



You Are Not Alone

Mental Health Week 2017



Healthscope
HOSPITALS

Contents

You alone can do it But you can't do it alone	3
Who was that nurse? A patient's story of thanks	7
Teardrop	8
A Profound Responsibility	9
The fight against temptations in life	10
You are not alone	12
Story of being helped by peers	14
For Suzanne	15
Help with Turning my Life Around	18
The Nest	20
Teddy	21
Cocoon	22
Who am I?	24
All in the same boat	25
We are not alone	27
A letter to myself	36

You alone can do it But you can't do it alone

Recognising you need help and asking are two different things...

Despite a 22 year history of several mental health diagnoses* and with underpinning symptomatology being there many years before I continue to struggle with issues surrounding acceptance and denial, guilt and shame, failure and self-value.

The greater aspect of my treatment was repeated invasive strategies and prescription medication. That being several dozen daily medications and a calculated 483 occasions of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) over a consecutive 10 year period under the instruction of the one psychiatrist. Typically the treatments were conducted with 2-3 attempts to electrically induce seizure activity, equating to approximately 1,000 electrical shocks to my brain.

This resulted in 1,679 days admission over the 10 years. (3,650 days)

This represents 4½ years in hospital.

Prior to these events, I had been admitted to three other hospitals of various geographical locations, where these aspects of psychiatric management were repeatedly attempted over 12 years.

Every psychiatrist was informed of prior treatment strategies and their effectiveness. Yet it persisted despite reported poor response to medication and only moderate responses to ECT.

Placing faith and confidence in the psychiatrists' professionalism I assumed this was the options to best manage my illnesses. I was not placed under an involuntary treatment order (ITO), so consent was enacted.

However, under the following circumstances my capacity for giving informed consent was not appropriate. At the later facility, the consent form was regularly presented to me when lying flat on my back, with organ monitoring leads on my chest and abdomen, blood pressure cuff on, toes exposed, cannula ready to be inserted, awaiting the psychiatrist to position the electrodes on my head. The form did not disclose all evidence of the side effects of treatment.

Illness and treatment had resulted in the prolonged loss of many societal roles to which I attached my identity and measured my self-worth.

I no longer had the capacity:

- To sustain my marriage and to be a wife
- To be a mother, with as an infant my son being taken from my care
- To sustain my career and employment despite having three university/tertiary qualifications
- To acquire the "great Australian dream" of home ownership
- To self commute as I was required to surrender my licence
- To live the independent and fulfilled lifestyle which was my ambition

Now 45 years of life and its' emotionally attached memories and experiences were taken from me. I was a hollow, exposed shell, without meaning, purpose or aspirations.

However, although I struggle on a daily basis to adhere to personal hygiene, (showering, dressing, combing hair, brushing teeth) daily living tasks (get out of bed, go outside to mail-box, put out wheelie bin, food preparation, open blinds/curtains) to integrate into society (community participation to complete chores, social, leisure, recreational pursuits) and to challenge distorted thoughts and cognitions I need to un-mask my inner securities and allow for the fact that: **I am not alone** on my journey of life.

*Major Depression with suicidal & self-harming behaviours, rapid cycling bi-polar affective disorder, schizo-affective disorder, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder complicated by diagnosis of epilepsy, hypo-thyroidism, obstructive sleep apnoea, chronic rheumatoid pain

With **support** I have now:

- Had the courage to seek opinions and engage other psychiatrists whose approach is much more inclusive, challenging and encouraging
- Completed numerous classes and programs addressing the cognitive aspects of illness
- Participate in regular counselling sessions with a psychologist
- The capacity to educate myself and to make informed decisions empowering me to cease some treatment options
- Scheduled maintenance TMS therapy
- Formed on-going/monitoring relationships with hospital nursing and allied health professionals
- Recognised the benefit of a "lifeline" counsellors
- Receive financial support by DSP (Disability Support Pension)
- Established fortnightly appointments with my GP who co-ordinates my holistic treatment plan – psychiatrist, mental health plan, cardiologist, endocrinologist, neurologist, sleep physician, rheumatologist
- My medication management is well supported by way of having my pharmacy assemble blister packs and give knowledgeable advice
- Although over the duration of my illnesses I have not established any significant friendships since 1983, I treasure those who have supported me long term
- A new relationship partner
- Trying to establish a relationship with my now adult aged son
- Access to paid community transport services
- Been determined eligible to live 7-10 days twice a month in 24 hour short term supported accommodation
- The remainder I live in the community enhanced by the employment of 1:1 support worker 2 days per week
- Access twice weekly to participate in full day activity support program
- To enhance my daily support/care needs with the appointment of a case manager I am eligible for the services of the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme)

During the experience of acute episodes I resent that I require so much assistance to live daily...

...but from my supports I have a tremendous amount to be grateful for...

Especially my Mum and Dad

Well being won't change the past but with support I hope it will increase the actions of today

*Major Depression with suicidal & self-harming behaviours, rapid cycling bi-polar affective disorder, schizo-affective disorder, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder complicated by diagnosis of epilepsy, hypo-thyroidism, obstructive sleep apnoea, chronic rheumatoid pain



The night is long
Sleep elusive
The alarm rings
The body tries to rise
Half way up with
Apollo strength
But the 'velero' holds
me still
Down again
That 'safe' environment
of bed



Sometimes having
coffee with your best
friend, is all the therapy
you need.



Who was that nurse?

A patient's story of thanks

When I come to the clinic, I often experience episodes of dissociation and regression due to childhood trauma.

During this particular admission, I became increasingly distressed one evening, as my mind turned to conflicts with my family of origin. As I became more and more upset, my thoughts and emotions spiralled out of control and eventually I found myself on the floor of the bathroom.

I dissociated and experienced life from the eyes of a younger part of myself, so the next part of the story is written from Little Madeline's* point of view. She is five years old:

I am all alone and there is no one to help me.
I am in a big scary house and I don't like it here.
I am in my room looking at the brown carpet.
I don't like the brown carpet. I want to ask for help but no one will come, and if I tell them I am scared and upset, I might get into trouble.
So I sit here and rock myself and I don't look up.
But I am crying lots now, so Big Madeline says to press the big red button for emergencies. I look at the button but I am too scared to press it coz I don't want to make the nurses mad. I might get into more trouble.

Eventually I hit the red button and I close my eyes really really tight in case the person that comes is scary and will be mean to me.

A nurse lady comes. She asks me stuff but I can't talk to her or look at her because I am so scared. I am so so so so scared.

Then she goes away and then another nurse lady comes. This lady sits next to me and I like her voice. She rubs my back and I like that. It makes me better. I tell her about the carpet and how I am scared. I ask if I can go and live at her house. She says no but she is still nice to me. She tells me that we are in a hospital and shows me how the floor is not carpet. It is made of pink tiles. She tells me that I don't have to stay in the bad house and how I can come to bed now.

