

Candles

Shawn Sobers

My brother passed away. He gave me two large candles so I have always had them. These two massive candles stayed with me but I left them in my former house when I moved out. My friend's parents passed away so the candles, unlit, remained behind.

The candles are those white chunky candles. They have not been burnt. They are just there as symbols. A gift. Sentimental value. The gift takes on added value when the person is no longer there. These markers can never replace the person. I know I cannot hold on to those things artificially. They serve their function as a reminder - they can become a bit of a red herring.

My brother Delvin was very fit and strong. The fit one. He taught kungfu, fitness and body building. He was everything I wasn't so I looked up to him. He died of a serious illness in 2013 and had to have his legs amputated. That was definitely a marker and changed my relationship with myself. He had a degenerative illness. I guess candles cleanse.

Towards the end of his life, there were some fractures in the family related to my dad and him. I was in the middle and he was talking to me but not my dad. My dad died in 2018 and after he passed away I went on a meditation retreat, not long after the funeral. I was just doing a meditation programme - but all of a sudden, I saw my brother and my dad. After the meditation, I understood .my brother's position more and saw things from his perspective. So, there was forgiveness and I definitely saw history from a different standpoint and felt cleansed.

My brother is my dad's son not my mum's. He was one of the 'sent for' children. He came over when he was older. His mum had other children and she came to Bath. He arrived into a difficult situation. He came to live with us when he was 16. It was never really announced - we knew by osmosis. We teased each other and we definitely bonded. It was music, kung-fu and a sense of humour. We grew very close.

I remember one time we were watching something on telly. My dad was in the kitchen. I said something and he made a comment and called me a Blastard monkey. I ran into the kitchen and told my dad 'My brother just called me a bastard monkey!' I could hear my brother and sister spitting out their food and drink in laughter.

He would always carry a massive holdall. The brand was Head - a massive sports bag that you could carry a tennis racquet in. He would always carry this bag. My sister said 'What have you got in there?'

It suddenly dawned on me when she went through his bag - he even had his remote control in there for his telly. My sister and I talked after he died - he went into care for a little bit when he came to England. A security thing, travel, transit. That was what that was about.

He didn't have children. He was in a good relationship - a long-term relationship. He always had someone in his life.

I am still learning because of how it ended. There was a lot of guilt attached when he passed away. There was that fracture. Forgiveness on both sides and forgiving other people. Lots of learning on perspectives, priorities in life. Prioritising family. He was a very popular person, very loved. He lived by example. Similar to my gran in that way. One of the legacies of everyone is how people make you feel. For all his strength, he had vulnerabilities. At the time it wasn't clear where these were coming from. History into the present. People around can't understand what is happening. 9 times of 10 arguments are born out of miscommunication. Only a small percentage is from maliciousness, and the rest is miscommunication.

My brother had kind eyes. Very kind eyes. I have a vision from the meditation - my dad carrying me up the steps when I was a child and my brother watching that. He didn't have that from my dad. I can't get beyond the images of me being held, and him looking on.