

Mental Health and the Recovery from Abuse

[Teresa Joyce](#)

Author of "There's a fine line"

Section 1

Questions and Answers

Why did you decide to share your story with the world?

Answer – This is a very good question and one I have asked myself many times over.

The answer is not very black and white; it was a combination of many factors. In truth at first it was a way of trying to heal myself, if I could just revisit that dark place then maybe I could find some sort of closure. Seeing it down in print made me face my demons, there was no longer any choice. It became so very real and I was made to look into the face of hell – my hell. As my book progressed it was clear that it was becoming much more than that. It was also recognition of a life, and one that I stand in awe of every time I think of her. That someone enriched my life tenfold, I am proud to be able to call that person my mum. This story needed to be shared with the world for that reason alone. I was also hoping to be able to reach out to others, those who may need a hand to hold. Not unlike finding some form of camaraderie in numbers, cemented by the fact that others could and would understand. I am here to say that there is light at the end of the tunnel; you just need to reach for it. It was a message that I needed to get out there to share, that you can and will survive this with faith. To condense this all down by sharing a chapter in my life at its darkest point, maybe it could help others with their own.

2. For your memoir you decided to write it yourself instead of using a ghost writer, are you happy with that decision now that the book is complete?

Answer – I understand that this book/memoir is just a little different to most other memoirs, as you rightly say I was the one to write this, choosing not to use a Ghost writer. This is something I never even considered, to my mind I had to be the one to do this. I had to somehow try to express the feelings and emotions I felt within its pages, ultimately as no other person could. The best outcome being that you would take the journey with me, strongly believing that this time I would not be alone. I had to travel down that path no question, but it was a lonely road to walk. So the answer to your question is yes I am very happy with the decision I made, no other decision was even in the equation.

3. What message do you want your readers to grasp?

Answer – This question has to be answered two fold. Many things happen to us throughout our life time some good some bad. The good hopefully outweighs the bad, but for others that sadly is not the case. People looking in on us as we go through such a traumatic life changing experience, may find its content hard to understand. There is a knee jerk reaction that tells them to turn away; if they don't recognise it it's simply not there. By sharing my experience, I am hoping to hold their attention just enough to dispel their fears. Secondly I am hoping to make anyone in a similar situation aware that there is help out there, that you can survive this because you are stronger then you think. There's a place somewhere deep inside of all of us that has yet been untapped; if you have never had occasion to do so you are unaware of its strength. But at your darkest moment as long as you believe, hold on to life and love you will survive.

4. What advice would you give to someone that is in an abuse situation?

Answer – It has taken many years of my life to realise, that maybe I was not to blame for everything going on around me at that time, that feeling to be honest never really goes away. I could say that I am now at ease with my involvement, but that would be untrue. So where do you go from there? Forgiveness has to be the answer. Firstly you need to try and forgive yourself, to heal the child that's inside of us all. The other side of the coin is so much harder, you have to try and make headway in forgiving your abuser.

Holding on to all that pain is only creating a mountain of hate which has no real purpose, by holding on to that pain your abuser is still very much in control. I am not in the least saying this will be easy, how could I when I am still struggling to do just that myself. But we have to believe that it's possible.

5. Are you working on anything right now?

Answer – At present I am still very much involved with my current books release, but somewhere in the back of my mind there is a continuation.

6. Was writing the book in some way therapeutic for you?

Answer – Was it therapeutic..... not an easy one to answer. The day I sat down to write I had never been so scared in my life could I really do this? Could I revisit that dark place and come out of it the other end? It was a long hard journey but one I knew I had to take. Sitting here now I know that it has helped me enormously. But while writing there were times that I could not face the next chapter sentence or even the next word. So yes it has been therapeutic, but at that time it was like looking into the fires of hell.

7. Was your decision to write 'There's a fine line' planned or was it a spontaneous decision?

Answer – I could not say that it was planned because in truth; it sort of crept up on me from behind getting closer as time passed. To me it seemed like the best way to deal with the demons lurking in the dark corners of my mind. I didn't get up one day and think lets go write a book! It started as something much smaller – i.e. if I could just write everything down it would feel somewhat like unloading. I could not continue to carry around this amount of emotion/pain any longer without any release. Somewhere along the line it became a book, but at what point this changed I am unsure it just seemed to evolve. Maybe it was the need to help others to do just that, to unload their pain and to face their own demons. You see if my book only helps one person that recognises its content, then it will have been worth all the pain inflicted.

Section 2 Mental health

When these words are spoken they are always received differently, depending on the impact they have on the person hearing them. For those of you like me who have gone through this experience, we also have a magnitude of different responses. Every one of us has a different story to tell. But let's first go to those on the outside looking in. There is a stigma attached to those words that was never part of their remit. Association if recognised could taint their very being. They scoot around us with an uneasy feeling as though it were taboo to ask the question. Is this a reasonable reaction? Do they mean to make us feel as if we have the plague? The answer to my mind is a very easy one it's a firm no. The way the system is run in many ways gives weight to those seemingly measured thoughts. It's treated as a under the counter transaction, that should not bring it's baggage along with it. So many things need to change if we are to alter their prospective. Mental Health is an illness, that should be treated much the same as any chronic condition. It's ok to ask us how we are feeling, when returning to work after time away to heal, we won't go up in smoke or become an out of control entity. We are still the same person we were before our episode; we need to move on in leaps and bounds to push this message home.

So let's come back to us and our own insecurities. How do we prepare for that first day back at work? Will we be walking around with a sticker firmly pasted on our forehead, announcing to the world that we nearly made it to the funny farm? How should we respond to the questions that are asked of us from the brave? How many times have we

asked others how they are feeling after time away? Would they really want an honest answer? Or is it just a curtsy? Do they want to sit with you for a time and discuss the truth? Should we just put it out there, make a joke about it as if we too can see the funny side. Do we make it quite clear, that there is no discussing the matter in any way shape or form? Do we see someone we know in the far distance and alter our route in avoidance? I myself have experienced each and every one of these scenarios.