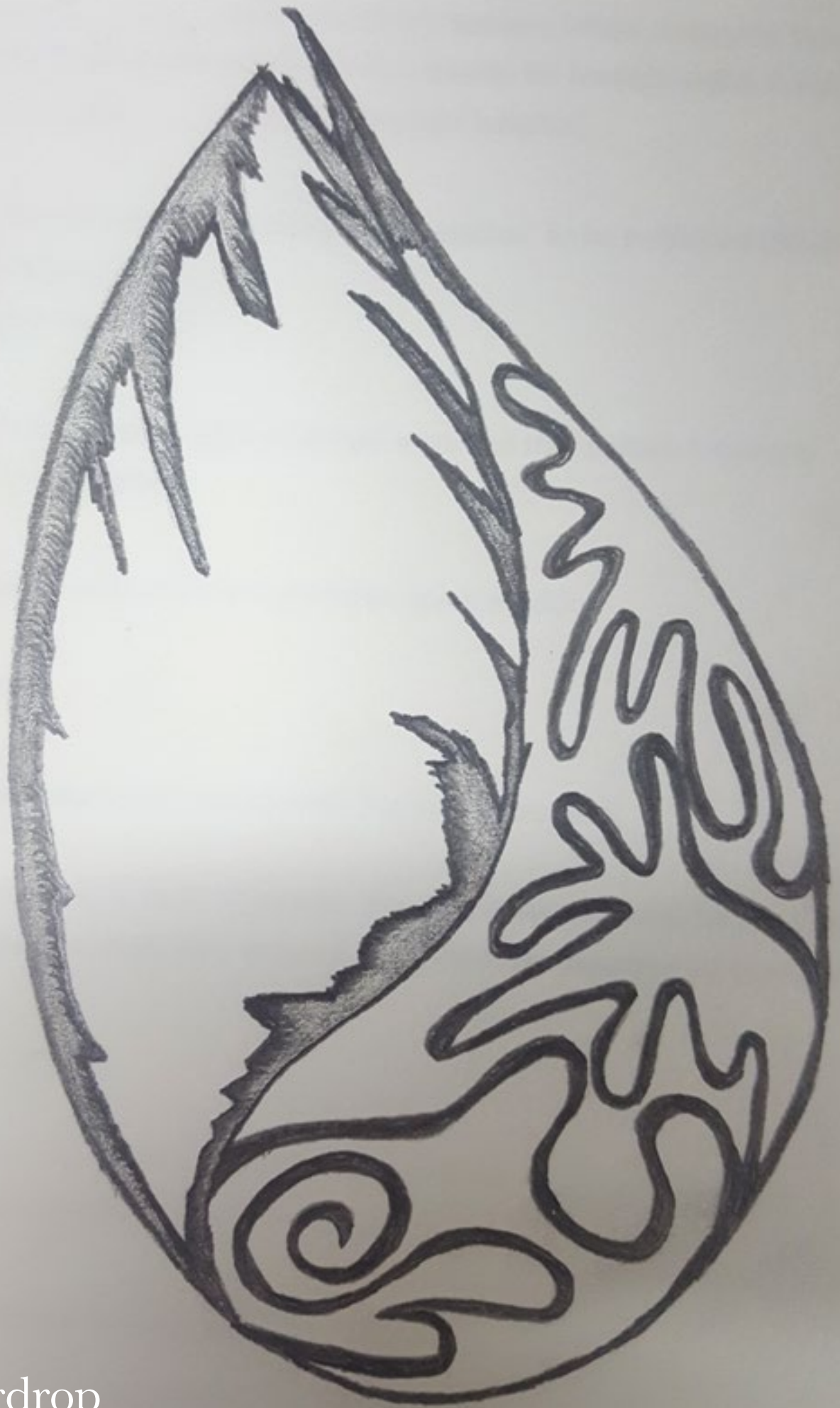
She takes me to bed and talks to me about my cats and chickens. Then she leaves but that is okay because I know I am in hospital now and my doctor will see me in the morning. Later there is another lady nurse who comes in the dark and gives me medicine. I like that nurse lady too.

I have written this story from Little Madeline's point of view so that it will be obvious to all how powerful the simple nursing actions were that evening. To be spoken to gently and kindly, to be understood, to be spent time with so patiently, and most of all to be soothed by a kind hand on my back... These were the real medicines given.

I have dissociated like this many times in hospitals. Sometimes my behaviour has been misunderstood and I have been dismissed or chastised for what looks like childish behaviour. However, when nurses interpret my behaviour through a trauma lens, therapeutic magic can happen. The nurses who helped me on this night did not simply de-escalate my distress, they helped to rewire the consciousness of my five-year-old self so that she would know that the trauma has passed and, more importantly, that she can be reached and helped by people.

That one nurse in particular led me out of the most terrifying of places in my mind, and back into the safety of the present moment and my warm bed.

I have to say thank you, to whoever those nurses were. I know nurses do countless things every day which are so healing and important, but these little moments often go unacknowledged. So this story is to remind you all how wonderful and needed you are. You help me to slowly heal the hole in my heart that is attachment trauma.



Teardrop

A Profound Responsibility

Year ago when I first became unwell, I was diagnosed with schizophrenia – I was told that there was something wrong with my brain and that medication would fix it. I was told I would have to be on those meds for the rest of my life, most likely.

During my intense breakdown, I drew a lot of artwork which depicted my confusion and pre-occupations, and a story started to emerge – a story that spoke not of errant neurochemicals, but of trauma.

My trauma is subtle – it is not the “capital T” trauma of abuse or assault. It is the low-level, chronic trauma that comes from hiding my true self and repressing my feelings for a lifetime. The tension this created in my mind, body and soul was unbearable and led to a string of addictions and generalized misery, until eventually a “healing crisis” occurred, also known as psychosis.

Thus began a long journey of seeking help from others. I became so incapacitated that I could hardly hold a conversation, let alone work or do the household chores. I needed help, such as the help that was given to me by my wonderful husband who had to live with me through countless crises and episodes of depression and anxiety. Or the help given by the Victoria Clinic and all of their staff when I needed a refuge – which often happened. Or the help given from peer support groups, who made me feel not so alone and broken.

Then there was the help of a most profound kind, given by the therapists who became the attachment figures that I so desperately needed to facilitate healing. Over the span of 7 years, I have seen many therapists and doctors, but three of them really stand out. Firstly, my trauma psychologist, who I saw weekly for 18 months, and have been seeing on and off ever since. Secondly, Dr Aizenstros who first admitted me at The Victoria Clinic, and who really helped me to address my attachment trauma. And thirdly, my current doctor, who has supported all my recovery goals, including helping me come off all medications.

