



Turning Tragedy into an Opportunity to Uplift and Help Others: A Boston Marathon Survivor



Rebekah and Noah

This Spotlight is a very special one and be forewarned – tissues may be needed. While this story is not directly regarding a Kroger associate, it is about the daughter and grandson of Regional Fleet Service Manager for the East, Tim Gregory.

Our story begins on April 15, 2013 in Boston. Rebekah Gregory and her five-year-old son Noah had never been to Boston. They traveled there as a special treat for Rebekah's birthday. It was everything they'd hoped it would be. They met with friends, caught a Red Sox game, and toured the city. They even received a special invitation to watch a friend run in the Boston marathon before heading home.

As they stood with signs in hand cheering on the runners, one friend suggested they move closer to the finish line so they could get a better view of the action. It was at this point that Noah began to lose interest in the race. "Noah was getting bored, tugging on my clothes and getting anxious," Rebekah says. "So, I told him to sit on my feet and play with the rocks like he was a scientist." The "rocks" were merely pieces of asphalt on the ground, but they were enough to hold Noah's interest and settle him.

Just moments later, blasts hit that same asphalt near where young Noah was playing. In an instant, joy and excitement turned into panic and fear, changing many lives forever. Noah's back was against his mother's shins when the bombs went off, her body serving as a shield. While the physical pain that came next is unimaginable for most, it was the emotional scars that immediately dug the deepest. Something that neither Rebekah nor her son were prepared for.

"What we saw that day was unimaginable, it was like a war zone," Rebekah remembers. "There were body parts, and ball bearings and pieces of the bomb everywhere. It was hard for **me** to process and accept what was happening, but Noah, he lost his innocence that day."

"When Tina, my wife, and I arrived in Boston the night of the bombing, doctors had held off giving Rebekah anymore pain medicine or sedatives," Rebekah's father Tim recalls. "They knew we were on our way and wanted us to be able to talk to her. Rebekah couldn't talk when we arrived. Tina found a pen and pad and put them in Rebekah's hand. She scribbled out 'I'm going to be okay, God isn't done with me yet.'"

Noah suffered minor injuries - a cut to his leg and shrap metal in the back of his head. Rebekah however was not as lucky and suffered massive injuries to her left leg. After the explosion, Noah and Rebekah were taken to different hospitals as the authorities did not know they were together. Rebekah was placed in a medically-induced coma for five days and remained hospitalized for 56 days. The doctor's efforts to save her leg were to no avail, and eventually amputation was the only solution.

Having been in the hospital so long, Rebekah began to see it as her safehouse. It wasn't until she was sent home that the emotions took control and she knew something was really wrong. "I remember coming home in my mom's minivan. I was terrified," she says. "I kept thinking



Noah being wheeled away after the bombing



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someone was going to hurt me. As my father rolled me in my wheelchair through the front door, Noah came to me and said, 'don't worry mom, we're never leaving the house again.' That's when I knew the emotional aftermath would be an entirely different animal."

Rebekah began researching and realized that both she and Noah were suffering from PTSD. Although most people relate PTSD to veterans, it's a condition that anyone, at any age can develop after experiencing a traumatic event. She and Noah began traditional therapy but were not achieving the results they'd hoped for. They were still living a life in fragments; hurt, fear, and anger controlled them. They were still hoping for a way to once again be whole.

Rebekah continued to search for answers and eventually came across [Accelerated Resolution Therapy](#) (ART). Unlike traditional therapy that involves reliving the trauma and talking through the experience, ART reprograms the way traumatic memories and images are stored in the brain, lessening the physical and emotional reaction to them. It is a form of psychotherapy with roots in existing evidence-based therapies but unlike traditional therapy, is shown to achieve benefits within 1-5 sessions.

It was through this therapy that both Rebekah and Noah learned to heal, and their passion for helping others with PTSD came into play. "The more I researched it, the more I realized we needed to become an advocate for childhood PTSD," Rebekah says. She realized that any major trauma – illness, divorce, abuse, accidents – all live under the umbrella of PTSD. More importantly, she learned how the things we experience as children directly impact who we become as an adult.

In 2018, Rebekah made the decision to turn her and her son's pain into purpose and founded [Rebekah's' Angels](#). The non-profit organization provides resources and funding for treatment for children who suffer from PTSD. "While insurance companies have come a long way over the years, they're still not where they should be on supporting mental health," she says. "Rebekah's Angels steps in to alleviate the frustration and financial stress by pairing families with therapist and funding the cost."



Rebekah crossing the finish line in 2015

Rebekah is a true advocate for the therapy, testifying that it's what allowed her to return to Boston in 2015 and run the marathon as an amputee. As for Noah, he too has healed and is now able to share his story without emotional repercussions. He is involved with marketing materials for the organization's events, appears at events and is starting a kid's advisory board in hopes of helping other kids out there who are suffering. "No matter what happens in your life, you can come back and turn tragedy into opportunity," Rebekah says. "It's our passion. We're excited to be advocates and help others understand they don't have to go on feeling this way. They don't have to live with symptoms. There is help out there."

Rebekah's father Tim is proud to say that this experience no longer leaves Rebekah "sitting on the sidelines." Both she and Noah now participate in life to the fullest and find genuine delight in helping others. He says, "because of Rebekah and Noah, my family started **Feeding the Human Spirit** and **Uplifting** others on April 15, 2013 - and we haven't looked back!"

Thanks to Rebekah, Noah and their family, hundreds of people who thought they were destined to live their lives in the shadows of tragedy now have a guiding light. Rebekah's Angels watches over them, leading them to a path of healing.

Interested in learning more about Rebekah's Angels? Visit <https://www.rebekahsangels.org/>