If we were to put these two misconceptions together what would we be left with? To my mind for so many years, it became me on one side of the street and them on the other.

Today I sit here and announce that those thoughts no longer have any headspace. I have managed to close that divide through the power of healing. So I say to you here and now, please don't imagine that for you there is just no way back. Simply because if you are strong enough to deal with the episodes consuming you while searching for a way back to the light, then you're sure as hell strong enough to conquer anything.

Section 3

Reach for the light

Through the writing my book, I have found the strength and hope to come back from a very dark place. My greatest wish would be to impart that message to others. We can all achieve that. There is a place deep inside of us that remains untapped, unless you reach your lowest point, and allow the soul within you to take hold. Today my outlook on life is so very different, instead of the glass being half empty, the glass is half full.

There is always a light at the end of the tunnel; my aim is to reassure that.

After an accident in which I injured my back, I was ill health retired. This has given me the time and dedication to put pen to paper. My life was no longer full, and I found myself with an abundance of alone time, to sit and reflect everything I had tried so hard to bury. Although this has been extremely difficult for me, my hope is that anyone finding themselves in the same type of situation may take some strength from its content. If this book were to be catalogued where would it fall, a true account, a personal autobiography or self-help? The real truth is in all three.

Whilst writing, I was forced down a road that I never really wanted to walk again. It's an insight to the lengths someone will go to achieve their goal. At times I had to walk away to deal with the emotions that it invoked. To say this person was very unhinged would be an understatement. Teetering on the edge of insanity, and crossing over more times than I can count. Where everyone else involved just became fall out. It was as if I were being

pursued by the devil himself. Overly more there seemed to be nothing I could do to stop him and the destruction he left in his wake.

The facts within are very hard to believe, but believe it I must because I was there. It's still incredible to me to think that I came out of it the other side. That said only just. I have spent many years under the mental health care umbrella, while trying to deal with the enormous sociological and psychological residue it has left behind.

Section 4

How you can be lonely in a room full of people

This situation for me was something I had to contend with for many years.

The room is full but for me it may as well have been empty. All I can hear is white noise, were they talking to me? Why would they want to talk to me? Someone asks me if I am ok but the voice seems so far away, somewhat like a distant echo. I am stuck within my mind. Why does the world not stop turning, there is nothing out there but pain and sorrow. All of a sudden the room becomes full, people crowding in on me, judging me.

The evil within me must be so very apparent. I was the one that allowed the abuse; I could have stopped it in a heartbeat. But I was far too weak. Part of my suggested treatment was to get out more, to mix with others. How could I do that? How can I share the complete and utter despair I was feeling? I didn't feel the need to do so. Why look for an ear to share with, when you already have the ear of the one person you fear

– the Bogeyman. Was he not just a childhood apparition? How could he possibly follow me on and in to adulthood? But there he was sitting on my shoulder.

The above situation I am sure to some may feel like a mirrored speculum, shadowed within your own thoughts. For each of us the reflection may appear differently, which matters none. Our goal is to be able to look into that mirror, and not to be ashamed at the hateful person looking back at you as I felt. This is achievable to that I bear witness; we just need to alter our attitude, change our behaviour from that of a victim to that of a survivor. Realise the strength you needed has always been there deep inside of you.

You can and will come through this triumphantly, because I believe in you.....

Section 5

We know our past but we have no way of knowing our future

For so many years I felt as if life was just about getting up every day, existing just until another night of the haunting dark hours. I would be still in the dark, fighting with all I had to stay awake. Why could I not just close my eyes? That meant the return of the nightmares. I would feel the quiet all around me, and remember that for so many years those hours were not safe for me. You listen for the creek on the stairs, the lights going off and the house falling into silence. This is a memory I know I share with others, all be it a slight variation on my own situation. We are haunted by our past. At that time in my life, I never knew the sheer joy that was to come into my life altering it forever.

I sat this evening with my two year old Grandson asleep next to me; I have never felt more elated to be here on this side of life. He loves me for who I am, with a pure love that has no bounds. My past can only take this from me if I let it. I look at his sleeping face and the gentle rise and fall of his chest, the innocence, the trust he has in life. His small hand tightly in mine, just where he had put it. For so many reasons I could have missed this miracle of life.

So I say to all of you out there thinking that life is not worth living, that only the bad things in life ever happen to you. That somehow you can only see dark corners and shades of black. Look to the future. Some years from now you will be in a situation such as mine, and you will be glad to be alive. Keep getting up every morning, because one of those mornings not too far away in your future.... life will take your breath away.

Section 6

The legacy we leave behind us on our journey.

When we make the empowered decision to take back control of our lives, there is another hard fact that we need to face up to. While going through the trauma that engulfed our life's for so many years, there is always going to be a fall out. Mine was the peace and protection I thought I had imparted to my son. There was a shutter during that time, which when faced with something painful came hammering down. Shutting down was the only way I knew, of getting through those painful days in my life. Sitting here now I am able to take reasonability, and I will regret those years always. You see the people we love become the people we hurt the most. This is not at all intentional on our part, but because they love us back it's inevitable. During those years my son felt that it was his duty to protect me. That he should have been able to stop the madness going on all around me, but this was

not a job for a boy in his teens. My past along with my present at that time was so very hard for him. Years later we would sit and have a conversation, one in which he told me of his own painful memories. Was this the legacy that I had left him with? These are very difficult words for me to write, but it would be so much harder if I were not facing them. We have to learn to forgive our abuser to move on, just as the people in our own lives that we love have forgiven us. We owe it to them to make a conscious effort to do just that.

