



Is it POSSIBLE to feel *loved* when NO ONE wants you *around*? We believe it is.

It is always tragic when a child loses a parent so young, but without Barnardos one-year-old Lachlan was in danger of losing the rest of his family too.

Just a few months before we met Lachlan, his mother had died of breast cancer. His grief-stricken dad, Craig, had nursed his wife through her illness, while continuing to hold down his job as a mechanic at the local petrol station. However after her death he sank into a deep depression, and was unable to work or cope with caring for Lachlan and his five-year-old brother, Thomas.

Craig and his wife, Miranda, both came from difficult backgrounds and depended on each other for everything. They looked forward to being able to give their children the loving upbringing they never had. However without Miranda, Craig crumbled. Estranged from his own and Miranda's family he was left living in a remote rural community, feeling very isolated and alone and not used to having to ask for help.

With the help of a neighbour who offered to drive him, Craig was able to get Thomas to school every day, but blinded by grief the demands of a baby were too much for him to deal with day-in day-out. He would shut himself in the bedroom and cover his ears so he couldn't hear Lachlan crying and the little boy would be left alone, hungry or sitting in soiled nappies, for hours as his father's mental state unravelled. At such a crucial developmental age, when bonding and nurturing are so vital to healthy emotional development, the once happy little boy who had been used to the loving attention of both his parents became fractious and screamed constantly.

Even when Craig did try to settle Lachlan, missing his mum's cuddles and in pain from nappy rash, the little boy was inconsolable. This increased Craig's lack of confidence. One day, after listening to Lachlan cry for hours, Craig was nearly overcome by an urge to shake the little boy to shut him up. Realising that he couldn't go on as he was he took Lachlan to see his GP. Desperately worried about Craig's emotional state, and about the welfare of both Lachlan and Thomas the family were referred to us.

Our family support team saw at once that without help Craig was at risk of losing his kids. Having visited the family to assess the situation, our worker, Kelly, could see that prior to losing his wife Craig had been a loving and attentive father. Thankfully his GP had already prescribed a short course of antidepressants and arranged for Craig to see a grief counsellor. Realising that Craig had lost his confidence as a parent, Kelly has been spending time helping him establish a routine for Lachlan that will make it easier to meet his needs and give them all a more peaceful home. She has also arranged for Craig and Lachlan to attend a local playgroup together to help re-establish the bond between them. The neighbour is willing to continue taking Thomas to school until Craig is back on his feet, and Kelly has also negotiated extra time off from work with Craig's employer. She has also put Lachlan on the waiting list for a daycare placement so that Craig can get some respite, and in time return to his job.

It is still early days, and this family will continue having a difficult time coping with the loss of their wife and mother. However, we are confident that with our support Craig, Thomas and little Lachlan will not lose each other as well.

Help him *believe* it too.

Ninety per cent of childhood deaths due to neglect are children under the age of four.* The developmental and emotional consequences of neglect in the most early years of life can be lifelong. With your support we can create a safe and caring family environment where they will be nurtured instead of neglected.

Here's how your donation will immediately go towards providing services that give children the essential support and caring family environment where they will be safe and have the future they deserve.

\$35 will pay for a resource kit for a child like Lachlan's brother Thomas to benefit from a home based parenting and early childhood enrichment program that will help him develop the foundations for learning.

\$80 will help a child like Lachlan to attend childcare which will help reduce social isolation, relieve the stress on the family and aid childhood development.

\$115 will contribute to a Barnardos worker making home visits to help a family like Lachlan's overcome their trauma and keep an eye on the child's progress.

\$240 will help to meet the costs of respite care for a child whose family has no other support.

\$505 will enable a dad like Craig to participate in parent support counselling to help him regain the confidence to nurture and care for his children and develop the skills to be a capable single parent.