These three people have all stood in as parental figures in my life. They have taken on what I call the “profound responsibility” for caring for my wounded, inner child.

That child in me was so wounded with shame that my behaviour was frequently challenging and I often directed my anger and insecurities at these people who cared, even as I deliberately sought to “prove” they didn’t care!

But they all stuck with me and showed in many, many tiny ways that they care; like the time my doctor loaned me his giant umbrella to go to an appointment in the pouring rain; like the hundreds of times I called my psychologist up on the weekend or after-hours, and she was there for me with some comforting words. Or the many times my doctor gently suggested a hospital admission because he could see I was falling apart, but I was too proud to ask for it.

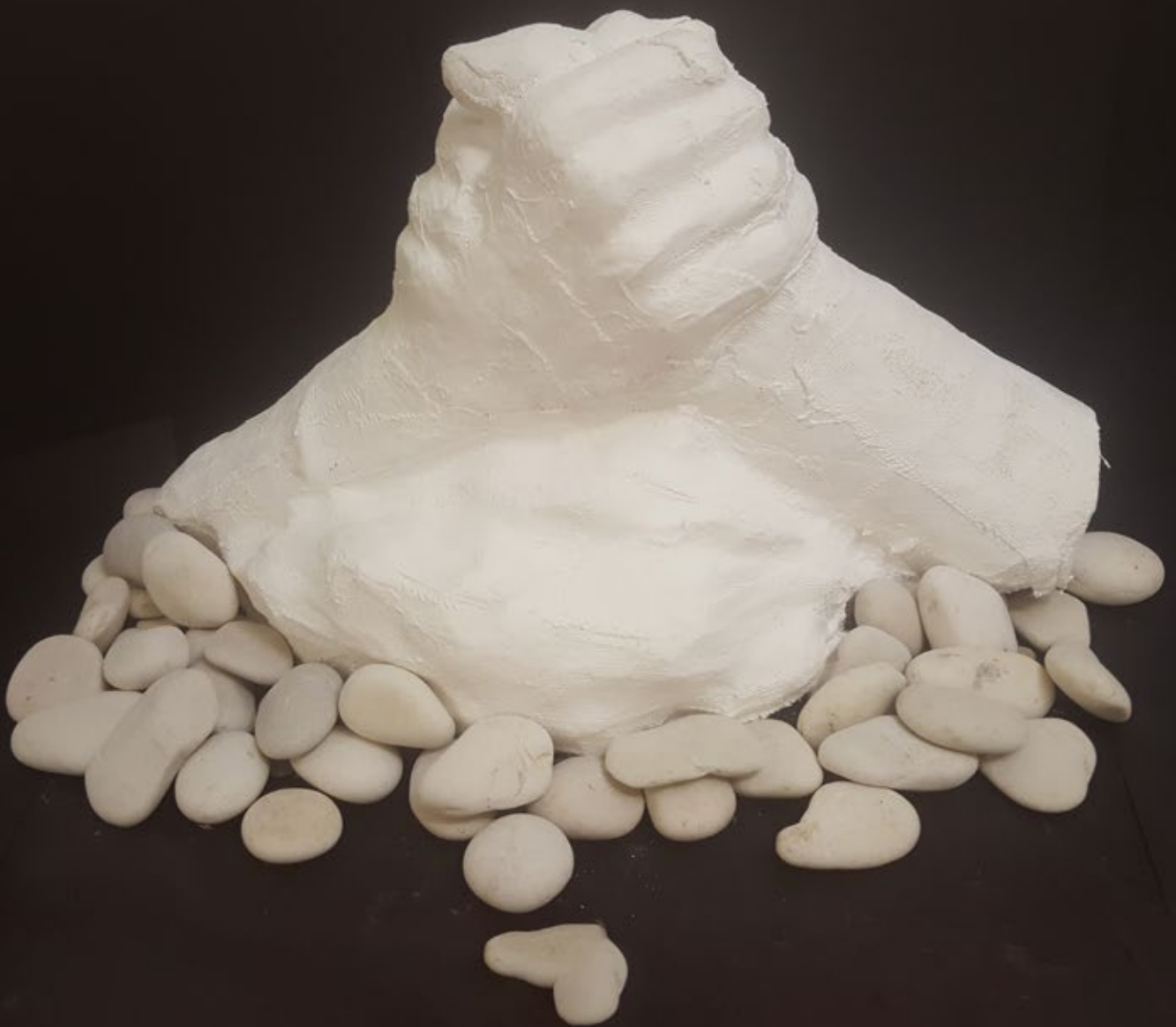
Healing from attachment trauma requires people who are “in it for the long haul” because otherwise you can feel utterly abandoned and again the wound opens up. People like me have to learn to trust, and this takes a lot of time because deep down, we may feel unlovable and unworthy. I know that is how I felt. But gradually, these three people unraveled those beliefs; their voices became the internalized voices in my head that support me, validate me and cheer me on. That is a priceless gift and I thank them all from the bottom of my heart.



The fight against temptations in life

The fish represent humans fighting against the waves that are our everyday battles with anxiety and depression.





You are not alone

Sometimes people have good days and bad days but only those who suffer with depression know how more noticeable these days present themselves.

Bad days can start with moments, turn into a day, mood can grow and last a week.

Molded from a small low to an all about face.

It slaps you in the dark, makes you question YOU!

"Why do you deserve happiness?" This mood takes you away from the outside, 'the normal,' the everyday little things you enjoyed: You knew.

When I can't see past these moments I call you.

You're busy, you're working back to back all day.

You're receptionist takes a message and tells me you're seeing another. Another person like just like me. Someone struggling with their own moments, their rambling moments; their own turmoil called depression.

Moments pass I still feel this way, thoughts darken thoughts engulf me take the positive away from me. By now I should phone a friend just the comfort of someone familiar. I just need a voice to hear "...that it's going to be o.k." I feel that I'd worry them. I'd distress them, interrupt them at work. I didn't deserve to let someone else know my deep down secret.

I put on a brave face. I can fool them. Pretend to them I'm o.k.
But only you know that when I make this call. That I am not feeling safe.
I need you to know.

I cry and cry and await your reply... minutes go by and by.
Then you call I feel so guilty that I've bothered you.
By now I can't see sense in my feelings.

You tell me I can come in and stay.

You listen to me when I'm here.

Listened to each and everything that has ever happened to me.

My trauma, my nightmares that come and go.

This darkness I'm going through has no invitation.

It stays, lingers; takes hold of me.

You pull a seat closer. Take notes and determine where I am at.

Each day you visit and talk to me. I feel safe knowing I am here.
I've made the decision to call.

