

## Life After Abuse...

As I got older I used different coping mechanisms to try and escape the mental trauma. I worked 80-90 hour weeks, drank a lot and got myself into a lot of debt gambling and spending recklessly.

I don't think I ever really connected with people or made true friends. I could switch off my feelings easily. I have lived my life recklessly living in the moment without giving thought to what the future may hold

I lied more than I told the truth. I would lie so much about things that I would convince myself things actually happened that way. I have night terrors and struggle to sleep. I have flashbacks constantly; I normally end up swearing or making some other stupid noise when they happen. I suffer with PTSD, anxiety and depression as a direct result of childhood trauma.

I feel intense Shame at the things I did and were forced upon me.

I feel constant guilt for failing to protect Tim and for not being there when he needed me the most.

I feel stupid for believing their lies and can't understand why I was so gullible.

I feel anger towards both of my abusers but don't know how to express it.

I feel revulsion for what was done to me and what I did. I understand that there are people who are homosexual but I have never had those feelings. What I was forced to do was vile to me and when I have flashbacks or thoughts of those moments I feel physically sick, incredibly frightened and intense panic. It takes a long time to forget those and continue as normal.

I don't feel I have an identity. For a long time I existed by pretending to be someone I wasn't or to be the type of person people liked and along the way I feel I lost who I actually was.

I cannot stand people touching my throat. It brings feelings of fear and panic even if I touch it myself.

I would love to say that the abuse hasn't beaten me, but it would be a lie. I have learned to accept it wasn't my fault and that I was manipulated and groomed but some days I have to remind myself of this. I have learned to see the signs of when I am struggling and know to talk to my partner or seek help from professionals. I still have bad dreams and the flashbacks continue as they always have. I no longer rely on alcohol, I don't gamble and I am trying to be better with my finances. I am supported in this by my partner Sarah and I now consider the future more instead of living for the day. I have been promoted into a job I love doing, and have become successful. I have started to focus better and enjoy learning new skills. I live in a beautiful house, in an area I love to be, and I'm with someone I love more than I ever knew I could. Sarah supports me and has stuck by me through

some very trying times, times when others would have walked away. I feel loved and accepted by her family and I love them back.

I am unsure of how I feel about my own family. I have spent my life pretending that we were a perfect family. I am struggling to comprehend how my mother could do nothing. I no longer want any contact with my stepdad and I'm starting to feel the same about my mother. I get anxious when she messages or emails and wait for Sarah to read them first before I can bring myself to view them. I don't know why, I just dread opening them.

Martin has thrown himself into work, Katy pretends like nothing happened and Tim turns frequently to alcohol and cannabis. We have started talking about it and Tim seems to be on a quest for vengeance. He is tired of lying and wants to confront my mum. I have advised against it but if he chooses to go down that path then I will support him.

My abuse could have been stopped. There were signs from an early age. I understand things were different back then and if a child said in school now they would get the slipper for getting spellings wrong they would probably take more notice.

For Tim to be questioned about his abuse by a teacher who then does nothing more than send a letter to his abuser and enabler is hard for me to understand.

For me to tell a psychiatrist what was going on and for nothing else to happen, just reinforced Janis's control over us. No-one will believe you, no-one cares about you other than me.

I was reaching out for someone to help me, someone to just ask a few extra questions or to just probe that little bit further. But no one did and the people that were told did nothing.

I have hope that we live in different times now, that signs of abuse are recognised in children and I like to believe that people react more now than they did when I was growing up. I don't know if this is true or not. I hope it is.

My reason for coming here was to tell the story of my abuse in the hope that it benefits something, in the hope that no child is ever sent home with a letter to his abuser saying that he has broken his promise and told the secret. If anything I have said today helps in any way to change this then it's worthwhile.