

## Speakers Available For Professional Events & Conferences

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 on the following topics:**

**Devastation versus Hope: The Language of Illness** – Words are tools that have the power to create and destroy hope in a patient. As a health care professional, it is vital to pick the right words to foster hope in a patient when possible while honestly representing medical situations.

**Family Perspectives of Illness** – Illness impacts the patient and their family members in vastly different ways depending on their position in the family and their stage of life. A basic understanding of these unique family dynamics can help health care professionals provide more effective care for their patients and support for the family members involved.

**Grief Attack** – Grief is often presented 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 need to be grieved. Acknowledging these losses as a health care professional can help your patients recognise and deal with their grief.

**When a Cure Isn’t Possible** – As medical science advances, terminal illnesses are turning chronic as death is staved off through continuous treatments. But more prevalent cases of chronic illness require a shift in a health care professional’s approach to patient care. Where previous success was determined by whether the patient lived or died, different goals need to be developed for chronic illness care.

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

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