

Featured Writer Sylvia Triplett

Community and connection are powerful themes in Sylvia Triplett's full life; family, neighbors and friends—met and unmet—are all dear to her heart. She finds meaning, satisfaction and solace in sharing her gifts and experiences through blogging, organizing elaborate birthday parties and weaving her love of art and music into daily family activities. But time can slip so quickly past for this active mother of two that it's sometimes hard to carve out a small scrap of it for herself. Sylvia participated in Write Around Portland's Fall 2017 workshop with NICU Families Northwest, open to family members of newborns who spent time in the NICU.



FIVE YEARS

by Sylvia Triplett

I keep thinking I'm running out of time. I keep thinking about time and its grip on life. First it was only time will tell, then time heals all wounds, and now it's don't waste any time because the inevitable it's only a matter of time is next.

Five years. To me it feels like an instant, but to him it might be a lifetime. His lifetime. How can I let go of someone after knowing them and loving them for a lifetime but only getting to keep them for an instant?

I keep thinking about five years and is this his last year? I keep thinking about his birthday and his funeral in the same hour. I'm planning both. Hoping with all my being that the goodbye songs and lifetime slideshows don't actually get played. I create invitations to a party and buy decorations and when my mind has a second to wander I think about how at his funeral I'll ask my friend to sing the song I wrote for him in the NICU.

I keep thinking there must be a way to control time but all I can come up with is to stay present with him and Don't let time steal the minutes we have together.

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Interview with Featured Writer Sylvia Triplett

Interviewed by Write Around Portland volunteer Jacqueline Novet.

How did you first hear about Write Around Portland, and what drew you to join the workshop?

I had just joined NICU Families NW on Facebook and randomly saw a post about the 6-week workshop there, so I signed up for it right away.

Have you always been a writer?

No, I wouldn't say I was always a writer, but I like writing a lot. Writing was a good outlet for me to express my feelings, to communicate with other people after my son's traumatic birth.

What was the workshop experience like for you?

I was like, *Oh, how am I going to think of what to write?* There were some really good exercises that helped us expand on pieces instead of rethinking and focusing on one little phrase. It was really helpful to just write down whatever came to mind.

I appreciated that we always received positive feedback every time, even when I was thinking, *Eh, this isn't very good; I don't know if I want to read it out loud.* It really helped my confidence. People had things to say that I wouldn't have thought of on my own.

Being so busy and having a lot going on, you do start to feel kind of isolated. And so getting to be in this group where you feel like you belong, and getting that kind of feedback in such a supportive environment each week definitely makes you feel more connected.

How did you feel about having your work published and reading at the anthology release party?

It's really exciting to see your work in print. I was really proud of that.

I also felt nervous about reading, because the piece I wrote is very emotional for me. But when I heard other people reading and what they put into their pieces, I was impressed by the courage it took for them to do that. Hearing the things they'd written about and where they were coming from, I felt more comfortable.

It was a big step for me, but I thought, *If I can do that, what else can I do from here?*

So, what do you feel were your biggest takeaways? Where do you go from here?

I definitely think the workshop increased my confidence. And it was very helpful just to create space and dedicate time for myself. I still have writing time in my calendar, even though it doesn't always happen.

I've been in contact with some of the other moms from the group, and once in a while somebody will share a prompt. Even if you're not writing about the NICU experience, it's such a good way to connect with people and have a place just to let it out. That's been nice – to connect with other moms in the group, people I feel safe to share with – and keep that relationship going.

Anything else you'd like to say about your workshop experience?

On our last day, I wrote a piece about the group. The prompt was *Around this table...*

Around this table I have found life, death, joy, fear, humor, sarcasm, truth, and imagination.

I have learned to embrace, to purge, to expand, to listen, to speak.

Around this table is the presence of mothers, friends, sisters, teachers, comedians, and authors.

I have learned there is truth in fiction and there is always hope, even in the darkest hour.

I think that really summed up the workshop for me. It was just a really awesome experience and I appreciated and got so much out of it.

It's been a really awesome experience talking with you.

Thank you!