

Chapter 1.

The abuse I had suffered at a young age had taught me to internalise my emotions and to be non-reactive – in other words, ‘Shut up’ and shut down! I carried this personality trait into my adult life including my marriage.

My life seemed to continue to be interrupted by my past.

Although Peter and I had been through so much in our first few years of marriage, we now found ourselves stable, happy and in love. Everything that I had longed for, I was now living – at least, I thought!

Eight years had passed since the most incredible transformation in my life. I had been set free from the abuse I had suffered at the hands of my mum and friends and I had been transformed from a suicidal, self-harming mess to a confident fun-loving woman. I was delivered from demonic strongholds in my life and I was now free to be the woman that God had always planned me to be – life couldn’t be better! My once broken marriage had been restored and Peter and I had fallen in love (I know this was meant to happen before you get married!) and life was in what I would call a ‘happy place’.

I had my own little family, a husband that loved me, a 15-month-old baby girl that everyone adored and now I was pregnant with our second child (I always wanted our children to be close in age because of the age gap between me and my own siblings). We had purchased our first home (that we were busily renovating), we were surrounded by family and friends and we were busy in leadership at our local church.

But deep down I was struggling with unworthiness - unworthy to be a mother, a wife and a friend – I felt like a failure! And then loneliness embedded itself into my heart like a stream and it flowed out into every part of my life. Although the feelings seemed so real, I did what I knew best and that was to ‘Shut-up’ and shut the feelings down!

Wasn’t this all that I wanted? My life was a dream. Yet within the dream, I could not find contentment or peace.

It was around 9pm on September the 17th that labour began. At 11pm, after making Peter drive around the block of the hospital a few times while trying to convince him that I was not in labour, our second beautiful baby girl was born.

I remember waking up in a private room in the hospital and there laying in a crib beside me was my beautiful healthy baby girl - a second dream had come true and I now had two little girls, 16 months apart. The nurse popped her head in to tell me that Jessica was born with a little bit of jaundice and that I needed to put the crib into the sunlight. At that moment this incredible wave of guilt washed over me.

“What did I do to cause my baby to have jaundice?” I thought. That same morning Peter brought Maddie in to see her new baby sister and I felt terrible having to tell him about his little baby girl having jaundice. I felt so guilty and ashamed but what could I do? He seemed to take it in his stride and tried to tell me that it wasn’t my fault, but whose fault was it then?

With each day I spent in the hospital, a deeper darker cloud would settle in my heart and I just could not move it! As I looked at my baby, an internal fight would take place between love, guilt and despair. I felt so unworthy to be her mum. I loved her so much that I wanted her to have the best and I didn’t feel that I was ‘that best’. By the time I took our little bundle home I was longing to get

out ... to get out of 'what', I didn't know. All I knew was that I could not be the wife, mother and Christian that I had so wanted to be. I tried to hide my despair by going on walks, spending lots of 'me' time and going on long silent drives in the car. But the brewing mood and thoughts wouldn't lift. In fact, they grew deeper and darker! My quiet times and bible readings began to slide and I felt deeply ashamed of my feelings – so ashamed that I couldn't pray.

I would spend each morning watching Peter reverse out our driveway to go to work. Then the minute he'd left, the tears would begin to flow. I would spend the day planning the best way to 'check out' (commit suicide), writing notes with instructions on all that Peter would have to do. I had worked out in my mind who he would marry and who would be the mother to our beautiful girls. By the time he would arrive home, I would have torn up the paper and gotten myself together - until the next day! At night, I would fall asleep crying out to God wondering what His thoughts were about suicide and what the bible said about the subject?

This went on day after day, night after night. People would visit and I would be full of excuses for my lack of energy – I would simply put on a happy face. Once they left I would be totally exhausted! It was getting harder and harder to hold in my feelings and tears of despair but I could not put Peter through any more sadness, so I kept trying to cover them up. They felt so real yet they felt so wrong at the same time.

After weeks of feeling like this, I created a foolproof plan and all I had to do was carry it through.