EMERGING
from the
SHADOWS

ELAINE LEES
Imagine you are a bird. Choose any bird that you resonate with because we are going on a journey.

I want you to imagine that as this bird, you are able to fly anywhere in the world, to anyone’s house and look through their window … at any moment in time.

Looking through that window, you could see what they were doing, and hear what they were thinking. When they leave the house, you will fly next to them and see, hear and feel everything they go through, although they were unaware of your presence.

Watching this person, feeling what they felt, you would become protective of this person when they were hurt, and your heart would break and reach out to them when you saw them alone, broken and in pain.

When they slept, you would perch on the branch outside their window and reflect on what you saw, heard and felt with this person. You apply this to your own life, where you were hurt, broken and alone and feel a deep connection to this person.

You would wish better things for them and hope and pray that life would get better for them, and it would! Your heart would rejoice! But it wouldn’t last as they were hurt over and over again.

Then something magical happens. You begin to feel a power rising, you hear her chant, you see the connection she is making to a power that you haven’t felt in a long time. The more she speaks, the more she chants, the more she connects to her power, the more you feel your own power building to the point where you transform into the largest and most powerful version of the bird you have chosen.

You look through the window and your eyes meet. She sees you, and she smiles. She then closes her eyes, reaches her arms up into the air,
and transforms into something wonderfully bright and powerful. In this form she flies out into the world, into the windows of other women who are in pain and alone. They see her and smile, transforming and freeing themselves of their pain.

This is how I felt when I read Elaine’s book. I was drawn into her story, into her journey and into her power.

I am a male warrior in my own world. I have been through the darkness and come out the other side. I teach others how to do the same. When I read Elaine’s book I felt all those emotions that she felt and although I am a warrior, Whanau o Tumatauenga, her feminine energy awakened another power source within me: A soul deep love for the women in my family.

My mum, my sister and my nana. My wife and daughter. I saw clearly the maiden, the mother and the matriarch in all that they were and were going to be.

In my fatherly protective state of thinking about my young daughter, and when she goes through tough times in life, I feel a peace that this book exists for her if she needs it.

This book is a Taonga, a treasure. It has the power to reach into every home to find women in pain, who feel so alone and free them. And for every man that reads it, will be reminded that a woman gave us life and that sometimes, it will take a woman to help the women in our family.

Thank you Elaine, you remind us of our humanity and to see the power, beauty and resilience of the women in our families, and in our own hearts.

Dion Jensen
Author
‘The Worlds First Good News Book About PTSD’
Husband, Father, Son, Brother, Grandson.
To a Wife, Daughter, Mother, Sister and Nana.
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This book is dedicated to Women. Women whose life experiences have compelled them to want more from Life. Women who are ready to reconnect to their inner power source, inner wisdom, and sacred space of *Mana Wahine*. This inner sanctuary of our Being where we are connected to everything and anything far greater than anything we can imagine in this physical world and existence.

There are so many more dimensions to us than what we see reflected in the mirror, more than what other people see in us, more than what we see in ourselves.

Many of us spend our Life or our ‘Dash’ doing what we feel is expected of us, doing what we feel others wanted from us or doing what we thought would make us feel accepted and loved by others. But how many of us actually spend time loving and nurturing ourselves? Sounds simple, but I know it’s not for many women like me.

I’m sharing my story about the most vulnerable and defining moments in my life, and my transformational journey, in the hope that women can see that the challenges we face in our lives can be overcome by learning to love and honour ourselves unconditionally and embracing everything it is to be a woman in today’s world.

Not just at a superficial surface level, but at a Soul level in that sacred space of *Mana Wahine*.

The brightest lights cast the darkest shadows, but we don’t have to dwell permanently in the shadows. It is our natural birthright and our life’s purpose to let our Diamond Light shine.

I encourage women to learn to Love and Honour yourself unconditionally, and rediscover your inner power source, your sacred space of *Mana Wahine* and embrace your Greatness – your *Mana*. This is your solid foundation from which to manifest your dreams, hopes and
aspirations. This is the space where you absolutely BELIEVE that you are worthy of Love, Joy and Happiness.

This is the transformation to true FREEDOM.

And finally, I encourage you to allow unconditional Self-Love to become your dominant energy, and the catalyst that propels you to emerge from the shadows.

Walk into the Sun and allow the Shadows to cast behind you.
First and foremost, I want to acknowledge my children John-Paul, Shannon and Kiri for giving me the courage and commitment to find my way out of the shadows. For loving and supporting me, and standing by me, and for always being the brightest lights in my darkest times.

I acknowledge also my greatest teachers, my Mum and Dad for giving me the gift of Life and unknowingly giving me the strength and determination to overcome many challenges.

And finally, I acknowledge all the people who have crossed my path and played a part in my Life journey. It is said that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Sometimes we are the teacher, and sometimes we are the student. I’ve been truly blessed to learn from diverse and inspirational teachers who have crossed my path. Too many to name.

But I do want to make special mention of two of my teachers who have influenced me more than they know. Peter Harris and Jennifer Starlight of the Invisible College here on the Gold Coast. Peter and Jennifer (herself, as well as Ascended Master Min whom she channels) have been an amazing source of knowledge and inspiration on my transformation journey in the last few years. Their teachings are reflected throughout my story. It is with much love and gratitude that I acknowledge their infinite knowledge and wisdom.

My teachers are many. They are not only qualified teachers, coaches or counsellors in their chosen fields. Often, they are my children, my grandchildren, my friends, my family, or strangers I see or meet in passing. But each one of them has taught me something valuable or inspired me in some way, often without even knowing it.

My transformational journey has taught me to always be mindful, aware and conscious of my environment. To see the beauty in everything, to watch for the signs, to recognise and acknowledge the wisdom in every situation and every person I encounter.
Quite recently, I was at a railway station kiosk waiting for my cappuccino. I happened to look out the doorway, and at that particular moment a beautiful young man appeared in the doorway. He stopped for a few seconds, and in that brief moment in time I was instantly captivated and inspired by him. He was physically disabled, with just a torso from about waist height, and two arms, one of which was noticeably disabled. A small skateboard was his mode of transport. He may have been in his early to late twenties. His appearance, clothing and ta moko (tattoo) suggested to me that perhaps he was a New Zealander of Māori descent.

It was a busy time at the railway station with lots of commuters coming and going, but in those few seconds this beautiful young man was the only commuter in the frame of the doorway. It was like a snapshot in time, a picture in a frame that has remained in my Mind since that day.

His presence touched me deeply at a Soul level. I didn’t feel pity or sympathy for him; I felt truly inspired by his Mana, his presence and beautiful aura. I also felt extreme gratitude for everything I have in my life.

By the time I turned back from receiving my cappuccino, he was gone. I didn’t see him leave but I imagined him weaving his way through the commuters to the train platform. I wondered how many commuters even noticed him or acknowledged him. I looked for him on the platform with the intention of talking with him, but he was gone.

During the train ride, I couldn’t get his picture out of my Mind, and my thoughts wandered to how much he looked like Jonathan Thurston (JT). A few seconds later, I looked out the window of the train just as we were passing a billboard featuring JT. Synchronicity at its best! I thought about the thousands of people that JT inspires with his celebrity status, and how seriously he takes his responsibilities as a role model to the multitudes.

Equally, I believe that this beautiful man I saw at the station inspires many people, just by his presence and aura of strength, independence and determination. And I wondered if he knows what an inspiration he is.
If I ever see him again, I will make the effort to tell him how much he has inspired me.

For that brief moment in time he was my teacher, and I was his student. I learnt some valuable lessons just by seeing him through conscious awareness of that moment in time.
In the true Spirit of *Mana Wahine*, I acknowledge with Love and Gratitude:

Chantelle Tiepa, *Serene Culture Photography*; chantelletiepa.com

Karina Wirihana, *Beauty Revelation GC*  
https://www.facebook.com/beautyrevelationgc

For their creative and artistic genius and expertise in photography and beauty therapy. Their passion is featured on the Cover, and images used on my website www.elainelees.com. Truly inspired and blessed to share this journey with two women who express their passion for *Mana Wahine* through awakening and capturing the beauty and Mana that exists in all of us.

Nga mihi arohatinonui ki a raua.
White Ribbon statistics show that one in three women in Australia have experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by someone they know. The statistics are similar for New Zealand women as well.

Over the space of twelve months in Australia, on average, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. And according to Statistics New Zealand, between 2009 and 2015, there were 92 IPV deaths. IPV stands for ‘intimate partner violence’, and I challenge officials to replace the term ‘intimate’. There’s nothing intimate about violence! One violent death is one too many!

Personally, I can’t understand how the powers that be in our society will not accept or allow the terminally ill to make an informed personal choice for voluntary euthanasia, but the same society allows or accepts women being abused or killed by violent partners. It doesn’t make sense to me.

Every time we turn a blind eye to domestic or family violence in our homes and society, we are accepting it and allowing it to continue. We are disempowering our women and our children. We are taking away their power and ability to make a valuable contribution in this World.

Statistics also show that domestic and family violence is the principal cause of homelessness for women and their children. I know from my own experience, that women are forced to flee our homes looking for safety for ourselves and our babies. We take Flight, on broken wings, because we don’t have the energy or courage to Fight the Fight anymore.

Now let those statistics sink in. Now add another very conservative figure of ten or twenty percent for unreported violence. Actually, Statistics New Zealand estimate that at least 76% of family violence goes unreported—76%! And again, from personal experience I totally understand why women are not reporting the violence.
The tragedy of Domestic and Family Violence is the driving force behind my desire to share my story. But my story is not only a story of violence and abuse; it’s a story of rebirth and reconnecting to my sacred space of *Mana Wahine*.

I believe that we have become the victims and perpetrators of violence primarily because we have become so disconnected from our *Mana*, and our natural birthright of unconditional love for ourselves and others.

I believe that when we can reconnect to this sacred space of *Mana Wahine* and unconditional love for ourselves and others, we will not tolerate violence and abuse towards ourselves or others.

We will set ourselves free.
My Passion and Life Purpose

Being an authentic teacher of my own life experiences and supporting women is my passion and life purpose. This is what my life experiences have prepared me to do. Every mistake has taught me a lesson. Every challenge has given me strength. Every loss has given me motivation. Every glory has given me confidence.

My life experiences have taken me on a journey to discover and embrace the Essence or Āhuatanga of Mana Wahine - my saving grace, my sacred space. I cannot fully articulate the āhuatanga of Mana Wahine but for me personally, it’s a feeling or a knowing that resonates within me. Mana Wahine encompasses everything sacred and powerful of being a woman. Balanced in Body, Mind and Soul, and aligned with our physical and ethereal worlds as conduits of ancient knowledge, healing and enlightenment from our Tipuna (Ancestors) and Papatuanuku (Mother Earth).

When we go right back to the ancient, fundamental beliefs and values of indigenous cultures, including Māori, our status as Wāhine, as women, was revered. We had Mana, we had Greatness. Mana Wahine - was our natural birthright. We were tapu, we were sacred. Our bodies were especially sacred because we nurtured and gave birth to a new generation – to our Whakapapa – we kept our lineage and connections to our tribe, and the Ancient Ones, alive.

It took me a while to discover and understand Mana Wahine, this sacred space where I feel empowered, safe and protected. It’s not a physical place; it’s a sanctuary within my Being where everything sacred and powerful resonates and reverberates. It’s my Wairua, my Mauri, my inner power source that drives the multi-dimensional energies and aspects of who I AM.
It took me a while to find this sacred space because I was always searching outside of myself for the solutions, the material things or the person who would make me happy, make my life meaningful, and give me the love and affection I craved. The more I looked outside of myself, the more disconnected I became from my inner power source, my Wairua.

I believed I was a ‘victim’ of my challenging life experiences, and the victim mentality kept me anchored in the past. A past that was controlling and constraining, a past where I felt guilt and shame, and a past where feelings of low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and self-worth were dominant.

I was fifty-two years old when I finally realised I was too old to have feelings of low self-esteem, low self-confidence and low self-worth. I’d sacrificed enough, and I chose Freedom, and started to re-evaluate my life. I chose to free my Self from my fears and doubts, my guilt and shame, and piece by piece I started to put the broken pieces of me and my life back together.

Now I firmly believe my life experiences have guided me towards my passion, and the Freedom to live a more fulfilling and purposeful life.

The information I share in this book is authentically Me. To be truly authentic, I have to be transparent and honest about the defining moments in my life. So, my story focuses on those defining moments, the major challenges and lessons I’ve learnt, and the people who’ve influenced and inspired me.

All these things have helped to shape the person I’ve become.

It is written from what I perceived through my child, adolescent and adult eyes and Mind. It has been a confronting but therapeutic experience to acknowledge the pain from the past.

Some people who know me may not agree with what I’ve written in my story, and I apologise in advance if I upset or offend anyone. But this is my story, my feelings, my vulnerability, my experiences, and my own perspectives of my Life. This is my Truth.

I want to make it clear that the words in my story come from a place of love and forgiveness in my Heart. Through this writing process and my transformational journey, I have been able to transform the mistakes and pain of my past into my passion to help other women to transform
and reconnect to their inner power source. To reawaken and connect with their sacred space of *Mana Wahine*.

And to reignite their passion for living, loving and embracing Life!

In sharing my story, it is my deepest desire that it may help other women to understand that the most important, life-changing decision we can make for ourselves is to **learn to love and honour ourselves unconditionally**, first and foremost.

True, unconditional Self-love is the highest energy of all.

Loving and honouring ourselves unconditionally is the only way we can reconnect to our sacred space, our inner power source. It’s the place where we connect with the courage and commitment to forgive ourselves and others, learn from our lessons of the past, and become deliberate creators of a more fulfilling future for ourselves and future generations.

My story focuses on:

- **FREEDOM** - my experiences, aspirations, hopes and dreams in my *Maiden* child and adolescent years;
- **FULFILMENT** - my experiences, achievements, responsibilities, burdens and sacrifices in my *Mother* years; and
- **FORESIGHT** - the knowledge, wisdom and foresight evolving in my *Matriarch* years.

Each of these chapters includes my recollections of the defining moments during those particular phases of my life.

I hope my story demonstrates the transformational healing that comes from surrendering to love and forgiveness. When we can see people and situations from a more aligned place in our Hearts, free of judgement and blame, we free ourselves from the restrictions and limitations of false beliefs and our ego Mind. Our ego Mind wants to find fault in others and assign blame. Our Heart wants us to find understanding, love, joy and happiness for ourselves and others.

My story also includes poetry inspired by my experiences and people who have crossed my path. My poetry comes from my sacred space; it comes through me not from me. Part of my journey of Self-discovery has included healing through poetry and creative writing.
I have learnt so much about myself in the last five years and this journey of self-discovery and *tino rangatiratanga* (self-governance) has no final destination.

My journey will continue to change and evolve through time, and I am excited to see where it leads me.
I have always been innately drawn towards metaphysical philosophy. For thirty years or more I have ventured on and off my Spiritual pathway to find a clear understanding of the connection between our physical and non-physical existence. Two near-death experiences in my life confirmed for me what I innately knew.

We are so much more than a physical body with an expiry date.

For a long time now, I’ve delved into different areas of metaphysical philosophies, spiritual teachings, healing modalities, meditation, basic neuroscience and other areas of personal interest. I’ve invested in self-development courses, seminars, online studies and learning materials. I’d often start something, lose interest and jump onto something else. However, when I discovered something that resonated with me, I’d get totally consumed by it until it made sense to me.

There is so much information available out there in cyberspace that it can become quite confusing, to say the least. And some theories and information contradict or conflict with other theories or information, depending on who’s writing or sharing the material.

Over time, I narrowed my areas of interest, and identified teachers and teachings that resonated with me, and who I Am. For me personally, I tend to focus on the feeling or ‘āhuatanga (essence) of the philosophies I adopt in my life, rather than the details, mechanics or scientific theories or proof behind the philosophies.

In other words, I trust what intuitively ‘feels’ right for me.
Ancient Knowledge and Principles

Following are some of the meanings and/or definitions of the Māori words I use throughout my book to provide some understanding of the cultural significance and essence of the words used. These definitions have been sourced from https://maoridictionary.co.nz.

**Whakapapa - (noun)** genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent - reciting whakapapa was, and is, an important skill and reflected the importance of genealogies in Māori society in terms of leadership, land and fishing rights, kinship and status. It is central to all Māori institutions. There are different terms for the types of whakapapa and the different ways of reciting them including: tāhū (recite a direct line of ancestry through only the senior line); whakamoē (recite a genealogy including males and their spouses); taotahi (recite genealogy in a single line of descent); hikohiko (recite genealogy in a selective way by not following a single line of descent); ure tārewa (male line of descent through the first-born male in each generation).

**Mana - (noun)** prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object. Mana goes hand in hand with tapu, one affecting the other. The more prestigious the event, person or object, the more it is surrounded by tapu and mana. Mana is the enduring, indestructible power of the atua and is inherited at birth, the more senior the descent, the greater the mana. The authority of mana and tapu is inherited and delegated through the senior line from the atua as their human agent to act on revealed will. Since authority is a spiritual gift delegated by the atua, man remains the agent, never the source of mana. This divine choice is confirmed by the elders, initiated by the tohunga under traditional consecratory rites (tohi). Mana gives a person the authority to lead, organise and regulate communal expeditions and activities, to make decisions regarding social and political matters. A person or tribe’s mana can increase from successful ventures or decrease through the lack of success. The tribe give mana to their chief and empower him/her and in turn the mana of an ariki or rangatira spreads to his/her people and
their land, water and resources. Almost every activity has a link with the maintenance and enhancement of *mana* and *tapu*. Animate and inanimate objects can also have *mana* as they also derive from the *atua* and because of their own association with people imbued with *mana* or because they are used in significant events. There is also an element of stewardship, or *kaitiakitanga*, associated with the term when it is used in relation to resources, including land and water.

**Atua** - *(noun)* ancestor with continuing influence, god, demon, supernatural being, deity, ghost, object of superstitious regard, strange being - although often translated as ‘god’ and now also used for the Christian God, this is a misconception of the real meaning. Many Māori trace their ancestry from *atua* in their *whakapapa* and they are regarded as ancestors with influence over particular domains. These *atua* also were a way of rationalising and perceiving the world. Normally invisible, *atua* may have visible representations.

**Tohunga** - *(noun)* skilled person, chosen expert, priest, healer - a person chosen by the agent of an *atua* and the tribe as a leader in a particular field because of signs indicating talent for a particular vocation. Those who functioned as priests were known as *tohunga ahurewa*. They mediated between the *atua* and the tribe, gave advice about economic activities, were experts in propitiating the *atua* with *karakia* and were experts in sacred lore, spiritual beliefs, traditions and genealogies of the tribe.

**Rangatira** - *(noun)* chief (male or female), chieftain, chieftainess, master, mistress, boss, supervisor, employer, landlord, owner, proprietor - qualities of a leader is a concern for the integrity and prosperity of the people, the land, the language and other cultural treasures (e.g. oratory and song poetry), and an aggressive and sustained response to outside forces that may threaten these.

**Tapu** - *(noun)* restriction, prohibition - a supernatural condition. A person, place or thing is dedicated to an *atua* and is thus removed from the sphere of the profane and put into the sphere of the sacred. It is untouchable, no longer to be put to common use. The violation of *tapu* would result in retribution,
Emerging From The Shadows

sometimes including the death of the violator and others involved directly or indirectly. Appropriate *karakia* and ceremonies could mitigate these effects. *Tapu* was used as a way to control how people behaved towards each other and the environment, placing restrictions upon society to ensure that society flourished.

**Papatuanuku (personal name)** Earth, Earth mother and wife of Rangi-nui - all living things originate from them.

**Wairua** - *(noun)* spirit, soul - spirit of a person which exists beyond death. It is the non-physical spirit, distinct from the body and the *mauri*. To some, the *wairua* resides in the heart or mind of someone while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body. The *wairua* begins its existence when the eyes form in the foetus and is immortal. While alive a person’s *wairua* can be affected by *mākutu* through *karakia*. *Tohunga* can damage *wairua* and also protect the *wairua* against harm. The *wairua* of a miscarriage or abortion can become a type of guardian for the family or may be used by *tohunga* for less beneficial purposes. Some believe that all animate and inanimate things have a *whakapapa* and a *wairua*.

**Mauri** - *(noun)* life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions - the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located.

**Tino rangatiratanga** - *(noun)* self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power.

**Tangihanga** - *(noun)* weeping, crying, funeral, rites for the dead, obsequies - one of the most important institutions in Māori society, with strong cultural imperatives and protocols. Most *tangihanga* are held on marae. The body is brought onto the marae by the *whānau* of the deceased and lies in state in an open coffin for about three days in a *wharemate*. During that time groups of visitors come onto the marae
to farewell the deceased with speech making and song. Greenery is
the traditional symbol of death, so the women and chief mourners
often wear pare kawakawa on their heads. On the night before the
burial visitors and locals gather to have a pō mihimihī to celebrate the
person’s life with informal speeches and song. In modern times, on
the final day the coffin is closed and a church service is held before
the body is taken to the cemetery for burial. A takahi whare ritual
is held at the decease’s home and a hākari concludes the tangihanga.

Karakia - (noun) incantation, ritual chant, chant, intoned incantation,
charm, spell - a set form of words to state or make effective a ritual
activity. Karakia are recited rapidly using traditional language, symbols
and structures. Traditionally correct delivery of the karakia was essential:
mispronunciation, hesitation or omissions courted disaster. The two
most important symbols referred to in karakia are of sticks and food,
while the two key actions are of loosing and binding. Individual karakia
tend to follow a pattern: the first section invokes and designates the atua,
the second expresses a loosening of a binding, and the final section is the
action, the ordering of what is required, or a short statement expressing
the completion of the action. The images used in karakia are from
traditional narratives. There were karakia for all aspects of life, including
for the major rituals, i.e. for the child, canoe, kūmara, war party and the
dead. Karakia for minor rituals and single karakia include those for the
weather, sickness, daily activities and for curses and overcoming curses.
These enabled people to carry out their daily activities in union with the
ancestors and the spiritual powers.

Ngati Maru ki Taranaki

Following is some information about my Iwi (Tribe) Ngati Maru ki
Taranaki, my Hapu (sub-Tribe) Ngati Hinemokai and our Tipuna
(ancestors). This information is recorded in its entirety from this source
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ng%C4%81ti_Maru_(Taranaki) )
Emerging From The Shadows

Ngāti Maru is a Māori iwi of inland Taranaki in New Zealand. They are descended from Maruwharanui, the eldest son of Pito Haranui and his wife, Manauea. Pito Haranui belonged to an ancient Taranaki people known as the Kahui-Maru, whose genealogy predates the arrival of Toi.

Maruwharanui had three siblings. A brother, Marukōpiri, who settled at Manganui-o-te-Ao - near Raetihi, and two sisters, Mihi-Rawhiti and Hinepango. It is surmised that Maruwharanui was contemporary with the arrival of the Hawaiiki people in the 1300s. This is judged primarily by the marriages of his siblings, to Hawaiiki People. His younger brother Marukopiri married Hineue, the daughter of the famed explorer, Tamatea Pokai Whenua of the Takitimu Waka. Another sibling, Hinepango married Hotunuku who arrived aboard the Tainui Waka.

Ngati Maru are primarily descendants of Maruwharanui’s daughter, Te Reimatia. She married Tamatea-Kopiri, the Grandson of Turi - the commander of the Aotea Waka. Tamatea-Kopiri was the first Aotea Child born in Aotearoa and is considered the senior male line of the Waka. Today, most of the Iwi of Ngati Maru, can trace their descent through one or more of the sons of Te Reimatia, the grandsons of Maruwharanui.

The Main Hapu of Ngati Maru (which also comprise smaller sections) are Ngati Hinemokai (includes Ngati Rongonui) Ngati Kopua (includes Ngati Tamatapui and Ngariki) Ngati Kui (includes Ngati Te Ika and Ngati Tamakehu)

Te Upoko o te Whenua Marae is the iwi’s marae at Tarata. Ngarongo is the name of the Whare Puni (Meeting House) and the Whare Kai (Dining Hall) is named Maruwharanui.

Whakapapa is paramount in our Māori culture. It’s about knowing our lineage back to our eponymous ancestors, and maintaining our connection to our tribes, tribal lands, mountains, rivers and seas. These
form the basis of our Mana, and the solid foundations from where our ancient knowledge and principles originate and continue to evolve from over time.

About twelve months ago, one of my teachers introduced me to the ancient Hermetic teachings, The Kybalion, and the seven Hermetic Principles:

- Mentalism
- Correspondence
- Vibration
- Polarity
- Rhythm
- Cause and Effect
- Gender.

