

I love daffodils – a journey through PTSD

I love daffodils.

Daffodils flower in the spring and spring is the time of new beginnings. When I was seventeen my mum died and I stopped seeing the beauty of things. I was numb to life. Then one day I opened the back door and saw a daffodil. I breathed the fresh spring air, saw the beauty of that one flower, felt the sun on my cheek and knew that life was now different. Better. I had a future.

Like you I experienced a traumatic labour (Aug.2001) that took away life's beauty again. My world became a dark and scary place, one from which I wanted to leave. I remember vividly at my lowest ebb begging for my mum to come and take me away from this living Hell.

Experiencing a traumatic labour is horrific enough on it's own. The event may last hours or days but the aftermath can last a lifetime. For some, this causes PTSD, depression, anger, marriage breakdown and sadly suicide. We each have our own story of equal hurt, equal importance.

For 3½ yrs PTSD ruled my life. Only those who have experienced it can understand what it is like to live with fear and helplessness; constantly re-living the trauma. You fear it will never end and you begin to forget what a happy life is. The more time that passed, the more frustrated, angry and depressed I became. I was desperate for treatment. I had been misdiagnosed with Postnatal Depression but knew it was more than that. I had appointments with a CPN and psychiatrist and was put on a waiting list for psychotherapy (average waiting time 18mths). Not knowing at that time what was wrong with me or understanding it took it's toll and in April 2004 my GP sent me to the psychiatric hospital but they refused to admit me because I was neither psychotic or suicidal (although I could not bear to live, I could not act on this because I wanted to see my children grow up and to be with my husband). For me there was no way out.

Each time I was referred to someone I would have hope that this time I would be helped and get my life back. But every time I got the same response "don't know what the cause is" "can't help you" "it's good to talk to a woman about these things!" Each time was like a kick in the teeth.

Throughout my illness I was constantly trying to explain to my husband what I was feeling so that he would understand. It was my greatest fear that he would leave because he couldn't take any more. By having him understand helped us both. I used lots of analogies. With regards to receiving help I told him to imagine being in the middle of a very long, straight road in the middle of nowhere all alone with a broken leg. In a lot of pain and in need of help. Suddenly someone comes walking by and I feel hope and relief. They ask if I am ok and I explain about my broken leg. The person sympathises but says they are unable to help and walks away. I am upset, disappointed, frustrated and angry. This happens several times each time beginning with me feeling hope and relief that help has arrived and each time ending in despair, disappointment and anger.

My own research and desperate need for answers resulted in my own diagnosis of PTSD 3yrs after the birth of my daughter.

I began Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Xmas 2004, which I believe is the most common form of treatment for PTSD. It aims to alter the way we feel about a traumatic event and change our perceptions of it. This type of therapy takes several weeks or months and involves



talking through the event in great detail. I had talked and analysed until I was blue in the face and also knew that in some cases talking can embed the trauma further. This worried me.

A friend told me about the "rewind technique" which is carried out under hypnosis and is used to treat PTSD and phobias. She managed to set me up an appointment with a colleague who is a trained hypnotherapist and I went along in January 2005. I had been hypnotised once before so was not apprehensive in any way. Many believe that you are not in control or are asleep and are scared of hypnosis. This is largely due to stage hypnotists though.

Hypnosis is a form of deep relaxation and when carried out by a registered professional is not harmful in any way. Hypnosis for me is the most relaxing experience I have ever had. I was completely aware of where I was and very aware of the therapists stomach rumbling throughout!

The rewind technique or Neuro Linguistic Programming is safe, non-voyeuristic (you do not have to speak or reveal any intimate or traumatic details) and it is fast. These were the facts that attracted me to it.

Once relaxed you are asked to imagine being in a safe place and watching what happened to you on a TV screen. You have an imaginary remote control in your hand. The "film" is played in fast forward then rewind several times which has the effect of processing what happened from a part of the brain called the amygdala to the neo-cortex where the trauma becomes a bad memory only. This is a natural process.

The session took three quarters of an hour. I did not speak whilst hypnotised I only had to see the event in my imagination. When I opened my eyes I was immediately aware of the total absence of fear. I was completely calm, relaxed and amazed at how good I felt. I knew that I would never again suffer from another flashback, panic attack or depressive episode. What happened was now just a bad memory.

On leaving I stopped by my friends house to thank her for her help and she handed me an article with a picture of a newborn on it. For 3½ yrs I could not look at a baby, real or in a picture, I avoided baby talk, pregnant women and the maternity hospital as they would cause great distress. Now as I looked at the baby not only was I not upset but I was actually "cooing" over it! This was 10min. after treatment. I was amazed. In the weeks that followed I sought out contact with babies, pregnant women etc. to test out my reaction. I felt nothing but delight every time. I had my life back.

I had built up a lot of anger and bitterness over the years and it was changing me as a person. I was heading towards becoming a bitter and twisted old bat!! Luckily I realised this and knew that I had to deal with all this anger and not by lobbing the TV out of the window as I felt like doing!

Coincidentally I attended a health exhibition and talked to a Thought Field Therapist. This works by processing emotions by tapping on various pressure points on the body. I must admit it is the most bizarre task that I have ever carried out but it worked. Again within a short space of time (one and a half hours) the anger and resentment had dispelled. I saw a daffodil.

Between these two forms of treatment, hypnosis and TFT I am now my old self. Happy, confident and enjoying life. I cherish every second with my family. I will never forget what I went through and will always feel sad about the precious times that I missed with my children but I can move on now. Ten months on life is wonderful. I am excited about my future and by Xmas next year I will be a qualified Hypnotherapist/Psychotherapist. I am using my experience to learn new skills and hopefully help others.



Having hope is the most precious thing you have. Hold on to it if you can and you will have your Spring. And your daffodil.