



The Person Who Saves Your Life Could Be a Child



Cullen 24, now a high school teacher, and Taine 23, an architectural design student, are sharing their story alongside their mum to raise awareness about the importance of teaching children how to respond in emergencies.

In New Zealand, more than 2,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur annually, with 80% happening at home. This was the case for Kendall on December 28, 2007.

After dinner, Cullen and Taine were watching TV when their mother suddenly collapsed in front of them.

At first, they thought she was joking, but when they couldn't wake her, Cullen called their

grandfather, who instructed them to call 111.

The call taker instructed the boys to turn Kendall on her side, but they were unable to. They vividly remember her turning purple.

Emergency responders arrived quickly, and a firefighter took the boys into the dining room, instructing them to look at the table while the medical team performed CPR on their mum.

The situation was critical. Kendall received six shocks during 40 minutes of CPR, but her chances of survival seemed bleak. Emergency personnel were discussing whether to continue resuscitation.

“I was told they worked on me for 40 minutes – they were going to call it, but because it was so close to Christmas and I was a single Mum with 2 young children, they decided to give it one last go. Luckily for me, whatever they did worked.” Kendall recalls

Kendall was rushed to Hutt Hospital, where she was placed in a hypothermic coma for 24 hours—a relatively new treatment at the time, making her only the sixth patient to receive it. When she arrived at the hospital, she was breathing only 6–8 breaths per minute. Her family was advised to prepare for the worst.

“The doctors told us the outcome looked gloomy and everyone was crying, but I didn’t know what gloomy meant”. Taine, then six years old, remembers.

Against the odds, Kendall regained consciousness. Though she has no memory of the weeks surrounding the event, she spent a month in the hospital.

She was eventually flown to Auckland to receive an implantable cardio-verter defibrillator (ICD), which has saved her life three times since.

Now, reflecting on their experience, both Cullen and Taine stress the importance of teaching children how to respond to emergencies. “It’s okay to call 111 if you think something is wrong—you won’t get in trouble for asking for help,” they say.