These ancient principles resonated strongly within me, along with other more commonly known Universal Laws like the Law of Attraction, Law of Allowing, Law of Deliberate Creation, etc. I could see how these ancient principles aligned to some of our ancient Māori knowledge and wisdom, and this intrigued me.

I referred back to other teachings that have resonated with me over the years, and I can clearly see how those teachings correlate to the ancient principles and Universal Laws. In terms of whakapapa, I believe that these ancient principles are the foundation from where other teachings originated and evolved.

The whakapapa of teachings makes total sense to me, it resonates within me, and it intuitively ‘feels’ right for me. It may not resonate or be true for others, and I respect that. But these are my guiding principles that I try to apply in my day-to-day life.

These are the principles that guide the multi-dimensional aspects of who I Am.

This discovery was like an epiphany! All the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that I’ve collected over the years have finally come together to consolidate my learnings, and form the cosmic portrait of who I AM:
I AM – Eternal, Wild and Free

I AM, I am Unique, I am ME
I am the physical creation of my English Father and Māori Mother
I am not the colour of my skin, nor the languages I speak
   I am my thoughts, my feelings, my emotions
I am more than my physical body, my appearance
   More than who others see, hear, smell, taste or touch
I am not defined by my house, my car, my status, my job
   I am feminine and masculine energies merging in dance
   I am a precious and multifaceted jewel, a Diamond
Mai i te whai ao, born from the spiritual realms of Papatuanuku,
   Mother Earth
Ki te Ao Marama, into the physical World of Light, Ranginui, Sky Father
   A multi-faceted jewel in a multi-dimensional Universe

Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua, ko au
   I AM the Land, the Land is Me
Ko au te Rangi, ko te Rangi, ko au
   I AM the Sky, the Sky is Me
I am a descendant of the ancient ones
Of tribal lands, skies, mountains, rivers and seas
I am the Mauri, the life force energy flowing in me
I am the blood that pulses through my veins
I am Wairua, Spirit, a vibrational, intuitive Soul
I am pure consciousness in a tribal Multiverse
Traversing universal pathways of Io-Matua-Kore, the Creator of All
Seeking esoteric knowledge and enlightenment
Filling my kete o te waananga, my three baskets of knowledge
Sacred knowledge, Ancestral knowledge, Life’s knowledge
A tauira, student of ancient principles from ancient lands
Still relevant to every race, every culture, every creed

Ko au te maunga, ko te maunga, ko au
I AM the Mountain, the Mountain is Me
Ko au te awa, ko te awa, ko au
I AM the River, the River is Me

My Heart is sensitive, my Mind is complex
I am compassion, I am empathy
I have sinned, and I have served
I am the Maiden, the Mother, the Matriarch
I am Mana Wahine, strong and humble
I am whare tangata, my body, a sacred vessel
Blessed to nurture and birth new life
Expanding and contracting through labours of Love
Birthing my tamariki, their Wairua into this physical world
Whakapapa, generations woven in time and space
Extensions of Me, from Me, but never belonging to Me
Their Wairua, Spirit must always fly free

Ko au te hinengaro, ko te hinengaro, ko au
I AM the Mind, the Mind is Me
Ko au te tinana, ko te tinana, ko au
I AM the Body, the Body is Me
I AM, I am Unique, I am ME
I am awareness, I am consciousness
I am temporarily physical, eternally Spiritual
I have flaws, I have perfection
I am not a slave to society standards or law
Or to judgements made by colonised minds
I dance to the beat of my own drum
To the rhythm of tribal and universal lore
Expanding in my physical time and space
I AM the full expression of ME
When my drum beat fades, I shall return to Papatuanuku
The Circle of Life will begin again
Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au
I am the Land, the Land is Me
I AM Wairua, Spirit – Wild and Free

Hei oranga mo ake tonu atu – I AM Eternal
Tihei Mauri Ora! – Behold the breath of Life

Honouring the Wisdom of the Maiden, the Mother and the Matriarch

Before I get into my story, I want to explain the energies and aspects of the Maiden, the Mother, and the Matriarch because my story revolves around my experiences in each of these phases of my life.

An aspect of Mana Wahine is understanding and honouring the experiences and wisdom gained from our maiden, mother and matriarch years, and how these have influenced the person we have become.

The aspects or energy descriptions below are provided as a guide only to perhaps help you understand how your life experiences have influenced you through your maiden, mother and matriarch years. These years are not defined by linear time or age, but more from our upbringing, life experiences, parents, family, values, beliefs, or levels of responsibility experienced through our formative years and later life.
I believe that our relationships with our mothers or maternal role models have helped determine some of our personal values and beliefs. The purpose of reviewing our values and beliefs is not to find fault or place blame on our greatest teachers, our mothers. The purpose is to understand how the Maiden, Mother and Matriarch aspects of our lives have helped shape the person we have become. And to help us understand our internal software and programming that we’ve inherited and defaulted to.

I have used the descriptions below because they resonate with me and my life experiences. As you read through the descriptions, have a think about how often the maiden, mother, matriarch energies and aspects are present in your daily life.

Maiden Energy

The energy and essence of the Maiden-child is innocent, playful, curious and spontaneous with an adventurous spirit. This is our original blueprint, filled with innocence and unconditional love for Self and others.

The Maiden-child has a natural desire to enjoy the purity and innocence of being a child with not a care in the world, and the freedom to explore without restriction or limitation. This is the natural energy of the Maiden-child.

As the child matures into adolescence, the adolescent Maiden wants to explore and embrace her sexual energy and sensual expression with a natural desire to have fun with sex, to experiment and enjoy sensual pleasures.

When the energy of the Maiden becomes overwhelming she may become irresponsible and unreliable with a tendency to measure her self-worth by her attractiveness, or how popular she is with her peers. She can become somewhat shallow. The unconditional love and innocence born within the Maiden becomes diluted by the conditions or boundaries placed around her natural birthright of innocence and unconditional love.

Take some time now to bring Maiden energy into your awareness, and feel it. Feel the energy of innocence and unconditional Love for Self and others.
Remember when you were a child enjoying your playful, curious and spontaneous adventurous spirit. When did this stop and why?

How often were you encouraged and granted the freedom to explore without restriction or limitation?

What limitations or restrictions, if any, were placed on your freedom to explore? Why? And by whom?

Looking back now, what impacts did those restrictions or limitations have on your experiences?

What were you taught about sex and sensual expression? And by whom?

Did the discussions on sex and sensual expression include feelings and emotions, love and affection, trust and loyalty?

What maiden energy is dominant for you – the natural or overwhelming maiden energies?

Are you aware of the natural maiden energy aspects in your daily life? If not, why not?

Mother Energy

The energy and essence of the *Mother* is maternal, birth energy, nurturing and nourishing, for carrying, birthing and raising children.

The energy is also innovative, creative, and giving. Mothers are the creators and caregivers with so much to contribute to the World through birthing and nurturing new projects. *Mother* energy comes from the HeartSpace, it expands outwards and can be used to bring anything into ‘being’.

Women do not have to give birth to a child to experience *Mother* energy because this energy is also expressed through creating, birthing and nurturing new experiences or projects.

When the energy of the *Mother* becomes overwhelming, she can become over-stressed and feel undervalued and physically and mentally drained.

*Take some time now to bring Mother energy into your awareness, and feel it. How does it feel?*

*Are you able to experience, feel and express your Mother energy without restriction or limitation?*
What limitations or restrictions, if any, were placed on your freedom to express Mother energy? Why? And by whom?

How often do you express your Mother energy through innovative or creative expression?

Which Mother energy is dominant for you – the natural or overwhelming mother energies?

Are you aware of the natural Mother energy characteristics in your daily life?

Matriarchal Energy

The energy of the Matriarch is that of wisdom.

This wisdom is born of her maiden and mother years and is deeply rooted in her Being from her life experiences and lessons learnt. She is grounded by her wisdom and shares her foresight and wisdom with her tribe. She is the keeper of knowledge. Sometimes she may be selective about who she deems ready and willing to accept her knowledge and guidance.

When the energy of the Matriarch becomes overwhelming, she may retreat and close herself off from her tribe.

Take some time now to bring Matriarch energy into your awareness, and feel it. How does it feel?

Are you able to experience, feel and express your Matriarch energy without restriction or limitation?

What limitations or restrictions, if any, are placed on your freedom to express Matriarch energy? Why? And by whom?

How often do you express your Matriarch energy through sharing your wisdom and knowledge?

Which Matriarch energy is dominant for you – the natural or overwhelming matriarch energies?

Are you aware of the natural Matriarch energy aspects in your daily life?

What pearls of Wisdom and Foresight are you ready to share with your Tribe?
The term *Matriarch* is also defined as ‘a woman who is the mother and head of the family’ and ‘a highly respected woman who is a mother’.

Traditionally, the *Matriarch* shares her wisdom with her daughters leaving a living legacy to her family. A seed of knowledge planted to guide daughters through their *Maiden* and *Mother* years. This knowledge continues to be nurtured to evolve and is passed down again to the next generation.

In a traditional sense, this is also how genealogy information and tribal knowledge were retained.

### Embracing our Female Archetypes or Aspects

As we go through our daily lives, it’s natural and indeed important for us to embrace each of our female archetypes or aspects. For example, wouldn’t it be nice if we could enjoy every day the innocence, fun, spontaneity and excitement of the *Maiden* child and adolescent energy; to acknowledge our dreams and aspirations, and learn from the challenges and responsibilities of our *Mother* energy. To willingly share our knowledge and wisdom with those who are open to receiving our *Matriarch* foresight and wisdom.

These are aspects of *Mana Wahine* that we are fully entitled to embrace and be proud of. Free of judgement from others who have not walked our path or experienced our personal life journey.

*As you go about your day, try to be aware of the archetype energies you are experiencing?*

*How many female archetype energies have you experienced today?*

*Which energies are more dominant – the natural or the overwhelming energies?*
CHAPTER 2

FREEDOM - my experiences, aspirations, hopes and dreams in my Maiden child and adolescent years

My story is about the most defining moments in my life that have had an impact on me and some of the life-changing decisions I’ve made, both positive and negative. These defining moments are only a reflection of the most challenging times that taught me my greatest lessons.

They are the shadows woven through the tapestry of my life. They give depth and added dimension to the vibrant colours and patterns emerging from the shadows. But they no longer define me, or who I Am.

Evolving Tapestry

My Body, Mind, Soul - my Spirit, my Vibe
My Kuia, My Koroua – my Earth, my Sky
My Dad, My Mum – my Mauri, my Mana
My Sisters, My Brothers – my Courage, my Kaha
My Spouses, My Trysts – my Loves, my Lessons
My Whanau (Family)

My mother is Māori, and a descendant of Ngati Maru ki Taranaki tribe in New Zealand, and my father is from Preston in England. Both my parents have passed away and transitioned to continue their Soul journey in the Spiritual realm. I refer to them in present tense here because I believe in the eternal life of their Soul Essence. My father transitioned in December 1987, and my mother transitioned in October 2011. They are still very much a part of my life through the lessons they have taught me, and the continued guidance I receive from them.

I was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on 11 November 1961. I am the third child of the union of my mother and father. I was a sick baby and spent the first few weeks of my life in an incubator. I wish I knew more about why I was incubated, and why I missed this early bonding with my mother at such an important time.

However, I understand there were medical reasons for the separation, and it was also normal practice in those days for babies to be separated from their mothers and placed in a nursery soon after their birth. The mother-child bonding time following the birth is so important in the imprint period of a child’s life up to seven years old.

Nowadays this beautiful bonding time is encouraged with both the mother and father enjoying skin to skin contact with their baby soon after the birth. This bonding time is so important for both the baby and parents. More important than we realise.

I have two older sisters, Barbara and Judith, and two younger brothers Paul and Michael. I also have two older brothers, Peter and Paul,
from Mum’s first marriage. We didn’t know about Peter and Paul when we were growing up. Mum never spoke about our brothers, but I feel blessed that they eventually came into my life almost twenty years ago.

Unfortunately, this is a part of Mum’s life that she never talked about or shared with us. So many missing pieces and unanswered questions. I accept now that she had her reasons and it’s not my place to judge her or the decisions she made. I never walked in her shoes.

I also have an older sister, Barbara Ann, from Dad’s first marriage in England before he joined the Navy. Sadly, his baby girl passed away from tuberculosis when she was only two years old, while Dad was at sea. He never returned to England.

Earliest Childhood Memories
My earliest childhood memories are following my Dad around the farm in Otorohanga. I remember feeding the farm animals with Dad, especially the calves and orphaned lambs. Dad would give me a bucket of warm milk. I’d put my hand in the milk and the calves would suck the milk through my fingers. The lambs were fed by bottle with a long teat, and I had to hold the bottle with two hands as the hungry lambs suckled and tugged on the bottle. I loved being on the tractor-trailer with Dad throwing out the hay for the animals while the tractor chugged along on its own. I even helped him in the slaughterhouse when he butchered sheep to feed our family. When I was a little older, Dad would give me the guts (excuse my language) and I would cut them open, empty the contents and wash them ready to be cooked for the farm dogs. Nothing went to waste. Dad was a butcher and chef by trade, so we always had fresh meat and vegetables on our family table.

I always felt like I was Daddy’s little girl and I worshiped the ground he walked on. I followed him everywhere. He was my hero.

My brother Paul was born in Otorohanga. Dad’s first-born son, our first baby brother, and the catalyst for Mum and Dad getting married so his son could carry the name. I’ve never ever felt that Paul’s arrival detracted from the relationship and love that I had with my Dad. In fact, Paul and I have always had a close relationship and I depend on him for advice and guidance, much like I did with Dad.
Starting School
After Otorohanga we moved to Te Kuiti where I started school. In those days, there was a government scheme in all the schools to encourage children to drink milk. There was concern in the post-war days that children were lacking in calcium and balanced diets. I remember having to line up at playtime for a small bottle of warm milk. I suspect this is why I don’t particularly like milk now. If I do, it has to be really cold and accompanied with a gingernut biscuit. Not sure where that combo came from?

I also remember when New Zealand changed to decimal currency. My sisters and I were given handfuls of pennies to spend, and it seemed like a lot of money because the pennies were huge. At that time, our street was being tar-sealed. I’m not sure how it happened because we were distinctly told to stay away from the trucks, but I fell into a culvert on the side of the road where the excess tar had pooled. I cried all the way home, covered in tar that took hours to get off my skin and out of my long hair. Mum and Dad were not impressed with their little tar baby!

We moved around a lot during my child and adolescent years. We lived mostly on farms around Gisborne and the East Coast in the cookhouses where Mum and Dad prepared all the meals for the shepherds and farm hands.

My favourite place was Puketawa Station in Tauwhareparae, Tolaga Bay. We moved there from Te Kuiti in the back of the furniture truck. Dad sat in front with the driver and all us kids were in the back of the truck with Mum and all the furniture. It was quite an adventure. When we needed to stop for a toilet break we would shine a torch through the small window to the cab to signal the driver to stop. At one toilet stop the driver told us we’d arrive at our new home after we cross three swing bridges. There was a small window in the roof of the truck and we all lay on our backs counting the top of the bridges as we crossed them.

Such happy childhood memories.

It was a good life in the country with all the animals and plenty of space to be free and adventurous. We’d spend our days building tree huts, sliding down hills on cabbage tree leaves, swinging on the bush
ELAINE LEES

vines, hunting possums with our fox terrier, Rua, collecting mushrooms and watercress, and riding horses. We would disappear for hours on the farm without a care in the world. Sometimes we’d annoy Danny, one of the shepherds, while he was breaking-in or shoeing the horses. He would get so angry and yell at us to ‘bugger off or I’ll bloody skin you alive!’ and we’d run away laughing.

I loved the cattle-droving times, watching Danny and the other shepherds round up all the cattle and prepare for the drove to the stockyards. It was just like the cowboy movies, with the shepherds wearing long oilskin trench coats and cowboy hats, skilfully controlling the horses with one hand on the reins and the other waving and cracking the whips. Dad used to help with the dogs and I watched as he whistled and yelled instructions to the dogs just like they did on the TV program, Country Calendar.

I used to wish I could ride with the cattle drovers but our horse, Nobby, was lame in one leg and could barely walk. Stubborn as a mule she was too! My sisters and I would try to catch her by enticing her with handfuls of grass, apples or carrots, and it was always a mission. But Mum and Dad would just call or whistle to her and she’d just amble on over to them and let them put the bridle on.

Mum and Dad both had a special gift with animals.

I’d get up early in the mornings and go sit with Dad when he milked the cow, and sometimes he’d let me give it a try. We’d help Mum feed the chickens and our two pet piglets, that I suspect eventually ended up as roast pork on our table. We were miles away from anywhere and our groceries were delivered by truck. Sometimes my sisters and I would go through other people’s groceries and take the fake tattoos out of their Chesdale cheese packets! I still remember the TV advertisement for Chesdale cheese – ‘there’s much better value in Chesdale, it never fails to please’. The cartoon characters in the TV ads dressed in black singlets and gumboots were a true reflection of the farm staff we knew. I loved those cheese segments wrapped in tin foil; they were a treat that I looked forward to on delivery days.

Our telephone was the old-style phone where you picked up the earpiece from the cradle, cranked a handle, and spoke into the mouthpiece on the wooden box. Sometimes I’d sit and listen to conver-
Emerging From The Shadows

I used to love lambing time too and watching lambs being born. But it made me sad to see the lambs getting their tails cut off. I still remember how protective the ewes were of their lambs, and sometimes it was our job to keep them away from the shepherds during the docking. The rewards came later when we cooked the lambs’ tails on the open fire, wrapping them in bits of newspaper so we didn’t burn our fingers while we ate them. There was usually a group of us from neighbouring farms, all sitting around the fire at night fighting over who got the next lamb’s tail, and dancing around the fire like little Cherokee Indians.

Now and again we’d take a trip into Gisborne, the big city. Mum would dress us in old clothes for the ride in the back of the Landrover over dusty, winding country roads. Sometimes, Dad would stop to remove a dead animal off the road or pull out a ragwort bush he’d spotted. We’d always stop at the Kaiti Mall for a cleanup and change into our good clothes.

Another exciting adventure for us kids!

I loved our family life in the country. Far away from the temptations and restrictions of city life. My sisters and I went to Tauwhareparae country school with one classroom and two teachers, a husband and wife team.

I have such happy memories of those times on Puketawa and Ihungia Station in Te Puia Springs.

After Puketawa, we moved to a farm in Ngatapa, in Gisborne. I remember going with Dad and Mum and the shepherds to one of the shearing sheds way out in the hills. We had to go by horseback and Landrover with all the supplies for the duration. I enjoyed exploring the shearing sheds and watching the shearsers and fleecos doing their
work. Mum would bring the scones and jam, and everyone drank tea from enamel cups. Everything tasted different back then with a rustic flavour from cooking on open fires. My Mum could cook anything and managed to make a meal out of next to nothing sometimes.

My First Near-Death Experience

When I was about five years old, Mum took us swimming at the pool on the property we worked on in Ngatapa. The shallow end of the pool was separated from the deep end with netting. The deep end was about six foot deep, and I normally stayed in the shallow part. However, this particular day, I remember watching my sisters playing with a large rubber ring, an old inner tyre tube. Barb and Judy were floating along with the tube in an upright position like a tunnel, and I wanted to have a turn. They were closer in age and spent a lot of time doing things together, and I often felt a wee bit jealous and left out. Just normal sibling rivalry though, nothing major.

I don’t remember the details of how this all transpired, but I do remember getting into the big pool trying to copy what they were doing with the tyre tube.

My next memory that remains as clear to me today as it was then, was slipping through the tube and slowly sinking to the bottom of the pool. I don’t remember feeling any fear or panic. I felt myself leave or separate from my body and watched myself sinking to the bottom of the pool. It was like slow motion, a calm and peaceful feeling. I was wearing a dark blue swimsuit with a seersucker top that had a little skirt attached that flowed from my hips. I could see the skirt rising and swaying in the water as I lay at the bottom of the pool.

I watched as my Dad dove towards me, and his fingertips got hold of my skirt and I floated to the top with him. It was like watching a slow-motion movie on a big screen. I watched as Dad and other people were reviving me next to the pool. The next thing I remember is lying on the ground vomiting water and food, with Dad and Mum and strangers gathered around me.

We had eaten luncheon sausage and salad with boiled eggs for lunch that day. To this day I don’t like luncheon and I’m not a fan of salads.
I never ate eggs again until I was an adult with my own children. The thought of any of those foods used to make me feel nauseous. Every time I see luncheon sausage, I think about that experience, but the memories aren’t fearful. Quite the opposite, actually.

Anyway, the doctor came and examined me. Apparently, I was lucky to be alive because I’d been under the water for quite some time. I’ve often wondered why Mum never jumped into the pool to save me? I don’t believe at all that she did this intentionally; it’s just something I’ve pondered over the years. Instead, she sent Barb and Judy to get Dad, who also waved down some people driving by? Looking back, I don’t remember a time, even at the beach, where Mum came into the water with us. Perhaps, she had a water phobia. *I wish I knew.*

I remember the doctor telling Mum not to let me sleep for a few hours due to shock. So, I was put to bed propped up with a few pillows, and Mum sat with me for a while keeping me awake. I felt kind of special because people came to visit and brought me presents. One present was a doll with long golden hair that I’d spend hours brushing and styling. After a while I was left on my own, but I could hear Mum and Dad with the visitors in the kitchen. I was so frightened that I might go to sleep and not wake up without my Mum or Dad there to keep me awake. I felt scared and alone.

This was my first of two near-death experiences, and I often wonder if this was the beginning of my Spiritual journey and interest in metaphysical teachings.

**Moving to the City**

After Ngatapa we moved to Patutahi and my sisters and I went to the local school. This is where I had my first experience of the “Murder House”, the dentist. At first, I was excited when the nurse came to the classroom and called my name. I was so impressed with her pristine white uniform, nurse’s cap, and red cape. She looked so official and professional. My excitement soon turned to fear after an uncomfortable and scary experience with the instruments and drill in the murder house. Even the little butterfly the nurse made from dental swabs and
gauze didn’t pacify me. I would cringe every time I saw her in the school
grounds. I’d try and anticipate the days she’d come to our classroom and
pretend to be sick, so I could stay home. It didn’t occur to me that I’d
still be on the hit list the next day.

This is definitely one of my childhood fears that still affects me as
an adult. I won’t let the dentist do any dental work without an injection
to numb everything!

We lived two streets back from the Patutahi Hotel. We could
actually see the hotel from our house. This is where my first memories
started in relation to the effects of alcohol on our family life. The hotel
was already familiar to me because it was one of the pubs that Mum and
Dad had previously stopped at on one of our family outings.

Looking back now I can see and understand that this was a big
transition for all of our family. Mum and Dad had to take regular jobs
and life was quite different to living on the farms. I can’t remember
where Dad worked, but Mum had a cleaning job at the hotel. Not good.
The temptation of alcohol got the better of her sometimes.

The freedom and space we enjoyed as kids on the farm was now
restricted, and new rules were introduced to keep us safe, I guess.

After Patutahi we moved to the city, Gisborne. We lived at Number
8 Pickering Street in Kaiti, in a brand-new State Advance House (which
I thought was pretty cool).

Soon after we moved there our baby brother, Michael, was born. I
remember Dad taking us to the hospital to visit Mum and Michael. I
still remember how excited I felt as I admired him through the window
in the nursery. Mum had to have a caesarean for Michael’s birth, so she
needed extra help when they came home. I loved helping Mum look
after our baby brother. As he got older and Mum would growl him, I’d
sit on the floor and cry with him, and get angry at Mum for upsetting
him. He was my little shadow.

When Michael was about two or three years old, we walked to the
shop to pick up a loaf of Sunday bread. The aroma of the freshly baked
bread, crusty on the outside and fluffy soft on the inside was so irresist-
able that Michael and I started picking at the bread on our way home.
We ate nearly half of the soft fluffy bread, and the rest of the loaf was
ruined when it started to rain.
Emerging From The Shadows

It amazes me now to think of the freedom we were able to enjoy as kids. Where our parents didn’t have to worry so much about us walking to the corner dairy or school. Where everyone in the neighbourhood knew where you lived, knew your parents, and watched out for each other. Where kids could walk to school with all the other kids, kick stones, jump in puddles, kick a ball, swap lunches. All the fun stuff.

How times have changed. What effect does this have on our kids today? Not being able to enjoy the simple joys of expressing their curiosity, freedom and spontaneity without so many restrictions and limitations placed on them to keep them safe in a fear-based society.

We lived opposite Waikirikiri School, and I enjoyed school as a child, and I especially loved writing stories and poetry. My favourite books were *Winnie the Pooh*. Every chance I got, I would sit in the Gisborne Library for ages just reading those books over and over again. The first badge I got at Brownies was my Writing Badge. I was so proud of myself as I sewed it on to the sleeve of my Brownie uniform. I wrote about dinosaurs and how they became extinct by the great floods. The leader’s comments referred to ‘my great imagination’, which confused me a little because I believed it was a true story!

