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Giving birth prematurely inspired Shusannah Morris to help other mums of prem babies

WORDS
Malcolm Rock
PICTURES
Tom Campbell

WATCHING her baby fight for life for four months in neonatal intensive care left Shusannah Morris weak, worn and wanting to support other parents going through the same ordeal.

Mrs Morris, of Malvern East, gave birth to her daughter Molly-Rose after only 26 weeks.

Molly-Rose had chronic lung disease, sight problems and weighed 880g.

Mrs Morris and husband David haunted the corridors of Carlton's Royal Women's Hospital for eight weeks before little Molly-Rose was transferred to the Friends of Perry House, where she spent a further two months.

"It was a difficult and emotional time for us both," Mrs Morris said.

"But the hospital staff were excellent and made things as easy as possible."

It was at the hospital, during anxious hours, that Mrs Morris met three other mothers with whom she would establish Life's Little Treasures two years later.

"Life's Little Treasures is a support network for parents of ex-prem babies," Mrs Morris said.

"It's a group parents can turn to for information and advice, or simply to get in touch with others who have had the same experience."

The Morris' story would have been significantly different had Life's Little Treasures existed when Molly-Rose was born.

"It was not a Johnson and Johnson champagne and chocolate celebration at all," Mrs Morris said. "Molly was born in February 2003, we only got to take her home in June. As she was our first baby, it was incredibly scary."

Mrs Morris said it was the time immediately after Molly's extended hospital stay that proved most trying.

"The hospital staff become like family and you get used to the beeps and machines," she said.

"Then you finally get to take her home and that support structure is gone and you have no one to talk to.

"It's like stepping out of one world and into an entirely different one, and it's terribly lonely."

Mrs Morris said the emotional rollercoaster left her alienated from other mothers whose babies had reached full term.

"When you're in and out of hospital it becomes difficult to relate to mothers who have not shared your experience.

"While they are discussing what their kids are wearing, ex-prem parents are organising their next hospital appointment."

One of Life's Little Treasures' most successful jobs has been running social events and playgroups exclusively for ex-prems and their parents.

"Kids get to play together while mothers have time to meet and share their stories and anxieties," Mrs Morris said.

The not-for-profit organisation is run by six core members - all mothers of ex-prem babies.

Mrs Morris said it had been well supported since it began in November last year.

She said interest across Victoria had grown and she hoped Life's Little Treasures would become the first place parents turned to when they had a premature baby.

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horoscope



by Shelley von Strunkel



Ex-prem mums Shusanna Morris with Molly-Rose, left, and Parool Shah-Harrington with son Luke, 4.

N08MP601

“The idea is for mothers who have premature babies to be directed to Life’s Little Treasures and come to us for assistance,” Mrs Morris said.

“Most maternal nurses now have our flyers and know of our 24-hour support line.

“What Life’s Little Treasures is doing is so important

“I remember finding it desperately difficult to find useful information when I had Molly-Rose.

“No one should have to go through what we did.”

Today, Molly-Rose is like any other sparkling, cheeky two-year-old.

She will undergo an operation later in the year to correct her retinopathy of prematurity (crossed eyes).

“She was an IVF baby and premature, which means she has been pushing the envelope from the very start,” Mrs Morris said with a chuckle.

“Molly-Rose is a wonderful miracle child.”

“It’s like stepping out of one world and into an entirely different one, and it’s terribly lonely

— Shusannah Morris

Life’s Little Treasures meets fortnightly in Stonnington and Sunbury.

The next major event takes place in Armadale on Friday, October 21, at 10.30am.

» For more details phone 0437 254 360 or email lifeslittle-treasures@yahoo.com.au



ARIES

March 20-April 18



As campaigns you’ve been waging succeed, the mood of even difficult individuals becomes optimistic. In matters of a practical nature you need only agree to plans.

Arrangements involving others are trickier, as everybody will want their say. Their spouting has more to do with ego. Listen with apparent fascination, and they’ll soon talk themselves into agreeing with your plans.

TAURUS

April 19-May 19



Only last week life was about power struggles, and often over relatively minor issues. Without a word of explanation, the mood becomes more cooperative. Tempting as it is to ask why the change of heart, you’d be well advised to focus on the progress that can be made. With friends and loved ones this means putting differences behind you and simply enjoying life.

GEMINI

May 20-June 20



Just when you were considering stomping off and leaving others to it, suddenly there’s universal harmony. By midweek you’re finally able to discuss relationships or projects about which you feel passionate. Others are finally showing both understanding and enthusiasm. While decisions won’t necessarily be made, just knowing that there’s hope completely transforms your mood.

CANCER

June 21-July 21



You’re sensitive to others’ need to show they’re in control. But enough is enough; you’ve had enough of their tedious manoeuvring. They seem to realise that they’ve overdone it, and do a timely turnaround. By midweek you’re going to have to make some swift decisions about potentially far-reaching changes

LEO

July 22-August 22



You’ve known that certain matters needed attention. But your efforts have met obstacles. Aggravating as this has been, now that things are going better, you’ll need to watch details. This is tedious, but it’s the only problem you face in an otherwise happy and productive week. True, things may be moving a little slowly. But what’s being considered is so exciting, you’ve no objections.

VIRGO

August 23-September 21



You have found others’ obsessive attitude towards certain matters exhausting. Consequently you’ll be relieved to find that your logical approach to dilemmas has worked. So much so, in fact, that once problematic arrangements are now proceeding without a peep. If anything needs watching, it’s your sums. Keep them in line and the rest is brilliant.

LIBRA

September 22-October 22



Since September began you’ve been making your way through a minefield of tricky situations. You’ve done your bit to relieve problems, but with disappointing results. Now all that effort pays off, and in some cases spectacularly. The fact is, you’d done enough for others recently. And it’s about time that you, who and what you care about, take first priority.

SCORPIO

October 23-November 21



While you may not have been responsible for recent problems, you still had to face the music. This has meant finding solutions that everybody could live with. Now, suddenly, everything falls into place with ease. For once, however, there’s no need for suspicion. This is your efforts, plus good timing, coming together for a happy result

SAGITTARIUS

November 22-December 20



Just when you were beginning to give up hoping that plans you’ve been working to organise would ever get anywhere, everything comes good. What you’ve learned about everything from the foibles of certain individuals to the practical and legal requirements of arrangements will come in handy now. If there’s any challenge, it’s working closely with other, slower individuals.

CAPRICORN

December 21-January 18



You’ve had to manoeuvre around all sorts of problems but, in the process, have learned a great deal. Now everybody’s interested and wants to make a contribution. Gratifying as this is, it would cause massive confusion. This is where those facts come in handy, as you’ll know what and who to encourage and where to draw the line. You should be finalising things before the week is over.

AQUARIUS

January 19-February 17



This week’s events bring together a series of clever manoeuvres on your part. You get a good result from these. This leaves you with the job of finding ways to organise arrangements that were, only days ago, nothing more than ideas. You must think about timing, money and who’ll do what. It’s better to make a plan now than delay arrangements until it’s too late.

PISCES

February 18-March 19



You’ve been so involved with demanding arrangements and temperamental individuals, that any indications about what you should be reflecting on have passed you by. You must now make up for lost time. What you learn is promising. While recent developments weren’t exactly in your control, you’re superbly placed. If you’ve any challenge, it’s demanding what you want, and nothing less.

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