

# Years Later, Bereaved Mother Continues to Honor Terrorist-Slain Son

Sherri Mandell would rather not be in the limelight, not on International Women's Day (which was Tuesday), or any other day, for that matter.

The wife, mother and accomplished writer is perhaps best known for her role as co-founder of the Koby Mandell Foundation (KMF), Israel's pre-eminent organization serving bereaved families of victims of terror and other tragedies. She serves in memory of her 13-year old son, Koby, who was murdered by Arab terrorists on May 8, 2001.

Sherri is thoughtful, soft spoken and has an infectious laugh. Considering all that she's been through, that she is able to laugh at all is a miracle.

Sherri and her husband, Rabbi Seth Mandell, turned their grief into a way to help other families of terror victims focusing largely on bereaved children through their feted Camp Koby and other unique programs for bereaved mothers and widows. Through the successful range of therapeutic services offered, the Koby Mandell Foundation has become essential in the lives of thousands served each year, healing invisible scars of bereaved families of terror victims and other tragedies.

Sherri Mandell's vision, and that of the Koby Mandell Foundation, is laid out in her acclaimed second book, *The Road to Resilience*. Rather than remaining a victim to their tragedy, the Mandells have built the Koby Mandell Foundation to strive to help make bereaved families stronger as a result of their loss. If the past 14 years are any judge of that, their success has been widespread and both those helped and Israeli society on the whole have benefitted enormously.

In many ways, Sherri Mandell is a role model for this. She is an active participant and leader in the KMF programs for bereaved mothers and widows, providing a safe space among peers for women to grieve and express their loss. How essential this is cannot be understated.

Sherri helps bereaved women deal with the emotional and other consequences of their loss, yet while still serving as an anchor of emotional support and love that's especially needed in their homes: for their husbands and surviving children, or as newly widowed single parents.

Because of the particularly grotesque way in which Koby was murdered, Sherri Mandell was in the spotlight right away. During the year afterward, she expressed her voice and shared her vision to turn tragedy into something with a positive outcome, and as a way to remember Koby. Her award-winning book, *The Blessing of a Broken Heart*, was as much a therapeutic outlet for her, as it is a playbook for her overcoming the grief and building and living for the future. It has been translated into multiple languages, and is the basis for a play by the same name that is concluding a successful several-week run in Los Angeles. It has been widely and favorably reviewed and well worth going to see if you're in the area.

Whether for her own faith and resilience for which she is a role model, or as a source of comfort to other bereaved women and children, in the context of International Women's Day Sherri Mandell is a model of the achievement of women, in her personal case of overcoming grief and adversity to rise to greatness, and in enabling other women to do so as well.

We should never have to know the personal loss that Sherri Mandell has suffered and overcome, but for those who have suffered loss, she is a source of inspiration and strength. For more information on Sherri Mandell, buying her books, and the work of the Koby Mandell Foundation please visit . {eoa}

**Jonathan Feldstein** was born and educated in the U.S. and immigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a regular column for 's Standing With Israel. He can be reached at FirstPersonIsrael@.