

Adrienne Rosen

Our most earnest prayers are uttered at Yom Kippur. From the haunting tone of the decrees chanted in Kol Nidre, to the heartfelt recitation of Avinu Malkenu, we feel vulnerable, fragile, and focused. Even those who would deny any religious connection know that this is about more than ceremony -- It is about whether we will meet the next year with our dreams intact, whether we will have our jobs, and whether we will have our health.

Everything can change in a nano second. Would you have predicted last Kol Nidre that this year you would be watching Kol Nidre on a zoom session? That a pandemic so malevolent would strike the world killing millions of people and changing our way of life completely?

Working from home; eating at home; your children out of school; masks; endless washing of hands and keeping far away from others.

Did you *ever* imagine that the most vulnerable – the elderly – would be the first to be afflicted and that they would die alone without the comforting hand and embrace of family?

No, you did not, and I did not.

I suffered the worse loss of my life and I am still reeling from it. It happened two years ago.

Our daughter Alana suffered from mental illness and drug addiction and we spent ten years trying to help her. We sent her to the best clinics, rehabs and doctors – we worked so hard to help heal our daughter. And at the age of 25, this beautiful, powerful, brilliant young woman accidentally overdosed on heroin riddled with fentanyl and died. My wife Myra and I discovered her in her bed in the morning.

We were beyond broken. There are no words.

We were alone in the desert.

Except we were not. While we have glimpses of memory of the service and seeing her for the last time in City Shul before the service – most of it is a blur.

Except that every day – *every* single day we were surrounded by people who loved us and watched over us. Some of them we knew and others were strangers. They held us, fed us and the nightly minyan never had less than a hundred people. It did not stop after the week of shiva. People knew that our grief was so deep that we usually sat on our porch every day.

And, people from the congregation continued to turn up to porch sit.

We all porch sit now in a sense. We need during covid to make our homes our sanctuary – our holy spaces. It's not perfect but it is what we need to do.

We will never ever, ever forget the love and care that this community bestowed upon us even though we are not shul goers. Had it not been for this community I honestly do not know how we would have gotten through.

I urge you to support this shul – we are special – we are the strongest community I have ever known, and we are here for each other

This very special place has to be sustained and here for future generations.

(scroll down for Sally Rosenwhite)

Sally Rosenwhite

Growing up a goofy kid in Downtown Toronto, I will be honest in saying that synagogue was never exactly a highlight for me. Although the high holidays held great significance and great importance to me, they were often met with significant boredom and absolute disinterest. Then again, I cannot name one child who actively enjoys sitting in a room with their parents for five hours with no food. My sister and I would do absolutely anything we could to distract ourselves during the services. We would do gymnastics in the hallways, bring skateboards to shul, and of course – secretly steal honey cake off the table- while the ladies setting up for the break fast weren't looking (sorry!). However, we would always make it back just in time for Rabbi Elyse's sermon.

When my sister passed in the summer of 2018, my family was broken. My sister fought a lengthy battle with drug addiction for over a decade, and my parents remained by her side through every obstacle. We had lost the battle and we were devastated. My appreciation for City Shul really blossomed when I saw how much the community was there for my family. Every single day, we had visitors from the congregation coming to give their condolences. Whether they were bringing food or just a big hug – it meant the world to us. I remember my partner telling me how amazed she was that we had a constant support system from the synogouge every single day of the shiva (and after!). Suddenly, it occurred to me that these people who I had been seeing every rosh hashana and yom kippur weren't strangers but they were my community – my family.

I've spent the last two years worrying about my life and the future that awaits me. I never imagined to grow up an only child without a sibling – and I'll be honest with you, I'm a little scared. But the fear isn't as great as it was before because I know I have this community, city shul to watch over me and my family as we grow. The future of this synagogue is really important to me because one day I'd like to have a family myself, and I would love for my future children to feel the same support and love that I have felt and received from City Shul. La Dor Va Dor- From generation to generation. I am proud to be part of the next generation of city shul and teach my future family the importance of community and finding your holy space.

If you go to [www.cityshul.ca](http://www.cityshul.ca) and click donate – you can help me achieve this dream. Thank you so much.

