

THE IMPORTANCE OF SAYING “WHEN”

At some point in time each of us would have sat back and reflected on ‘life’ - how far we’ve come in our unique journey, what did and didn’t go as planned, who we met, who we ‘grew with’ along the way, and who’s in our life now as a result of all the choices we and others made.

Hopefully this reflection will involve giving ourselves a pat on the back for doing good things, or confirming that we learned lessons and applied the learnings (so we didn’t repeat the same mistakes again), or maybe it enabled us to see ourselves as more mature, with improved coping skills, more emotionally intelligent and compassionate towards others.

After all of our reflections the one thing that we will no doubt realize is that we experienced life – we actually *lived* – as experiences make us who we are.

When I was very little I started experiencing some really traumatic events – being physically, emotionally and mentally abused by people I thought loved me; being subjected to sexual misconduct by an adult male known to my mother, and also inappropriate behaviour from an adult male relative. At that time I didn’t realize I was suffering acute trauma responses or, as time went on, post-trauma symptoms lasting for months and some for several years. I knew how I *felt* about what had happened, but family rules coupled with deficiencies of some of the people responsible for my care and safety, prevented me from not only speaking up loudly, but also being heard. I found solace and safety with my maternal grandparents, when I could get to them, and by my mid-late teens I had developed quite an enormous level of resilience especially for one so young. Throughout my early life I knew I was strong and happy despite all the negative episodes, but it wasn’t until my mid-40s and (unfortunately) after many more traumatic events, that I was able to quietly reflect on my life and see my strength, courage and determination for what they were. By my mid-40s I was really empowered to celebrate my success in living, and surviving through all that I had endured, mainly because I had by then exited from a destructive marriage and also decided that enough was enough – in other words, I’d said “when” to myself.

Traumatic events (no matter how major) don’t always result in an *emotional* injury to people (what’s known in the medical world as a *psychic injury*), even if a physical injury has been suffered at the same time. Some people may not even experience the normal ‘acute’ responses to the abnormal event because their resilience and life circumstances provide a greater level of protection than at other times. Also, some events are more traumatic to some people than others, some may be repeat events for the person involved and therefore cause the effects of the event to be exacerbated. It is important, therefore, for each event to be looked at *in context* to the person’s life, their history and their personal circumstances at that particular point in time.

For me, even though I’d completely healed from past childhood events, and developed coping and risk management skills to the best level possible by the time I was 17-18 years old, there were some further events in my early adulthood that rocked my soul to the core, some that I simply “managed” deeming them a “normal part of life”, and some that came in such quick succession they really tested my resilience and ability to stay positive through the worst adversity.

Despite all of the traumatic events in my life, I’ve never had cause to be referred for counselling or treatment for my post-trauma symptoms, or ever deemed myself to be in need of help. The reason for this is I was always self-reliant, even from a young age, and at times I actually thought everyone else experienced the same body symptoms as me. In my mid-40s I had my biggest ah-ha moment though – that’s when I realized that my on-and-off post-trauma symptoms, some lasting for many years prior, had permanently ceased. My freedom from these lingering symptoms (which included intense fear, recurring nightmares, flashbacks, prolonged emotional pain, migraine-like headaches and serious muscle tension, to name just a few) came after I completed a series of hypnotherapy

sessions designed to help rid myself of emotional baggage associated with the memories of all those traumatic events. After the hypnosis sessions, and some extra self-hypnosis I did for myself, I was entirely free of the range of chronic and sometimes debilitating physiological responses I had grown accustomed to enduring. Plus, despite experiencing more traumatic events since and some of which caused considerable distress in the moment, I have never had those symptoms reoccur. Lucky for me, and the effort I put into re-engineering my thinking so that my mind doesn't tolerate negative internal messages, I bounce back from negative events at phenomenal speed and keep my mind focused on the positive, no matter what.

My latest two books (on trauma, healing and resilience) published in early 2017, include the (now) award-winning "Best Children's Book" *Feronia – The Little Girl Who Learned To Fly Free* and, published in late March, the adult book *Post-Traumatic Stress – Not a Life Sentence*. The pre-cursor to these two empowering books were my earlier three books. Where all of my earlier books have won awards for their powerful, inspirational self-help and life-changing messages, the underlying virtues and values ring true in all five e.g. the importance of: holding oneself accountable for one's life and health outcomes; being compassionate and caring including with oneself; not seeking revenge for a wrong done to you therefore allowing the body and mind to focus on positive self-nurturing messages; a self-healing mentality which supports the body's own survival systems and innate ability to heal itself in time; time, which presents opportunities and choices; a positive mindset and planning a positive future thus enabling a positive self-fulfilling prophecy; and being honest and true about yourself (and therefore authentic) as the most powerful way to take control of your long term outcomes.

For over five years I have advocated that post-traumatic stress is related to an injury from which people can heal. People can and will heal if they drop the 'forever' and 'disabled' mindsets. My latest two books are therefore written to empower readers to take control and heal themselves, and remove past stigmas associated with their traumas.

It is by taking control of oneself that we become most powerful and positive in our impact on others.

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