Saturday mornings were my favourite time of the week. Dad would get up really early in the morning and go clean the butcher shop where he worked, Stacey’s Butchery, right beside the Town Clock in the main street of Gisborne. The shop was owned by two brothers, Bruce and Sid Stacey. Sometimes I’d go and help him.

Dad would always bring something special home for our family’s traditional Saturday cooked breakfasts. Crumbed lamb chops were my favourite smothered with homemade mint sauce, and tomatoes out of our garden. After breakfast, Mum and Dad would help us get ready for Brownies and marching or whatever activity we were involved with. Dad would polish my Brownie badge with Brasso until it shone so bright I could see myself in it. Both my sisters were in marching and Dad would paint their boots white as white and lace them up as perfect as perfect could be.

The boys (as Dad affectionately referred to Paul and Michael) were groomed for soccer, Dad’s favourite sport. I loved going to the local soccer games with Dad. Not so much because I liked the game, but because he’d buy me treats. FA Soccer finals were a big night in our
house and we’d often camp out in the lounge with an array of yummy food that Dad would make for the big game.

Dad also took me to the horse races with him, and we’d go to the birdcage to have a look at the horses, so I could pick one for the next race. I’d always pick the friskiest horse because I loved its energy, and sometimes Dad would place a small bet for me.

Life was so good. Dad, Mum and five happy, healthy kids. A normal family. Happy girl, happy Me!

Saturdays were also housework and baking days. Mum was pretty strict with me and my sisters and we had to learn to cook and keep a clean house. She taught us how to cook without recipes, knit and sew without patterns, and we’d do tapestry with pieces of sugar sacks that Mum would frame with strips of material cut from old clothing. She was really resourceful.

Mum was also naturally gifted musically and could play many instruments ‘by ear’ without music sheets. I have memories of Mum playing ukulele, guitar, piano, banjo, and piano accordion. *I wish I knew* where and how she learnt to do all these things. My sister Barb was gifted musically as well and learnt quite quickly to play our old piano ‘by ear’ without music sheets. Just like Mum.

On weekends, our friends would be playing outside calling us out to play but we always had to finish our work first. It was real work, cleaning walls and ceilings, using newspaper and methylated spirits to clean windows, doing the laundry in the old wringer machines, hanging out washing and ironing clothes, everything!! There were no fancy Spray ‘n’ Wipe cleaning products in those days. And Mum always worked alongside us making sure we done everything properly.

Mum was the distant and disciplinarian parent, and Dad was the soft and affectionate one. Looking back now I can see that both of my sisters and I learnt some valuable survival lessons from Mum. Our lives have often forced us to be resourceful and creative with the limited resources we had. I still have that discipline of ‘no play until your work is done’. Even now as an independent adult I cannot leave the house without making the bed and making sure the house is clean and tidy. Sometimes I challenge myself to leave the bed unmade and not worry about the housework, but it doesn’t happen very often.
Both Mum and Dad had green thumbs and we probably had the best vegetable garden in the street. I didn’t inherit this gift, but both my sisters did. It was Mum and Dad’s happy place and they’d spend hours tending to their gardens. Mum would often knock on the kitchen window and growl us as we raced around the garden leaping over her shrubs like hurdles. And that’s how I got the nickname “Leepy Lees” from our friends in the neighbourhood. Almost every part of our lawn was covered in plants and shrubs that Mum nurtured and grew from cuttings taken from other people’s gardens. I swear she could shove a stick in the ground and it would grow. Sometimes I’d just sit in the vegetable garden eating the peas and talking to Dad. I loved these special times with my Dad.

We were really lucky as kids; we always had fresh meat and vegetables. Both Mum and Dad were great in the kitchen. Mum could make a meal out of nothing and Dad was a chef, so we had gourmet meals from time to time. My siblings and I are all pretty handy in the kitchen, including my brothers.

We lived in a normal neighbourhood with kids outside playing on the road, riding bikes, hopscotch, marbles and bottle tops, bull-rush, and go-carts we made ourselves. Happy family, fun times.

Dad loved tinkering around with old cars; it was his other ‘happy place’. Bruce and Sid Stacey had a huge garage and workshop full of old cars and car parts, and I’d often go there with Dad on the weekends. We used to have an Armstrong Siddeley, twin cab ute, with the old heavy suicide doors that opened from front to back. The large bonnet of the ute seemed longer than the cab and trailer and looked a bit odd to me.

I remember going to the shop with Dad one Sunday to get the Sunday bread and paper. I always wanted to go so I could get the children’s activity page out of the paper before anyone else. I was in such a hurry to remove the page I didn’t close the door properly, and it opened as we were travelling home. As I grabbed for the door handle, the weight of the big suicide door pulled me out of the ute and onto the road. Another day or two convalescing in Mum and Dad’s bed.

The ute was good for our family outings but none of us kids liked being seen in it. I remember Dad leaving for work on frosty mornings trying to start the ute with the old crank handle. It was hilarious to
watch from behind the curtains, especially when he started swearing and
cursing in his pommie accent when the ute wouldn’t start. When he
finally got it started he’d come inside for a jug of warm water to defrost
the windscreen, and I’d run giggling to take his place in bed with Mum.

He loved those old cars but us kids hated them. We would rather
walk to places in pouring rain than be seen in his ‘old bombs’. If we had
to go in the car we’d insist on being dropped off way down the road from
where we were going. How embarrassing!

I remember one Christmas when my sisters and I got bikes. They
were recycled bikes that Dad had obviously put a lot of love, time and
effort into. Barb and Judy were at college at the time, so he had put
carriers and saddlebags on their bikes for all their schoolbooks. I thought
they were pretty cool. My bike had a basket strapped to the front of the
handlebars. I was so embarrassed, and I’d take it off whenever Dad wasn’t
around, so I didn’t hurt his feelings.

Dad always tried to make birthdays and Christmas a little special
for us but there were times I’d see him crying when he couldn’t give us
much.

Now and again, Mum would pack a picnic lunch and we’d do
family road trips up the East Coast. Four kids squashed in the back
seat and our baby brother on Mum’s knee. Sometimes we’d have a
ukulele, and we’d all be clapping and singing forgetting for a moment the embarrassment of being seen in the ‘old bomb’. I loved those happy family times.

Sometimes these trips turned into ‘pie n chippies’ days outside a pub somewhere along the coastal route. Usually it would be a pub with a little park or the beach where we could play. I swear we’ve sat in a car in every pub car park on the East Coast of the North Island of New Zealand!

I remember travelling along with my eyes squished closed and my fingers tightly crossed as we approached the pubs, praying that we wouldn’t stop. ‘Please, please, please don’t stop’. My heart would sink if we stopped at a pub because I knew we’d be there for a while. Now and again Dad would bring us pies and drinks, or chippies and drinks.

The worst part though, there would most likely be a drunken argument and fight to follow.

Looking back now, the ‘pie n chippies’ days were normal for a lot of families like ours. Interestingly enough, the pubs became landmarks for us, ‘You know that motel just past the Tatapouri Hotel’, or ‘the dairy on the corner by the DB Hotel’. Funny that!

The Effects of Alcohol on Family Life

A little while after we moved to Pickering Street, the DB Hotel was built down the road. That hotel changed everything! Alcohol became the game-changer, and our family life was never the same again. Mum and Dad used to have a drink now and again when we lived in the country or on our family road trips, but now it was more often. Dad would stop at the pub for his traditional jug of beer after work, and Mum started going to the pub with her mates while Dad was at work.

I hated how Mum and Dad would change when they were drinking. A real Jekyll and Hyde transformation.

Alcohol-fuelled arguments and fights soon became common in our house. I used to get so scared, and sometimes I’d just hide in the wardrobe and cry. Even as a child, I worried about what the neighbours and my friends thought about the arguments and fights, and I often felt ashamed and embarrassed about what went on in our home.
Those same feelings of fear, sadness, shame and embarrassment have regularly returned in my adult life.

The days when Dad would leave the car for Mum were the worst. They would start off really exciting. Mum would load all us kids into the car and take us for a ride to Makaraka to buy the best ever pies and donuts for breakfast. Sometimes she’d take us home to get ready for school, and other days she would drive to her friend’s place and we’d wait around all day while she was drinking. We all knew that Dad would be angry when we got home, and we often had to lie to him about where we’d been.

The arguments and fights escalated. Another fight, another escape to the wardrobe, another sleepless night, another bout of fear and sadness.

Through my child eyes and Mind, I always blamed Mum for all the fighting and arguing. Maybe because I had such a close connection with Dad, and he was my hero. He could do nothing wrong in my child eyes and Mind.

My sister Barb learnt how to drive when she was at intermediate school. One day, Mum left me in the car outside the dairy on the corner by the DB Hotel (seriously). She told me to wait for Barb to come by on her way home from intermediate school and tell her to drive the car home. So, I did.

Barb and I got home and there was no one else there. When it started getting late, we knew Dad would be angry when he got home from work, so we grabbed a couple of blankets and went across the road to hide at the Kindergarten. It began to get cold and dark, so we decided to go home and hide in the corner behind the piano in the lounge. The piano was obviously too heavy to move so we had to climb over it. Well, I fell asleep and started snoring, and Dad found us! He was livid! He was mostly angry because we were hiding from him and lying to cover up for Mum.

The Separation

Mum and Dad eventually separated, and Dad left our family home. I felt like my whole world had fallen apart. I was Daddy’s little girl. He was my hero, and now he was gone. In my child Mind I thought
I’d done something wrong to make him leave, like all the lies I had to tell him.

I felt abandoned and so sad without him. Even at that young age, I was trying to reconcile my internal world of confusion and sadness, with the changes in my external world.

No more Dad, no more traditional Saturday family breakfasts or Sunday roasts, no more family outings, no more sitting with Dad in the vegetable garden, no more soccer games or horse racing days, no more happy family.

Life as I knew it had changed dramatically, and that’s when I started to resent Mum.

I blamed her for everything!

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**Childhood Memories**

*My Dad, My Mum*

*Two sisters, two brothers*

*And in the middle is Me*

*Happy memories*

*From childhood years*

*Of Saturday breakfasts*

*And soccer with Dad*

*Sisters baking, Me, Jude & Barb*

*Girl Guides & Marching*

*Mum’s rice pudding*

*And Sunday roasts*

*Family picnics, beach nights*

*Dad’s vintage cars*

*Our recycled bikes*

*Paul’s jeep, Mike’s trike*

*Hopscotch and Marbles*

*Bottle-tops and bulrush*

*Go carts and skates*

*Bruises and grazes*
Fearless and carefree
Happy girl, happy Me!!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
Two sisters, two brothers
Our Mother and Me
Daddy’s gone?
I’m so confused
Tears and sadness
Anger and pain
Fear and madness
Come back Daddy
I promise I’ll be good
I won’t answer back
I won’t tell lies
I miss you Daddy
Please come back
I have questions!
No-one’s listening
Someone please explain this to me!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
Two sisters, two brothers
Our Mother and Me
Who is this stranger?
She’s not my Mum
Lost to the drinking
And adult fun
Rattling beer crates
Pubs and parties
And drunk bludging mates
Fuck off, I hate you
Embarrassed, ashamed
Family life gone
Abandoned again
Two sisters, two brothers
But oh so alone
I have questions!
No-one’s listening
Someone please explain this to me!

Daddy visits
Invited in
But stands at the door
Not the same, anymore
A box of meat
A cheque for Mum
To feed us kids
Not the tills at the pub
I miss you Daddy
Please come back
Daddy no! Please don’t go
I’m sorry, I’ll be good!
But why Daddy, why?
What about us?
Our family, please!
I have questions!
No-one’s listening
Someone please explain this to me!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream
Two sisters, two brothers
And me, home alone
Mum went out
And didn’t come home
The paper reported
A car hit a pole
Mum's in hospital
And Dad comes home
But I still feel so alone
Money's tight
Another fight
And Mum's gone again
Jesus Christ! What the fuck?
I have questions!
No-one's listening
Someone please explain this to me!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
Two sisters, one brother?
My Daddy and Me
The stranger, my Mum
Took my baby brother away
Another branch broken
From our family tree
I'm so sorry Daddy
But I need to know
Where's Michael Daddy?
Why did he go?
My heart's breaking
Lips trembling
Tears rolling
Everyone's leaving?
So many questions!
No-one's listening!
Someone please explain this to me!!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
My Daddy, one brother, and Me
Barb n Judy now gone
Living lives of their own
Empty spaces, a void
Then a glimmer of hope
We’re Auckland bound
One brother and Me
Together again
Paul, Michael and Me
But life repeats
With fighting and drink
Protecting my brothers
From Mum’s jealous lover
I’m so full of hate
I don’t give a fuck!
So many questions!
No-one’s listening
Someone please explain this to me!!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
One sister, two brothers
Our Mum and Me
A flat in the Hutt
Next door to a pub
A constant reminder
Of booze & drunks
Dad’s still in Gizzie
Holding on to a dream
Of a family home
Never to be
A fragmented family
Broken as fuck!
So many questions!
No-one’s listening!
Someone please explain this to me!!
And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
My Dad, one brother and Me
My teenage years
Without my Mum
Parties and boys
Cars and rum
Girls college, bitch fights
Hated school, hated life
Left at 15 and got a job
My tools of trade
A bucket and mop
But who gives a fuck?
It is what it is
So many questions!
No-one’s listening!
Someone please explain this to Me!

And then I woke up
Is this just a dream?
My Dad, my Mum, two brothers and Me
Saturday soccer
Sunday roasts
A fragmented family
Together at last
Will never forget
The tears I cried
When I finally saw joy
In my Daddy’s eyes
A reconciliation
For Mum and Dad
It didn’t last
They’re better apart
So many questions
No-ones listening
I was about ten or eleven years old when Mum and Dad separated. Prior to the separation I have memories of happy family times, picnics, beach days, day trips up the coast, Saturday family breakfasts, Sunday roasts with pudding, baking day Saturdays with my sisters, and all the normal kid's stuff. Happy times enjoying the natural adventurous innocence and spontaneity of being a Maiden-child.

After Dad left, Mum started drinking more and going to the pub with her drinking mates. Our house became the party house, and I remember a sense of fear and dread when we'd be woken by the sound of car doors closing and the rattle of the beer crates. I would hide under the blankets, my heart pumping, crying for Daddy to come back home and make things right.

I shared a bedroom with my two little brothers, and our room was next to the lounge. My bed was against the wall where the piano was in the lounge. I can still hear the thumping sound of the pedals setting the rhythm of the music while strangers sang 'Ten Guitars. And there were always drunk arguments and fights.

My two older sisters would come into our room and stay with us to keep the strangers out of our room. Sometimes Mum would come and take my sisters into the kitchen to cook for the drunks in our home. I resented the fact that the food that Dad dropped off for us every Friday evening was feeding strangers. My little brothers would hop into bed with me and I'd keep watch on the door. It didn't seem to matter to Mum that we felt unsafe, or we had school the next day. I hated those times. Life had changed dramatically, and I cried a lot from what I experienced and saw through my child eyes and Mind.

In the morning after a party, I'd go into the lounge and look for money left behind by the drunks. Some mornings there'd be nothing, other times there was enough to buy lollies, or Four 'n' Twenty mince pies for me and my mate, Hawea, on the way to our intermediate school.
Hawea lived next door and her mother was one of Mum’s drinking mates. Sometimes we’d have to walk to school in the rain, and if we got too wet we’d get our pie from the dairy and just go home because nobody seemed to care if we didn’t go to school.

Mum would change dramatically when she was drinking, and I hated it when she was drunk. She could be quite nasty and argumentative at times. We’d quite often come home to strangers in the house, and I hated having to go around them all and give them a kiss. We also had to call them aunty or uncle, and I didn’t particularly enjoy that, especially when they were drinking. And they weren’t my real family.

Dad would come and visit us every Friday night and bring a box of meat and a cheque for $25.00 for groceries. A lot of money at that time. He would come to the back porch and I’d be so excited and happy to see him. He never came inside the house because he didn’t want to see Mum. Mum was usually at the pub when Dad came around and we lied to him about where she was, but he knew. I hated that back porch.

One Sunday afternoon Dad arrived and came to the front door. He asked where Mum was, and we lied, again. Mum had gone out Friday night and not come home. We told Dad she had just left to visit a friend down the road. I can still see the look of anger and sadness in his eyes as he growled us for lying. He had read in the paper that Mum had been in a car accident. The car driven by one of her drunken mates crashed into a power pole. Luckily, she wasn’t seriously injured. That was the catalyst that bought Dad home, and Mum left soon after she was discharged from hospital.

No more cars and rattling beer crates. No more drunken parties. No more thumping piano pedals. No more lying. No more Mum. So, my sisters and I took over the mother responsibilities of looking after the house and each other, while Dad worked hard to provide for us.

And that’s when the adventurous innocence and spontaneity of my childhood really became locked away inside of me. I was only eleven years old with adult responsibilities that denied me of the innocence, fun, and spontaneity of my childhood. And I guess it was the same for Barb and Judy, but we never really talked about it. Barb and Judy were closer in age, so they spent most of their time together doing big girl stuff, and I suspect that sometimes I was a bit of a nuisance to them.
I could never understand why Mum left. In my child and adolescent eyes and Mind, Dad was a good husband and provider. Always worked hard for his family, we had everything we needed, and life seemed happy before alcohol spoilt everything.

Perhaps Mum thought we would be better off without her, and her gypsy spirit and need for freedom took her away to find herself and her happiness.

_I wish I knew_ how her mistreatment in her childhood contributed to the decision she made to leave us.

My Maiden-adolescent Experiences

Memories of my transition years from maiden-child to maiden-adolescent are mostly just a blur now. I feel like I’ve tried to bury all the sad memories and pain along with my adventurous innocence and spontaneity of the child within. In doing that I’ve lost happy memories of my adolescence as well.

A poignant memory of my maiden-child years was a discussion I had with Dad when I was about eleven or twelve years old. He told me that education was not as important for my sisters and I, as it was for my brothers. He said that my sisters and I would get married and have husbands to support us. Our role was to be a good wife and mother, to keep the house clean, look after the kids, and have dinner ready when our husbands come home from work. Education was more important for my brothers because they were expected to get good jobs to support their family. He also told me how important it was to save yourself for your husband, to be a virgin when you got married. Sex before marriage was taboo. There was no mention of love and affection, or trust and loyalty, or how important these values were.

I don’t recall Dad using the word “sex”. He talked about virginity, and “not sleeping with” a man before marriage, and how important it was to wear white on your wedding day. A sign of a virgin bride. He said a man would not respect a woman who wasn’t a virgin when they married.
Neither Mum nor Dad ever talked to me about puberty or sex in an educational sense. And they never referred to parts of the body by their proper names. Probably why I have difficulty actually saying those two words myself, penis and vagina. Mum and Dad would say ‘diddle’ and ‘birdy’. Mum used to refer to menstruation (or our period) as ‘pain’. She’d say things like ‘when you get your “pain”’. Just a sign of the times, I guess.

Mum and Dad didn’t seem comfortable speaking about things like sex, puberty and menstruation. I’d go so far as to say that when Dad did speak about sex he made it sound wrong, bad or even dirty. I learnt about those important things from school, my sisters, friends and their mothers, or books and magazines.

Funny really, because when Paul and Michael were teenagers it was okay for them to be thinking about ‘sowing their wild oats’ as Dad would say. Quite a contrast to the messages I was told, and I guess my sisters as well.

These messages from Dad had a huge impact on how my life evolved. I remember a time in Gisborne when there was a child predator exposing himself to young girls around schools and shops. I saw him three times. Once when I came out of a dairy on my way home from netball he was parked near the shop masturbating in the car. I didn’t know or understand what he was doing, but I somehow knew it was wrong. I remember the disgusting look on his face when he got my attention. The experience scared the crap out of me, and I ran back into the shop and stayed in there until he’d gone. I never told anyone. Not the shopkeeper nor my Dad.

Another time my little brother Paul and I were walking to the shop and took a short cut behind the Kaiti Mall. It was night time and I saw someone walking towards us. As he passed us he shone a torch on his penis, and we just ran and kept running until a friend came along on his pushbike and doubled us home. Never told anyone except my friends.

The third time I was with friends up Kaiti Hill. We were all climbing up a bank when the same pervert I saw near the dairy came and parked at the bottom of the bank and exposed himself. I never told anyone, and I’m not sure if my friends did either.
I still remember the car he drove, a teal coloured 1950s Vauxhall. He was probably in his mid-thirties with shoulder length dark greasy hair, slicked back behind his ears. A real sleaze.

These are the sort of things any child should be able to tell their parents. But I didn't. I thought I'd be in trouble. Not really sure why I felt like that.

The traditional values of being a good wife and mother were instilled in us in our home environment throughout our childhood. My sisters and I were cooking, cleaning, sewing, and knitting from a very early age. We were always being groomed to be a good traditional wife and mother in preparation for a traditional husband who would support us. However, we were unintentionally forced into taking on the responsibilities of the mother role at a young age, when Mum left.

Mum surfaced now and again, and we spent time together, but it was always clouded by sadness and alcohol related incidents with her alcoholic boyfriends.

Between the ages of eleven and fifteen years old I spent most of my time with Dad. He worked six days a week in two jobs sometimes and always did his best for us, but he was different. Carrying all the burden of five kids and working two jobs took its toll on him. Dad was also a very proud man and I believe our family situation was a source of great shame and humiliation for him. I know this because when he was drinking, he expressed everything that he'd bottled up.

Mum's restless gypsy spirit took her all over New Zealand. Now and again we'd get a letter from her telling us she was coming to see us or sending us money or presents. We hardly saw her, nor the presents or money. Just broken promises. Sometimes I'd write to her and letters were returned stamped ‘Returned to Sender’. I was her daughter, I had a name, I wasn’t just the ‘Sender’! It hurt but mostly I pretended I didn’t really care.

I missed having a mother, but I didn’t miss her. I felt like she had abandoned us, and I was so angry with her.
My Fragmented Family

When I was about twelve years old, both our sisters Barbara and Judy left home. Barb went to live with her boyfriend’s family, and I think Judy and her boyfriend went to Wellington with Mum. More branches missing from our family tree.

For a while it was just me Dad and the boys. I remember Dad taking us to Tolaga Bay for a weekend. We stayed in a little hut at the motor camp by the wharf. We collected pipis on the beach to use for fish bait, and spent some happy hours fishing off the wharf with fishing line wound around a stick. We cooked on an open fire with a steel plate and told ghost stories by torchlight in our little hut.

Me, Dad and the boys getting on with life.

Dad worked at the Chalet Rendezvous restaurant on Wainui Beach on the weekends, and I’d work alongside him serving up the meals, making seafood cocktails, entrees and desserts, and washing dishes. Dad was a typical chef and used every pot and utensil in the kitchen, so there were heaps of his dishes to do as well as the dishes from the restaurant! But mostly I just enjoyed being with my Dad. ‘The boys’ as Dad affectionately referred to Paul and Michael, played and slept in the restaurant owners lounge.

Dad would arrange for one of the waitresses to pick us up on her way to work. I remember always struggling to find something tidy or decent for us to wear. We really didn’t have much, and I would use my sewing skills to try and fashion something out of what we had.

One Christmas, the Chalet owners bought me a present, a brand-new dress, for helping Dad in the kitchen. It was a beautiful dress, a size too small but I squeezed into it anyway. I feared that if I gave it back to them to change for a larger size, I wouldn’t get it back. I’d never had anything so beautiful and brand new before.

It was that Christmas that Dad agreed to let the boys and I go to Dunedin to have Christmas with Mum. Mum had paid for the boys and I to fly to Dunedin and spend Christmas with her. She promised us that she was living on her own and she wasn’t with her alcoholic boyfriend Dave anymore. I was more excited about our first plane trip and the new clothes Dad brought us, rather than the holiday.
The night before we left, the boys and I were outside playing, and Dad was at work. The neighbourhood kids and I were having bike races and I crashed into my little brother Michael on the footpath. The impact was so bad that it caused a compound fracture to his leg and his broken bones had pierced through his skin. It was awful. I picked him up and sat him on a power box outside our house. I felt so bad and cried with him until the ambulance arrived and took him to hospital. He had to spend a few weeks in hospital and missed out on the trip to Dunedin.

I still have a copy of the letter that Dad wrote to the editor of the *Gisborne Herald* about the rules around visiting hours, and the problems he had getting a wheelchair to take Michael for walks to the cafeteria to buy him some Christmas treats. Looking back, it was a difficult time for both Dad and Michael.