Section 7

Sometimes in life we can see the good through our tears

I am sitting next to my mum holding her hand, just as I have been doing for the last thirty days. They have just turned off the life support; I watched her dying breath as it escaped her tiny body. She had gone to hospital with lower back pain, a complaint that should never have caused the loss of life. My head is in my hands, it feels like my body is being torn apart by the hounds of hell. How in the world could this happen. On arrival she had not been seen by the consultant in charge of that particular ward, the reasoning for this? He was on holiday. On his return after some seven days she was rushed to theatre. But this would prove to be far too late. I had walked with her as far as possible, coming to an abrupt halt at the theatre doors. The last words she spoke were to tell me that she loved me, she would never speak again. She had totally and utterly forgiven me for my part in the madness that had ensued. That day part of me went with her never to be reclaimed. Some months later I would attend a formal hearing, where the duty of care was discussed. Tears are streaming down my face; I can't focus on anything through the haze. The outcome was never really a surprise for me; once again she would touch the world with fairy dust. During her life she had given freely all that was asked of her, now even in death she had been able to reach out to others. During that meeting steps were taken to alter the macabre situation we had found ourselves in. Never again would anyone go through the torment felt because it increased a consultant's work load.

There is still an invisible thread that runs between us, one that however stretched will always hold fast even in death. They say the good die young, he or she was too good for this world. Both proverbs sit well with me. We may have no comprehension of the path that has been ours to walk. We may have no understanding of the battles we were made to face. But if we share this with others through our pain, they have a meaning a reason for being. We can then take a horrendous situation and spread a little fairy dust of our own.

Section 8

Searching for answers past gone

It's raining and I am kneeling next to my father's grave. The dirty water and mud swish all around me but I pay no mind. I have so many questions that need to be answered by a man that has been dead for so many years. Do I remember him or only the stories I have been told over the years? I was only three when he departed this world. As far back as I can remember my Stepfather had told me that I was just like him. My Father had been a violent drunk; my mother had endured a life of hell under what should have been his sheltering wing. Just over an hour ago I met my Grandfather for the first time that I can bring to mind. I had asked him the same questions that I was now asking of the man that should have been my protector. Why had he cared so little for his family?

A story was relayed to me of a time he had nearly lost his life diving into the sea to rescue a dog, proving it seemed to my Grandfather's mind that there was evidence of good within him. This would beg the question; did we not matter as much? Should it not have been us that he would have risked his life for? It seemed not. Could I myself not render a reply? After all I'm just like him; this had been hit home hard for so many years. But I had spent so little time with him was it genetic? If so how could I alter it? I had been conditioned to expect the worst in any given situation I was evolved in. The rain is getting heavier running down my face mixing in with the tears I am unable to control. I sit back to alleviate the crapping pain in my legs, how do I come to terms with the legacy he left me? I am not sure how long I was sitting there while trying to make peace with my maker, asking of heaven to show me the route to my salvation. When I left there that day all those negative thoughts were banished from my mind. So maybe my questions had been answered. Many people out there have been affected by the same such scenario, I hear so many stories that could run alongside mine and fit right in. But the fact is who we are and how we treat others is of our own making. Although it may suit others to have us believe differently. The route we walk can alter immensely, just by taking hold of our lives at the scruff of the neck and giving it a shake. No one is born to be bad. If someone out there is making you feel that you are on the road to hell, that you deserve to be there. Maybe they are just looking in the mirror.....

Self- Worth

Who do we see when we look in the mirror? You should be so comfortable with the face you were born with. We have seen ourselves grow and change, from the pictures we have witnessed when we were children. The truth is we never see the real us, the reflection always differs from the way that others see us. I am sure you know what I am talking about here, we think we are too fat but others tell us that not the case. Our hair never seems to look good, while friends ask us for our stylist's telephone number. Your nose is too big. Why can't I look that good in jeans? I could fill this page with examples, but I am sure they are not needed. Now here's the kicker. For those that have suffered with mental Health, for those who are still within its care umbrella, the picture in front of us is so much darker. This is because we are no longer concerned with our outside appearance. We don't even see that ugly fat person in front of us now; all we can see are the dark shadows lurking deep inside of us. That small child within us has been lost. Is it possible to look good on the outside, while deep inside you are dying from the inside out? To answer that question if asked of me at that time, it would be a compounding and definite yes. I lost all my self-worth, totally believing that I was not worthy of loving. That the monster inside of me had taken over. I believed it to be seen by others also so clearly. But the truth is that the monster is only recognised by us, no one else can look into that mirror and see what we see. If you are ever going to alter that image you may find yourself in the fight of your life, but there will never be a more worthy one.

It's true to say that for many of us years have gone by since our baptism by fire, but sadly we are still affected by our past. It's likened to Groundhog Day, where it seems we are happy to relive it daily. Why? The answer to that is never going to be easy. Maybe facing it is just too painful, but there comes a time for all of us where turning away is no longer an option. It's so evident to me on reflection tempered by my own personal experience, that with the right help we can all evict that monster from our lives. There is a feeling of let's not stir things up; the past is the past that's where it should remain. But the truth is that it was never left, we are still dragging it along with us. We can change that. All that is missing or lacking is the strength to move on. Each and every one of us will find that strength in an array of different places. So how do I know this? Simply because it's a journey I have taken. That does not make me all seeing; when I hit rock bottom the only place to go for me was up. It's a journey that you too can make; we all have the capacity to do so. Through the blood sweat and tears you will once more emerge. The real you that may have been lost to circumstance which was not of your making. It may seem like we are once more putting ourselves in harm's way, that revisiting those times has no real purpose. But how can we move on with our lives if we are unable to close that chapter behind us. Search for the innocence that was yours before it was taken from you; learn to love yourself once more.

Find that self-worth that should never have been ripped away from you. Anything is possible; I have every faith in you as you should have in yourself.

