

In more remote Momi, every child had scabies. We'd brought enough scabies medicine to last the village a lifetime, but, as we explained the treatment to parents—wash the children in soap from head to toe, dry them off and slather on the medication before bedtime—we were met with blank stares. Finally, someone told us that the village had no soap. It was a message we could take back to base: a few cases of no-frills soap would have been far better for the health of Momi's residents than all the expensive drugs we'd brought.

My translator that day was 12-year-old Sami, who told me she planned to study medicine, then come back to help

the people of her village. I gave her my stethoscope and showed her how to use it. As we scrambled down the cliff back to our boats at sunset, the last thing I saw was Sami's silhouette, with the new stethoscope in her ears and a single file of locals waiting for her to examine them.


At home, I've had time to reflect. Fijians don't have access to many of the basic 21st-century health supplies that we take for granted. But they don't have many of the 21st-century maladies (such as stress and depression) that plague my Sydney patients, either. Fijians tend to view life through a slower lens, stopping to laugh at every opportunity. Now I try to do the same—every day.

Learning to Live for Both of Us

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As I crested the hill in the Royal National Park and saw the coastal vista ahead, the waves tumbling against the cliffs washed away all thoughts of emails and iPhones. My heart ached. My husband Michael, who died suddenly in April this year, would have been even more mesmerised by the sight than I was.



First shot at a new start

This was my first trip since his death, and I'd been hoping to put aside my grief for a few days. I was missing everything about Michael: from his unflinching devotion to his goofy jokes—even his roof-raising belches. My friend

Nicola had come from the US to join me as support crew, and we'd planned a three-day excursion from Sydney. Our tour included Kiama, Minnamurra Rainforest and Stanwell Park, where we rented a cliff-top beach house.

As an American who moved to Australia only five months before my husband's death, I've been asked why I'm still here. My family's in the US, and Michael's is in Denmark. But I have friends in Sydney who have supported me literally night and day throughout my trauma. Equally important, Michael and I moved here because we loved Australia and looked forward to exploring the country together.

That day in the Royal National Park, 'our' adventure began for me. Near the edge of the crag, an echidna sat so still, it might have been a sculpture, but eventually it began scratching the

YASMIN WEARS ORGANZA SKIRT, CHARLIE BROWN, \$399, (02) 9360 9001; KNIT TOP, KAREN MILLEN, \$225, 1300 665 745; NECKLACE, \$450, AND EARRINGS, BOTH FROM PETER LANG, \$120, PETERLANG.COM.AU

When I am very quiet, I can feel Michael in spirit

dirt and vacuuming up ants. We crept closer, cameras clicking. "Michael, you have to see this!" I screamed in my head. He would have been so thrilled by the encounter. I shed more than a few tears for the experiences that Michael missed on this holiday: for the echidna, for the two rainbows over the ocean at sunset in Stanwell Park and for the deep black ocean pools under Kiama's grey skies.

Nicola couldn't replace Michael, but we built new memories. With each day, the knot in my stomach relaxed a little. The powerful tides, the gentle smell of earth, the waving ferns: all spoke to me of the unity of the universe. I began to believe that I could make it through this difficult time. I want to continue Michael's and my dream of exploring Australia, and though this short trip was only a tiny first step, it has inspired me to take many more.