Paul and I flew to Dunedin the next day, and Mum and Dave picked us up at the airport. Not a happy girl! I hated him. Our time in Dunedin was mostly spent at a motor camp where we were evicted from a motel room into a small room above a shop, because the rent hadn’t been paid. There were no cooking facilities so Mum cooked food in a roasting dish on a bar heater turned on its side. Yes, my Mum was certainly resourceful. We didn’t have a Christmas lunch or dinner, so I never got to wear my new dress.

More drinking and fighting, and more resentment from me. The police were called to one of the fights and asked me what had happened. I told the officer about their behaviour and the things we had witnessed. He basically told me I was just a child who should stay out of adult business. Adults! Are you serious? They were behaving like children while I was being responsible for me and my brother!

I wasn’t sad to leave, I couldn’t wait to get back home to Dad.

Just to add salt to my already festering wounds of resentment, my luggage went missing on the flight home. All my new clothes and shoes, and other small treasures I owned just vanished, gone! My brand-new dress from the restaurant owners, never worn, never to be seen again.

Anyway, Dad claimed insurance for the missing items, plus a few more things that he added to the list to try to recoup the full cost of what I’d lost. He gave me some of the insurance money because I needed new
school shoes. I went out and bought a new pair of sports shoes instead for netball and athletics. I loved my sports and I hated school. Dad was ropable, and never trusted me with money again.

I guess this is where my rebelliousness against Dad started. For him it was a trust issue, but for me it was making a decision on something that I wanted to make me happy.

I can’t remember when or how this happened, but my world caved in again. Mum came back and took our baby brother away with her. I was devastated, and I resented her even more. She’d taken Michael and left the town where we lived, and we had no idea where they’d gone. Perhaps it had something to do with the accident and his broken leg.

My family was broken into fragmented pieces, again.

Another letter in the post, and eventually we started to reconnect with Mum again.

Paul and I went to Auckland to spend the school holidays with her. We were so excited to be seeing Michael again. Mum had sent us a photo of Michael and he had grown so much and started school.

Dad agreed to let us go and put us on a bus from Gisborne to Auckland. Mum promised us again that it would be just her and Michael. I remember stopping somewhere for lunch and buying lunch for Paul and I. I made the mistake of buying Paul a raspberry spaceman drink. The sickly-sweet drinks came in plastic bottles shaped like a spaceman. Not one of my best adolescent decisions because soon after he finished it, he projectile vomited it all over himself and the seat on the bus. What a mess!! I did the best I could to clean it up with serviettes, and newspaper and rags offered by other passengers. Needless to say, it wasn’t a pleasant trip for either of us, nor the passengers seated near us.

Anyway, we arrived at the Auckland railway station, and as the bus was approaching the bus stop we spotted Mum, Michael and her alcoholic boyfriend there to pick us up. I was so angry after our episode on the bus, and then arriving to find that Mum had lied to us again just made me want to cry. Paul and I were both disappointed, but happy to
be with Michael again. We hadn’t seen Michael for a while and he was a little shy and distant at first. Sad really. I just knew this holiday was going to be memorable for all the wrong reasons!

True to form the holiday was totally ruined by alcohol and fighting to the point where I got into a physical altercation with Mum’s alcoholic boyfriend Dave as he tried to hurt my brothers. I lunged at him and slammed his head into the doorframe, resulting in a gash to his head. I didn’t care; I just slammed the door shut behind him. I guess playing rugby and bull-rush with the guys paid off in the end.

This was the first of three physical altercations with this man that I hated with a vengeance. A twelve year old girl, physically defending my brothers from an angry, jealous drunk. I couldn’t stand the sight of him and his bullshit!

I know ‘hate’ is a strong word, but that’s how I felt at the time.

**Changing Family Dynamics**

I can’t remember exactly how this happened either, but somehow my little brothers and I ended up with Mum, my sister Judy and her husband Matt, in Wellington. We had two rooms in the Criterion Hotel in Courtney Place. I was at intermediate age then and Mum took me to live with Aunty Golly (her real name was Alamein, but everyone called her Golly) and Uncle Eric in Ngaio, and their family.

They weren’t blood relatives and I hadn’t met them before. Aunty Golly’s sister Aunty Mihi used to be one of Mum’s drinking friends in Tolaga Bay. Back then we called all adults Aunty or Uncle, out of respect. I loved my new Aunty and Uncle a lot and, even more, I loved living with them in a happy and loving family environment. It was so refreshing to live with a functional loving family. I made friends in the neighbourhood and caught the train to Raroa Intermediate School. Mum came to visit from time to time and it was nice. Looking back, I can see now that she tried to do the right thing for me.

Eventually I went back to live with Mum in Lower Hutt. It was my first year of college, and I hated being around her new alcoholic boyfriend, Graeme. I resented him too; he was just a younger version of Dave. Same MO, bludge, drink, fight! Sometimes Mum would send me
into their bedroom to get money for my train fare, and Graeme would get out of bed naked to get his wallet. Creep!

I was happy when they broke up.

We lived in the Waiinga flats on Railway Avenue, Lower Hutt, right next to the Valley Inn Hotel. Great! We couldn’t get much closer to a pub than that. It was a constant reminder of the drinking culture. My sister Judy and her husband Matt lived in the flat next door and the boys (Paul and Michael) would either stay with them, or us, depending on what was happening at the time.

I started college at Wellington High and caught the train into Wellington every day. Soon after, we all moved into a house in Tasman Street, Newtown. By then Dave was back in the picture – not sure how that happened either. The home dynamics changed up another gear with Dave, Matt and Mum drinking and arguing. Sometimes Matt would beat up on Dave, and I secretly enjoyed the fact that he got served some of his own medicine. They all worked together at the Gear Meat in Petone, and I’d go help Mum in the kitchen there from time to time.

I was a late developer and always felt different from my friends and the other girls at college who had already developed breasts and started their periods. Our uniforms were white shirts and a skirt. Bra straps were visible through the shirt so the boys at school used to ‘ping’ the girls’ bra straps. I hadn’t developed enough to even wear a bra, but I wore one of Judy’s bras anyway coz I didn’t want to be different to the other girls. But that soon changed.

Mum and Dad never talked to me about puberty or sex. I relied on what I learnt from my sisters and other girls. And I learnt a few things about anatomy and sex from the Playboy and Penthouse magazines Dave had in the house. There was nothing about love, trust and affection in those magazines!

I know that Mum always worked hard and tried to make things work for us. She had a few jobs in the time that I lived with her, but they never lasted long. But it was different in those days when there was plenty of domestic or factory jobs, you could afford to pick and choose.

Eventually, Paul and I went back to live with Dad in Gisborne, and Michael stayed with Mum, and Judy and Matt in Wellington.
My Adolescent Years with Dad

It was great when I first moved back with Dad. He bought me new uniforms for college, and a school bag that had my initials ESL printed on it in gold lettering. His friend who worked at the freezing works boarded with us, so we always had a cube steak roll in the fridge. Dad would cook me steak and eggs for breakfast every morning before he went to work. He’d also leave me lunch money, and three or four cigarettes because he didn’t want me spending my lunch money on cigarettes.

My friends would come to my house before school and we’d smoke the cigarettes and pool our money together to buy a packet on our way to school. The school bus was usually packed, and we’d weave our way to the back of the bus with all the smokers. The bus drivers gave up threatening to stop the bus because no one ever listened to them anyway.

One of my early rebellious acts against society rules.

I went to Gisborne Girls High, an all-girls college and I hated it and all the bitchiness that went with it. The only subjects I enjoyed at school were shorthand, typing and sports. I wagged all the time. The school would send letters home to report my absence and I’d intercept the mail before Dad got home and watch the flames devour the letters as I burnt them in the fireplace.

It seemed like everything and everyone, all the girls at college, were a constant reminder of what I didn’t have. A happy family, a nice home and nice things. I never went to school socials because I never had anything nice to wear, or make-up, or shoes, nothing. I was never interested in hanging with a bunch of bitchy girls. I was more comfortable hanging out with my best friend Vanessa and our mates who happened to be guys who were a little older than us. We’d spend our time hanging out at the beach, playing guitars and singing, roughing it up with the guys playing rugby and bull-rush, sneaking out, drinking rum and driving cars.

In this environment, I didn’t feel like I had to compete with girls who I perceived as being prettier or luckier than me.

Dad taught me to drive when I was fourteen years old, and I couldn’t wait to get my drivers’ license. I took the driving test on my fifteenth birthday and failed the written test by one question. I was so disappointed but managed to pass the test a week later. I felt so grown up
when I received my license (and I still have it in my little treasure trunk). I mistakenly thought that this gave me more leverage to drive Dad’s car whenever I wanted. Wrong!

Dad offered to buy me a car if I passed my school certificate exams the following year. I’d already experienced the ‘old bombs’ that Dad seemed to prefer, and I shuddered to think what he would buy for me!

When I applied for my license I had to get a copy of my birth certificate. I remember Dad sitting me down for another one of our ‘serious’ father-daughter talks. He’d had a few drinks at the time and seemed a little angry when he told me that when my birth certificate arrived it would show that I was a ‘bastard’ child. He told me that he and Mum weren’t married when my sisters and I were born, so we were all ‘bastards’. When I asked why they never married until after Paul was born he said it was more important for boys to be able to carry their father’s name. This was also one of the many times he told me how he really felt about Mum during their relationship and the reasons why he didn’t want to marry her prior to Paul’s arrival. I can’t repeat those negative feelings here because they came from an angry and hurt place in his heart fuelled by alcohol. But his words at the time reinforced my own negative feelings about Mum.

And I started to question internally his previous lecture about the importance of being a virgin bride, and the fact that I was a ‘bastard’ child.

My outlet was sports and I excelled at netball, softball and athletics, but I never trialled for representative teams because I knew Dad couldn’t afford the fees and the uniforms. I never had my Mum or my Dad cheering me on from the sidelines. They never knew how good I was.

I had two best friends, Vanessa and Liz, and I spent a lot of time with them and their families. They still had Mum and Dad, and I envied that. I have so much love and admiration for their mothers who welcomed me into their homes and became my surrogate mothers.

My friend Liz’s mother whom I called Aunty Kath was glamorous, always well groomed with beautiful clothes. She sewed and made the most beautiful dresses and clothing for her and her daughters. I used to watch her blow waving her hair, putting on her make-up, and dressing
up for her hostess job at the DB Hotel. I was mesmerised and aspired to be like her one day. There was so much love in their home, and Aunty Kath and Uncle Lou were openly affectionate with each other and their kids. I often wished they were my parents.

Vanessa’s mum, Ann, was also an inspiration and role model to me. She was always busy and worked hard for her family. Vanessa and her brother David would always tease or play tricks on their Mum, and it was hilarious sometimes. I remember Ann’s advice to me one day when I was older ‘you’re a long time dead, so you have to enjoy life while you can’. I’ve never forgotten that.

Both Kath and Ann were my role models and I’ll always be grateful for their love, guidance and support.

It was hard being a teenage girl going through puberty without my Mum, or my older sisters. Whenever I needed money for sanitary items, I’d be too scared and embarrassed to ask Dad. I’d eventually pluck up the courage and ask him for money to buy ‘my things’. ‘What things?’ he’d say. ‘You know, my things I need’ (sigh!). He’d always give me the money, or offer to go buy the items for me, and that made me feel even more embarrassed!

These moments caused me to resent Mum more for not being around when I needed her. My friends had their mothers to talk to and buy these things for them. They didn’t have to ask their fathers!

I think Dad felt sorry for me at those times, and he’d let me take the car to the dairy. I’d always go the long way and do wheelies and slides on the gravel roads. Didn’t occur to me that someone would see me and tell Dad.

Rebellious Times

My relationship with Dad changed in my adolescent years, and I continuously rebelled against him. I left to go to Wellington with Mum as his little girl and came back a young woman. I think it was hard for him to see his little girl growing up, and everything that went with it.

I was so full of anger and resentment, with low self-esteem and self-confidence. I was conflicted between having adult responsibilities of helping Dad raise my brothers, but still being treated as a child.
I resented both Mum and Dad for everything sad, bad and mad in my life, but I was no angel either. I experimented with alcohol, sniffing petrol, shoplifting, parties and taking Dad’s car for joyrides with my mates. I constantly bunked (or wagged) school. Paul went to the primary school across the road and I’d give him money to buy our lunch, and he’d bring my pie and donut home to me at lunchtime. Paul never once told on me or even threaten to tell Dad about me wagging school all the time.

Dad didn’t like me hanging out with the guys, and he started to limit what little freedom I had. And I automatically retaliated. I craved love and affection. Mum had gone, Dad and I were fighting, and I guess I responded to attention I was getting from one of the guys we hung out with.

I lost my virginity to him when I was fourteen years old, he was twenty-one. The sex was a painful, uncomfortable experience. Nothing like the sensual orgasmic sex I’d read about in Dave’s magazines. We had chemistry, but there was nothing loving or affectionate about our brief interludes. He would pick me up in the morning before school and let me drive his Mark II Zephyr. It had a manual T-shift, and I thought I was pretty cool. But I wasn’t. I was looking for love in all the wrong places.

Vanessa and I would take Dad’s car sometimes when he wasn’t home. It was a Humber 80, and I didn’t need keys because I could start the car with a screwdriver. We’d mark the road where the car was parked, scrounge around for some money for petrol, and go for joyrides out to Sponge Bay. We’d go to Roy’s Garage in Wainui to top up the petrol before we took it home. Petrol was about fifty cents a gallon at the time, and that was about all we had! Dumb move, because Dad always went to Roy’s Garage! On the way home, I’d do more ‘wheelies’ around the neighbourhood on the gravel roads, before we parked the car on the marks on the road outside my house. I thought I was pretty clever. But looking back I can see how stupid and irresponsible I was. We were so lucky we never had any accidents.

Dad eventually found out about the joy rides by taking the mileage of the car one day. I was in trouble again!

My punishment was normally more work around the house. Cleaning walls and ceilings and stripping our gas stove and cleaning it
piece by piece. Mowing lawns and weeding the garden and cleaning out
the shed. I’m sure that’s where my intense fear of spiders came from!

Dad never physically punished me, but his words cut deep wounds
inside me. ‘You’re just like your bloody mother’. Probably the worst
thing he could’ve said to me at the time, given the way I thought and
felt about Mum.

My First Love

My ‘first love’ and relationship was with Andre. We were the same age
and had known each other at our primary school in Tauwhareparae. His
parents and mine were friends back then, and we referred to them as
Aunty and Uncle, and Andre and his brothers and sisters as our cousins.
I remember being at their house when we were kids having horse races
when his older sister arrived home with her boyfriend. Her name was
Theresa, but everyone called her Honey Bunch, and her boyfriend’s
name was Billy Joe. I was so impressed. Honey Bunch and Billy Joe,
reminded me of names you’d hear in old movies. She was like a beautiful
Princess coming home with her handsome Prince, in this big flash car.
I remember the car so vividly, a cream and brown Bel Air. From that
moment, I wanted a Prince and a flash car when I grew up.

It’s funny the moments we remember and how they influence our
life. I reckon all little girls dreamt of their Prince Charming, a Golden
Carriage and living happily ever after like all the fairy tale endings.

Andre was the only guy that Dad approved of and let me go out
with. Perhaps because he knew his parents, and Andre was always
respectful to Dad. Andre lived in Ngatapa, quite a distance from me
so we would spend hours on the phone, and Dad was always giving me
grief about it. Sometimes I wished he’d just leave me alone. At least I was
home, he knew what I was doing and where I was. Where was the trust?

Sometimes I felt that Dad restricted my freedom because both my
sisters had babies at fifteen and sixteen years old. He always used to tell
me, ‘you’ll end up just like your sisters’. But I thought I knew better, and
I was going to prove him wrong!

Whenever Andre came to pick me up, Dad would give him a
full-on lecture about his expectations and my curfew. Andre always got
me home on time. Sometimes when Dad wouldn’t let me go out at night I’d sneak out anyway while he was asleep. The back door of our house was never locked at night. I’d open the back door and wait to hear Dad snoring, and sneak past his bedroom door and into my room. I did that a few times before I got caught. I was in trouble again!

It didn’t occur to me at the time that all I was doing was giving Dad more reasons to not trust me. Funny really, because all I wanted was for him to trust me.

Andre and I shared some special times together. He was my first real love and I named my first son after him, John-Paul Andre. I thought about Andre often. About twenty years ago I heard that he had terminal cancer and had died in a motorbike accident. Such a sad transition for someone who I remember as being so adventurous, with a wicked sense of humour and so full of life.

Entering the Workforce

One day, Dad was really sick and stayed home from work. I’d never known Dad to take a day off work in my life! But anyway, this just happened to be the day when another letter arrived from my school advising Dad of my continued absence. He was not happy. We had a huge argument, and I told him how much I hated college and everything that went with it.

Whenever Dad was really angry with me he’d say, ‘I should’ve left you at the bottom of that bloody swimming pool’, but I knew he didn’t mean it. I actually found it quite amusing because Dad’s English accent was more pronounced when he was angry, and it sounded quite funny.

In the end, Dad agreed to let me finish school if I got a job, so I left school at fifteen years old at the end of the school year. I didn’t even start the fifth form at college; I hated it that much and just wanted out.

When I left school in December 1976 only a month after my fifteenth birthday, Paul and I went to Wellington for the Christmas holidays and stayed with my sister Barb and her family. While I was there Mum got me a domestic job in the kitchen at Hutt Hospital. I’d only just turned fifteen but we lied about my age, so I could get the job. Mum was recuperating from a hysterectomy at the time.
I wrote to Dad to tell him I had a job, and that Paul and I would be staying in Wellington. I thought he'd be happy but forty years later I still have the letter he wrote back to me. His letter tells of how hurt he was when the boys and I left. It broke his heart. I initially thought he'd be happy to get rid of me after all the grief I'd caused him. In saying that though, I never did anything really bad or illegal. I was just mischief and pushed the boundaries now and again with my rebellious behaviour.

After Paul and I left to go to Wellington, Dad started getting grief from people saying he shouldn't have a three-bedroom house on his own while there were families in need. But he had a dream. The same dream I had. That eventually our family would come back to our family home and live happily ever after. Dad's focus was always on working and providing a home for us. And I can honestly say that I never, ever saw Dad with another woman after he separated from Mum.

Perhaps a year or so later, while Dad was asleep one night, someone set fire to the house. The fire was deliberately started in the hallway closet next to the room where Dad was sleeping. I cannot imagine anyone disliking Dad so much to do that. He was awoken by the smoke and jumped out the window. The fire destroyed anything of value to Dad including a warm winter jacket I had sent him for his birthday. A blessing in disguise really because the fire was the catalyst that brought Dad back to us in Wellington. The house was renovated for a new family. The end of his dream was the beginning of a new dream for another family. Every cloud of smoke has a silver lining.

Freedom to be Me

I worked at the hospital for seventeen months and initially lived in the Nurses’ Home. I was earning $85 a week, and more if I worked weekends or overtime. I felt rich! I paid $10 a week to live at the Nurses’ Home, and that included all my meals. I had a small room with a single bed, a small set of drawers, a wardrobe and a wash basin. My own space,
so small and confined, yet so liberating! Finally, some happy times of freedom and independence.

When I got my first pay I took my little brothers shopping and bought Paul his first guitar for his guitar lessons at school, and new clothes for him and Michael. The next payday I bought myself a stereo on hire purchase, and a pair of Levi jeans. I was so proud of myself, and I never ever missed a payment on my stereo.

On Friday or Saturday nights, my friends and I would get the train into Wellington and go nightclubbing. I was only sixteen years old, but I felt so grown up and independent. I didn't have to ask anyone's permission for anything. I was free, and responsible. I never missed a day at work, and I worked my way up to First Cook's Aid. When the First Cook, Tangi, had a day off I was responsible for preparing the light meals and desserts for all the hospital patients. A huge responsibility for a sixteen year old, but I was blessed to work with Tangi and excelled under her guidance. I had so much love for her.

Mum also worked at the hospital with me after she recovered from the hysterectomy. Seeing her every day in a work capacity was something new for me. She worked hard, and we got to spend time together in an environment that wasn't clouded by alcohol.

I started to see glimpses of the mother I loved.

Fighting for Freedom Again

After the fire, Dad moved to Wellington and set up a home for him and the boys, so I left the Nurses’ Home and moved back to live with Dad to help him with the boys. Mum and Dad tried to reconcile but it didn't last long. They were better off apart.

Life with Dad and the boys together again was awesome. Dad was happy, and we were embraced with his love and support again. Barb and Judy and their families all lived in the Wellington area, so in a way we had our family back together again. At least we were all in the same city, and we could get together often for family birthdays and Christmas. Mum was also finally settled in Wellington and we started to see her more often as well.

Despite the rebellious times with Dad and his strict discipline and rules with me in my teenage years, I loved him dearly. He was always my
hero and I worshipped the ground he walked on. I never had any doubt in my mind that he loved me as much as I loved him.

Mum and I never really spoke about how I felt about her in my adolescence, and I never really knew how she felt about me sometimes. She never told me she loved me unless she was drinking but it wasn’t very often because I tried to avoid her when she was drunk. Her words never meant anything to me at those times anyway.

I have to be honest and say that there were times in my life where I had no respect for Mum. I blamed her for not being around in my adolescent years, and for making me feel unworthy of her love. I often felt abandoned, betrayed and ashamed for not having a ‘real’ mother when I needed her most. I had conflicting feelings between who my parents raised me to be – a good wife and mother -and the reality of my formative adolescent years without my mother.

I remember my self-declarations as a teenager as my internal voice announced with such conviction that if I ever had children, I would never be like my mother. However, those declarations became a self-fulfilling prophecy when as an adult my life became a reflection of my adolescence and everything I resented about my mother.
CHAPTER 3

FULFILMENT - my experiences, achievements, responsibilities, burdens and sacrifices in my Mother years

I was fifteen years old and working at the hospital when I met John who was seven years my senior. He worked as an orderly at the same hospital. I was in the staff cafeteria having lunch one day when Mum’s boyfriend Dave came in drunk and started verbally abusing and threatening me. So, I stood up and smashed him full-fist in the face causing his nose to bleed, and he ran off just as the orderlies came into the cafeteria. I didn’t know John very well, but he told his team to look after me while he went to find Dave. This small act of protection made me think he cared about me, and our relationship started from there. He lived in the male staff accommodation, and I’d spend a night with him from time to time.

Looking back, it was initially just a physical relationship for him. We didn’t socialise together, and he only took me out twice. Our first
social outing was a wedding where his ex-girlfriend, Michelle, got married. John and Michelle were engaged to be married before they separated, and he’d often use the term ‘once bitten, twice shy’ when he referred to our relationship. He actually had a book of stickers with those words printed on them, and he’d stick them on some of his personal belongings. A constant reminder to me of his relationship with Michelle.

I didn’t realise the significance of those words at the time.

Anyway, I was so self-conscious and uncomfortable because he didn’t really sit with me, and it felt a little weird meeting Michelle at her wedding. I got terribly drunk and I don’t remember too much from the night. One embarrassing thing I do remember is sliding off my seat and ending up under the table. Shame! But I think it also had something to do with the satin material of my dress, and the slippery surface of the seat. Well, that was my excuse at the time.

John and I were in a semi-committed relationship when I fell pregnant with my first child. Dad and I were having disagreements at the time because he had started to restrict my freedom again, after I moved home from the Nurses’ Home to help him with the boys. I was conflicted again between having adult responsibilities, while still being treated like a child. I was worried about telling Dad I was pregnant because I knew it would upset him, but I obviously couldn’t hide it for long.

After the initial shock and disappointment of my pregnancy, Dad was excited at the prospect of having a baby in the house. He supported me emotionally and helped me prepare for my baby’s arrival.

Dad voiced his opinions about John before he actually met him. He was concerned for me because John didn’t support or visit me very often while I was pregnant. I was about seven months pregnant when John first met Dad. He came to pick me up to take me to a social function, and Dad wasn’t overly impressed.

Mum knew I was pregnant before I even told her. She had an uncanny way of knowing when I really needed her and from time to time she would call me out of the blue, ‘now what’s going on dear’ she’d say. These were the times that I loved my Mum dearly.

I worked until I was seven or eight months pregnant, and my beautiful son John-Paul Andre was born on 20 November 1978, nine
days after my seventeenth birthday. This was the year the electoral voting age was lowered to eighteen years old. The election officials came to the hospital for special votes, and I can still see the indignant look on the lady’s face as I sat on my bed holding my baby and told her I wasn’t old enough to vote.

Mum was with me for most of the time during my long labour, and I was grateful for her presence. Especially when the specialist came to examine me with a group of trainee doctors in tow. Mum saw the look of fear and embarrassment on my face and asked the trainee doctors to leave the room.