Section 10

A bitter pill to swallow

It's dark and I have no idea of where I am nothing around me looks Familiar, I can hear voices just out of eye shot. My head feels as if it may explode and I am fighting the urge to throw up. There is a swell of disinfectant hanging in the air which is not helping me much. I sit up in bed and try to take in my surroundings. I was not meant to be here, I had taken the decision to close my eyes for the very last time. I feel cheated; once more any control over my own life had been taken from me. Why could they not just let me go, did they not see that this was the best thing for all concerned? By removing the cancer the epidemic would be over. Everyone's life would revert to the way it had been before I had caused this vast devastation. My life had been the only thing I had left to offer up as a sacrifice. Someone is standing next to me asking if I would like some tea, I can't even muster the energy to reply. I turn my head into the pillow and cry silent tears; the pain inside of me is the only thing I can concentrate on. I had nowhere else to fall I had hit rock bottom. I am sure these words hit home with so many of you out there, and sadly we won't be the last. So let's talk some more about the fallout after this situation. People say things to you like "you tried to take the easy way out" "you're too much of a coward to go on living" "your selfish only thinking of yourself" I am sure there are a few other gems out there I have left out, but they all equate to the same thing. These words are said to us by the people we love; because the thought that they may have lost us provokes an angry in them that they are unable to express, or can't find the words that would make a difference. The truth is there isn't any coming from that quarter. The answer lies within you. I can tell you here and now, that sitting with a bottle of pills and a bottle of cider was not at all easy, how in the hell can it be? Granted at that time you are not of sound mind, because the pain to go on living is just too much.

But that does not make it easy, of that you can take my word. In the cold light of day a fear runs through you like an ice cold dagger, but this is only in hindsight. Driving home hard just how many people you would have hurt, because of your complete and utter break down. What we need to realise is that removing ourselves from the equation was never going to be the answer; the devastation we feel we created will go on, we just won't be there to see it. So is it bravery to take the so called easy way out? Or take control of your life once more? Having tried the first I can tell you at this time in my life, that it was completely the

wrong thing to do, and there will never be a repeat performance from me. My message to you having done both is that living is always going to be harder, but the rewards it brings with it in time are something you don't want to miss. So when you feel that all is lost and there is no way back for you, dig deep, take an intake of breath, put your best foot forward, the rest will follow on behind. You have so much to give; it may take a little time to realise this, but if you are no longer with us you will never know.

Section 11

Losing the one you love

I've just returned home after another session with my Psychiatrist, today has really not gone well. I was asked to visit a place that had so many bad memories for me. Dealing with the sexual side of my rehabilitation is a killer. I know that I need this psychotherapeutic treatment, because I am drowning in my own pain. How do I put into words the sheer agony that I feel inside when I revisit that place. It feels like someone is tearing out the very heart of me, leaving me feeling hollow and empty. Every dirty moment relived. Surrender because I was too weak to fight back. I can feel his hands on me just as if it was yesterday, but the truth is that many years have passed.

Then there's the Psychological side of the coin, where you can't escape your thoughts.

So much so that you wish you could reach inside your head and rip out the entire episode. So which hurts the most? Can you even compare the two? They are separate yet interlinked; you can't deal with one without the other joining in. It's far from a fair fight. There are no Queensbury rules here, each growing in mass as they feed off each other's misery. A game of Ping -Pong between the two; where I have no hope of even seeing the ball. I know this effect will not lift an inch today, not a cat in hell's chance. I try to remove myself from my home situation retreating to the bedroom, knowing that I am in a bad place and best left to my own devices. But it's clearly not working.

Questions so many questions, I feel as if my head is about to explode why can't I just be left alone? You can feel it coming over you, mounting with each second that passes.

There's a heat rising within you that you know you will not be able to control, anger emanating from your very being. It should be visible to all as it engulfs you. To late the moment has passed for them to retreat, you hit out at the only one there. All control is lost they become the enemy, and words are spilling out of my mouth with such venom.

If they think it's that easy then maybe they should go in your place. Then the inevitable statement – If this is how it affects you why do you attend at all? Which brings us back to

the question; you have been asking yourself all day. I could elaborate here but I see no need, if you have ever been in this position no other exploration is needed. If you haven't then the explanation you are looking for will ever materialise. The aftermath in this situation often differs, but the situation above more than not pushes the one you love to breaking point. How can we expect them to understand when it's so far from a normal? There has not been a book written, that can truthfully outline the intense emotions felt when you have been on the receiving end of such abuse. Once again it falls to us to regulate our reaction, to change the negatives to positives. If we don't or choose not to, then we run a real risk of losing the only good thing left in our lives. Yes we are loved but everyone has a breaking point a point of no return. Take heed it's a lonely road to walk of which I speak from experience.

Section 12

Weighted which way

I have just been asked by my counsellor about my sexuality, a question I have been waiting for that took its time to arrive. The answer has been in my mind for so long waiting to be announced. I truthful didn't know. So what were my options here? It seems through choice that I am Heterosexual, Bisexual or Lesbian. It all sounds so very clean cut, all the boxes ticked in the right place. The problem I am having, is that not one box has been ticked within me. The three most prominent males that influenced my life had made it so difficult.

Let's first turn to my Father who had been a violent Alcoholic, he had beating my mother so badly, that I had been born a month early as a direct result of a boot in her stomach. Withholding from her the money to purchase even food, it seemed he felt the pub was the place to spend his earnings. Any snippet that was given to her was spent on feeding us children. Result? Even while seven months pregnant you would never have been able to tell.

Now let's walk down the path a little further towards my Stepfather. Abuse is the only word I can bring to mind with regards to this person, not only as a child but repeated with such venom and destruction in my adulthood. There was only ever one promise he gave to me that he kept; he told me that he would destroy my life, that I would lose everyone and anything that I loved. Result? This was the outcome Moving forward where was the man who should have been my protector? Good question and one that I am still unable to answer. The reason for this is that I am unable to find the right words to elaborate or explain. Why would my husband take what was happening to me in his stride? Why did he

continue working for my Stepfather? Where was the protection that should have been mine, while the ground was being kicked away from beneath me? Result? Complete and utter destruction of my marriage, for me it became unworkable.

