



Finding hope in the midst of challenges.

## Speakers Available For Illness Related Organizations

Amy Mathers – Liver Transplant Recipient, Heart Transplant Recipient, and Professional Speaker

Amy Mathers was born with an inborn error of metabolism called Glycogen Storage Disease Type IIIa, also known as Forbes or Cori's Disease. Due to a deficiency in her glycogen debranching enzymes, glycogen was stored in her liver, heart and muscles, resulting in multiple organ failure, myopathy, a liver transplant and a heart transplant.

An alumna of McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton, the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and Toronto General Hospital, Amy is well-versed in the dichotomies of the doctor/patient relationship. She has experienced first-hand the evolution of patient care from the 1980s to the 2010s, as well as the differences between child and adult care.

Amy is dedicated to improving support and care for families and people dealing with chronic illness and their unique needs. She works at Hope for Families Counselling Centre as a Resource Coordinator. She uses bibliotherapy as a way to help people understand, process and cope with their experiences while dealing with a chronic illness.

Amy explores the issues facing people dealing with chronic illness in the posts she writes for "The Phoenix Zine," a blog she developed. Past posts have covered such topics as salvage therapy, doctor/patient interactions and stress management.

She has spoken for Heartlinks, a support group for heart transplant patients based out of Toronto General Hospital, the MS Society, "Rogers Daytime in Mississauga" television show, and on the radio. Amy is committed to raising awareness about organ and tissue donation through sharing her experiences with transplantation and is a volunteer for Trillium Gift of Life.

Holly Mathers – Counsellor, Founder of Hope for Families Counselling Centre and Professional Speaker

Holly has lived her life as the sibling of a sister with a chronic illness. This has played a major role in shaping her life choices. Being aware of illness issues and the impact of Amy's illness on her and their entire family, contributed to her decision to become a counsellor and then to focus on working to address the gap that exists in services, resources and support for families dealing with illness.

She has experience working with teens, young adults, couples and families in Waterloo Region in Ontario, Canada. She has facilitated grief groups for young adults at The Coping Centre and a group for teens who had a family member or friend with cancer. It was called Support Space and took place at HopeSpring Cancer Support Centre. She facilitates Caregiver Support Groups for people who are providing

care to someone with an illness. She is a relief member of the Mobile Crisis Team at the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Holly is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Christian Counsellors. She has an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from York University in Toronto, Ontario and a Master of Theological Studies degree in Pastoral Counselling from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.

She speaks publicly to various groups about families and illness issues including the Wellington-Waterloo chapter of the Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the MS Society. Holly has led sessions for staff working with families who have a child with mental health issues and she spoke about her experiences with postpartum depression at *Power, Pride, and Passion – Enhancing the Understanding of Mental Health and Women in Society*.

For more than two years, Holly hosted a radio show where she discussed a variety of topics pertaining to illness as well as other life issues affecting individuals and families.

Amy and Holly co-wrote and taught a course for Conestoga College entitled “Assisting Families Dealing with Chronic Illness” aimed at professionals with health care related jobs. They also co-developed an organizer resource called “The Phoenix Pages” for people dealing with illness to help them manage their illnesses and live their lives.

**Amy and Holly are available to speak together and lead workshops on the following topics:**

**Devastation versus Hope: The Language of Illness** – Words are tools that have the power to create and destroy hope when dealing with chronic illness. Exploring the meaning behind the words we use helps us frame our experiences in different ways. Sometimes changing our view of illness starts with the words we choose.

**Family Perspectives of Illness** – Illness impacts individuals and their family members in vastly different ways. Specific workshops are available for parents, spouses, child or adult siblings, children or adult children and extended family members & friends.

**Grief Attack** – Grief is often viewed as something felt only in response to a physical death. When it comes to a chronic illness, however, there are many losses along the way that cause grief. Finding ways to acknowledge and mourn these losses can help us adapt and discover hope.

**Please contact Hope for Families Counselling Centre for more information or to book a speaking event:**

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