I feel better and once again see something to look forward to.



175



there was someone who was miserable, and down,
Her mind was in a complete muddle,
rather dreadful in some ways
thought,
They weighed her down dreadfully,
hurriedly
It was a waste of time
awful,
to the whole
most annoying at times!
how topsy-turvy I am!"
now she was wondering what was happening,
it was not easy to swim in clothes.
"What is the matter with me?" she wondered. "I make
up my mind to be so good and helpful and everything—
and then I go and do just the opposite! I lose my temper,
sigh. He was used to her
troubles by now. She was always getting into some
difficulty or bother!
I want to talk to you. It's very important,"
"Can't it wait?" "I want to talk
to you where we can't be overheard."
"All right,"
"Come into the garden,"
"I'll come and hear this
terribly important thing."
He had discovered it when he
was inventing something else, and had found
you have got the courage to see your own
faults, and that is the first step to curing them. Don't
worry too much. You may get back all you have lost if
only you are sensible."
but you do
make things as hard for yourself as possible, don't you?"
"I didn't like not being told about that
she didn't like it very much.
That's why I'm giving
you this chance of telling me, so that I can help you
you might find it difficult!
there is a lot you have to learn,
You probably tried hardest to be you,
she puzzled to see it.
Still, she managed somehow,
to forget and forgive easily,
to begin all over again and find some way
But she had never before met anyone
Who loved her better than anything on earth.

CHAPTER XXVI

HAPPY ENDING

every child should be helped with his or her faults
—and how could anyone be helped if their faults were
not known?
to every child had come a great lesson.
Something had changed
I'm mending
She was rarely afraid of anything or anyone.
you're not making yourself miserable he said.
"I want to ask your advice about something,
"I'd like it now,
I want to get on with my job.
Good gracious—that was a person changing!
Isn't it beautiful?"
It's a nice feeling."
"You really feel part of it, and you know that
what you are and do really matters
Anyway, I'm just the same girl now as I was then,
So it is a complete mystery."
She began to play the piano again, a happier tune.
"You simply can't forget for one moment that you
are one of those grand, marvellous, and altogether
wonderful beings

Story of being helped by peers

I was feeling so broken, so lost. I had had a complete breakdown and been diagnosed with schizophrenia. I was hearing voices almost constantly and was highly agitated and restless. I did not like to go out in public because people could see I was sick and they were afraid of me too. So I hid in my house, ashamed, embarrassed, not feeling fit for human society.

It was a dark period in my life so I don't remember where I even heard about the support group for hearing voices. But somehow I did. And somehow I went along. I remember the huge effort it took to even leave the house. The voices tried to make me ashamed of what I was wearing and how I looked. They laughed at me as I walked. They said, "She is crazy, she is ill".

When I finally got to the local library and found my way to the group room, I just wanted to turn around and leave. But I was desperate too, deeply wanting to connect to people and perhaps hear some words of hope and kindness.

I was peering tentatively through the glass panel into the group room when the facilitator saw me and beamed a big smile. She waved me inside. I went in, drawn magnetically by her warmth.

Her name was Janet. I looked into her lovely, smiling face and knew that I was safe with her. I wasn't so sure about the other people... But I took my seat in the circle and did a good job of staring intently at the carpet for the next hour. When it came time to share my story, I took a "pass". Just breathing, just being there, was hard enough.

Janet took me under her wing. She gave me her personal mobile number at the end of that group. I remember thinking, wow... She really cares. She just gave so freely, without the normal restrictions that helping professionals have. Over time I learnt her story... How she too had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and how she had spent many years heavily medicated and had felt "written off by the system". But somehow she had defied the gloomy prognosis and had made it to a certain level of recovery which meant she could work and participate in life. Seeing her vitality, her passion, her optimism... I wondered... Maybe there was hope for me too?

Janet was a peer worker, some one with the live experience who became a mentor for many people. She took such a personal interest in me, finding out what I liked to do and what my talents and strengths were. And it wasn't special treatment. I saw that Janet gave this attention to all people who needed it. Many of these people had been living with mental health difficulties for years and had very little support or cause for hope. Janet hoped for everyone. She believed

deeply that people could recover. And sometimes, her tenacious belief is what pulled people out of the darkness.

I was one of those people. In clinical services, I felt that people saw me as a diagnosis and a bunch of problems. But with Janet, I was seen as a whole person, just someone who was struggling with life but who would make it out the other side.

I persevered with those groups, mainly going every week because I wanted to see Janet, but also learning that being with a group of people who had experienced similar problems was very relieving and helpful. They accepted me, that was the main thing. I could turn up unkept, shaking, my head full of voices, and it didn't matter. I was a human being, precious and valuable just because I existed.

Janet went on to become a mentor in work as well as life, as she helped me start volunteering and then later get a paid position as a peer worker myself. Through the changing dynamics of our relationship, she always was my friend too. She always cared. You can't fake that, and it is so priceless. Janet was a master of "talking me up", telling me how well I was doing or reminding me how far I had come.

Janet was one of the few people who really saw the wounded aspects of my self, and who appreciated and validated my inner child and the story she told.

We all need a Janet in our lives.



For Suzanne

"You came to the aid of my heart when it couldn't function anymore and put it somewhere safe...
Until I could return to myself..."

To you I know I will be forever grateful"



clear away violent resentment
clear the clouds that cover
the observing mind, be cement then
crumble to dust to float in the breeze
turn ghosts into ancestors and you
will be freed
reparation ripples through
your deepest waters, tears, blood
blood of recognition, taste in your
throat this rising flood.

"Emotions must first be given the right to assert themselves
in 'a definite field',
... In which
EVERYTHING THAT IS HIDDEN can reveal itself"



Help with Turning my Life Around

Thank you for reading my story which is about how I have been helped with turning my life around. There are three groups of people who have helped me to do this. Firstly, my family and friends; secondly my colleagues; and thirdly, my medical team of professionals.

When I graduated from university with a Bachelor with Honours in Colour Chemistry I was delighted to be offered my first job with a paint company. My father was so proud of me because his brother and father had also worked for this company.

After 15 years of working my way towards the glass ceiling as the only young woman in an all male environment, I became disillusioned and unwell and my life came crashing down around me. I had been so single minded and had lost what seemed like everything. What followed was 20 years of illness.

I cannot and do not wish to burden you with the pain and the heartache which my family and friends suffered as a result. Of course it has been hard for all of us but I can say that they walked that long path with me and have given me so much support along the way.

As a child I had always wanted to be a doctor so that I could use my fascination with science and the body, to help people. Sadly my grades didn't quite stack up then, but what I have been able to achieve in the past 7 years has been very rewarding.