After seventeen hours labour and an epidural, my beautiful baby boy was born by forceps delivery. He was an 8lb 6oz bundle of perfection, with a thick mop of long dark hair. It was absolute love at first sight, and I quickly forgot the discomforts of giving birth. John was at the birth with me. We were transferred to the maternity ward, and after John left, the nurses took my baby to the nursery. I was so upset but too scared to say anything to the hospital staff. The nurses would bring baby to me for feeding and take him straight back to the nursery. I couldn’t sleep, I felt empty. I could hear babies crying and I just wanted my baby with me.

I thought it was hospital policy, but we later found out that they took him away because I was young, and the staff assumed that I wasn’t capable of looking after him properly. They brought baby back to me in the morning to spend the day with me.

Mum came to visit and could see that I was visibly upset. I told her about the nurses taking baby to the nursery during the night. She went straight to the Charge Nurse and demanded that they leave my baby in my room and told them they had no right to take him away. The Charge Nurse came and apologised and became a regular visitor to my room. She would come and rearrange all my flowers every day and admire my beautiful baby.

Dad came to visit, and he was instantly besotted with his new grandson. He joked about baby having more hair than him and buying baby a comb for his long hair. He nicknamed him “Nig” in reference to baby’s olive complexion. He was looking forward to having me and baby home.
Looking back now I can see that I was truly blessed to have love and support from Mum and Dad at that time.

Against my Dad’s advice, I moved in with John after leaving the maternity hospital. Dad was hurt again and so upset with me. He had supported me during my pregnancy and I had let him down again. His words were, ‘you made your bed, you lie in it’. And I did.

I was about to embark on my fairy-tale life and I wanted so much to have a family and believe in happy ever after.

Nowadays having a baby at seventeen years old seems young, and it is. But I’d been living with adult responsibilities since I was eleven years old. Both my sisters had babies and I was used to the practical things like bathing, changing nappies, and generally taking care of a baby. Other things, like breastfeeding just came naturally to me. At seventeen I was young in age, but I was mature and responsible. I’d worked for seventeen months, saved some money, and bought everything I needed for my baby.

And I was driven by my strong desire for a family.

I had never focused on a career or education because I had adopted a belief that a career and education weren’t important for me and my sisters. We were going to have a husband to provide for us, and it was our job to be a good wife and mother. Look after the kids, keep the house clean, and have dinner ready for the husband when he gets home from work. That was what we were raised to do, and we were good at it, all three of us! Me, Judy and Barb.

Both Mum and Dad advised me not to take my baby and move in with John. Dad wanted him to prove his commitment to me by supporting me with our baby. Dad knew that it wasn’t a committed relationship because I’d only seen John maybe three times during my pregnancy, and Dad didn’t trust him. But I thought I knew better.

Mum never said much as usual, but I just knew she agreed with Dad.

Typically, my rebellious and ‘know it all’ adolescent Mind told me they were wrong. Who were they to advise me about relationships when
they couldn’t even work out their own? It took quite some time for me to realise that they were passing on their wisdom from the lessons they had learnt.

I ignored their advice. And come hell or high water I was going to prove them wrong.

But they were right. There was no happy ever after. John and I were together for seven years and had three beautiful babies. Dad’s words, ‘you made your bed, you lie in it’ echoed continuously in my Mind. From the time I left home at seventeen years old with a baby in my arms I never once asked Dad or Mum for help financially or for ‘things’ that I needed. I turned to them for emotional support when I needed their love and support, but I never told them about the challenges or struggles we were having as a family.

I stubbornly stuck to my resolve to prove them wrong.

There’s only thirteen months between my two boys. Shannon was born on 6 January 1980, after a very quick labour and birth. It was so quick I almost had him in the bath. The bath was part of the hospital pre-birth process and policy in those days.

Another beautiful 7lb 14oz bundle of perfection, with a mop of light brown hair and a fairer complexion than his older brother. He was often referred to as ‘the milk man’s baby’. It took a little while longer for me to recover from his birth because he was in such a hurry to enter the world, I needed a lot of stitches. Mum and Judy came to visit me at home when baby was a couple of weeks old and I was still uncomfortable with sitting and walking. I was grateful for Mum and Judy’s advice and support at that time.

Another time that Mum just turned up out of the blue when I desperately needed her support.

Shannon suffered with colic for his first few months, so he needed a lot of extra attention. John-Paul wasn’t too keen on the arrival of his baby brother and had to be supervised any time he was near baby. Life suddenly changed up another gear and along with that came a whole new set of responsibilities and challenges.
Looking back now I can see and understand how a mother’s energy and emotions affect her unborn child. I remember when I first found out I was pregnant with Shannon I had mixed emotions. I wasn’t sure that I was ready for another baby, and I worried about this a lot during my pregnancy. It wasn’t that I didn’t want another baby, I just didn’t ‘feel’ that I was ready. I have often felt guilty about those feelings because a mother isn’t supposed to feel that way about her child. John-Paul (or Charlie as he is affectionately called by family) was still a baby, and I was enjoying being a mother and proud of my baby’s development. And John and I were adjusting to living together in a full-time relationship with responsibilities that neither of us were fully prepared for.

I believe that my feelings and emotions during my pregnancy had a lot to do with Shannon’s need for extra attention as a baby. The colic was a physical manifestation of his need for attention and his desire to feel wanted. This may seem unfathomable to some readers, but when we understand how intelligent and intuitive babies are from their conception, and how they respond to their environment even whilst they’re in their mother’s womb, it seems natural.

As a child and adolescent, Shannon has always been the most openly affectionate one of his siblings. He openly shows his feelings and emotions and loves deeply. He was the one who would bring stray animals home or bring his friends to stay if they were having problems at home. He was always rescuing animals and people, because he wanted them to feel safe and protected. He was particularly protective of his baby sister when she arrived.

Combining Work and Motherhood

When Shannon was only a few months old, I had to get a part-time job in a takeaway bar, as we struggled financially to make ends meet. There were times prior to me going back to work where the kids and I would be having Weetbix for dinner until payday or John would bring food home from his nightshift job. We would often borrow money from his Dad as well. I was too stubborn to ask for money from my Dad, and I knew he had very little to give anyway.
It was quite uncomfortable lying in the bed that I made, but I was never going to admit it.

My in-laws happily took John-Paul for a few hours or an overnight stay to give me a break, which was great, but Shannon initially missed out because he was quite an unsettled baby. At times, I was exhausted from looking after two babies, a home, a partner and working part-time. I had no social life, but I was blessed with a very close friend, Sue, and we spent lots of time together. Our partners were mates and worked together at the hospital. Sue and I were experiencing similar challenges in our lives and it was so good to have someone as close as a sister who totally understood what I was going through. We talked about everything; there were no secrets between us. I loved her like a sister.

I also had close relationships with my brothers who visited often on the weekends to hang out. These visits were always a nice respite from my reality. Sometimes I’d catch the train with the kids and go visit Dad and the boys. I could never tell Dad about my reality.

When Shannon was still a baby, I fell pregnant again. I was devastated. I was barely coping with my two babies, our financial struggles, and trying to keep on top of everything. I was on the contraceptive pill and breastfeeding at the time. John and I decided that we wouldn’t have the baby. It was a hard decision to make, and something I struggled with for some time after the termination. Feelings of guilt and shame were overwhelming sometimes. I often wonder about the little Soul who didn't make it into this physical world through me.

Writing this now brings back those feelings but I cannot change the decision we made. It’s so much harder for a mother to cope with this decision than the father. I was affected physically, mentally, emotionally and Spiritually. More than I realised at the time as I tried to suppress my feelings of guilt and shame and struggled to forgive myself. I wanted to believe that it was the right decision at the time, but it was so hard.

It took a long time to forgive myself and allow those feelings of guilt and shame to surface, so I could heal inside. I said at the beginning of my story that ‘the most important, life-changing decision we can make for ourselves is to learn to love and honour ourselves unconditionally, first and foremost …’. Can you imagine how hard it is to love yourself after making the decision I made?
My transformational journey in the past five years has often been painful and confronting, and sometimes I felt like giving up because I had to dig so deep to find the courage and commitment to acknowledge and expose everything I had hidden and suppressed.

But I persevered and found a place in my Heart for forgiveness, and a loving space for our baby. I am finally at peace with the decision I made.

Some months later, I was pregnant again. I was working with Dad who had the catering contract at the Manor Park Golf Course. Our sister Judy used to do all the baking for the club, and I’d drop my boys off to her every morning and pick up the baking. I continued working with Dad throughout my pregnancy. I had a small twenty-first birthday dinner at the Golf Club with Dad, my brothers, and my little family. Ten days later I received a belated twenty-first birthday present, my beautiful baby girl, Kiri Angela, was born.

I didn’t know we were having a baby girl. In fact, I had convinced myself we were having another boy, but I secretly wished for my baby girl. My labour with Kiri was comfortable and her birth was quite relaxed. Probably because she was a petite 6lb 14oz bundle of perfection. I was so happy when they told me I had a daughter. I couldn’t wait to get her home and dress her up in all the clothes we got for presents when she was born. She was a placid baby and settled easily. She was my third baby, so I was more relaxed and confident as a mother too, and this reflected in her placid nature.

I knew Kiri was quite different to the boys, and not just because she was a girl. She seemed to be acutely aware of everything in her environment, seen and unseen. She’d react to things I couldn’t see. I wish I knew then what I know now about the innocence and pure consciousness of babies, and their natural connection to their inner power Source.

However, I innately knew enough then to trust her reaction to her environment and people. Even as a baby she was sensitive to the energies in her environment and would become quite upset and unsettled with
some people, and they were generally people I didn’t particularly like either. As a wee baby I’d often see her interacting with unseen visitors in her room, but I knew enough to not worry about it. I also spoke to her paternal grandfather who confirmed what I innately knew. She was connecting with the Spirit world, and it seemed so natural and familiar to her.

She still had her connection to ‘home’.

Seeding a New Mindset

When my babies were small, the Plunket Nurses would come and do their weekly health checks until babies were six weeks old, and thereafter the visits were monthly. On one visit for Kiri, the nurse sat me down for a heart to heart. She spoke to me about life, life outside my little world, life outside of being a housewife and mother. She noticed that when she arrived at 10 a.m. each week that all the housework was done, washing on the line, food ready to cook for dinner, and the kids all fed and dressed for the day.

She told me I needed to start thinking about myself.

I often wonder if she saw potential in me that I’d never recognised myself. She encouraged me to start thinking outside of being a mother and housewife. To start thinking about a career for when my kids were old enough for me to study or work. She spoke about planning for when the kids were older and ready to leave home, and how quickly time would pass. I just couldn’t imagine that time so far into the future.

The nurse went on to tell me about a government-funded computer course that was being developed for ‘disadvantaged people’. The conversation both confused and excited me. I thought I was doing a good job as a mother and housewife, and I hadn’t thought beyond that.

But she had planted a seed that I just couldn’t ignore.

When Kiri was about two months old I had to go back to work again. Dad had left the Golf Club and took the kitchen manager job at a new restaurant in Petone, The Fisherman’s Table, and I got a waitressing job there. I worked from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. or later if I could, depending
on Kiri. I would breastfeed her and keep her awake all afternoon, so she'd be ready to sleep by the time I went to work. John would arrive home around 5 p.m., and I'd get picked up by another waitress friend at around 5.20 p.m. She drove a gold-coloured, V8, Holden Monaro with a manual gearshift. I could hear the car coming before she pulled up outside. I loved that car, and it was something I aspired to have one day!

Most times the boys would be in their PJs and dinner would be ready before I left for work. I had to take spare T-shirts to work because I'd often spring a leak. One of the realities of breastfeeding. After a while I progressed to a grill chef position. It helps when your Dad's the boss. My experience working with Dad in restaurants as a youngster made the transition really easy. I actually enjoyed that job, and eventually had to put Kiri on the bottle when my hours increased.

During that time Mum turned up out of the blue again and stayed with us for a couple of months. What a Godsend! I didn’t have to worry about the kids while I was at work, the house, the cooking, the cleaning and I got to rest more when I wasn’t working. Mum and the kids, especially Kiri, started to form a close bond, and I loved seeing the love and tenderness Mum gave to my kids. If Kiri hurt herself or wanted something, she would generally go to her Nanny. My baby girl had become used to me not being home. Quite sad really.

I used to call Kiri ‘my pretty girl’ all the time. One day we were visiting Dad and he told me I shouldn’t be calling her ‘pretty girl’ or she would grow up to be vain. I didn’t know how to respond to that. I just wanted my baby girl to grow up strong and confident; I didn’t want her to be like me.

Life became busy with three little kids, the household, and a part-time job. At one stage, I had one child at school that finished at 2 p.m., one in morning kindy that finished at 12 noon every day, and one at afternoon kindy that started at 1 p.m. and finished at 3.15 p.m., every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The kindy and school drop-offs and pick-ups at that time were always a mission!

We had a Ford Falcon XA ute at the time. It had a canopy over the back, and we removed the window between the cab and the canopy so the two boys could sit in the back on an old car seat. Kiri would be in the front with me in a car seat that hooked over the bench seat. This was
before child safety car seats and restraints were introduced. It’s amazing how we adapt to our challenges, because the ute presented ongoing challenges for me.

At one stage I had to put water in it every time I used it because it was over-heating. At other times it just wouldn’t start so I had to remember to reverse park it in the driveway, so I could let it roll out of the driveway and down the street to crash start it. If any of the neighbours were outside, I’d sit and wait until they disappeared. I was so embarrassed. If it didn’t crash start I’d leave it down the road where it stopped, unload the kids and walk. I had to have a contingency plan, so I’d make sure the pram was in the ute before I left home.

We had an old wringer washing machine that liked to challenge me as well, and I can’t remember how many nappies got wrapped around the wringer. The pump didn’t work so I’d put the hose into the bucket to empty the machine, and I’d get distracted by one of the kids and flood the house. The lounge looked like a Chinese laundry with nappies and clothes drying in front of the heaters, especially during the winter months. The clothesline was situated between the house and an elevated bush area with very little sun, and we didn’t have a clothes dryer. With a baby in cloth nappies, and three little kiddies, the washing was endless!

Sometimes I look back and wonder how I coped with everything, but you do, and there were plenty of other Mums doing the same. I can reflect on those times with a little humour now but there was nothing funny about it at the time!

My sister Judy and I had a regular catch-up day once a month in Lower Hutt when our kids were little. I’d catch the bus or train with my three babies, and the pushchair and a bag that contained everything except the kitchen sink, for the kids. Nappies, bottles, spare clothes, snacks and toys, and wet flannels because we didn’t have wet-wipes back then. It was quite a mission! I’d have Kiri lying in the pushchair, with a seat that strapped across the pushchair frame for Shannon. John-Paul would walk until he got tired, and then he’d sit in the shopping tray under the pushchair.

Sometimes Judy and I would load all our kids, my three and Judy’s four, into the back of the ute and go to Barb’s house in Porirua for the day. My sisters and I would sit upstairs drinking tea, eating scones
and chatting while all the cousins played downstairs. Twelve cousins spending time together building memories. Something that I will always treasure and remember with both love and sadness because this very rarely happens now. In my eyes, our whanau or family has become fragmented again.

I wish I had photos of those times. Something else I regret from when the kids were small. I have very few photos of the kids and some of the happy times we had.

Another Lost Dream

Over time my relationship with John deteriorated. It was a loveless and controlling relationship. All my childhood messages and conditioning had compounded over the years and I was hurt and confused. Although we never married, he wasn’t the good provider, father, and husband Mum and Dad groomed me for. And I had my suspicions about his loyalty and commitment to me and our babies, which later proved correct.

I cannot find the words to explain how I felt some years later when I learnt that I had been living a lie with him. We had three beautiful babies and he was never fully committed to us.

My Dad was right all along but that rebellious adolescent thought she knew everything.

For a whole lot of reasons, I chose to separate. John moved out of our family home and moved to Auckland.

Another broken family, another lost dream.

Alcohol and Violence

And then I made the biggest mistake of my life. I’ve agonised for quite some time about whether to share or even write about this part of my life. But this is Me in all my authenticity. And it’s no secret to friends, family and others who know my story.
The challenges I faced in this relationship have strongly influenced the person I have become now, and my desire to help other women. It’s the part of my life where I felt the most guilt and shame. I struggled for many, many years to forgive myself for the choices I made that had such a huge impact on not just me, but my babies, physically, mentally and emotionally.

I went into a relationship with John’s brother. It was a mutual attraction and we both knew it was morally wrong, and so did our families. No one ever said anything directly to me, but I knew that some people were disgusted. And rightfully so. Others were supportive and thought that we were better suited. And maybe we were for a short time until the alcohol-fuelled violence started. I knew that he had violent tendencies because I had witnessed it personally with his previous partner, but this disillusioned, fairy tale, ego mind of mine said, ‘It won’t happen to me … I’m different … he won’t do that to me’.

At first, I believed that he loved me and my babies. He had known me and my life for the past seven years I was with John, and he was always good to me and my babies during that time. He often gave us money when he knew that we were struggling financially. I guess it gave me a false sense of security, and I wanted so much to have a happy existence for me and my babies. But I was so wrong.

I allowed alcohol and violence into my children’s lives. Unforgiveable.

After John left, I was on the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB), and it was just enough to cover rent, food and essential living expenses. At the time I was also trying to pay a large loan that John and I had borrowed months before our separation to pay our consolidated debt. I hated the stigma of being a beneficiary on the DPB, and the way I was treated by Social Welfare. We lived in quite an affluent area and I was always conscious of what other people had, and often felt inferior to other mothers at the school and kindergarten.

But amongst all the turbulence and complexities of my Mind, I was still driven to make something of my life, for me and my babies.
Then one day, I remembered the seed the Plunket Nurse had planted, and I enrolled for the government-funded *Foundation Course in Computers* for disadvantaged people. I fit the ‘disadvantaged’ criteria because I was female, Māori, uneducated, on a benefit, and a solo mother of three children. I was accepted on the six-month full-time course at the Central Institute of Technology (CIT) in Trentham. The CIT had a Māori Liaison officer, Tu Wyllie, and he became my mentor during and after the course. His wife looked after Kiri during the day while I studied. They were difficult times, trying to study, look after my babies, and do anything I could to keep the peace at home and avoid the violence.

It would be fair to say without exaggeration that my babies and I lived in fear.

I still to this day cannot understand why he resented my babies so much, especially my boys. They are his blood, his family, and they were good, well-behaved, well-mannered and respectful kids. They didn’t have a nasty bone in their bodies. Perhaps he felt guilt and shame about our relationship and took it out on me and the kids. Whatever his reasons, there is no excuse for mental and physical violence against me but particularly my children. He purposely made them food he knew they didn’t like and forced them to eat it. Sometimes he’d come home drunk and wake my boys from their sleep and hit them for any little reason he could find. He resented anything I did or bought for my kids, especially for birthdays and Christmas.

If he wasn’t home by a certain time I knew he’d come home drunk, so I’d put the kids to bed early hoping that they’d be asleep before he got home. If they were still awake I’d tell them to pretend to be asleep. I’d go around the house and make sure everything was perfect. I’d go outside and make sure the kids hadn’t left any toys out. I’d make sure his dinner was ready. I tried to anticipate anything that might make him angry, and I did anything I could to keep the peace. Some of the things I had to do were Soul destroying.

But it was all pointless, because the anger and resentment were inside him anyway. The more I feared the anger and violence, the more it happened. There was nothing I could’ve done; he unleashed his anger on me and the kids anyway.
I realise now that my obvious fear gave him more power over me.

This was a regular occurrence in our home, at least two or three times a week particularly during the rugby league season. A predictable pattern of drinking and abuse or violence emerged. Every Wednesday on payday, every Thursday after league training, every Saturday after a game. Sometimes he would bring his drinking mates home from the pub with their crates of beer, and I had to make them feel welcome or I’d suffer the consequences after they’d gone. Sometimes the violence happened when they were there. And, mostly, nobody did anything. They just picked up their beer and left!

I could never openly object to their intrusion, I just had to suppress my feelings and emotions again and put on a brave face. It was much easier to clean the mess up in my home after the drunks left than it was to clean the mess up in my Mind and body.

I’ve often wondered if my babies heard the car doors closing and the rattle of the beer crates, and if they felt the fear and sadness I did as a child.

I was always relieved when my brothers-in-law and their families would want to have the kids for the weekends. Not only was it good for my kids to enjoy some respite and fun times with their uncles and aunties, but it gave me a brief reprieve from worrying about them being home when he was drunk. I’d often ask their grandparents to have them on weekends as well. For most of the school holidays when their father couldn’t have them I’d take them up to my cousins in Taranaki. They loved having them and the kids loved their time there in a happy and safe family environment.

My kids never had birthday parties or friends stay over because I was too scared to risk something happening with other people in the house. And he resented things that I would do for the kids. He’d often refer to them as spoilt brats. The reality was that their childhood was spoilt by the choices I made.

I can imagine the thoughts going through the minds of people reading this. ‘How could she let someone do that to her kids?’ ‘Why didn’t she leave him?’, ‘Why didn’t she call the police?’ ‘Why didn’t she get help?’ ‘Why did she stay with him?’ ‘She deserved it’. Why? Why? Why?
Well, only women who have been through this hell will know and understand how powerless we are in these situations, and I will try to explain this more.

What I needed most from my family and friends was Love and understanding, and I definitely got that. I leant on my friends more than my family because I was so full of guilt and shame. When I was at the lowest part of my life, I would spend hours with my friends, especially Sue, Lee and Myra, unloading everything that was mad, sad and bad in my life. I would talk about the violence, the hurt, the anger, the shame, the guilt and everything that was awful about my life. I would tell them I wanted to leave my nightmare.

Then I’d go home and start to make a plan to leave with my kids. I’d think about where I was going to go. Who I could ask to look after the kids before and after school? What I would tell my work, or not? What I would tell my family, or not? Where I would hide the car? How would I manage financially because I was still responsible for paying the rent at the house he wouldn’t leave? I’d think about what I would take for the kids, what toys? Shall I take their bikes? What keepsakes or photos shall I take, just in case we never come back? What paperwork do I need for the bills, kids school events, appointments, medical papers? What clothes do the kids need? What clothes do I need? Do I need blankets and pillows? Everything!!

I had a mental plan, accompanied by scenarios in my head about how it would unfold. I didn’t tell anyone about the details of my plan for two reasons. One, to ‘save face’ because I had made plans before and never followed through on them. And two, to protect my friends and family because I thought it would be safer for them if they didn’t know.

And then he’d come home, and the fear would well up again and my Mind would start going into overdrive. What if he caught me leaving? What if someone saw me packing the car? What if he found me and the kids? What if he came into work? What if he went to the kids’ school? What if he went to my friends’ places looking for me? What if … what if … what if?

Then the fear-based scenarios played over and over in my Mind. And the more the movies played in my Mind the more afraid I became to leave. And I’d change my Mind.
Then my thoughts would turn to ‘what can I do to keep him happy, so he won’t get angry?’ I’d think about how unfair it is to take the kids away from their home, their beds, their toys, their bikes, everything that was familiar to them. I’d think about excuses to stop him from touching me, from intimacy. Then I’d think about how angry he would get if I withdrew intimacy. I thought about how sick it made me feel.

I’d totally lost control of my own Body and Mind.

I thought about everything from within the darkness! It was Soul-destroying. Then I’d withdraw into myself, physically and emotionally.

And I’d get in trouble for being a ‘grumpy bitch’.

My Life in the Corporate World

During those turbulent times I managed to complete my computer course, and I got a job straight away at Statistics New Zealand in the typing pool. The annual salary was around $14 000, not much more than I was receiving on the DPB, even less after deducting my train fare and other costs, but it gave me independence. It also gave me an escape from my reality and an opportunity to be amongst successful and career-driven colleagues. I was fortunate that my managers and colleagues recognised and supported my potential and encouraged my career progression from the typing pool into senior and PA positions. My salary increased with my career progression, and I continued to support myself and the kids with no financial help from their father.

I am forever grateful for the support of my friends, managers and colleagues. They provided the love and support I was missing at home, and I was able to financially support myself and my babies. It was a continual struggle trying to manage my abusive home life and build a career to earn a decent living.

One of my best friends, Lee, who I met on the computer course also got a job at Statistics New Zealand and we’d travel to work together every day. We’d stop at the coffee shop by work and have a pot of tea and a few cigarettes every morning before work. She became my confidant and supported me through some tough times.
My life was a constant roller coaster of extreme highs and lows, and it was usually when I was in the low, depressed state that I’d make life-changing decisions. My personal recipe for disaster! I still had to perform in my professional life while in these emotional states, and it was difficult. There were two personalities in this body, the Me I hid at home and the Me I showed to the world.

I became an expert at it over the years.

