

# 'My Light-bulb Moment'

Four women reveal the instance that changed their lives. By Kate Corr



Suzy is now good friends with her ex

When Suzy Miller's partner of ten years, Chris, didn't come home one night, she feared he'd been in a car crash. In fact, he had walked out on Suzy and their

## 'I knew I had to forgive him'

three young children — without her even knowing that their relationship was in trouble. When he turned up, a few days later, he told her he'd been unhappy for some time, and was leaving for good. Suzy says she was numb with shock.

"When he left, in 2003, we'd been together for ten years and had three beautiful children [Cydney, now 13, Joseph, 11, and Henry, nine]," says Suzy, who's 47. "He told me there was no one else involved, but did admit to having serious debts, which he'd kept secret from me."

After about six months (during which they had to sell their home to pay the debts), Suzy managed to buy a small ex-council house. "By then, the shock had worn off, but I was still feeling tremendous pain — and venomous anger, too."

"Then a friend, who'd been through a painful break-up the year before, gave me a book called *If It Hurts, It Isn't Love* by Chuck Spezzano. I flicked through and two sentences leaped out at me: *Love can never cause pain, as love can only be good. And: The pain we feel is not love — it is need.*

"Suddenly, it dawned on me that I had to change the way I was thinking about what had happened. I needed to focus on the love that had created my three children, not the anger I felt now. I phoned Chris at once.

'I don't know *how* I'm going to do this,' I said, 'but I'm going to forgive you and move on.' And that decision allowed me to see him differently. He'd ended our relationship badly, but he was still my children's father and still a good man."

Seven years on, the couple are on good terms. "Chris remains a fantastic father, and sees the kids several times a week," says Suzy. "He even has a key to our house and is currently fixing my car. He's in another relationship, and I'm genuinely happy for him."

"As for me, I've set up my own business helping other people going through relationship break-ups. I want to inspire them, just as I was inspired."   
● For more information, visit [www.startingovershow.co.uk](http://www.startingovershow.co.uk)

## 'Simple ideas can be life-changing'

Zach Gundle, who's 16, was born with a rare, genetic condition called Angelman syndrome, which has resulted in him not being able to do anything for himself, and rarely sleeping for more than a couple of hours at a time.

"I spent the first six years of his life in a fog of sleep deprivation, trying to keep afloat," says his mum, Deborah, who lives in London with her husband, Kevin, and their other children, Leo, 15, and Eden, 12.

"When Zach started to crawl, at six-and-a-half, it was a fantastic breakthrough," says Deborah, who's 45. "But he was incredibly skinny and kept hurting his knees and hips. Then I saw some

goalie trousers in a sports shop. They were padded at the knees and hips, and just what Zach needed. I thought, 'If only someone had told me about these before!'

"I realised even the simplest idea can be life-changing. So I started writing down my tips and asking other mums for theirs."

Soon, Deborah had gathered hundreds of ideas, on everything from coping without sleep to surviving birthdays. "These can be particularly depressing when your child doesn't achieve the usual milestones," she explains.

Eventually, Zach's needs became so complex that Deborah and Kevin had to make

the difficult decision to send him to a residential school. "It was dreadful, but it was only then, years after I'd started collecting it, that I finally had the time to make use of the advice I'd gathered," says Deborah. "With a huge amount of help from my brilliant friend, Linda Goldberg, I created a unique website called Net Buddy, where anyone caring for a child with learning disabilities can swap and share their own

Deborah has learned a lot from son Zach



moments of inspiration. It's been life-changing for me and I hope others will find it the same."

● For more information, visit [www.netbuddy.org.uk](http://www.netbuddy.org.uk)

## 'I couldn't let Mum down'

Barbara Bisco was 72 when she wrote her first book, a racy romantic novel.

"But then the rejection slips from publishers started arriving," says her daughter, Jasmine Montgomery. "One day, after what seemed like her hundredth rejection, Mum was close to tears, and I found myself saying, 'Don't worry, Mum, I'll publish it for you.'"

Barbara looked overjoyed. "But I was mortified," admits Jasmine, who's 38. "What had I done? I didn't know anything about publishing (I worked for a brand and marketing

Jasmine made mum Barbara's dream come true



agency). But, once I'd had the idea, there was no going back." Fortunately, Jasmine had someone nearby who could help. "My dad, Roger, agreed to help me start a publishing company. It

took us two years, and there were many terrifying moments, but Mum's book, *A Taste For Green Tangerines*, was published last year, and is still selling incredibly well," says Jasmine. "Watching the

moment Mum had dreamed about become a reality was really fantastic."

● For more about *A Taste For Green Tangerines*, visit [www.blacklotuspublishing.com](http://www.blacklotuspublishing.com)

## 'I needed to give my son's life meaning'

Kate Lake was 36 weeks pregnant when the umbilical cord became tangled around her baby's neck and he died. "I gave birth to our beautiful son, Jacob Sydney, the following day, on 21st March 2007," says Kate, who's 42, and from Gloucester. It was a long, harrowing labour, but afterwards, my husband, Martin, and I had 12 precious hours with Jacob, just holding him, cuddling him, loving him. His grandparents, aunts, cousins and my dearest friends came to see him, too."

Grief, she acknowledges, leads everyone down different paths. "Martin and I are doers," says Kate, who has two older children, Natasha, 21, and Hannah, 19 (from her previous marriage), and Sydney, aged two, with Martin. "While we were utterly devastated, we were also hugely grateful to staff at Gloucestershire

Royal Hospital for the time they'd given us with Jacob. It made us think...what if we could make Jacob's life mean something?"

Kate then spent hours consulting with maternity units, and other bereaved mums, asking what might really help the parents of stillborn babies. "They all said that most parents simply crave time with their babies. I understood this perfectly and decided to work out a way of giving them just that."

After a lot of research, Martin and Kate came up with the idea of a "cooling unit" (a metal plate that sits in the base of a Moses basket) so that babies like Jacob can stay with their parents for a few hours longer, before their colouring starts to change. "Then we found a wonderful team of inspired experts who said they could make it," says Kate.

Two units, the first of their kind in the UK, will soon be arriving at hospitals in Gloucester and Leeds. "The one in Gloucester will be funded by Jacob's Appeal (we've raised more than £5,000) and have a plaque explaining that it was inspired by our son. Although nothing could take away the pain of losing Jacob, creating something that will help other bereaved parents has helped to give his life a purpose. It's a tremendous comfort to know that Jacob has left his mark on the world."



Kate with daughter, Sydney