It's not a pretty story for sure but one I was to experience. So where do you go to feel safe within a relationship? The answer for me was to someone I had known all my life.

This was a complete alteration from anything that had gone before me. It came in the form of a lady that I had always loved as a friend since childhood. So does that make it easier to shift to the other side for want of a better word? I guess we are back where we started, am I of a certain persuasion? At that time I was asking myself that very question. Let's now return to the present day and dissect the above paragraphs. What have I learnt from the above experiences? This question I have no trouble in answering.

I have learnt the hard way that regardless of sexuality, gender, race or creed people are just people. Is it not what's inside of a person that should be important? Do they treat others in a manner they themselves would like to be treated? Are they there for you when it's needed? Would they stand toe to toe with you through the rough as well as the good times? Lift your spirit when all you need is a hug; are they the wind beneath your wings?

I will leave it up to you to decide my sexuality. Because my train of thought sitting here present day is that I am all three.....

Section 13

When the nightmares start

I shoot up in bed sweat pouring from my body, the sheets clinging tightly all around me.

I try to adjust my eyes to the light, while they are darting from one corner of the room to another. I know he is here I heard his footsteps on the stairs. He is coming closer and closer to me with every step that he takes. Suddenly it's all out there in front of me, the memory of his breath on my face, the rancid taste in my mouth. Invading my body whilst I am unable to move paralysed with fear. Why can't I see him? The light was playing tricks with my vision. I know that he is here somewhere, was this some other trick he had perfected? I start to feel sick bile escaping from my stomach; a burning sensation at the back of my throat is making me gag. I curl up in a tight ball tucking in my hands and feet, the smaller I become the more of a chance I have of not being seen.

My heart is beating so hard it feels as if it will burst right out of my chest, I had to quieten it down the noise would bring him right to me. I take a big gulp of air and hold my breath. This time someone would come they just had to, all along knowing that nobody

would they never did. There's a scream trying to escape my mouth. I bite the inside of my lip and concentrate on the pain, anything but the monster I knew was only inches away from me. I'm suddenly aware of the bitter taste of blood but I had to keep biting down hard, it was the only way to stop the scream from escaping. I know he is just behind me, I could hear each breath that he took in the deathly silence. Maybe it will be over quickly, I could just close my eyes until he was done with me. Why was the wait before he found me far worse than the act? Was it the fear of the unknown? A fearful emotion which I still had some control over? Once found I would lose all control, all the power would become his. I was too big I had to make myself smaller. Panic stricken I was thrown into a state of intense fear and desperation. The air was filled with apprehension not unlike waiting for a snake to strike. It's so sudden when he does that it knocks the wind out of me, his crazed mad eyes reminding me that he was in charge and that he always would be. I won't tell who was I fooling? No one would believe me, they would take me away and put me in a children's home. I scream but there is no sound, the scream I had been holding in until it almost choked me had now dissipated.

I'm now wide awake having found myself in a dream within a dream. I feel utterly wasted, just as if I had been in a prize fight. I look around the room only to find that I am all alone. I lower my head back on to the pillow its two o'clock in the morning, any more sleep this night would be lost to me. This situation had been going on for so long, the fear of closing my eyes whilst fully aware of where that would take me. How do you close your eyes in the knowledge of the dark place waiting for you? You feel yourself drifting sleep is almost yours. You are just so tired maybe tonight the dreams won't come, you fight to stay awake your eyes straining with the required effort. You know it's only time before exhaustion takes over. The doctor offers you medication; that's not a choice you can make sleep is the enemy. Living your life in a loop it seems on a never ending merry-go-round. You feel as if there will never be an end to the nightmares; I am here to tell you that there positively is. Our dreams are our own subconscious thoughts. No one else has access to the deeply troubled and vivid memories inside our heads. We are having these nightmares because we have still not dealt with the fundamental cause. There are so many things to do during the day that can occupy the mind, we busy ourselves; there is not enough time to dwell. But when the lights go out and we climb in to our bed there is nothing waiting there for us but our thoughts. So how do we change that? The answer is to deal with our issues one at a time, during our waking hours where there are distractions. You can then take strength from those around you, they may not even be aware that you are doing so but they don't have to be. Ask yourself this question; is it better to deal with your demons in the day light hours or all alone in the hours of darkness? I'm sure you will arrive at the same conclusion I did. Don't run if you need to walk, go at a pace that suits you and you alone. Even tiny steps will turn into strides if you make enough of them. There will come a day

when the only thing waiting for you in the turbulence you have suffered, will be a peaceful welcoming sleep. Take heart, take courage, and above all believe. It is achievable and yes you can take my word on that.....

Section 14

Self- harm

Self harm is a very controversial subject, and one that many people skirt around or as they say tread lightly.

Let's first turn our attention to the outside world looking in. We are an unstable mind deliberately causing untold injury to ourselves, whilst finding or given justification. No one in their right mind would be able to do such a thing, what perverse pleasure are we striving for? Questioning our sanity fully aware the question has already been asked and answered. They turn to our Psychiatrists for answers; how can they stop us doing this? How do they deal with the dilemma now facing them? Make no question this is all about them loving us, trying to shield us from any more harm than we have already experienced. There are so many books out there; maybe that's where they will find the answers. Anything is worth a try, they can't sit and watch us 24 hours a day it's just not possible. Then there's the guilt they feel when leaving us to our own devices, unaware of what they may find on their return. They see themselves losing all control whilst striving to help us in our recovery. Sadly they are between a rock and a hard place Control is the key word here as we explore the other side of the coin, inside the bubble that we have created for ourselves. Whist trying to claw back any control whatsoever.