With the help of my family and friends I have had the opportunity to gain a different purpose in my life, a much more balanced purpose. An opportunity which can seem impossible to obtain with a mental illness. We raised thousands of dollars to help people with this illness, I have studied and passed a Graduate Diploma in Community Services and I have been nominated to sit on committees and boards of not-for-profit organisations.

Now, as a volunteer Consumer Consultant and Peer Worker, there is a deeper level of meaning to my life. Having the privilege to work alongside people, as an equal and

having a real understanding of their pain and suffering can be so hard yet so rewarding. At last I feel that sometimes I can actually help people, just like I had hoped to as a little girl. Without the trust, dedication and patience of my colleagues I wouldn't have been given this opportunity.

The other day I was told by my psychiatrist that the illness is in remission. Also he has been considering the list of medications which have played havoc with my body over that time. After weighing up the costs versus the benefits he has decided to take me off one medication and he has plans to slowly reduce others where the benefits outweigh the costs.

One last point, with helping me turn my life around, I have always been dismayed by the way that the various doctors work separately, when we know that the mind and body are inseparable. I feel very lucky that I have at last found a psychiatrist who writes to doctors of other disciplines and listens to their opinions. I have finally found a team of professionals who work together to take care of me, sharing their care of me. This is something I had honestly given up the hope of ever achieving.

So, in conclusion, my life has turned around to be much more balanced and meaningful. I feel as though 'we' have done this, my family and friends, my colleagues, my medical team of professionals and me. It's taken a very long time and it continues to challenge us everyday. But with everybody's help, we'll keep trying.

I hope you enjoyed my story.



"CRACK THE CODE"



The Nest

I am a nest, beautiful, fragile, hardworking...

A fragile structure that has the strength to support family.

Life lived with mental illness is difficult.

Without support I could not manage.

The study roots of the tree depict the clinic and those professionals who have helped me with their wisdom.

The strong trunk, weathered from the environment, represent my art therapy group.

Although twisted they remain strong and supportive.

I am grateful to those incredible people in my life, without them I would fall.

Teddy

My dear, dear Teddy, my darling boy. When I look at your picture, my throat still constricts. I miss you every day when I step out into the fresh air to get my take-away coffee and stroll through the streets. You are no longer with me.

I remember so clearly the first time I saw you. Your smile was so happy and innocent; a confident grin mixed with hope: “Are you going to be my new family?” How could I say no, although you were scrawny, your coat in poor condition and your nose scabby. But I will never forget his smile.

“What is his name?” I asked the person at the desk.

“Teddy.”

I was now adopting a rescue dog from the RSPCA and as soon as I had filled out the forms and bought a bed, bowls and food, we were on our way home.

When we arrived home, his ears were flat and his tail between his legs. I knew how he felt because many of my days were spent in the human equivalent of the RSPCA - even driving up to the RSPCA had me in a cold sweat.

It took a few weeks but with good food and many hugs, he came out of his shell and I thought he would be ready for a short walk – but would I?

I was crippled by anxiety at the thought of leaving the house on my own but now I had Teddy. We walked around the corner to the café and I tied him to a street sign while I bought my morning heart-starter. When I came back to Teddy, someone was patting him.

“What type of dog is he?”

“A heeler kelpie”

“I’ve never seen one that colour, I’m from the country and we always had these dogs.”

“He’s a rescue dog.”

“Well, he looks like he’s landed on his feet.”

“Bye, have a great day!”

“You too!”

And so began the first of many doggy conversations.

Teddy was growing into a very handsome dog. We was a red kelpie with a few white, speckly markings, perky kelpie ears, delicate kelpie legs, and of course, the smile.

We grew in confidence together and I could walk symptom-free with Teddy before I knew it. Over the years we became part of the neighbourhood and he and I enjoyed meeting the other dogs we knew each morning. He knew to trot across the road looking at me first and he would wait patiently if I went into a shop. His expression however was always a bit desperate; “Will you be coming back?” Am I going back to the RSPCA today?” No buddy, of course not. What would I do without my mate?

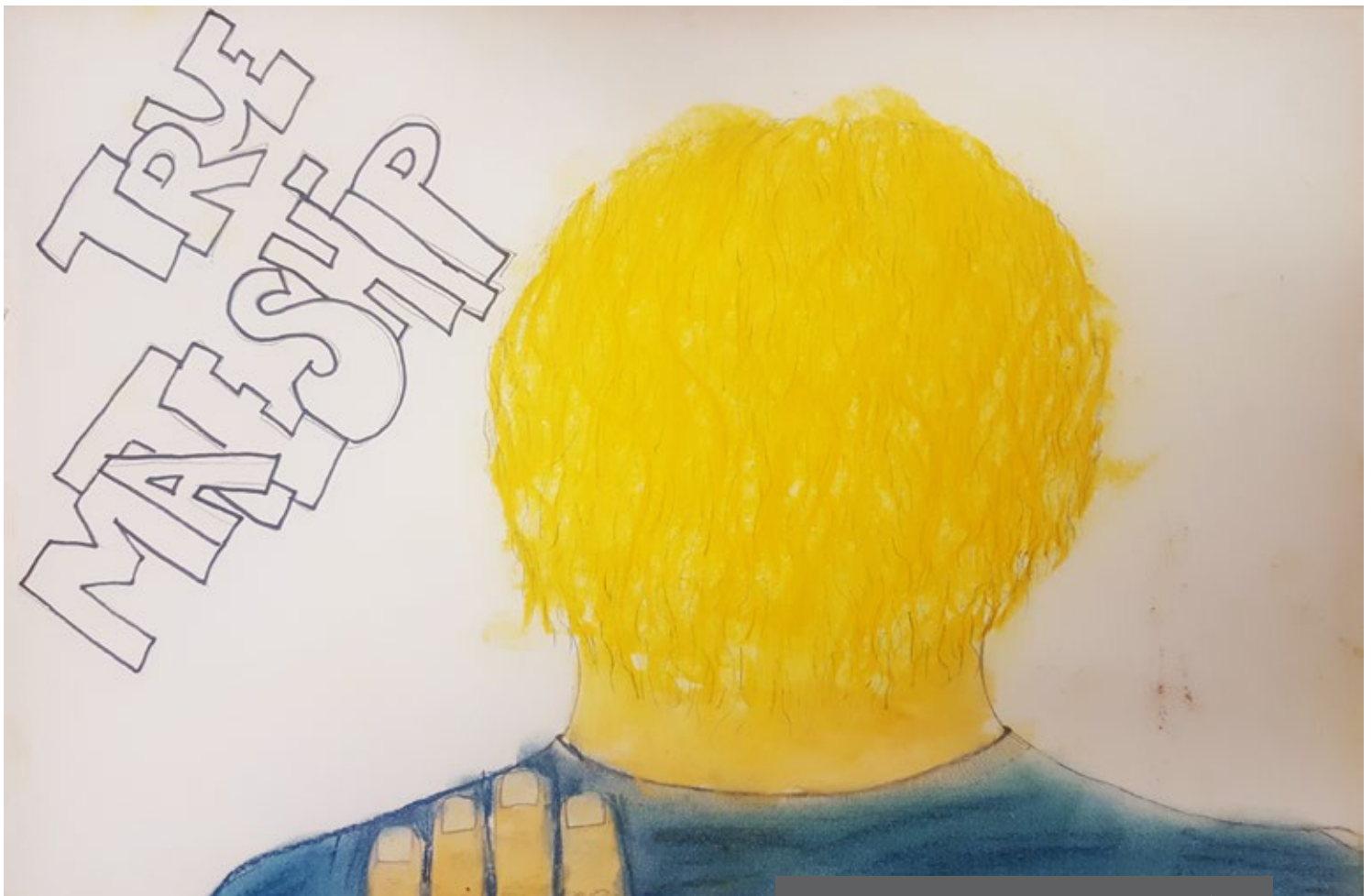
When we were nearly home, he would always roll over for a tummy rub. Rain, hail or shine. After a fairly long time, I would lead him through the gate and as I removed his leash, I always bent down to kiss him on the top of his head and smell his fresh, earthy scent. I can still smell it now. He would always settle outside in his hole in the garden, in his kennel, or on the doormat. I would go inside until I thought to go out and pat him again. Our days were of a gentle rhythm and we were always at least mentally together.