Losing my Hero

On Tuesday, 22 December 1987, soon after I started work at Statistics New Zealand, my beloved father, my Hero, passed away. About four years earlier, Dad had an operation for bowel cancer. After he recovered from that doctors discovered cancer in one of his lungs, so he had part of one lung removed. It took him a while to recover from that operation, and he had convalesced with John and I and the kids for a short period of time. After his recovery he returned to work. He was old-school, and never liked to take time off work. I’m not sure how long after Dad’s lung operation that he got cancer in his other lung. After his previous experiences, he didn’t want to have another operation.

When Dad was young he and his older brother, Uncle Syd, looked after their father who was in a wheelchair. As a result of those experiences, Dad always told us that if he ever got sick he would not want us to be burdened with looking after him. He was never a burden to any of us. He was just so loved.

Dad was admitted to hospital the week before he died so the doctors could adjust his medication for his changing condition. I visited him on the Sunday and he was asleep. As I was putting his laundry in the locker by his bed he woke up. He looked at me with sadness and tears in his eyes and hugged me. He said he felt like a burden because the doctors did not believe him when he described the pain he was having. They told him he shouldn’t be feeling the way he was because he only had stage two cancer, but the pain he was describing was stage four. He wanted to go
home but I told him to stay there to get his medication sorted, and not worry about what the doctors were saying. What he was feeling was real. Dad was one of the strongest men I know, and he had experienced cancer twice before.

Dad was discharged from hospital the day before he died. I suspect he discharged himself. None of us, including the doctors, expected him to pass so soon. Judy called me at work to tell me that Dad had been rushed to hospital and was not expected to make it through the day. My work arranged a taxi and I went straight to the hospital. As I entered the ward a nurse came towards me and I knew from the look on her face that I was too late. I just froze. I couldn’t believe that my Dad, the man I loved most in this world was gone. The nurse took me into his room and I lay on the bed beside Dad; he felt so cold, and I wanted to keep him warm. I whispered in his ear and begged him to wake up.

I was devastated. We were all devastated. This man we loved and admired so much had left us, no chance for goodbyes or to tell him again how much he was loved. Perhaps he wanted it that way.

My partner never came to the hospital, nor did he bother to come straight home from work. He knew that I had lost the most important man in my life, and he didn’t even have the decency to support me in any way, shape or form. His mother and sister-in-law came to see me and...
helped settle the kids. After they left, I sat alone in my grief with our old family photo of Dad, Mum, me and my two sisters. I cried for my father, I cried for my family, I just cried for every broken part of me. I was still crying when he came home drunk. I remember his words clearly. ‘What are you fucken crying for? You fucken knew he was dying.’

He may as well have stabbed me in the heart with a red-hot poker.

We had one day to organise Dad’s funeral. My sisters and I went to the funeral home and dressed him. This was my first experience of touching a lifeless body. I had always been scared of dead people, even at *tangihanga* (funerals) I would never go near the coffin. I also kept my children away from coffins. But this was different; this was our father, our Dad. It was a life-changing experience for my sisters and I. It gave us an opportunity to talk with Dad, tell him how much he was loved, have a little fun with him, and say our final goodbyes. But mostly to ensure that even in his passing he was treated with dignity and respect.

His funeral service and cremation were held the next day, Christmas Eve 1987. And a few months later we scattered his ashes in the Cook Strait. Dad was in the British Merchant Navy and it was always his wish to return to the sea.

Dad’s friends worked on the inter-island ferries in Wellington and arranged for us to take his ashes out to sea. The Captain of the ship was an admirable, compassionate man. He slowed the ship’s voyage through the Cook Strait and performed a service in the aft of the ship, and we released Dad’s ashes to the sea. Following the service, the Captain took us to his private quarters for lunch.

We were truly blessed to have had this opportunity to honour Dad’s wish to return to the sea.

*In ocean wastes no poppies blow,*
*No crosses stand in ordered row,*
*Their young hearts sleep... beneath the wave...*
*The spirited, the good, the brave,*
*But stars a constant vigil keep,*
*For them who lie beneath the deep.*
*‘Tis true you cannot kneel in prayer*
*On certain spot and think. ‘He’s there.’*
But you can to the ocean go...
See whitecaps marching row on row;
Know one for him will always ride...
In and out... with every tide.
And when your span of life is passed,
He’ll meet you at the ‘Captain’s Mast.’
And they who mourn on distant shore
For sailors who'll come home no more,
Can dry their tears and pray for these
Who rest beneath the heaving seas...
For stars that shine and winds that blow
And whitecaps marching row on row.
And they can never lonely be
For when they lived... they chose the sea.

By Eileen Mahoney

I never really had the chance to mourn the deep loss of my Dad. It was a sad Christmas and New Year that year. But I’ve never really enjoyed the Christmas or New Year time of the year because they were always clouded by alcohol-fuelled drama and resentment. The work Christmas parties, drinks with mates, drinks with family, any excuse to drink for my partner. As a result, my kids missed out as well and I was always relieved if the kids went to spend Christmas with their father. I didn’t have to worry about them, and I knew they’d be happier away from the dramas at home.

To this day, I still struggle to enjoy Christmas and New Year festivities. In fact, it’s my least favourite time of the year.

My grief from losing Dad, and the physical and emotional abuse often left me feeling depressed and powerless, and my babies suffered terribly as a result of the choices I made, especially my boys.

The physical injuries I endured, the fractured ribs and cheekbones, the black eyes, bruises and abrasions healed over time, but the emotional damage stayed with me for over twenty-five years.

I fought a constant battle, internally and externally, to stay positive, but life had convinced me that I wasn’t pretty enough, clever enough,
fun-loving enough, skinny enough, good enough, and I didn’t measure up!! This constant battle with feelings of low self-confidence, low self-esteem and low self-worth and a painful emotional existence became my natural state. My emotional health affected my physical health, and I suffered with ongoing bouts of depression, gynaecological problems, endometriosis and lower back pain.

Despite my gynaecological problems, I fell pregnant again, and lost our baby girl when I was sixteen weeks pregnant. A blessing in disguise I guess. She didn’t want to come into my nightmare life. I’d also created an internal world that was so toxic, I can’t imagine it being a nurturing environment for a baby.

My best friend Sue came and supported me at the hospital. I had to go through labour and give birth to our baby girl. After she was born, the nurses took her away, and I felt empty. Later in the day, I asked to see her. She was so, so tiny, but almost perfectly formed. I cried with her, for her, for my family, and for every broken piece of me, again.

I asked Dad to look after her in Heaven, and I let her go.

While I was in hospital, my neighbour asked my daughter Kiri where I was. She said, ‘Mummy’s in hospital with my baby sister Bianca.’ Another one of her intuitive child disclosures. The kids didn’t know about our baby girl.

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My Second Near-death Experience

One night after a particularly bad beating I lay curled up in my bed quietly crying for my Dad. I begged and begged for him to come and get me. And he did.

It was like the moment in the swimming pool when I was five years old. That same feeling of separation went through my body, and I felt myself, my Spirit, leave my body and float upwards. I looked down at myself lying on the bed beside that man I had grown to hate. I turned away from that scene and found myself in a beautiful garden with a bright light like a tunnel to my left. Dad was standing in front of me. Much younger than I remembered, and so handsome in his Navy uniform. He
never said anything to me; he didn’t need to. He just stood there with his hand outstretched. I reached for his hand, and just before I touched him, I remembered my babies. ‘No Dad, I can’t, my babies need me’, and I went back to that lifeless body curled like a foetus on the bed we shared.

And that was the catalyst for great change for me and my babies. I found the courage and commitment, and the burning desire deep inside to change my life.

The Phoenix

I gave so much
To a tormented Soul
Destroyed my Faith
In the time he stole
Jealous rages
And gutless actions
Poured from a bottle
Of drunken courage
Battered and bruised
By tattooed fists
Blackened eyes
Silenced lips

We lived in fear
My babies and I
Hiding in shame
Telling lies
Suppressing tears
And muted cries
Such pain inflicted
On innocent lives
Will never forget
It’s been hard to forgive
I'll carry this burden
As long as I live
Emerging From The Shadows

He violated my babies
My Body, Mind & Soul
Buried my light
In a darkened hole
Deep in depression
Just wanting to die
A final escape
From pain inside
Tired and beaten
Wanting to be free
I begged my Dad
Please come, take me

My Spirit rose
I was finally free
I went to my Dad
Waiting for me
In Heaven’s garden
His hand outstretched
I reached for my freedom
But couldn’t leave
Why punish my babies
With sad memories
So I told my Dad
My babies need me

My Spirit returned
To this lifeless body
Curling like a foetus
On the bed we shared
Driven by fear
My courage emerged
Packed up my babies
And left the nightmare
Times were tough
But we survived  
*From a burning desire*  
*Deep inside*

*The lifeless foetus*  
*Curléd up on that bed*  
*Now reborn*  
*With fearless strength*  
*I rose like the Phoenix*  
*From burning ashes*  
*A Warrior Spirit*  
*Ignited by passion*  
*Wild and FREE*  
*My Faith restored*  
*Safe in knowing*  
*He'd never break me*

*I cry no more*  
*For time he stole*  
*I reclaimed my Life*  
*My Mind, Body & Soul*  
*My Spirit soars*  
*I'm fully aligned*  
*Surrounded by love*  
*Safe and Divine*  
*I worship my babies*  
*For I truly believe*  
*In my darkest hours*  
*My babies saved Me*

**Escaping the Violence**

Around this time, I met my future husband Ralph at the rugby league club. My partner, and two generations of his family had played at the same club for many years. The rugby league drinking culture had a lot to do with the alcohol-related violence my kids and I endured.
This particular night was the first night my partner had allowed me to stay at the club on my own with my brother Paul and sister-in-law Rana, and he went home early. This only happened because we were in the honeymoon cycle again. That part of the continuous Domestic Violence Cycle where the abusive partner promises the world, ‘I’m sorry’, ‘I’ll never do it again’, ‘I don’t know why I do it’, ‘I love you’, ‘I can’t live without you’, ‘If you leave, I’ll kill myself’, ‘You can do anything you want’, ‘I can’t remember’.

Abused women have heard all these worthless excuses. For me personally, I wanted to believe the promises. Not because I was scared of losing him, but because I just wanted some peace.

Ralph was a premier and representative player, physically fit, handsome, and softly spoken. I had met him briefly when he and my partner played in the same team, but I had never really spoken to him for any length of time. He approached me that evening at the club and asked for my phone number. I could not believe that someone of his status in the club was interested in me. I was completely blown away. He was one of the most popular guys in the club, way out of my league, and he wanted my phone number!

He called me at work and we arranged to meet for lunch.

Ralph was married with two young children, and he knew that I was in a relationship. My relationship was one I had tried to escape many times for obvious reasons. I had endured regular beatings and emotional abuse and made to feel ugly and worthless. I was told repeatedly how worthless I was (but in more abusive language) and that no one else would want me with three kids, and I believed it. I was also threatened repeatedly by my abusive partner, that if he couldn’t have me, no one else will.

After four years of physical and emotional abuse, I believed that I was worthless. I was self-conscious about my appearance and my body since having my babies, resulting in low self-confidence and self-esteem. So, when Ralph showed a genuine interest in me, knowing my situation, it made me feel special and desirable again. Here was this man, popular in the club and with the ladies, and he approached me for my phone number!

So, we met for lunch, and I felt that he was genuinely interested in me and wanted more than just an affair. Incredibly unbelievable in my eyes.
So, one week after meeting Ralph for lunch, I packed up my babies and left our nightmare.

My experience with Dad in Heaven’s garden, and meeting Ralph gave me the courage and confidence to leave. It wasn’t because Ralph had promised me anything; it was because the experience with him had helped me realise that I wasn’t worthless, that someone else could want me, and maybe even love me, and accept my kids.

And those were the driving forces that helped me through the following months.

Escaping Our Nightmare

It took many months to escape that toxic, violent relationship because my partner wouldn’t leave the house we shared. My kids and I spent time in Women’s Refuges and I continued to work and pay the rent and bills at the house. I chose to go to a refuge because I didn’t want to impose on family or friends, and I was embarrassed and ashamed about my situation. I also had a fear of my family or friends being hurt if they got caught in the crossfire. I know from my personal experiences with women in the refuge that this was a common concern of most abused women. Perhaps this is a double-edged sword for some. I felt that I was protecting my friends and family from his violence but at the same time I believe it gave him more power over me because no one intervened. It’s a difficult situation for abused women that people on the periphery just don’t understand.

Another fear I had was that if my family, friends or the police did intervene, my kids and I would be punished more, physically and emotionally.

The boys went to my friend Myra’s place before and after school, and Kiri went to another friend closer to her primary school. I’d pick them up after work and we’d go back to the refuge. I met Myra at the league club. She’s another life-long trusted and loyal friend who I am blessed to have, and a Lifeline buddy I know I can call any time of the day or night. Our kids grew up together and remain close friends.

Initially, the kids and I had the non-Māori refuge house to ourselves for a few days which was good. It gave us a chance to settle down and
spend some time together, and I could hide my car behind the house. A few days later we were asked to move to the Māori refuge house, so we wouldn't be on our own. There were about four other Māori women and their children in the Māori refuge, and we’d sit together in the evenings when all the kids had gone to bed.

One evening the women started sharing stories of their abusive relationships, similar horror stories. One woman had been in every refuge between Christchurch and Wellington because her partner, who was a gang member, would always track her down at the refuges. The stories were all similar; the only thing that was different was the level of physical violence. The mental and emotional abuse was the same.

Something that has stuck in my Mind since that night sharing stories, was observing the reactions and comments of each woman during the sharing of violent stories. Two of the stories detailed horrific violence on a physical scale compared to mine and two of the other women. (Note however that in saying this, the level of violence and abuse is irrelevant. It does not change the long-term effects on women. We all experience similar long-term effects of mental and emotional trauma.) Anyway, the comments and reactions from two of the women troubled me. They expressed that they hadn’t suffered such horrific physical abuse, so perhaps their partners weren’t that bad, and they considered returning to their partners. This left me reeling inside and sent shivers through my body. Since that moment I have often thought of alternative ways to combat those feelings and reactions from abused women.

One night one of the partners turned up at the house. The woman shared later that he had tracked her down wanting to reconcile, and she had agreed out of fear. He knew that the refuge would help this woman to resettle in a Housing Corporation home, and he would be able to move in with her once she was set up. It wasn’t what she wanted but fear overrides everything in these situations, and the same scenario had played out before. She had also put us, the other women and children in the house, in danger and she worried about what her partner would do at the house if she didn’t give him what he wanted. I totally understood and felt her fear. Abuser manipulation, playing on our fears and insecurities.

I never shared the extent of my situation with the other women in the refuge. It’s just the way I am. The other women thought I was ‘lucky’
because I had a good job and a car, and my kids had bikes. But I never felt ‘lucky’. My story was no different to theirs, except that I chose to work rather than struggle on the DPB. The emotional and verbal abuse we endured was the same. The physical scars and emotional wounds were the same. Each one of us was made to feel ugly and worthless.

I will always be grateful for the support we received from the women’s refuge and the amazing volunteers who give up their free time and resources to help women in need. Even then, in the refuge with other abused women, I knew I wanted to help abused women in some way. I just wasn’t sure how at the time, but my desire has grown over the years through my life experiences.

My partner eventually left the house and my brother Michael and his partner at the time, Roberta and their baby son, came to live with me and the kids. Roberta has remained one of my closest friends. Someone who has stood by me in all my trials and tribulations, someone I trust with my life, and someone my kids love just as much as I do. She is very much a part of our extended whanau and has been one of my lifelines for almost thirty years.

When we left the refuge and returned to the house I discovered that he had poured battery acid over my furniture, bed, and everything I had worked hard to get, including a Lazy Boy chair we had bought for Dad when he was sick before he died. Every window in the house had been unlatched and left wide open, and all my clothes were gone. My new automatic washing machine had been intentionally damaged, and the freezer turned off so all the food that was in it had to be thrown out. Everything that I had worked hard for was ruined. There was nothing in that house that he had contributed to.

Even with Michael and Roberta living with us, I never felt safe in that house with the memories and ongoing threats of violence. I had reported the threats to the police who told me they could not do anything unless I had a non-violence order against him. So, I had to pay for a non-violence order that wasn’t worth the paper it was written on. I couldn’t get legal aid because I was working. I struggled physically and mentally to stay on top of everything.

He was eventually arrested for attempting to attack me with a hammer.
The previous night he had called and threatened to kill me. I was too scared to stay in the house, so I took my daughter and stayed at Myra’s house around the corner. I left the boys at home with Michael and Roberta. I went home the next morning to get ready for work and sort the kids out for school. When I left the house, it was raining. I got into my car that I had parked on the lawn near the front door. I had just started the car engine when I noticed someone come out the front door, and I thought it was Michael but when I turned the wipers on I realised it was him and he had a hammer in his hand.

I quickly locked the doors as he was punching the window and yelling at me to ‘open the fucken door’. I reversed the car out on to the street like a maniac and raced to the nearest Police Station to report what had happened. I was a nervous wreck and my whole body was shaking with a mix of fear and anger. The attitude and response of the police officer was almost offensive. I told him they needed to do something or one of us was going to end up in a box. I told the officer that if I had a gun I would shoot my partner. I was that desperate.

I filed my report, checked on the kids, and drove to work. I walked into my job with my work-face on.

He was arrested later that day.

We discovered later that he still had a key for the back door. He had entered the house sometime during the night and slept under my daughter’s bed. Just the thought of that made me feel sick to the stomach. If I had been home, I suspect I would’ve been attacked in my bed.

Eventually, I had to face him in court. I answered only the questions I was asked. I didn’t elaborate on too much because I thought that all the details of my abusive life and the incident had been recorded and presented previously to the Judge. The Police Prosecutor told me after the court session that I could’ve elaborated more, but they weren’t allowed to instruct or advise me to do this prior to or during the court case. Unbelievable! How does that work? What about the non-violence order? The money I was still paying off for the non-violence order was wasted; it meant nothing. It was money the kids and I desperately needed!

He should’ve gone to jail, but he only got periodic detention. What a joke! And people wonder why women don’t report abuse. In fact, official statistics show that at least seventy-six percent of domestic and
family violence in New Zealand is unreported – seventy-six percent!! It’s also reported that at least one in three women suffer physical and/or sexual violence in their own homes by someone they know.

And I suspect that the majority suffer in silence just like I did.

Every time society turns a blind eye to domestic or family violence, we are accepting it and allowing it to continue. We are disempowering our women and children. We are taking away their power and ability to make a valuable contribution in this World. It’s just so wrong!

The police called me at work on a Friday afternoon, and told me the outcome of the court case. I was working in the executive suite as PA to the Deputy Chief Executives at Statistics New Zealand at the time. My work colleagues were aware of my home situation, and work had become my safe place. When I got the news of his sentence I had a nervous breakdown at work and wanted to jump out of a window on the eleventh floor. I didn’t want to live in fear anymore. More shame and humiliation played out in my workplace, and my brothers came and took me home.

I was back in the office on Monday with my work-face on again. It took a lot of fortitude to go back into the workplace after the breakdown the previous Friday, but I had no choice. I had a family to support. During the previous months, I had taken a lot of time off work with injuries, humiliation, and meetings with the Police Prosecutor.

Unless you’ve been in a similar situation, you cannot imagine the fortitude and courage abused women have to find to keep everything together for our families.

On the surface I seemed OKAY, but on the inside, I continued to struggle physically and mentally, and life seemed so unfair. Why was this happening to me? I didn’t deserve this. I took good care of the men in my life. In fact, the more I was beaten, the more I would do for them. I thought it would make them stop, but it didn’t. I felt like I was always looking over my shoulder like a fugitive on the run. Everything took its toll on me and my kids.

Then one day I got tired of running, tired of the threats, tired of living in fear. I was physically and mentally exhausted, I had nothing else to lose and life didn’t seem worth living. I lived for my children, but I often wondered if they would be better off without me.
I went to where he was staying and confronted him. I invited him to take his best shot at me because I wasn’t running with my kids anymore. I didn’t care what he did to me. My fear had turned to intense hate and anger. His final act of dominance, non-consensual sex. I took myself to another place in my Mind and lay like a rag doll while he had his last cowardly way with me. It wasn’t hard to do because I’d been doing it for a long time, and I knew it was the last time he’d ever touch me.

I left and never looked back over my shoulder again. I stopped empowering him with my fear. He would never physically hurt me or my babies again.

Important Note: Please note that I do not encourage any woman to take the course of action that I took in confronting my abuser. This action could have had more dire results. I repeat again that I do not encourage nor suggest this course of action under any circumstances.

Your personal safety and the safety of your children are always paramount, and the most important things to consider in any action that you take. Please refer to the support and resources section at the end of my book. There are a range of support services available to women in abusive or unsafe situations. If you fear for your safety and/or the safety of your children, ring the Police immediately. Keep yourself safe. You and your children have a valuable contribution to make to this world. You are so loved.

I was mentally and physically drained, but relieved to finally be free of my nightmare. Michael and Roberta stayed with the kids and I in the house.

Although I knew in my mind that the trouble was over, I still felt threatened and wouldn’t drop my guard. I felt like I needed some respite for myself to get my life back together, so I asked John to take our boys for six months to give me a break, and he agreed.

But the six months turned into a few tough years for our boys. Another decision I regret.
Repeating My Pattern of Behaviour

True to form, I went straight into another relationship, with Ralph, because I wanted love and affection. I also wanted to feel safe and protected. I felt like I’d been through hell and here was this man who gave me what I desperately wanted. He was married with two young children, and he left his wife for me. There is nothing I can say to make this morally right.

After four years in the abusive relationship, I finally felt some happiness, and life had new meaning with Ralph despite the challenges we had with family and friends accepting our relationship. I started to enjoy my newfound freedom of socialising, sports, the gym and supporting Ralph with his rugby league passion. I poured everything into this new relationship, and it was exciting to feel good about myself and, for a while, I felt safe.

Mum would normally come to babysit for me when I went out with Ralph. After one night out, she told me that the kids had said they didn’t like me going out all the time, and I should be at home with my kids. I immediately got defensive and reminded her about our childhood and being left at home on our own. My exact words to her were, ‘Don’t you dare tell me how to look after my kids’. I’d never spoken to Mum like that before. I regretted it later, but it was how I felt at the time.

I consoled myself by thinking that at least my kids were fed and cared for when I went out, and after everything I’d been through I believed I deserved some enjoyment. And I worked to support my family. I made sure there was a roof over our heads, food in the cupboards, and the bills were paid before I spent money on myself.

But her words had struck a chord with me.

My boys were living with their father in Auckland when Ralph eventually moved in with me, and I only had Kiri to worry about. I started to enjoy a social life, leaving Kiri with one of her Nannies or other family members when Ralph and I went out. Perhaps it was selfish, but I wanted some adult enjoyment and excitement in my life.

But the karma was real, because history repeated itself and I experienced the same problems with alcohol and violence. Although it was to a lesser degree, the feelings of fear, shame and humiliation were
just as raw and painful. We had a reconstructed family with his two young children and my daughter, and that presented ongoing dramas.

Everyone was vying for a place in everyone’s heart.

In the early days it was difficult for Kiri. She was missing her brothers and having to share me with another man, and his children when they came every third weekend for time with their father. She had an absent father, had been through tough times in my previous relationship, and now she was feeling rejected again. My boys weren’t happy living with their father and they wanted to come back.

Everything I had experienced and resented in my childhood was repeating again in my children’s lives. Alcohol, violence, abandonment, rejection.

Karma made itself known again when I received a Child Support order from Social Welfare for my boys. I couldn’t believe it. I’d struggled to pay the loan for our consolidated debt when John moved to Auckland, and he had never contributed anything towards that, or the kids. He had managed to avoid paying Child Support when I had all three of the kids and he had a good job, and now he’d left work and gone on a benefit. Unbelievable! Part of the reason I asked him to have the boys for a while was so I could get back on my feet financially. I was still paying for the worthless Non-violence Order and trying to replace everything that had been damaged or destroyed. I was gutted. It seemed like I was always taking two steps forward and one step back.

Eventually, when my boys were teenagers they came back to live with Ralph and I, and we went through an initial period of difficult times as we all adjusted to the new living arrangements, but I was so happy to have them back with me. I can honestly say that my children never caused us any major grief in terms of their behaviour through their teenage years. We experienced the normal challenges with teenagers, but nothing drastic.

I wanted them to have the freedom I never had, and I trusted them not to let us down.

I finally had my family back together again, and I started to try to redeem myself with the kids for all the heartache I had put them through.
My Nanny and Poppa Dream

My deepest desire since I was eleven years old was always to have my family back together. When my mother and father separated, and our family became fragmented, I was devastated. It soon became clear that our family, as I knew it, was never going to come together in the context that I desperately wanted it to. Mum, Dad and five happy, healthy kids, like it used to be. Doing all the things that other families were doing together, loving and supporting each other.

