

Alice #38

My name is Alice, I am 10 years old I am on top of my neighbors roof with my best friend. We are playing games and feeling very adventurous. Suddenly I feel unwell and am overcome with pain. I am taken to hospital and they took out my appendix. Back in the day you stayed for 2 weeks - I actually thrived in hospital because I had regular meals.

My mother came to visit and the doctor said you can take her home. Her face went dead white because downstairs in the car was a man I didn't know and my father was drunk (not unusual). We had at least an hour's drive. Within 10 minutes dad was leaning into the back seat throwing punches at my mum and all I remember was screaming and crying and begging him to stop. The driver kept driving as if somehow this was normal.

Then he pulled up at the police station and marched dad in to the police sergeant who was supposed to keep him until he sobered up. However, instead the sergeant dropped him home and all hell broke loose.

The only thing that was unusual was that I had been to hospital.

My mother, brothers and sisters lived like that for the best part of 15 years. From age 10 to 50 I had PTSD with chronic anxiety. I was always scared of something or someone, and in my relationships I was grateful not to be hit. Just being devalued in some way didn't seem so bad by comparison.

As a child I always felt less than others. No confidence. Unworthy. I didn't turn to drink drugs or sex only because I was so fearful of everything. The pain was always there. From about 35 till now I found relief and hope in counselling and women's services. I gained confidence and I worked really hard to overcome my fears.

When I look back on how we lived as children it breaks my heart that that was how it was for me and my siblings, but we all grew into strong independent successful adults and I think it was because of each other - it wasn't monkey see monkey do. I worry when people label survivors and say that patterns are repeated, but we are not our parents and we are not completely controlled by our genes. We can all change; we can all learn to make better choices. I think I healed, yet I feel sad that it is still all around me, but at least I challenge things now if I see it, hear it, I speak up and each time a little louder.