Nothing lasts forever and Teddy was not young when I adopted him. He became slower and people started to say, “What a lovely old dog!” He still wanted a tummy rub at the end of the walk but his hind leg became wonky, he started to leak (a lot) and he became very anxious and barked incessantly due to dementia.

We had been mates for five short years. When it was time for my dearest Teddy to go, the vet understood immediately and as he lay on the rug with his head on my lap, it was quick and still. I will grieve for a long time. I loved him truly and even though I may get another dog when the time is right, I will never forget my marvelous companion. He was my pet therapist and I cared for him so he could live without fear. I understand even more fully now the primal bond between man and dog and a friendship without words can be deep and true.

Cocoon





Who Am I?

I AM NOT ALONE

As a South Korean adoptee adopted by Irish parents who lived in Perth, WA at 5 months old, I have struggled with feelings of loss, abandonment, separation and rejection. At the age of 23, I am now accepting and loving who I am, I love my adoptive family who are the ones who also adopted my brother from Korea when I was 3 years old. Brought up in quite a privileged school, I took things for granted yet felt a hole in my side as I yearned for my birthparents, I tried to fill it with drugs, ICE, dangerous behaviours while struggling with underlying issues and mental health. It has taken years to address them with many psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, detoxes and rehabs but I am now grateful for everything that has happened to me because now I love myself as a clean, beautiful, intelligent and capable woman and Mother to my beautiful 4 and a half year old daughter and love my parents like they're my biological ones because they are the best and I deserve to be happy as everyone else in this world does.



All in the same boat





"We are not alone"

He sat across the room from me - his eyes alert, intense
His advice came from authority - yet made so little sense

"You've never found your voice" he claimed it's alluded you till yet
I bristled, shuffled both my feet - denial firmly set

I'm a trainer, I'm a lecturer, I've been a key note speaker
Why is it you see my voice seemingly a weakness?

He paused, as was his right - took due professional time
I never did imply, he claimed - your silence was a crime.

You've talked to me of family - of hours spent alone
You watched your mother sleep all day - she'd never really known
How you'd yearned to feel her presence, watch you play your sport
'She'll come and bring me luck!' - superstitiously - you thought.

In short you were the parent - felt guilty as you failed
like floating on an ocean, ill-equipped to sail.

You yearned to cry out from your heart - shake and rouse her sleep
"I have feelings, I am scared Mum"... her silence cutting deep.
Sadly you did not succeed, yet held to childish hope
Instinctively you knew her life was slipping down a slope.

You searched in vain for safety - security - a place
To laugh, to dance, allow a joke - enlighten up the "space".
It came to you in romance - till reality set in
Would that refuge soon return - sense it deep within?.....

My back I straightened in my chair, I choked for just one word
His insight left me speechless - struck that very chord.
I'd escaped life in a substance, relief had filled my veins
Yet I always ... always needed more, those cravings causing pain.

It soon became a way to cope - a chaos set within
Little did I see back then, my own line wearing thin.
The drug had overtook me, - with "IT" I had to cope
With loss, the grief and loneliness, in truth I'd lost my hope.

So now it's time to claim my voice, speak it loud and clear
Yes I've felt that shame, that guilt and dealt with all that fear.
I'll dare where I'm supported, I'll make each small advance
I'll be assertive - seize the day, take a risk, a chance.