For many like me all control was removed the day our abuse started. Control is not always as straightforward as it seems, in the way many people regard it. From an early age we are told by our abuser that they are in control and that we best not ever forget that, and in truth you don't. Even in adulthood when the abuse may or may not be behind you, you follow the golden rule. Your abuser doesn't need to be there for this to happen, you're conditioned this way until the day you find the strength to heal. Add to that the enormous pressure within the mental health care you receive. Even that is not straightforward; healing us takes structure. The script and time frame as they would have it, capitulating to their will. You're asked to revisit a place that was all about control, a place of pain whilst in the hands of your abuser. The ultimate control that we have been fighting all our life's to regain. The people that love us try to control our movements in fear of what we may or may not do. So what's left for you? You embark on the road to Self-harm.

The pain tearing you apart inside has been there for so long, that you have no control over it whatsoever. Overly more you never had. But you can control the pain you feel on the outside, that pain can then become the focal point. If you hurt enough physically, maybe it will shut out the pain of your terrifying memory. For my part it was something I tried to hide, choosing to create this pain where it was not visible, the more it hurt the less I thought about my painful past. I would never let it get to a place of healing, before I once more felt the need to open up the wounds. The most important factor in this whole issue is that you are in soul control. You can choose when or how to inflict the pain. Self harm is yours and yours alone. For all of this to make sense to people that have never been in this place, is really asking for far too much. All that matters to you is that one word – control. No one can take this from you, you choose how where and when. So how can we replace emotional pain by inflicting the physical? The truth be told is that we can't, it deadens the nerve just enough to get us through the day.

The above story is happening all over the world as I speak, but it's a journey we can come back from. Will it be easy? I'm Sorry to say that it won't, but that should not hinder your journey to recovery. You will never take a bigger stride in your life, than the one you will make towards your journeys end. But please believe me when I say, that's the time you take back control of your life once and for all. From that point on the control becomes yours alone.....

Section 15

Why?

Why? It's a question I have been asked many times both personally and indirectly through my web page. So which why am I being asked here? There are so many whys in my past; it's quite difficult to pin each one down. This scenario I am sure mirrors the lives of so many people, still unable to answer that particular question for themselves.

Let's now return to the start of this piece and deal with the said question "would it not be easier to deal with the cause and not the aftermath"? That's one hell of a question and a little like opening a can of worms. That said I will try to answer as honestly as I possibly can. For me there were so many whys. Why was I abused as a child? Why did that horrendous situation follow me in to adulthood? Why was my mother taken from me so cruelly, because of the incompetence of the medical staff involved? Why was I in an accident that would see me ill health retired and in constant pain daily? I'm sure you can see where I am going here, if I were to think about it further, that reply would increase tenfold. Everyone has a choice as to how they deal with the destruction that blighted their

lives. Do we keep returning to those painful places, while dissecting every last episode? Which proportion of blame do we allot to each episode? Has the right amount of blame been fairly disrupted? Do we run around chasing our tails in an effort to partition everything in the right boxes? I can only answer these questions as I myself see them, fully aware that each and every one of us needs to find our own way to move forward. That's the key – move forward. Personally I see no point in the post-mortem.

If we are ever to heal the most important thing that springs to mind, is that we need to deal in the here and now. Is it not about finding peace within our self's in this moment and time? Do we keep dragging it all behind us by the scuff of the neck unable to put it down? Ultimately we can't keep raking over our past, if we every stand a cat in hells chance to heal. In essence why waste your future because of the destruction suffered within your past? The sad fact is that life won't wait for you, it will continue on if you're along for the ride or not.....

Section 16

Grieving

Grief – it's a word we can all relate to, if we have ever suffered the pain of losing someone close to us. It's a word that is associated with love, the empty feeling it leaves behind as the bottom of our world falls out. It's a word that is associated with death, as we try to move on in our lives without that special person. Buts death has many guises.

So what relevance has it here? Let's explore that question together. To my mind there are so many other things that we grieve for. The loss of that prefect job, the reposition of your home, bankruptcy, these and more are all relevant points if we take the time to look-grief wears many hats. This was a lesson that I had to learn, in which I would receive an A star plus for effort on my road to recovery. If we were to think of our lives and the passing of the years as building blocks that forge us as we grow, any block removed would have a major effect on us. We need to fully understand, that this also includes the bad as well as the good. They define who we are, a jigsaw with all the pieces in place. If we are to give any credence to the above statement, it becomes very easy to recognise the relevance. However much we would like it not to be. The abuse we have suffered plays its part, that loss is also felt fully. So how can that be true when everything surrounding that passage of time was so very painful? Rightly or wrongly it has become a part of you. Many years may have passed for some me included, where abuse was a constant part of our lives. The fact that we find the courage to change; to remove those blocks will almost defiantly create a hole that will need to be addressed.

We grieve for the loss of time within our lives; a feeling that is somewhat uncomfortable. Emotions are being removed healed one by one, emotions that seemed to have become part of our DNA. The kicker is that leaving anything behind us has an effect; it's a shift in time of which you have no control over. For many years of my life, healing involved the comfort of a support group. I was in a bubble of safety.

Unburdening all those issues that I had to carry alone for so many years; someone was now in place taking some of the weight from me. They helped me to fill the void that was being created, by the very act of being there. I came to rely on that comfort and never envisaged that at some point it would be removed. But the reality is that it was only ever going to be there for a short period in time. Once more we grieve the loss of that guiding hand in the right direction; the stark reality is that we now have to take control of the reins alone. It's true to say that from that moment on looking to the future, the blocks being put in place will be of your own making, but there will never be a stronger foundation.....

Section 17

Abusers that abuse

More than once to date I have received an email from an abuser and not the abused.

The question that must pop in to our heads is why? Why would someone of that ilk visit my web page? Is it not rubbing their nose in it? Are their reasons for being here pure?

After much pondering, I have decided to write this piece to those of you that have.