So, I transferred my childhood desire into my own family when I had my children. When that didn’t work out, I transferred the same desire into my next two relationships. I kept chasing my elusive dream of the traditional family concept of Mum, Dad and the kids.

Keeping my childhood desire of a family alive was my driving force for much of my life. And quite possibly one of the underlying, subconscious reasons I stayed in destructive relationships.

When Ralph and I started our relationship, and my two stepchildren would come for weekends and holidays, there was always drama attached to the visits through no fault of any of the kids. Ralph and I just couldn’t seem to drop our guilty defences and make these happy times for our kids. All the kids got on well, and they still do. They consider and treat each other like brothers and sisters. The problem was Ralph and I not communicating properly, and guarding our loyalty to our own kids, rather than letting our reconstructed family evolve naturally. We managed to work through some of the problems as we started taking responsibility for our decisions and behaviour, and our family relationships started improving as the kids got older.

Then all of a sudden, our kids started having their own kids. And guess what I did? I created a Nanny and Poppa dream! Our kids never had Mum and Dad, so I desperately wanted our grandchildren to have Nanny and Poppa.

Ralph and I moved residences quite a few times during our marriage, primarily because we were trying to build our property portfolio through flipping houses. When our grandchildren started arriving I wanted to settle in one place, so we could settle down and our grandchildren could associate our home with ‘Nanny and Poppa’s’ place. I had visions of our
grandchildren coming to stay at ‘Nanny and Poppas’ and sharing quality time with us. I even had visions of them as teenagers bringing their friends to stay.

My dream started to crystallise, and I was happy.

Our first grandchild, Jamie-Leigh, was born on 26 January 1999, and I was present at her birth. I cannot find the words to describe how I felt and the huge impact she had on my life at the time. She bought so much light into my darkness.

One of the most poignant memories I have is visiting her when she was about nine or ten months old. I was in the lounge with her parents and bubba had disappeared. When we went to find her, she was sitting in the kitchen on the floor beside a cupboard where she had discovered a packet of flour. The flour was all over the inside of the cupboard, all over her, and the floor, and she was drawing pictures in the flour like finger-painting. My first automatic reaction was ‘what a mess’! Her parents, however, stood there laughing and clapping and cheering her on ‘what a clever girl’.

They always encouraged her to explore and discover, and freely express herself. Just beautiful.

That was a defining moment for me. I realised how times had changed. I realised how different I had been as a parent and the influence my parents’ good wife, good mother, messages had on me. They were so deeply ingrained that my focus was always on keeping the house and kids clean and tidy. I was always going around picking up after my kids, not letting them make a mess, not letting them get dirty, confining the mess to a small area, and unintentionally limiting and restricting their exploration and discovery, spontaneity and freedom. We never had enough play time. I was too busy cleaning, cooking, working and living an abusive life. My priorities were all wrong, in hindsight.

We’ve been truly blessed with many grandchildren and each one of them is an absolute treasure. They have added another dimension to my life that’s indescribable. I’ve had similar defining moments with all of them. Each one of them and their parents have become some of my greatest teachers.

Sometimes I think the challenges and pressures for parents now are so much harder from living in a fear-based society. Most children cannot
even walk to school anymore. Parents nowadays are having to protect their children from more threats than we had in our days. Much of the freedom we enjoyed as kids and even our own kids, has been limited and restricted because of the fear-based society we live in now.

I’m learning so much from watching our children raising their own children and encouraging their individuality and natural talents. They are truly some of my greatest teachers. I am so proud of them.

We are truly blessed.

Losing Our Beautiful Sister

In June 2003, our beautiful sister Judy passed away. Judy was our loved and respected Matriarch of our family. She was the one who always brought the family together for Christmas and family celebrations. She embodied everything maternal and I always felt that she was our ‘Mother’ role model. She endured so much in her short life. However, her story is not mine to tell. Suffice to say that her passing at the young age of forty-three left a huge void in our family for many reasons. I deeply regret not starting to write her story before she became too unwell to share her life in her own words. We lost an opportunity for her to leave a lasting, written legacy for her family. We started it, but it was never finished.

In the last two months of Judy’s life we spent a lot of time together reconciling our distant relationship and sharing some quality time together. We talked about everything, we laughed, and we cried. Sharing in her care before her passing was a life-changing and humbling experience. I remember spending a day with her three weeks before she transitioned. She told me she was afraid of dying, and wondered how it would feel, but not in a physical sense. It was more about consciousness or awareness, and still having a sense of ‘knowing’. Like when we’re asleep, we’re still semi-conscious or dreaming. She wondered if it would still be like that. I shared with her my experience with Dad, when I went to him in Heaven’s garden. I told her that’s how it would be. That she would go towards the light, and Dad would be waiting in his Navy uniform to meet her in that beautiful garden.

Later that day we went to visit the hospice, so she could see what it was like there. Her husband and children wanted to take care of her
Emerging From The Shadows

at home, but she didn’t want to be a burden on them. She enjoyed the visit to the hospice, and I think it gave her peace of mind to know she had that option. We all shared in her care while she was at home, and in her true Matriarch soul essence style, she had brought our family back together again.

It was the last time Mum, Barbara, Judy, Paul, Michael and I, were all together and reconciled as a family.

At times it was like being kids again. The three sisters, Barb, Judy and I would top 'n' tail in her bed and talk into the wee small hours. Barb would lie beside Judy and cuddle her, and I’d lie at her feet massaging her legs. Sometimes she would wake during the night and tell us that she’d seen Dad and angels at the foot of her bed. We knew our time with her in her physical life was coming to an end.

We shared some special moments that I will never forget. Her house was like a marae with mattresses spread out in the lounge in the evenings, and we’d all have turns at sitting with Judy. Whanau would come for karakia (prayers) together every evening, and others would play the guitar and sing for her. It was truly beautiful.

Around this time Judy said she wanted to go to the hospice, so we packed her things and her daughter Jessie, Roberta and I took her to be admitted to the hospice. On the way there we drove past places she wanted to see. Michael met us at the hospice and he and I reminisced and shared some funny stories with Judy before she fell asleep.

She never really woke from her sleep, but we knew when she was aware of us, and when she wasn’t. We never left her alone. We played her favourite music, reminisced with her, read to her from the Bible, and talked with her. The nurses administered her medication, and we all shared in her personal care. At night we would put mattresses on the floor and sleep in her room, and we’d all take turns at staying awake with her. Just like we did when she was at home. The hospice staff would come in during the night and weave their way between the mattresses to administer her medications, but they never complained. They were amazing and truly beautiful, compassionate people.

One night we had extended whanau visiting Judy, and as the night wore on Judy appeared restless and a little agitated. This was probably the most movement we had seen from her since she went to sleep on day
one. I called her daughter Jessie to confirm if it would be okay to ask the visiting whanau to leave because Judy seemed agitated. After the whanau left, we settled Judy down for the night. Judy’s eldest daughter Jeana, Barb and I were staying with Judy that night. Barb opted to take the first few hours to stay up with Judy, and just as Jeana and I were going to sleep Barb called us to Judy’s bedside.

Judy was ready to leave us. We all held her hands and spoke to her, and gently supported her through her transition. I cannot find the words to describe my emotions at the time, but I felt truly blessed and honoured to share that time with my beautiful sister.

She was finally pain-free and at peace.

Ralph totally supported me and our family through our loss, and I will always be grateful for his love and understanding. He spent all his spare time with me and our family while we cared for Judy at her home and in the hospice.

My managers and work colleagues at Te Puni Kokiri were also unwavering in their support, and I was able to take as much time off work as I needed to spend quality time with my beautiful sister before she passed away.

We had Judy at her home for a few days before her funeral. This was the first time our family had experienced a tangihanga for someone so close to us. It was a sad, but beautiful time to experience with Judy. We weren’t able to do this for Dad when he passed away.

We had a constant flow of visitors coming to pay their respects to her, and an abundance of koha (gifts) in the way of food, money, help and support. The most memorable visitors for me were the Down Syndrome clients that Judy cared for in her job. They adored her, and they openly expressed their love and sadness for her in their own special unique way. My heart ached for them, as much as it did for myself. To see the lives she had touched was incredibly humbling. Those few extra days with her helped us through the grieving process and brought our family closer together again.

After Dad passed, a medium clairvoyant, Janeke, told me that if I ever needed him he would come to me as a Tui. The Tui is a beautiful native bird of New Zealand sometimes referred to as the Parsons bird because of the plume of white feathers on its throat. Tui have a dual voice
box and Māori believe that Tui (and other birds) are messengers between the Spirit and Physical realms, and the dual voice box enables the Tui to communicate between the realms. I miss seeing the Tui now that I live in Australia, but I often hear them in my Mind, and sometimes a picture of a Tui will appear just when I need it.

All my family know of my beliefs around the Tui, and often share their stories of when a Tui appears in their experiences or their time of need. When Judy passed away and we were taking her out of the hospice doors to the hearse, a group of Tui circled and sang above her for the twenty or so metres until we put her in the hearse. A magical guard of honour for our Matriarch, and confirmation that Dad and others were indeed there to meet her as she started her new journey.

Some months later I started going to meditation classes again with Janeke. When I arrived one night she met me at the door and told me she had a message for me. She said, ‘your sister wants me to tell you it was just like you said it would be.’ I knew exactly what Janeke and Judy were referring to, and it gave me a sense of peace and comfort.
Judy had three grandchildren when she passed away. She now has more beautiful grandchildren who do not have the privilege of her physical presence. However, it is heartening to know that, with their innocence and open hearts and minds, they feel her Soul Essence and her presence. They know her and feel her, and their parents encourage this connection with her. It’s truly beautiful.

Losing Judy brought more personal regrets to the surface. I regretted not spending much time with her doing things that sisters should. We had grown apart for a few years. Not because we didn’t love or care about each other, but more because our families and busy lives took priority over everything else.

I often wonder if my sisters and I unconsciously adhered so much to our parents’ expectations of us being good wives and good mothers, that we sacrificed some of our own personal happiness and freedom.

Somewhere in our lives we lost opportunities to spend time together as sisters should.

A Fresh Start in Australia

Out of respect for my children, my step-children and my husband, I will spare the details of some of the defining moments of our time together. Suffice to say that we all experienced some tough times in the first few years of our relationship, especially our children. As our children got older, and Ralph and I matured and accepted responsibility for our choices, our family life started to improve.

One significant lesson and defining moment I do want to share here is this: Ralph and his first wife Lynda unknowingly taught me how to express my love to my children and others. Looking back, I can see that I was very much like Mum. She very rarely expressed her feelings when I was a child, and I guess I had unconsciously adopted that behaviour. But Ralph and Lynda openly and regularly expressed their love to their children many times in one day, and the kids reciprocated. The kids would say, ‘I love you’ to me even when the environment in our house was difficult or uncomfortable for them. I can’t find the words to explain how that made me feel. I had a mixture of guilt and shame, and an overwhelming feeling of acceptance at the same time.
I have always loved my kids. I live for my babies, but I never told them often enough. What I learnt from Ralph and Lynda changed my life tremendously. I started to openly express my love to my kids and others, and they reciprocated. I never realised the impact and power of hearing these three words ‘I love you’ when they genuinely come from the Heart.

And it’s so true that the more love you express and give out, the more love that comes back to you.

I sincerely want to express my love and gratitude to Ralph and Lynda, and my two amazing step-children for teaching me one of the greatest and most rewarding lessons of my life!

My brothers, my son and daughter and their families live in Australia and I wanted to be closer to them and my grandchildren. So, in early 2011 after many arguments and a separation, Ralph and I agreed to move to Australia to be nearer to my family, and to try again to make our marriage work. We sold our house, settled his business affairs, and made the move.

I wish I knew then what I know and understand now - We may travel to a different part of the world, to different circumstances to what we left behind but we are still the same person that boarded the bus, plane or train. Wherever we go, there we are! There is no escaping the thoughts, feelings, emotions and memories that we carry inside.

We lived with Paul and Rana for almost five months when we moved to Australia. I loved living with them, and spending quality time with my younger, big brother. Paul and I have always had a very close relationship, and I love Rana like a sister. In fact, everyone used to think we were sisters when we all lived in New Zealand. Paul and Rana had moved to Australia ten years previously, and I missed them a lot. I visited them in Sydney from time to time, and they always made everything special during the visits. I also enjoyed the times they would come back to New Zealand. Paul is often the glue that holds our family together.

After a few weeks with Paul and Rana, the cracks started to appear in our marriage again. I worried about bringing our problems into Paul
and Rana’s home, so I suppressed my feelings to keep the peace. The unresolved issues we brought with us continued to bubble beneath the surface. After a few months Ralph and I agreed that we needed to find our own place and moved into an apartment in Runaway Bay right on the water. Being near the water had a calming influence on me and I would often see dolphins swimming by. And I thought about Dad a lot.

We moved into the apartment on 3 October 2011, the day we received the news that my Mum had passed away. I flew back to New Zealand that afternoon with Paul, and Michael and his wife and family.

My Mum’s passing deserves a chapter on its own, so I’ve shared this experience later in my story.

I was fortunate when we moved to Australia that I was able to have a few months’ holiday before returning to work. I was confident I would be able to find a job quite easily with my twenty-five years’ experience in the NZ Public Service, but I was wrong. I was just one of hundreds vying for the jobs I applied for. I eventually got some temp work through a friend who referred me to her direct contact at a recruitment agency. Ralph was able to get casual truck driving and warehouse work. On advice from new friends we met here in Australia, we both got our Security Licences, and this led to casual employment in LNG projects in North Queensland. We worked a 2/2 rotation, drive in, drive out for security businesses in Tara/Chinchilla, before I got an offshore position on a 2/2 rotation.

This situation was a stark contrast to what we had left in New Zealand and added more tension to our relationship. In New Zealand I had a well-paid job, and Ralph was the owner-operator of a brick and block-laying business. We also had well-established work, social and sports networks in New Zealand, and they were an important part of our lives.

We couldn’t work things out, and we separated. I moved back to Paul and Rana’s and stayed there for eighteen months while I worked on my Self. For the first time in my life since I was eleven years old, I only had myself to consider. So, I committed myself to my journey of self-discovery and healing.

My offshore work was my saving grace, and soon became my happy place. It was an escape from my reality, and the downtime gave me the
opportunity to really focus on my Self and start my healing journey. The environment I worked in, and the people I interacted with every day gave me a greater appreciation of life. I had a lot to be grateful for, in comparison to their lives. It was a humbling experience.

Ralph and I were together for twenty-three years and achieved a lot together and individually. We bought our first home together and built up a rental property portfolio through hard work and perseverance. My career in the NZ Public Service continued to progress and I achieved senior and management roles and earned a good salary. We were involved in sports together and individually, and generally had a good life. The one thing that was missing was being a real family. A real family in the context that I had desired since I was a child.

The separation was amicable because I believe that Ralph and I both accepted that it wasn’t working. We both wanted different things in life. We tried for a long time to make things work, but I also understand now that we both had too much baggage from unresolved trust issues and the consequences of those issues, that kept affecting our life together.

Sad really, because we have such a close bond and relationship now. We’ve talked about everything, everything we couldn’t talk about when we were together, without fighting and arguing. We’ve both acknowledged what we did wrong. And we found it in our hearts to forgive. Our kids are bonded for life as brothers and sisters and that makes me truly happy. We can still come together for family events and enjoy being together with our kids and grandkids. Not quite the Nanny and Poppa dream I had, but I’ve accepted that now.

When I look in the rear vision mirror I wish we had handled things differently in our marriage. We both sacrificed our kids in many ways. We were together twenty-three years, and there were more good times than bad. I wanted so much to have a stable and happy relationship and home for us, our kids and grandkids but it never worked out.

When we separated I mourned the loss of my dream, and my childhood aspirations again.

But we are truly blessed that our grandchildren are in loving, safe, and stable homes.
Childhood Conditioning

Like most kids we weren’t allowed to call adults by their first names, so we called them Aunty or Uncle, or by their title Mr or Mrs. We were taught to respect our elders, and other people’s homes, possessions or property. Generally, we were raised with good manners. Not a bad thing at all.

However, it took me a long time to adjust my childhood conditioning in my working career. When I was twenty-eight years old I was PA to two deputy Chief Executives and I was responsible for their diaries, vetting phone calls, and generally managing their time effectively and efficiently. This also required me to open, read and prioritise their mail, clear their in-trays and draft correspondence for them to sign, and keep their offices tidy etc.

Well, I had great difficulty with some of these things. I just couldn’t bring myself to call them by their first names; it didn’t feel right to be opening their mail and going through their in-trays or entering their offices without knocking even when their doors were open. These things were a natural and expected part of my job, but I struggled to let go of my childhood conditioning. Thankfully, I worked alongside an experienced senior PA, Regina. She was old-school, so she understood my upbringing, and slowly nurtured me along my career path.

I was truly blessed in my career with managers who recognised and encouraged my potential. In every job I’ve had I have aspired to always improve and climb the ladder. Well, as far as my confidence would let me. Not bad for this ‘disadvantaged’ Māori woman who left school at fifteen years old.

I worked at Statistics New Zealand for eleven years. I started in the typing pool and progressed through my career in various roles. Receptionist, executive secretary, personal assistant (PA) to the deputy government statisticians, and eventually PA to the Government Statistician (Chief Executive). My last position there was a junior analyst role in the Māori Statistics Unit.

So, I was well aware of the statistics relating to Māori in labour force, education, health, welfare and justice systems. Those statistics did not paint a positive picture of Māori in New Zealand. However, I
was also privileged to provide secretarial support to the Māori Statistics Forum. An advisory group of prominent Māori leaders and visionaries led by Bishop Manuhuia Bennett. The Forum was instrumental in initiating positive change for Māori, including the development of Iwi profiles, the bilingual census, the Monitoring Māori Outcomes project, and the collection of ethnicity data across government departments. These initiatives had a positive effect on more accurately measuring and supporting Māori development.

I cannot emphasise enough how fortunate I was to be in the presence of highly respected Māori leaders and visionaries, both male and female. It was empowering and inspired me to learn my Māori language and culture.

I was also extremely fortunate to be supported by Statistics New Zealand to complete my Diploma in Matauranga Māori. When I was thirty-seven years old, I completed the one-year Diploma course through Te Wananga o Raukawa (TWOR), and two years learning te reo Māori to an intermediate level. I regret not completing my third year. The diploma study included te reo (language) classes twice a week after work, and regular weekends on different marae learning Māori language and culture. It also included a lot of self-discipline for the self-directed learning required to complete the diploma.

I thoroughly enjoyed my diploma study with TWOR, particularly the language immersion classes on the Marae. Learning my Māori language and culture gave me an increased sense of self-identity and pride. I felt like I’d found a part of me that was missing. The tutors and wananga (learning) environment were also empowering and inspiring in both a personal and Spiritual sense. I gave up my sports and totally immersed myself in this new journey.

I’m not sure if ‘racism’ is the right word to use because of the extremely negative connotations it represents. But it would be fair to say that I’ve experienced situations, more than I’d like to count, where I have been treated unfairly and assumptions or judgements have been made about me because of my ethnic appearance. This happened often enough that I felt inferior in some situations and avoided people or places where I believed I would be judged because I was Māori and, more particularly, a Māori woman. There were times when I felt my children were being
unfairly treated as well, and I was more inclined to stand up and defend them than I was to defend myself in similar situations.

My heritage is both English and Māori, but some people only see my colour. This, in addition to the physical and emotional abuse that was prevalent in my life exacerbated my feelings of low self-worth and self-esteem. It took quite some time to overcome my inferiority complex.

After eleven years at Statistics New Zealand I worked for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs as the PA to the Chief Executive. I started in that position on 26 January 1999, the day my first grandchild Jamie-Leigh was born. I was privileged to be at her birth. She was born in the early hours of the morning, and I was so overwhelmed and excited by her arrival that I couldn’t sleep before starting my new job.

I applied for the PA position because I wanted to work for an organisation that supported and empowered women. Prior to starting I received a phone call from the Ministry’s Māori Liaison person, Whaea Lydia. She told me that I was the first Māori woman to be recruited to the PA position, and the Ministry wanted to acknowledge that by welcoming me with a powhiri, a Māori welcoming ceremony. At first, I declined. I didn’t want any fuss or fanfare. Then my sister-in-law phoned me and encouraged me to accept the offer and reminded me of the cultural and Spiritual significance of the powhiri. To not only welcome me, but to acknowledge and welcome the Wairua of my tipuna/ancestors who are always with me and supporting me. So, I agreed. It was a humbling and proud moment. A memorable day with the birth of my first grandchild, and a new job.

New beginnings, and a new chapter in my life.

During my time at the Ministry, the Domestic Violence policy was being revised. I’m not sure if it was by design or Divine timing but the movie ‘Once Were Warriors’ was released around the same time. I went to see the movie with my husband. It was so confronting and hard-hitting, literally. I cringed and cried during parts of the movie but mostly in the scene where the kids were in bed, and they heard the car doors closing and the rattle of the beer crates.

Childhood memories came flooding back when I saw the same fear and disappointment on their faces that I had experienced as a child. The movie received harsh reviews from the media and society, and Alan
Duff was accused of Māori-bashing and making Māori look bad. For me personally, the movie put Domestic Violence under the spotlight, right where it belonged, and forced people to take notice. People started talking openly about domestic violence, police and support services reviewed their policies, and communities started to take a stand against domestic violence.

In my personal opinion, the movie ‘Once Were Warriors’ was the catalyst for welcome changes to policies and services across the board.

Domestic violence is a festering boil. It is so easy for people who have never experienced domestic violence to make judgements on women in these situations. It’s easy for people to say, ‘why don’t you just leave him?’ ‘Why do you put up with it?’ ‘How can you let that happen to your children?’ ‘Why don’t you ring the police?’

I cannot even begin to explain how difficult it is to leave these situations. Women who have been physically, mentally and emotionally abused are not in a position to make rational and logical decisions. The view from the outside looking in is vastly different from the reality of living in fear, enduring soul-destroying situations day after day that continually play with your headspace. Add to that the bashings and verbal abuse, and the threats that feel so real. The threats to hurt you, your kids, your family, your friends. Threats to come into your job and show everyone what a [think of the worst abusive name you can think of and fill this space because I don’t want to recall or write them] you are. The number of different scenarios we play over and over in our Minds is incredible. For every solution, there’s a problem or an associated fear that keeps us locked in the nightmare.

Perpetrators gain their power from our fear and submissiveness. We submit to protect ourselves and our children. Then we beat ourselves up over and over again. We’re not only bashed by perpetrators, we bash ourselves and we’re bashed by spectators who stand back and watch from behind their curtains or commentate from the sidelines because they ‘don’t want to get involved’. Then you try and get help from sanctimonious officials who have no idea about the reality and pain of domestic violence. All the hurt and anger you’ve suppressed gets directed at them, and they look at you like ‘she probably deserved it’. Fuck off!! Nobody deserves to be violated!!
I left the *Ministry of Women's Affairs* and started work at Te Puni Kokiri (TPK), the *Ministry of Māori Development* where I worked for 11 years. I worked in several positions at TPK and enjoyed my time there. I was particularly blessed to be working for an organisation that supported Māori development. I was privileged to work on regional and national programs, and I travelled nationally on a regular basis to the regional offices.

One of the most rewarding projects I worked on at TPK was showcasing our Māori women weavers and young models at one of our national conferences. My friend Roberta and I represented TPK at a Matariki event held in Taumarunui.

**Matariki** is the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades. It rises in mid-winter and for many Māori, it heralds the start of a new year. Matariki literally means the ‘eyes of god’ (mata ariki) or ‘little eyes’ (mata riki)\(^1\).

The event in Taumarunui included a runway show of garments woven from harakeke (flax), and the garments were modelled by local teenage girls who had no modelling experience, but their natural beauty and talent on the runway was amazing. The traditional and contemporary woven garments were equally amazing, and obviously designed and made with so much *aroha* (love) and vision, and many hours of hard work.

One of the garments was a wedding dress with a matching headdress. It was absolutely stunning! I couldn’t believe it had been made from harakeke.

The following day, I spoke to one of our Taumarunui colleagues about the weavers, models and garments. We met at her home, and some of the garments from the showcase event were hanging up in her lounge. I was quite sad to hear that the garments would probably just be stored at someone’s house, and one or two of them might be donated to the local museum and *marae*. It seemed like such a waste of talent and *taonga* (treasures).

