

Essay/Personal Reflection

Cite this article: Cangin MA (2021). Meaning-centered psychotherapy—session one: Meaningful moments—MY DAUGHTER AND HER WILL TO LIVE. *Palliative and Supportive Care* 19, 508. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951520001303>

Received: 13 October 2020
Revised: 9 November 2020
Accepted: 22 November 2020

Author for correspondence:

Marissa Cangin, City of Hope National Medical Center, Supportive Care Medicine, Duarte, CA, USA. E-mail: mcangin@coh.org

Meaning-centered psychotherapy—session one: Meaningful moments—MY DAUGHTER AND HER WILL TO LIVE

Marissa A. Cangin, PSY.D. 

City of Hope National Medical Center, Supportive Care Medicine, Duarte, CA

Elizabeth arrived on April 18, 1992, about 2 months prior to her anticipated delivery date. She was in distress. Upon delivery, the nurse brought Liz from the O.R. to me. I was granted a quick look. Maybe 10 s, then Elizabeth was rushed into infant triage. The clear message was that she may survive, at best, a few hours. Most likely, I would never see her again.

Hours turned into days, then weeks, and then months. All along, Elizabeth, fought for life in her incubator and on a respirator. The noise level in that incubator was deafening. Every second, another loud, metallic banging sound.

Hooked-up to a million lines, this little one who could sleep in the palm of an adult hand, survived with the help of a mother's caress and with sheer, self-determination. Old soul that she was, Elizabeth wanted to be here. She wanted life and seemed to know that she would have it.

Liz came home with an assortment of issues. Her challenges included an inability to digest and process food or drink, breathing problems and, as tests would later validate, mental limitations owing to a lack of oxygen at birth. In her first 5 years of life, urinary tract issues alone forced Liz to endure harrowing, painful tests. There were fine motor skill limitations to overcome as well. But nothing stopped Liz. With her parents by her side, she weathered it all.

Through Elizabeth's grade school and middle school years, the test results suggested that the expectations for an independent, whole life were not realistic. But this little girl was determined. No matter the task, her message was consistent, "I'll get it done in Elizabeth-time." And she would.

Fast-forwarding 28 years, the mantra has remained the same. Elizabeth refuses to be categorized by anyone. She is bright, compassionate, and always determined.

Today, Liz is a figure skater and a skating instructor. On the ice, she is a specialist in teaching and inspiring tots faced with early developmental challenges that are akin to her own experience. This young woman distinguishes herself through a strong ethic and moral center, by an above-average degree of kindness, by her considerable ability as a money manager and by her unlimited commitment to family and community.

On the eve of Liz's 29th birthday, I am reminded of the infant with a will to live that was unshakable. So it is today. For reasons that should surprise no one, my daughter is my hero.