If you are here then maybe there is a way to terminate this continued devastation. Can I help you realise, see clearly the excessive damage and destruction you have caused to others. Can it even be repaired or does that avenue no longer exist for you? Can I highlight here that ultimate control is exercised by the use of self control? There are so many questions that I may never know the real answers to, without a monumental leap of faith on my part. As I sit here looking for the right words to explore this subject, I realise that it's a very big ask. I have only ever known one side of the coin. To try to come to some kind of understanding, will require me to look at things from the other side. Am I uncomfortable with that? You can bet your life I am.

Let's start with the statement I have heard used so many times – I was an abused child – I was abused within a relationship. We know this to be a statement of truth because of our own past experiences; abuse is out there in so many ways. But the argument we now find ourselves in creates a massive divide – not all who were abused abuse. There is an argument put forward that it's only the weak that walk that road that

they are not strong enough to overcome the adversity suffered. That calamitous event within their lives had left them with no choice. How do we answer that? Is it only the weak that are abused? In my own case that statement is so very far removed from the truth. It was a case of – the strong require firmer handling – likened to owning the fastest car – not a horse but a stallion – breaking that spirit was all the more rewarding – I was a challenge – it was all about the power.

I was a guest on a radio show some months back now (GH Radio Michigan) when a lady came in to the chat room to ask me a question. This lady had seen her mother abused terribly by her stepfather but it did not stop there. She herself was the victim of his abuse for many years. For years she felt like she was walking in the desert dying of thirst, without finding forgiveness for either herself or her abuser. Until the day she felt she could not continue on, without exercising some sort of payback. If I tell you now that this lady contacted me from prison, you can understand my sadness. It pained me to hear the route that she took. In the cold light of day she had purchased a gun, and seeking him out she took his life. This man had taken so much from her in her youth..... he had now also taken the rest of her life from her through her own actions.

She then asked me if she had done the right thing, my heartfelt reply was no not for her..... Whist I am unable to condone the taking of a life, I am also unable to condone or judge her either. So here I sit on the fence, intently feeling the splinters from both sides.

Wondering if during my own journey to recovery, was I only a hop skip and a jump away from that route also. Abuse costs life's in more than one way that comes to the mind easily.

Some years ago I was to meet a lady that would become my best friend; she herself had been in and out of Mental Health Care for many years. She had been a victim of sexual abuse from her Grandfather, then again later in life from physical abuse from her husband. Over the years I have known her she has grown so very much, I am so extremely proud of her. We have spent many a night burning the midnight oil. On one of those said occasions, she chose to tell me that through her own pain she herself had become an abuser. I am not talking here of sexual abuse but purely physical. Her partner became the enemy and the receiver of this said abuse. If we sit and think about that statement it's not rational, but at that point in her life she had not yet learnt to overcome her own demons. I am not going to sit here and divulge it all blow by blow, that is not the point of me mentioning this conversation. It's merely to say that this is something she regrets immensely. The ultimate cost to her was the loss of that relationship. She always makes a point of reading my blog posts, and I know that more than once she has relived every painful moment of her own life through doing so. This post will be no different as she faces down her own fears with regret. Today she should be extremely proud of herself. Change is possible she is a shining

example to that statement. Does she know that I have included her story here? You bet your life on it.

Coming to the end of this piece I feel myself asking if these words will ever make a difference. The answer to that question should go something like this – If you are brave enough to still be here reading, then hopefully you have already made the choice for yourself to change..... don't waste another minute.....

Section 18

The crutch we depend on

I'm in a bad way I have only just made it to the bathroom before throwing up; sitting there on my cold floor tiles I put my head between my knees just to keep upright. The room is spinning, rotating all around me like some never ending merry go round. I know that this is where I will sleep tonight, not trusting myself to be too far away from the bathroom. Its cold the house is in darkness and has never felt so empty. It's just me and my drunken stupor, along with my demons, which once again this evening I had attempted to drown. That night had started like any other. Just one drink it will take the edge off..... two would surely not hurt.... the third is to convince yourself that you are in control and not the bottle. You can stop at the drop of a hat, but it would be your decision. You did not need or want any advice, did you ask for it? Why can't they mind their own business? By the time you get to your fifth you know it's helping, the pain has receded somewhat. You know what you're doing it was just for tonight, tomorrow will bring a new day you will stop then. By this point if I'm honest the count is immaterial. I sit backwards and lean against the wall, a bad move, once more I retch without any joy.

My stomach is now completely empty, but it seems my system was still trying to rid me of the toxic elements. I then fall into a drink induced sleep, curled into a tight fetal position, hugging the child within me with all my might.

For some of you like me the above is an all too familiar situation, although for me it's now past tense. For others your crutch may be different. Drugs are also a path that I know has been walked down, through conversations between myself and others. In an effort to block out the pain we visit places of real danger. Is there a difference?

Although this was never a route I tried, I personal see none whatsoever. It's your comfort blanket no more no less. So how do we stop this rendition of Groundhog Day?

The sad fact is that for a time we can't, the scary part is that we really don't want to do so. We need the support of our crutch, whichever one we feel supports us the most. It's not easy to let go of the only thing you feel you have left to take you through the day.

You need this to be able to retreat when the world is just too much to take, a place where you are oblivious to all that is going on around you. You're told that you have to take some control of this off the wall behaviour, the argument is made that if you can go for days without this prop, well then you just don't need it. I can only speak for myself here, but those words were alien to me for so long. The problem is that it's not understood that during those days of abstaining, you have been fighting with everything you have in order to do just as they ask.

