



# 2 of us

## TRACEY & SUZANNE SPICER

Newsreader Tracey Spicer, 43, and her fashion designer sister Suzanne, 40, fought like crazy as kids. Despite being so different in character and temperament, they have forged an deep bond as adults.

**TRACEY:** My sister was born three years younger than me on the same day. I'm like my mum – outgoing, outspoken and feisty – while Suzie inherited my dad's characteristics – she's shy, has a heart of gold, but is locked away in her shell. It could be a birth order thing but, as children, we fought like cats and dogs. I was the nerdy, blonde teacher's pet who wanted to go to uni and "change the world" as a crusading journalist, while Suzie was cool and groovy with jet-black hair and all the gothic make-up. I've always wished I could be more like her.

My relationship with Suzie changed when she moved out of home [at 17] to shack up with her pot-smoking boyfriend and create a life of her own. I wanted to say, "I miss you", but instead I said, "Let's go to a dreadful tattoo parlour." I'm pathetic and nerdy, so I got a tiny, yin-yang tattoo the size of a five-cent piece and Suzie got a pretty little love heart on her breast.

Five years later, Suzie and I moved into a share house in Petrie Terrace [in Brisbane]. I was 25; Suzie was 22. It was there that I introduced Suzie to her future husband [Chris Tapp]. A friend of mine had tried to set me up with Chris, but it didn't work out. We ended up being great friends though, and he'd often come around to visit and, as it turns out, have sex with my sister in the upstairs room! They had a quiet affair for a few

months before telling me. I'm not very perceptive!

My relationship with Suzie deepened when Mum was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer [in 1999]. Dad couldn't handle giving Mum the blood-thinning injections she needed, so Suzie and I drew up a roster to give him some respite. We spoke a lot about euthanasia in her final days. Hearing her screaming in pain tore our hearts out. Mum was the linchpin of our family and we were all devastated when she died [naturally]. Soon after, Dad slipped deeply into alcoholism. After nine years, he pulled himself out of it; he had 20 stomach ulcers explode and said, "I'm never drinking again." That was two years ago.

Although Suzie lives in Brisbane and I live in Sydney, we still see each other 10 times a year. Suzie is always there for me. When [in 2006] I lost my job at Channel Ten (shortly after returning to work after having Grace, my second child) I told Suzie I wanted to fight the dismissal, she said, "Go hard! They can't do that to a woman on maternity leave." In the end, I agreed on an out-of-court settlement but Suzie was still massively proud of me.

Our children are really close in age and it was no surprise to find we have very different approaches toward parenting. I'm a very old-fashioned, straighty-180 parent, whereas Suzie is much more laid back. Although it sometimes

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**Close and personal:** (above) sisters Tracey (at left) and Suzanne Spicer cherish their relationship.

annoys me that she is not stricter, why should I expect her to do things the same as me?

I am crazy about Suzie. She doesn't hold grudges, has no hate and sees the best in everybody. I can get pretty obsessive about work and I get exhausted and she says, "Will you just bloody pull back?" As a fashion designer, Suzie enjoys being behind the scenes. She doesn't like giving speeches – that's her greatest fear – so she thinks me being a newsreader is, frankly, ridiculous. She keeps my feet on the ground.

**SUZANNE:** When we were growing up, Tracey was everything I wanted to be: she was intelligent and gorgeous and I wanted what I didn't have. I was terribly shy, whereas Tracey would be up there on stage singing and doing all the moves. When she was in year 7 she sang *Two Out of Three Ain't Bad* by Meatloaf and the thought of it still makes me cringe. She had pigtails and big, long ribbons and long, blonde hair and she was so into it and doing all the facial expressions and I thought, "What the hell are you doing?" She did a June Dally-Watkins modelling course, too! What a cracker! Dad used to bring out the portfolio photos to show each boyfriend. The cut-away daffodil yellow swimsuit was a standout!

Tracey was always debating and acting, whereas I liked music and making my own clothes and being creative, and I'd die if I had to get on stage. I was nowhere near as wild as Tracey always thought I was. I did move in with my druggy boyfriend and I used to smoke pot and go to clubs, but it was nothing too outrageous. I was what was known as a "swampy", which meant we wore all-black clothes and dyed our hair blue-black and had scabby skin and listened to the [Scottish alternative rock band] Jesus and Mary Chain. Tracey had a very different look to me – big hair and shoulder pads – but I was never embarrassed by her. I was proud of her.

Getting a tattoo together was definitely a pivotal experience in our relationship. A big biker guy with a goatee was sitting beside us and he said to Tracey, "Don't you effing faint!" Poor Trace; she has a low pain threshold. She promptly passed out. It took her years to go back and have the colour inked in.

Every time we are about to do something momentous, we either phone each other first or do it together. Tracey was with me when I got married [in 1999] to Chris. We had our wedding in Las Vegas. We hired a limo and went through a drive-through wedding chapel; Tracey was our witness and photographer. Mum passed away two months later and then Dad had a breakdown, so it was so comforting to bounce off each other.

I'd prefer it if Tracey didn't live so far away. I cherish our relationship so much. She's down to earth, self-deprecating and has a great sense of humour. She's also honourable and intelligent and kind. Despite being on the telly since the age of 23, she's never let it go to her head. When I watch her on the news and she has her serious face on, I switch off the telly because I think, "I don't know who that person is."

I am definitely a lot more laid back than Trace. I'm a fashion designer and I work for myself and I get to be a bit more casual about life because I'm not reporting on horror stories. I'm always telling her, "Chill out!"

Tracey has known me my whole life and to lose her would be like losing a soulmate. I love that she has never judged me over the silly things I do; I'd be devastated without her. **GW**