

They say you can choose your friends but not your family. It is usually said at fraught times when your family are driving you totally bonkers, and like everyone I have had a few of those moments. I was reflecting on some with my younger sister after my father passed away the weekend recently. He was extremely ill after a stroke last year and in many respects, although he will be much missed, it was a blessing his pain and suffering came to an end. A death in the family makes you reflect on shared memories but it also makes you appreciate those who are around in a rock of support in the most difficult times.

Beyond my own personal circumstances, there have been two other examples in the media this week highlighting to me the power of family ties. The Brownlee brothers are fiercely competitive on the triathlon circuit. Alistair Brownlee has pipped brother Jonny to the gold medal in two successive Olympics but when he saw him struggling through exhaustion to reach the finish line in the end of season race, he picked him up and took him across the line. Part of me thinks I would be too competitive to do that but the other part of me knows that I would donate every organ in my body to my sister if she needed it. Blood is always thicker than water, which ironically is what Jonny needed!

Similarly the story of the son singing in the car with his dementia suffering dad because it eases his pain, leading to a record being made, shows what people will do for their loved ones. You know what helps to ease the pain, makes them laugh and relaxes them. It is instinctive. And regardless of all the usual trials and tribulations family life brings, with breakups and breakdowns, it never goes away.