

As a young child growing up in Sheffield I'm sure you are not supposed to be on first name terms with the nurses and doctors at Sheffield Children's Hospital! but to me this was normal and all I knew. I can't tell you how many times I was there for broken bones and serious injuries. I was so abused I thought the daily beatings were a normal part of growing up, I thought this was normal and what happened to every child, I didn't know any different!

For as far back as I can remember my mother was violent towards me. I was physically assaulted virtually every day of my childhood. If I got through a day without being hit to the floor or in pain from a slap or worse, then it was a good day. I thought it was normal to live the way I lived and to be punished the way I was punished.

The injuries I sustained from my mother's physical abuse were frequent and serious; burns, broken ribs, broken limbs etc. On my 11th birthday I was told to put both my hands on the kitchen table and she broke each finger with a hammer. I remember another time when she pressed a hot iron into my back. She told me she was punishing me for the things I'd done wrong! But I'd never done anything wrong! I think she used to get a kick out of being abusive to me. It felt like the more pain she could cause me, the happier she seemed to be.

Despite my regularly hospital visits due to all my injuries, my mother's violence was never uncovered because she was 'an expert liar' and as a young child I was too afraid to tell anyone the truth. She would have an excuse for every injury I sustained and made it sound true.

On one occasion, my mother told the nurses that I'd cracked my head open by riding my bike down the house steps! The truth was that she threw me down the steps and a bike on top of me, but I stayed silent because I didn't think anyone would believe me and I couldn't face being hurt even more.

When we had visitors to the house, she'd put on a loving mum act. She explained my bruises and broken limbs to family as me being clumsy. People believed her because she was a pillar of the community – she was well liked and very popular. No one could see behind the façade.

Why only my mum, I hear you asking yourselves? I never knew my biological father, I was told he left when I was born, and this resulted in my mother having a succession of boyfriends who were also abusive towards me.

For example; Growing up I had five different surnames! as my mother moved from relationship to relationship. All the men in my mother's life were the same – they all had alcohol problems and would physically assault my mother and me when they were drunk.

My mother blamed their behaviour on me and I would get an extra beating off her to punish me for what they'd done to her. If they smacked her, she would smack me. I was like her personal punching bag and I think she took out the frustrations of her life on me. As well as physical violence, I was also subjected to emotional abuse which made me feel worthless.

My mother told me her life was ruined the day I was born. She said that everything that had gone wrong in her life was my fault and that she wished she had killed me when I was a baby. The emotional abuse was cruel and constant, no child of any age wants to hear those words come out of your mother's mouth. If I wasn't being shouted and screamed at and called a mistake, then I was being ignored. I was never shown any love or affection ever.

Christmas is meant to be a magical time for children but for me, I hated it, it meant more emotional trauma and violence. My first memory, when I was around four or five years old, I came down Christmas morning so excited, but I was made to sit and watch my older sister unwrap her presents and then I was told I didn't have any presents to unwrap because I didn't deserve any. I was sent upstairs to spend Christmas Day alone in my room without any food. Another Christmas morning, my mother slammed my head in the fridge door, breaking my nose! Just the Christmas present I wanted!

However, aged 11, I was in hospital over Christmas, a nurse came in with a present for me, no one had ever bought me anything before! I opened it to find a LEGO set containing a Ship, a pirate and a palm tree. I built it in my hospital bed, she didn't have to do that, but it made my world.

As I returned back to school after Christmas, someone visited and talked to the whole school about child abuse! My first thought was what's child abuse? As I listened to the lady speak she was describing that what was happening to me shouldn't be happening! She told us about 'Childline' and that people were there to help!

Back then there wasn't mobile phones, I walked to the phone box the day after my 14th birthday, I was at my lowest point here as I had honestly considered taking my own life, I was mentally drained by the amount of abuse. I picked up the phone, dialled the number, a lady answered, and I place the receiver back down, call ended! I did this about four times before I got the courage to speak. I was so afraid that someone would see me, hear me talking and worst still tell my mum, I was beyond myself at this point what if she found out?

I finally spoke to a lady at ChildLine, I heard a reassuring adult voice who wasn't going to hurt me. I told her what my mother had done to me that day and she just listened to me and most importantly, she didn't call me a liar. I cried for about 20 minutes in that telephone box because for the first time in my life, I was told that what was happening to me was WRONG.

To be totally honest and I've been asked so many times, what happened next? I don't have the answer it's a total blank, I feel like my memory after that phone call was wiped, I think it was my body going into shock that someone had finally listened to me and took the time to tell me that everything was going to be okay. That lady will never know it, but if I hadn't spoken to her that day and she hadn't said the things she did, I wouldn't be here today.

I do however remember going to school and speaking to a teacher about what I wanted to do when I left school, I made the decision to join the Navy, this was my way of getting as far away from my mother as I possibly could, being on a submarine in the article circle still wasn't far enough! But it was better than being there with her.

My body is now covered in tattoos, I couldn't bare people asking me what all my scars were from, people don't tend to see the scars through the tattoos but unfortunately, they will always be there. On the 1st June 2003 I met an incredible girl who saw me for me, she ended up falling in love with me and a few years later became my wife. My life has been incredible since I met her, she has shown me so much kindness and she is so caring and gives the best cuddles, she once sat up with all night one night and I told her everything, it made us so close and we have been best friends ever since. In June 2008 we had a daughter and she has made my life complete.

I have tried so hard to block out my past but it's incredibly hard for my daughter, she knows a little bit of what I went through but I have no pictures of myself from when I was younger, it was the worst childhood ever! And I don't talk to her about it at all, so much different to how my wife's childhood was. I am however through my daughter able to see what a normal childhood is like, I am able to give her all the opportunities I never got, Christmas in our house is incredible, my wife is crazy we call her Mrs Christmas, she always spoils me it's sometimes overwhelming.

I hate to hear that child abuse is still happening today! It makes me feel physically sick, my only message for a child or young person going through what I went through is, please know that you're not alone. Talk to someone and get help