

family matters

Celebrating the ups and downs of life with your loved ones

The dog that rescued us from despair

Plunged into grief after the death of her son, **Vicky Joseph**, from London, reveals how canine comfort helps her through



In a split second my life was turned upside down. 'Guy's dead,' said Tony, my husband, meeting me on the doorstep as I returned from a trip to the cinema, with no idea of the bombshell that awaited me. That was 15 October 2011. Guy, our clever, handsome, adventurous son, had been killed while paragliding in the Pyrenees in Spain, aged just 25.

To start with, we buried ourselves in the practicalities – bringing him home and trying to find out what had happened. But I remember, in that very first hour after I was told, saying that we had to set up a charity to keep his name alive. Running that charity, Guy's Trust, has become one of our lifelines. The other has been

our dog, Nigel. Within weeks of Guy's death, our daughters, Alex and Lauren, persuaded us to get a Cockapoo puppy, although we weren't particularly animal lovers. Nigel hasn't changed our grief, but he's diverted it. Having a dog to walk and feed has given us a focus outside our sadness. It's impossible not to love him, and we soon found that having a soft, furry animal to stroke is very therapeutic and eases the pain for a moment. Tony calls him our "rescue dog" because he has rescued us from despair. There are some days which are so awful I think I can't bear it, and I'll go and sit with Nigel on the sofa and just cry.

Guy loved life. He discovered scuba diving aged 16 and travelled the world gaining his instructor qualifications. After graduating from Newcastle University with a First in Marine Biology, he lived on an Indonesian island teaching others to explore the ocean. In the year before his death, he had spent months in

Nepal learning to paraglide before making that trip to Spain.

From the embryonic idea of Guy's Trust, friends, family and strangers have raised over £100,000 to build two schools in Nepal, a country he loved. We are also working in Indonesia to fund scholarships for local students to work on protecting the endangered manta ray – something Guy cared passionately about.

Guy can't fulfil his dreams, so we have to do it for him. We hope others will be inspired by the charity and by our son, to support our work and to live life to the full, just as Guy did.

● To donate, visit guystrust.org. Or you can give up to £10 by text message: text GUYSTR followed by the amount to 70070.

