and found a way to survive (this being the subject of my new book). The look of relief on people's faces and the hugs they give me when I tell them that we don't 'get over' someone's loss are remarkable. Rather, with the right support, we can find a way of living with it. But we need to remember the person who has died, and acknowledge that they live on in us.

That couldn't have been illustrated more poignantly than by Princes William and Harry when they talked about their mother, 20 years after her death. It is clear how much she still influences them and that her love sustains them. They are her greatest

It is clear how much Diana still influences her sons. They are her greatest legacy

legacy. I was fortunate enough to be a friend of Diana's, and so I can't resist looking at old film footage and photographs of her, as well as occasionally speaking about her, but I also wish that she could be left in peace.

HAVING SUPPER WITH FRIENDS, in particular my girlfriends, is one of my favourite pastimes – I love sharing a meal at the kitchen table, being teased, laughing and talking through whatever seems to be important at the time; it is an essential touchstone of my happiness. Remembering Diana at one of those suppers brings back the image of her giggling infectiously, throwing back her head as she laughed, eyes sparkling, hand on her mouth, usually having told the most terrible joke.

I SPENT SOME OF my summer in Scotland, in the big wilderness of the Highlands. Breathing in the air as I pant and puff up those hills, talking with the people I love, and sitting in the heather with a chicken and avocado bap brings me much happiness. Being in those monumental mountains, which have watched us humans scuttle about for millions of years, is incredibly calming and healing.

Julia Samuel is founder patron of Child Bereavement UK and author of *Grief Works* (Penguin, £14.99). griefworks.co.uk; childbereavement.org.uk

THE LIST Reading

The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington by Joanna Moorhead.

Watching

Rake, a legal drama on Netflix.

Loving

Cycling and swimming before breakfast.

Hating

My dog peeing all over the house in protest at our new puppy.