So how do we get to a place where we feel we are able to let go of that crutch, where we can once more control our urge to drink or take the pills to survive. I am not going to sit here and lie to you, because the point I am trying to make here will be lost. It's going to take a lot of hard work on your part; it will mean putting your trust in someone that in some manner or form replaces that misplaced security. Take one day at a time. Don't run before you can walk, go at your own pace not the one set for you. You are the one with complete knowledge of the rate you can move forward. Some days it will feel like the world is falling away from under you, but it's ok to feel that way. It's all part of the bigger picture where you grow in strength. Allowing yourself those days are going to be part of your recovery, and yes there will be days when you stumble or fall. Beating yourself up about it has no real purpose, remind yourself that while on this road to recovery, there was always going to be an exception. Keep walking forward towards that mountain, by the time you get there it will have already have become a hill. Change your mind set. Instead of rebuffing yourself for the bad days, praise yourself for the days that went well. It may seem that you are not progressing, but there will come a day when the scales become weighted in the other direction. The good days are outweighing the bad. You will be able to face the world once more, with nothing holding you there but gravity. Stand tall, stand proud, you alone have made this journey in the way and time frame that worked for you. There may still be some doubting Thomas's out there that are asking can I really do this? You need to believe it was never in question. Deep inside of you your soul was waiting to take flight once more, the only question that ever needed to be asked was regarding the time frame.....

Section 19

Seasonal depression

I am sitting here at my pc in the mix of the season about to arrive. I've been faced by the outward realisation, merely by the Christmas shoppers; the Christmas tree's arriving in the shops. The length of the cues we are forced to stand in becoming longer.

It's a happy time a time for rejoicing while mixing with those that you love. As it draws nearer there is an excitement that seems to bubble over from the masses around you, as they plan that perfect time. Which house will we be spending Christmas day at? What should you take as an addition to the menu? Let's compare notes so that Christmas presents are not duplicated. It's a time of love to all men where that silly argument recedes, ultimately reaching a place of no significance; you wonder how the hell you have let this continue on for so long without resolution. You imagine the smiles on the faces of the children, their excitement which becomes infectious. The parties you will be attending, that perfect outfit you just have to have.

The above statements are everything they should be, a happy time that should be shared by all as the time draws nearer. So why am I making an addition to my website with something that seems to have no place there? Am I not making statements about a place of happiness? Overwhelming, ultimately finding a place of peace within our hearts. The direct answer to that question is that for so many people out there it's not that harmonious. They are the reason I am here.

Today has been difficult for me personally, which for a time took me back to a place of not feeling in control of my emotions. My work is all about healing, growing in strength, and overcoming the odds. But it's true to say that even after recovery, at times the world around us makes it mark. This brings us back to the starting point above, along with the realisation that every day is not like Christmas or the spirit of. I sit here today knowing that tomorrow will be a better day. A mindset that truly took me so long to find, at this point in my life I look forward to the tomorrows, and the promise they may bring.

Let's return to Christmas and the reason I feel the need to add this piece to my website.

For so long for me Christmas was a living hell, a time of dread coming ever closer as the days passed by. I was expected to embrace the festive season the same way that everyone else did. What was wrong with me? Why am I dragging everyone down with my negative thoughts? Why did I feel the need to spoil everything? For days during that time I had been fighting the need to retreat, to somewhere that had never even heard of Christmas. The more I struggled with it the worst it seems to get, bah humbug springs to mind.

So why is it that people like me during that time, try to run as fast as possible in the other direction? If I were to reply for myself it's a time I feel deeply about. It was a period in which I had sat next to my mum's hospital bed for thirty days, whilst she was fighting for her life in intensive care. For so many people whose life's she touched, her loss was unbearable when her fight for life was not successful. So do I now sit here and blame that festive season for taking her from me? For so long the answer to that question would have been yes. I know I share that feeling with so many people, along with someone that is so

very close to me, as she herself struggles to come to terms with her own loss. I am so sure we are not the only two people that this sentiment can be related to. The story of loss may differ it could be loss of life, maybe it's a time where our abuser is more vividly remembered, because of the magnitude of happiness around us at that time. It could also be that Christmas is just like any other day spent in sadness, while everyone around you is touched by the wonder of it all. Whatever your reasons it amounts to the same thing, we feel we have no right to feel happiness.

To our minds Christmas had taken something so special from us or just reminds us of a dark place, not a reasonably thought but one firmly engraved into our very being. So what's to be happy about? This is where we need to really understand the term Seasonal Depression. If you are a sufferer of abuse either now or in the past and before your journey to recovery, the fact is you feel as if you don't deserve that happiness.

There is a cocktail of emotions already erupting from your very being, now let's throw Christmas into the mix..... resulting in my own irrational, and completely off the wall thought process at that time. I needed to carry the blame for everything negative going on around me. That the loss I had suffered during that time was in some manner shape or form my fault. This was ingrained deeply in my mind since childhood. The abuse was my fault; everything I touched around me broke. Times of happiness were something I could never share. I can almost see you out there looking puzzled, none of that makes any sense right? Never the less it was a stark reality. Happiness was something I'd learnt to dread. How could I even dare to think happy? If I did there would surely be a price to pay. Christmas was for others. For those of you out there reading this with a keen knowledge of my sentiments, these words are not falling on deaf ears.

The story for me has a happy ending, as I am without doubt that given time will be your stories end. You see its not Christmas that you dread it's the season of good will, allowing yourself to feel..... That's a big one. Happiness is out there just waiting to take you by the hand; it's not structured by the time of the year. Christmas just brings it closer to mind, merely because of the overload of emotions going on all around us at that time. It's not just Christmas that we need to reclaim, its every day that we awake with a storm cloud over our heads. Fight for the right to be happy – un-cloud your mind to unveil the truth, with clarity comes reality. Find your peace of mind, not one that's linked or dictated to you by the date on a calendar. I found that Holy Grail – I'm no exception to the rule. You will also find yours in a place where you can let go of that misplaced guilt. Christmas will then become for you a day to be shared in complete happiness.....

Section 20

We can run but we can never hide

Is it not easier to leave all those painful memories behind? The truth is that we don't, they are just one step behind us lurking. Just waiting for an opportunity to drag us back into the recess of our mind, where we have neatly stored those painful subjects under the heading of delete. The only real way to remove those memories and place them firmly in the trash is by shredding the file.....

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