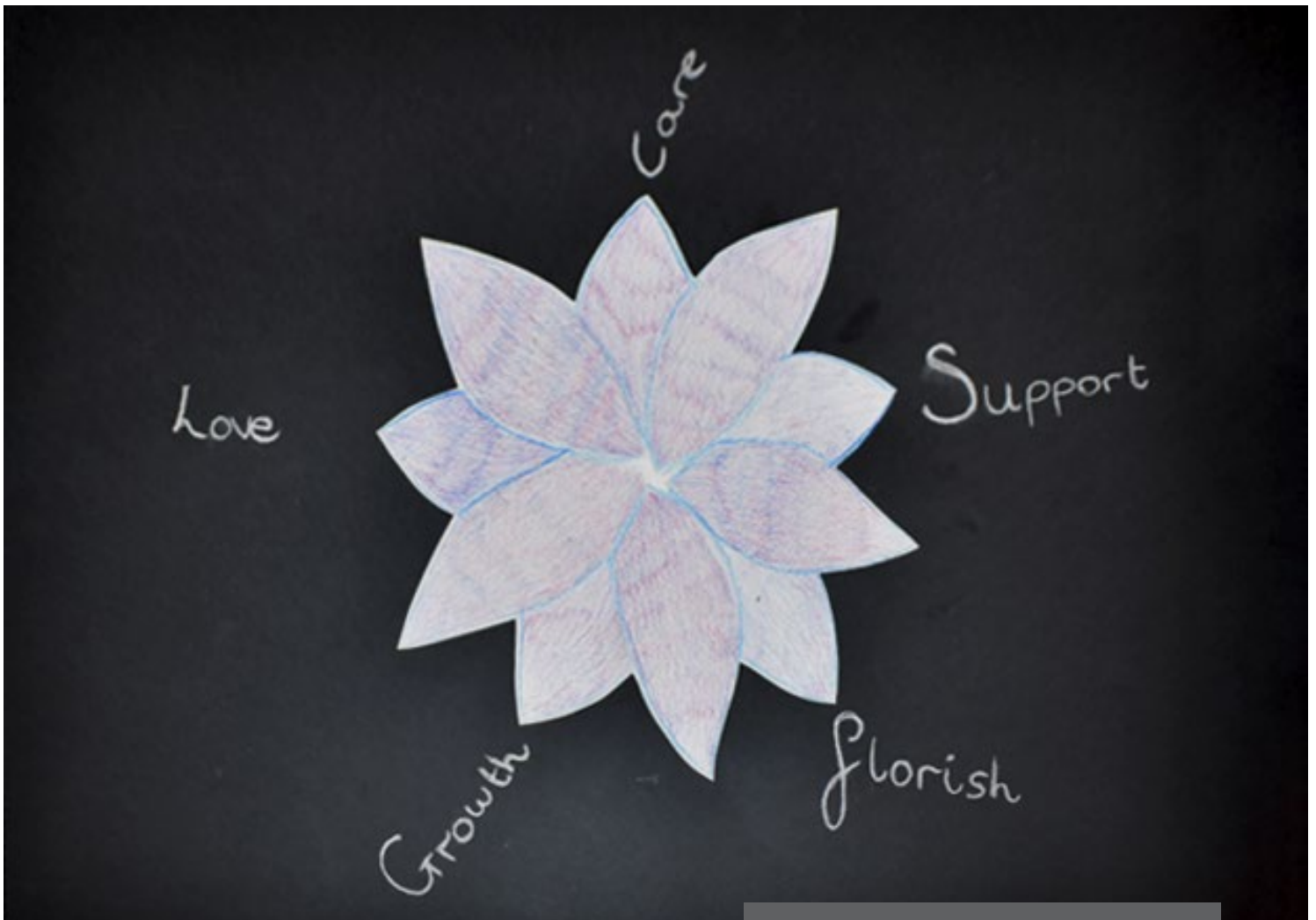
My heart I'm told will find some steel, I'll lock that in reserve
I'll give my loved ones insight, in that I do deserve....

I've only started breathing deep and searching for the words,
A posture that's respectful yet ensures I will be heard.
I take this challenge daily - determined to push through
Though I tremble and I worry - it feels so raw and new!

Each morning when I waken I crave for those I've lost
Some I've pushed to limits, we both have paid the cost.
Self belief has power - yet often it alludes me
The day I truly find my voice - then will I be free?

From a history that has silenced me, put me in my place
And compromised my loved ones, like a slap across the face.

I care for you - just like me, silence eats your soul
Let's reach out, we're not alone, on our path to "being whole."





it takes
a tribe

We're afraid of saying too much.

We're afraid of saying the wrong thing and we're scared of not knowing what to say.

We're so worried about burdening others with our sadness that we hide it away where no one can see it. We sit at our computers and post photos of ourselves smiling and shining and post status updates about how wonderful our lives are, and maybe they are. But if ever they're not we don't know how to talk about it.

We are so scared of upsetting others or offending someone that we don't know how to ask questions. We can't ask our friends if they are okay because we feel it's not out place.

But whose place is it, if not ours?

We don't talk because we think people don't want to know and we don't ask questions because because we assume we're not meant to know. These are not relationships. Relationships are not built on political correctness and conversations conducted behind the safety of our laptop screens.

We are not our Facebook profile page.

Our relationships cannot be understood by how many Twitter followers we have or how many people like our posts on Instagram. We are more than this, and yet this is what we are becoming. We don't need drugs and alcohol to express ourselves, and yet this is what we use.

The irony of it all is that our failure to talk and to ask questions is so often perceived as not caring, where in fact it is the opposite. We care so much that we don't know how to say it, so we just don't try.

Why is it so hard to tell people how much we love them? We assume that we will have another day, another month, another year – but what if we don't? We are so afraid of being vulnerable that we build huge walls to protect ourselves, shutting everyone and everything out.

We need to learn how to talk again. We need to turn our computers off and tell our friends that we're feeling sad. We need to let them listen and try to help. We need to stop having these conversations at 1am on a Saturday night and feeling more alone than ever throughout the week.

We need to start asking if people are okay.

We need to learn how to talk again.

We need to learn to tell people how much we love them.

We need to remember we are not alone.

The best advice I've ever received is that ultimately, the only person who can help you is yourself. You can be supported by external factors, but you need to source your strength, resilience and self-worth from within.



I am Grateful
for my inner
Lion

What are you crying about?

When you open your eyes it breaks your heart but you just can't stand living in the dark.

You know that no one will save you from the darkness and there isn't anyone in the world who can stop those tears.

You say that you're lonely. You crave company, and yet you are loneliest in those times when you are surrounded by people.

You're lonely because you never learned to be on your own and you're lost because you miss those who are closest to you even while they're right by your side. You crave something to fill that hollow space inside of you and you need something to fix those parts that you feel are unfixable.

Sometimes I think that my heart is too broken, that there is too much pain in the world. But everyone's heart is broken and we will all spend most of our lives trying to put each other back together again.

And what if we were never whole in the first place?

What if we measured our lives not in years, but by the number of hearts we managed to hold together, even if just for a moment?

And maybe at the end of it all my atoms will find your atoms and we will become a patchwork constellation of broken pieces and the tiny particles of everyone and everything we have ever loved will fill all the spaces in the world to create something truly beautiful.

Maybe we will be a great big oak tree, or perhaps we will love so much over our lives that we become a whole forest, and the people who walk through the forest will never know why it feels so alive and so magical, and they will never know how many lifetimes made the smallest leaf or how much laughter made the roots of the trees that they step around.

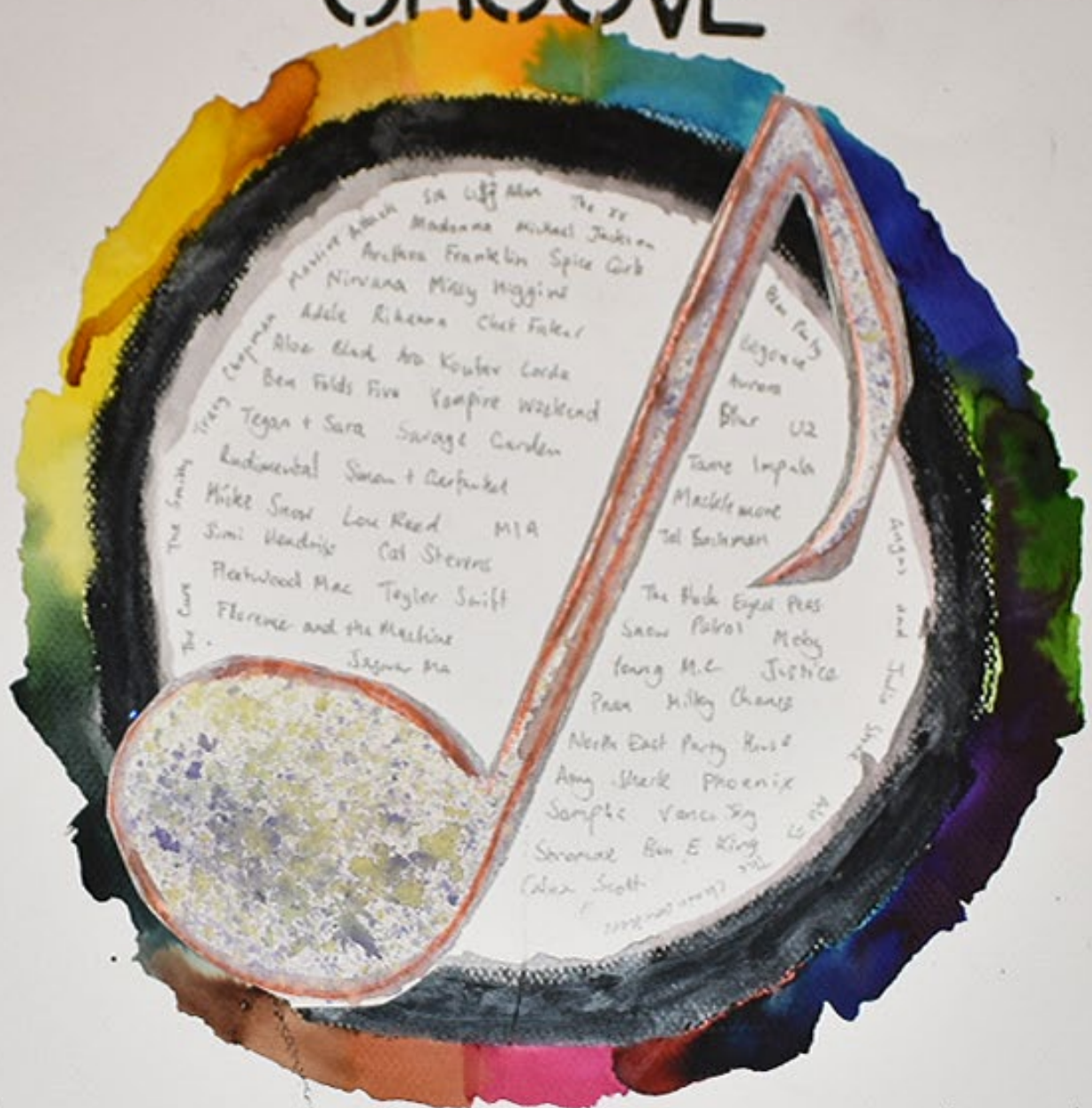
Dry your eyes.

You're not alone. You're a constellation of stars and a forest full of trees, you are a thousand oceans and a million grains of sand.

You were never alone.



FINDING MY GROOVE



I hate music and loud noises. That is what I said to myself as I walked away from a party. I am scared of expressing myself. So frightened to let the world know I exist. My head went down, down, down into a dark and lonely hole.

Here in the darkness I found my beats, music, dance and my groove. I AM FREE. No one can see me in the dark. Music has helped me to put rhythms to the indescribable. Headphones are now my protection. Music gets me through the highs and lows of life.

Now I spend weekends feeling the vibrations with friends or just in my lounge room. I love dressing in colours, being seen, embracing new friends and being in my groove.

Thank-you

MUSIC

To myself,

When you're sitting at the doctor's office filled with anxiety and strangers surrounding you, 'you're not alone'! You think you're cause no one is holding your hand or sitting by your side. But look where you're you made it, you took the first step to receive the help you deserve. The doctor states what you already know, 'depression', 'anxiety' and an 'eating disorder'. You spend the next two months in and out of appointments. Falling deeper and deeper into despair. You feel alone. Why has no one noticed that you have lost 'x' amount in 'x' amount of time. But you keep persisting, you attend every appointment possible, you don't tell anyone, why can't they just notice for themselves? You sit in darkness, by yourself until you realise you deserve better - you deserve treatment. I have a voice, I can advocate for myself. You pick yourself up out of the darkness and fight for your rights. Your mind might be the biggest player in this game of despair. However, you and 'it' have the power to change, to be the person who doesn't sit alone. From the power of your own voice you finally receive the treatment you deserve, and it's all thanks to your persistence and willingness to be your true self. You might not have the external supports that everyone else has in their life. But no matter what happens you will always have yourself to fall back on. Even if that feels unfair and falling feels like crashing into a 20 metre wave, no one can take yourself from you. In days of darkness you persisted, you found small light in every situation. You have spent 50 days in hospital without supports. But really you have found yourself a treatment team, friends and most of all yourself. You were able to hold your own hand, pick yourself up when everything seemed impossible, you did it. When you hear the statement 'you're not alone', don't laugh because you think it's true. Go look in the mirror and say thank-you! Thank-you for getting through 25 years of pain and heartbreak. You're here for a reason and that reason is to show those that this statement means more than external supports - it's about yourself/myself. Never stop believing in you.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

There are
two sides to
our story.

bye bye, friend
and say hello to

love

FROM WHERE
YOU'D
RATHER BE

WHAT IT'S LIKE ON A PSYCH WARD

'They say every hero has to leave home
but what those first steps are like
I'm yet to know.'

IF NOT
NOW THEN
WHEN ?

DON'T DREAM
IT'S OVER

A truly original and charming story.

It's a grind, there's pressure
but the results are worth it.

'heartbreaking and funny and brilliant'

WEAVE ONLY
JUST BEGUN

hateəʌoɪ

THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, RANDOM
PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS

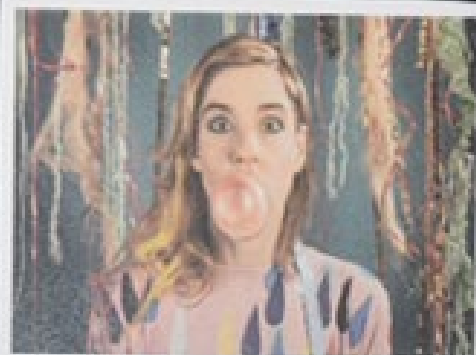
DIY SPACE
EXPLORATION

LOVE?

YOU

Open
your shop
today

a love of letters



FIVE THINGS TO DO BEFORE
DIE

Keep it simple

dressing to blend in isn't always a bad thing. If nothing else,
you're all set for the best game of hide and seek ever.



Healthscope
HOSPITALS

www.healthscopehospitals.com.au