So, when Roberta and I returned to work, we submitted a proposal to showcase the weavers, models and garments at our annual conference,

and the proposal was approved. The annual conference was held at the beautiful Mission Winery Estate in Hawkes Bay, and award-winning Māori actor Cliff Curtis was invited to MC the event. Senior executives from both the public and private sectors were invited to attend the conference dinner and showcase, including representatives from NZ tourism organisations.

Roberta, with her natural talent and passion for event management, organised the set-up of an elevated runway, lighting, photographers, program and everything else you’d expect in a professional showcasing event.

The event was a huge success for the weavers and the teenage models. The young models had never experienced anything like this in their lives. Some had never travelled out of Taumarunui nor stayed in a hotel before, and they were so excited to meet Cliff Curtis. Their gratitude, enthusiasm and excitement were incredibly humbling to witness. The most rewarding outcome of the showcase event for me was hearing that the weavers and models had been invited to showcase their taonga and talents at an international tourism conference held in Auckland a few weeks later. From memory, I believe that some of the garments were showcased in wearable arts events as well.

Incredibly empowering for everyone involved.

I made some life-long friends at TPK, and I was blessed to have managers who recognised and supported my potential in the various roles I had. The work environment also supported my Māori language and cultural aspirations.

I didn’t realise how fortunate I was to work for TPK until I moved to Australia.

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The Contrast of the Corporate World

While I have been successful in my professional career and achieved most things that I aspired to, I have always struggled in my personal and emotional relationships. It was almost like I had two personalities—the strong and driven professional who would advocate strongly for staff
and stand up for what I believed in at work; and the subservient wife or partner at home. Not always so subservient that I wouldn’t stand up for myself at times, but subservient in a sense that I gave and sacrificed more than I felt was fair, and I constantly resented that.

One of my biggest regrets is I sacrificed my children’s happiness to keep the peace in my relationships.

Even through my struggles, I tried to give my children what I didn’t have as a child. Looking back now, I wish I’d given them more of my time. Play time, fun time, family time, real time. I had a choice between staying on the Domestic Purposes Benefit and being a stay at home solo Mum, but I didn’t want myself or my children to have the stigma that went with it, and I didn’t want to struggle financially to make ends meet. I have always been the sole support for my children, financially, physically and emotionally, and I chose to work and build a career, earn a decent living and give my kids a better life than I had.

My biggest regret is I let my fears override my responsibilities as a mother to protect my children and provide a safe and loving environment for them in their formative years. Even though my circumstances had changed by the time my children became teenagers and adults, and I was more able to encourage and support their goals and aspirations, I still struggled with feelings of guilt and shame.

I am eternally grateful for my career in the New Zealand Public Service, and to all my managers and colleagues who supported my career development and advancement over the years.

The one thing I am most grateful for and more aware of now, is that my decision to work rather than stay on the DPB offered me the contrast I needed in my life, to change my life. Being able to get up every workday, and leave the house groomed and ready for work (albeit disguising my home life) gave me something to aspire to. I was working with professionals who had dreams and aspirations. I was working with colleagues who inspired me to want more from my life, for me and my babies. I was working with people who owned their own home, who travelled, who were strong in themselves and their culture. Basically, I could witness the contrast that provided more clarity for what I wanted in life. For half of my time, I was with people who I deemed to be successful.
And I wanted to be successful too. I desperately wanted to achieve my hopes, dreams and aspirations. I wanted what they had.

Honouring the Wisdom of our Matriarch, Our Mother

By now after reading my story, you will be aware that my relationship with my mother was not always positive and nurturing. I blamed her for everything sad, bad and mad in my adolescent years. I blamed her for breaking up our family and abandoning us. I was conflicted between the way I was raised to be a good wife and mother, and her not fulfilling her role as a good wife and mother. I made judgements about her, and declared that if I ever had children, I would never be like her. But this became a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the judgements I had made about my mother were reflected in my own life with my children.

Over the years since my children were born I started to reconnect with Mum, and our healing journey began.

Throughout my story I have included the term I wish I knew. This term refers to things I wish I knew about my mother and the matriarchal wisdom and knowledge she may have shared with my sisters and I if our family circumstances were different.

I now acknowledge and honour the Matriarchal Wisdom born of my mother’s journey through her Maiden and Mother years. Some of the wisdom we thought we had lost with her passing has been revealed and remembered in this healing journey through writing. While the tradition of sharing matriarchal wisdom occurred to a certain degree for my sisters and I, it was constrained by a fragmented family life that was often dysfunctional and challenging for our whole family.
Mum was born in Waitara, New Zealand, on 14 April 1931 and is of Ngati Maru ki Taranaki descent on my grandfather’s side. I wish I knew our tribal connections on our grandmother’s side. Mum was born during the Great Depression and Māori land conflicts. Government policies were impacting on Māori land ownership, identity and survival, and contributing to tribal unrest. These policies have had a long-lasting effect on Māori across New Zealand, and our Iwi Ngati Maru ki Taranaki are still seeking redress for the losses endured during that historic time.

I wish I knew what impact this political environment had on Mum’s maiden-child years.

Mum was denied her natural birthright of her mother’s nurturing love, affection and guidance. Her mother passed away when she was only a few months old, and Mum was raised by extended whanau separated from the love and comfort of her siblings. I have been told that our Nanny died as a result of complications during Mum’s birth, and I often wonder if Mum had to bear the burden of those who believed her birth contributed to our Nanny’s passing.

What a heavy burden for a child to bear.

My paternal grandparents also passed away when Dad was young, so we never had grandparents. This is something that I’ve always felt a little deprived of. We missed out on that special relationship and bond with our grandparents’ love, knowledge and wisdom. Quite sad really.

Mum told me that her father Te Amo Patuwairua, our Koro, had died when we were young. I later discovered he had remarried and had more children and lived for some time in our tribal area before his passing. I wish I knew our Koro while he was alive and living only four hours away from us. I often wonder what I may have learnt from him.

Mum was mistreated in her child and adolescent years and I believe this had a lasting effect throughout her life. She very rarely spoke about her childhood and when she did it was often about hardship and beatings, and the mutual resentment between her and her stepmother. One story I’ve been told was that Mum was taught to steal food when she was a child. An effect of the Depression times I suspect, and a behaviour that lingered through her lifetime.

She loved all animals, and I swear she was an animal whisperer. She would have full-on conversations with the cats, the dogs, the birds, every
animal she came across. Sometimes I thought she took better care of her animals than she did of herself. There was always a smorgasbord of different food laid out for them. She even gave them pudding, and cups of tea! Whenever she looked after our dog Savannah, we had to put her on a diet when we got her back.

Her ‘happy place’ was her garden; she loved being outside tending to her vege and flower gardens. Her gardens were always beautiful works of art decorated with rocks and paua shells, and other knick-knacks. Every time we visited her, her front lawn appeared smaller, as her garden expanded over time. Most of her plants were nurtured from cuttings she’d taken from other people’s gardens. She had her own compost heap and used dishwashing or laundry water in the garden to keep the bugs away. There was almost always a tablecloth and vase of fresh flowers on her dining table. Her gardens reflected the joy and happiness she gave and received from her ‘happy place’.

Sometimes as a child on our few trips to Taranaki, our tribal home, I would watch and listen to Mum talking with her brother and sister. I remember how fascinated I was to hear her speaking te reo Māori, our Māori language. I smiled when I realised they probably spoke te reo so I wouldn’t understand what they were talking about. ‘What are you doing in here big ears?’ she’d say and send me outside to play. Funny now but oh so embarrassing at the time.

I remember as a child asking Mum why she never spoke te reo to us kids. She told me how they were forbidden to speak their own language at school, and they were beaten if they were caught. This was a major historical event that Mum was very much a part of.

Te reo Māori is one of the most beautiful languages in the world. It’s the voice of our ancestors who spoke poetically in rhythm. In rhythm with nature, with Mauri, our life force energy. It’s a taonga, a treasure. It’s part of our Mana as a tribal people. It adds deeper meaning and essence to our ancient wisdom shared in the stories from our tipuna, our ancestors. The wise stories that sustained us. Quite different to the stories we tell today.

For Māori (and I suspect for other indigenous people), our culture and turangawaewae, our traditional standing place in this world has been seriously eroded through colonisation, through oppression and
suppression. We were forced to suppress our ancient wisdom, values and beliefs so we could assimilate into a foreign and superficial world of materialism that had little cultural or Spiritual sustenance for our people.

This erosion of our culture has simultaneously eroded our connection to our Mana, our Greatness, our natural birthright of unconditional love for ourselves and others.

Government policy had a significant impact on the identity of Māori. In fact, it contributed immensely to discrimination and the demise of our language and culture.

*I wish I knew* how government policies, and discrimination influenced Mum's young life and the decisions she made.

I remember Dad telling me that when they were courting he would take Mum out to a pub for a drink and the publicans would refuse to serve him because Mum was Māori. Needless to say, Dad didn’t agree with this and would leave the establishment. Dad had a strong dislike of racism. I just can't imagine how the publican's refusal to serve Mum made her feel. So sad.

Perhaps these experiences are part of the reason why Mum had a strong but voluntary disconnect from her Māoritanga and tribal roots. She swore she would never step foot on a marae and, to my knowledge, she never did. She never wanted any of us, her children, to go to our own marae in Taranaki, but she never explained why. She wouldn’t have anything Māori in our homes like artwork or taonga and seemed to have a strong dislike or fear of pounamu (greenstone), in particular.

*I wish I knew* why she felt this way about acknowledging her taha Māori, her Māori-ness? My diploma study included a private study of our Iwi and Marae so I felt it necessary to ask Mum for her support to visit our marae in Taranaki. And she willingly supported my cultural aspirations.

I often found it difficult to gauge Mum's mood or how she was feeling. She very rarely spoke about herself and seldom showed her emotions, but we definitely knew when we were in trouble! I never really saw her stressed or anxious despite the challenges she faced. Mum was always resourceful with a strong survival instinct. One of the many traits I learnt from her, I guess.
I believe that the mistreatment of Mum in her Maiden years would naturally have compelled her to wish for a better life. I wish I knew what her aspirations, hopes and dreams were for a happier life as seen through her child and adolescent eyes. How did her dreams and aspirations influence the choices she made through her lifetime? And what could we have learnt from her Matriarch knowledge and wisdom?

Healing my Relationship with my Mother

When I was a young mother experiencing the trials and tribulations of being in a relationship and raising children, my relationship with Mum started to improve. I really needed her sometimes, and she would turn up out of the blue and help me with the kids. It didn't happen very often, but when it did it was beautiful.

The healing process of love and forgiveness continued for Mum and I. Over the years that followed I rediscovered my love for Mum, and her love for me. Having my own children brought Mum and I closer together again. Seeing the love and attention she gave to my babies touched my Heart. It was like she had a second chance to fulfil her maternal responsibilities. Mum spoilt my kids in her own special way and they loved their Nanny very much. I watched as she openly shared her grandmotherly love, affection and tenderness with my babies. She had so much love to give. My daughter had a very close connection with Mum, and she has very fond memories of being out in the garden and learning to cook and bake with her Nanny.

Perhaps Mum shared her matriarchal wisdom with my baby in those special moments.

I have no doubt at all that my babies felt my mother's love and affection. Something that I always felt was missing in my maiden years.

When I was about twenty-seven years old, Mum met David and he became her companion for twenty-five years. David tamed Mum's gypsy Soul, and eventually Mum and David settled in Wellington and shared a home, together. They had a lot in common and were well suited for each
other as companions. Their relationship wasn’t an intimate relationship, but they had a deep love for each other. They both loved being in the garden and shared a mutual love of animals.

For a long time, my siblings and I never really appreciated the positive influence he had on Mum’s life. Without David, we would never have been able to leave her in New Zealand to start our new lives in Australia. His life revolved around Mum, and he took such good care of her in his own special way. Sometimes Mum could be quite hard on him, but it never seemed to phase him.

Over time they stopped drinking alcohol, and I started to enjoy visiting Mum.

Despite their financial struggles and failing health, they were happy in their little world and enjoyed family visits and gatherings at their home.

Every morning for almost twenty-five years, David would make Mum a cup of tea and take it to her room for her to enjoy before she got up. It was a daily ritual that he continued for two days after Mum passed away until he realised how much his life had changed.

Sadly, David passed away a few months ago. I have visions of them together in Heaven and Mum bossing him around like she always did. Together again, forever.

Losing our Matriarch – I Wish I Knew

On 3 October 2011 at 4 o’clock in the morning the phone rang. I somehow knew it was David, but hoped I was wrong. It was 6 o’clock in New Zealand, and our Mum had passed away peacefully in her sleep. This is what she wanted. She’d told me many times she was tired and just wanted to go to sleep, ‘I’ve had enough, I’m tired’ she would say.

I wish I knew what she knew. My Mum passed away five months after my husband and I moved to Australia to begin a new life. I wish I knew that as my new life was beginning, Mum’s physical life was coming to an end.
Mum was eighty years old, and had lived a full and interesting life; she worked hard and played hard. Even though she’d been unwell I never thought she would transition so soon. When we left New Zealand five months earlier, I promised her I would be back to see her. I couldn’t accept that I never got to say goodbye to her. In my adult eyes she was a strong, resilient woman – a survivor, because I saw her endure and overcome so much. I didn’t want to believe she was gone.

*I wish I knew* that she was preparing for her transition, I would’ve gone home to say goodbye, to tell her how much I loved her, how much I regretted not calling her often enough, not spending enough time with her, how much her grandchildren and great-grandchildren loved her. How much they loved her rice pudding and boil-ups, her forgetful conversations, all her little knick-knacks that cluttered every available space in her home, and the quirky or unusual presents she would give them. Sometimes she would give them a present that we had given her for her birthday or Christmas, still wrapped in the same wrapping paper. She loved to collect and hoard things, and her home was cluttered with her prized possessions! We still joke about this now, especially since none of us kids have inherited that trait.

The Longest Journey Home

My two brothers and I took the longest and saddest journey home that day. During the four hours on the plane I reflected on my time with my Mum, and how she had influenced my life. I thought about the good times and the bad times, the happy and the sad times, how strong and resilient she was, how she always seemed to be composed and calm, her gypsy Soul, her elusive dreams, and her love for animals.

I also reflected on how little I knew about her life and her true Soul Essence.

Over the next few days my siblings and I arranged Mum’s funeral and spent as much time with her as we could. We shared our special memories of her, we laughed, and we cried. We listened to her grandchildren talking to her and sharing their own happy memories of their Nanny. For some of her younger grandchildren this was their first experience of someone close to them dying. It was beautiful to see that
even in her passing she was teaching them something – the natural cycle of life and death.

I believe it was a life-changing and memorable experience for her grandchildren. Their curiosity and inquisitive minds were opened to discussions about death and dying. It wasn’t scary for them anymore. They were so eager to be a part of everything – they talked with her, drew her pictures, gave her toys, spoke at her funeral, and helped to bury her.

It was so sad but incredibly humbling and heart warming.

We were also blessed to have Aunty Alice come to share time with us and Mum. Aunty Alice told us stories of Mum from her childhood. She told us that our grandmother passed away when Mum was only three months old and Mum was raised by extended whanau. At eleven years old Mum ran away and walked twenty kilometres along a bush track from Tarata to Waitara to live with her Uncle, Aunty Alice’s father. She had had a tough childhood with her father and stepmother.

It seems that tough lessons continued through her teenage and adult years. The stories were really sad but helped us understand why Mum was the way she was.

We understood why Mum never wanted to speak about her child and adolescent years.

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‘The Dash’ by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on her casket from beginning to the end. He noted that first came the date of her birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the ‘dash’ between those years. For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth and now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash
So think about this long and hard; are there things you would like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged
If we could just slow down enough to consider what is true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel
And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we have never loved before
If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile, Remembering that this special dash might only last a little while
So, when your eulogy is being read with your life’s actions to rehash… Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your Dash?

My niece Jessie read this beautiful poem at Mum’s funeral. I’d never heard it before. What a powerful message. How many of us ever consider how we spend our Dash? How many of us actually think about the significant contribution we make to other people’s lives, and to this world? Do we remember pivotal events in our life or let them fade away in the busy-ness of our lives? Do we recall historical events we’ve witnessed or been a part of? Or are we so intent on getting through our busy life that we never stop to ‘smell the roses’?

Do we ever acknowledge how significant our life is and the legacy we will leave behind?

My siblings and I all spoke at Mum’s funeral, along with some of her grandchildren and extended whānau. It was interesting to hear our different perspectives of Mum, and how she was perceived through child and adult eyes.

I wish I knew how she saw her life through her own eyes?

It was really sad to realise that we knew very little about Mum and her Dash, and her contribution to the world from her perspective. My youngest brother Michael started his eulogy with the words ‘outside this room Mum’s passing will go unnoticed’. Sad but true. He went on to describe how through us and our achievements, she had contributed to a better world by the lessons she taught us. And we in turn are passing those on to future generations. He acknowledged Mum for giving us valuable lessons. He also acknowledged her for not burdening us with the pain of her past. He talked about how she had protected us from her past - she knew it wasn’t our burden to carry.
I had never thought about Mum from that perspective before.

I’ve realised that her grandchildren with all their innocence felt her true essence through their open and non-judgmental hearts and minds when they shared time with her. How cathartic it is to see Mum through their eyes. She gave them her love and affection, and they embraced her as their Nanny. My kids have beautiful memories of their Nanny, and that has been a large part of the healing process for me.

My sister Barbara closed her eulogy with the words ‘we are all part of Mum’s Dash’, against the backdrop of a family slideshow featuring her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Living legacies of the Dash between her years.

But it saddens me to see what’s happening to her living legacies now. We have a large whanau, where changing whanau dynamics and unnecessary judgements have resulted in our children and grandchildren growing up separated from the love and kinship of their extended whanau. They are being denied their natural birthright through no fault of their own. We have two new generations emerging, but they’re growing up like my siblings and I did, not knowing their real aunties, uncles and cousins. This is not fair on the kids who want to know their cousins. I totally understand this dynamic where we have whanau living in different countries, but I don’t understand when this is not the case.

We have so much Maiden, Mother and Matriarchal and patriarchal knowledge and wisdom available in our family, but we have become distanced from it again. Some of our emerging generations will not know their true Whakapapa, their kinship ties and the strength that comes from that knowing.

After Mum passed away I tried to put her tapestry of life together but there are so many missing threads. It’s a colourful tapestry for sure but it remains unfinished in my Mind. Perhaps that’s her intention.

There are things we just don’t need to know.

Through the years before and after Mum’s passing, we all accepted that there were many things that Mum didn’t want us to know about
I wish I knew what she was like as a child, an adolescent, an adult before she became ‘Mum’. What were her dreams and aspirations, her losses, her glories, her loves, her lessons, her life experiences, her Soul Essence.

I wish I knew more about her natural innate talents and gifts.

I knew that Mum had foresight and was very intuitive. She seemed to know when I needed her, especially when my kids were young. She would often turn up out of the blue and stay for a few days or weeks, and I always appreciated everything she did when she was with us. She never sat still, was always pottering around the house or the garden, or cooking for the kids. They loved her cooking and she would always make them something for pudding. In her own way she would spoil the kids, they didn’t have to eat all their dinner like we had to, and they could still have pudding!

I never really heard her growl the kids and she certainly never smacked them. She was always calm, and the kids were well-behaved and loved having their Nanny around. I guess her visits also gave the kids respite from the fear and sadness they experienced in our home life.

As a child I remember seeing and hearing Mum having conversations with people I couldn’t see, and I’d ask who she was talking to? She told me how the Spirits of loved ones come to say goodbye around ten days after they’ve passed away, before they go to Heaven. I was always intrigued by this. I only saw this happen two or three times because I believe that Mum suppressed her gifts and intuition, and I wish I knew why?

I often wonder if I’d known and understood more about our Mum, perhaps I would’ve understood myself better?

After Mum passed away and we returned to Australia, I waited. Ten days came and went, and I continued to wait. I wanted so much for her to come and say ‘Goodbye’, and I needed to tell her how much I love and miss her. I thought I would ‘see’ her, that I would ‘hear’ her speak to me.
But now I understand about eternal life. I understand that our physical body dies, but our Soul Essence, our *Wairua*, lives on, and begins a new journey. My two near-death experiences confirm my beliefs because I have experienced and felt what it’s like to be in my own Soul Essence state.

I understand now that while I waited those ten days I was looking for Mum in the wrong places. I was trying to see Mum as I knew her. I* wish I knew* then what I know now. Now I understand that in her eternal Soul Essence state she is the full expression of who she really is, fully reconnected to her inner power Source as she was when she came into this world. She is now fully realigned and free of all the earthly labels and limitations.

I cannot physically see her or audibly hear her voice, but I know when she’s close to me, because I ‘feel’ her presence and speak to her in my Mind and ‘feel’ her responses through the wisdom of my Heart. I ‘see’ her in my Mind’s eye, and I see a younger, healthier, happier vision of Mum.

I’ve learnt about this connection as an adult, but it’s natural for our babies and children, until it decreases over time with the ‘realities’ of life we impose on them.

I can consciously connect with Mum now when I’m in a calm, relaxed state and I look for her where she is now. Sometimes I can connect with her more easily any time I need to just by being open to receiving her love and guidance.

I understand now why we see our loved ones in our dreams, or perhaps when we’re doing creative activities like writing or art. It is at these times we are in a calm and relaxed open-minded state without limiting thoughts or resistance.

Now when I look back at our lives together, I am grateful for the lessons and values she instilled in us as kids. Slowly over time I’ve reflected on the similar challenges faced throughout our lives. I now understand her and the choices she made because I made similar choices.

The things I judged about my mother, definitely reflected in my life.
Emerging From The Shadows

I have purposely refrained from providing graphic details of the violence and abuse in my story because I want to focus on shifting our energy and vibration from abuse to Freedom. I no longer wish to be in the negative energy and shadows of the past. It serves no purpose to dwell in those shadows again. The shadows have added depth and contrast to my vibrant and colourful tapestry of life I’ve experienced thus far, but the shadows no longer define who “I Am”.

So, my life story is not a story of violence and abuse. It’s a story of rebirth and reclaiming my personal status and natural birthright of Mana Wahine. Because as I’ve said before, it is my firm belief that we have become the victims and perpetrators of violence primarily because we have become so disconnected from our Mana, and our natural birthright of unconditional love for ourselves and others. I also believe that when we can reconnect to our natural birthright of Mana Wahine, we will not tolerate violence and abuse towards ourselves or others.

We will set ourselves Free!

When we stop looking outside of ourselves for love and respect, we discover that all the love, nurturing, gentleness and respect we need, is within us. These are our natural birthright, our original blueprint, our inner power source.

Self-love and Self-respect are the highest energies of all, and through self-nurturing and gentleness, we can find our own unique sacred space of Mana Wahine. We owe it to ourselves and every other woman experiencing violence and abuse.

When we heal ourselves and others, we are contributing to raising the collective consciousness of health and wellbeing for all women.

This is the strength and power of Mana Wahine.

“The Brightest Lights Cast the Darkest Shadows”
In early 2013 I decided to put myself first, to pursue everything I had desired over the years, to discover who I Am at the core of my Being. I’d been contemplating the direction of my life for many years. My life had compelled me to want my FREEDOM. But not freedom in a physical sense, not freedom from my children or my marriage.

My children are all independent adults living their own lives, and they have their own beautiful together-families. My husband and I had tried for a few years to make our marriage work but we both wanted different things and experiences in our lives, and we had grown apart.

I wanted freedom from my self-imposed bondage. Bondage that was caused by my own internal doubts and fears. I wanted the freedom to love my Self without any external influences, limitations or boundaries.

And the only way I was going to discover this was to have time on my own. Time to reconnect with Me and my inner sanctuary of *Mana Wahine*.

I wish I understood *Mana Wahine* in my young years when I often felt conflicted between the subservient role of ‘traditional’ wife and
mother as described by my parents, and what my intuitive senses and impulses were guiding me towards.

My life experiences and internal conflicts convinced me that I wasn’t ‘good enough’, not pretty enough, not clever enough, and would never measure up. I had a constant fear of failure, and not living up to my parents’ or other peoples’ expectations. I felt trapped like a flightless bird with broken wings in an imaginary cage of low self-confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem.

Consequently, I was always trying to “improve” myself, sacrificing my self-worth for misguided love and acceptance. Physical and emotional abuse often left me feeling depressed and powerless, and I cultivated a victim mindset of powerlessness with stories of my abusive and sad life. Stories that were validated with attention or alienation, and sympathy from well-meaning friends and family. I struggled to see or appreciate the positive things in life.

It saddens me to see women experiencing the same trauma and hardship, needlessly drowning in negative emotions, settling for abusive relationships, struggling financially, and indulging in false beliefs that result in low self-worth, low self-value, and not loving and accepting ourselves just the way we are in all our NAKED glory. And I don’t mean naked of clothing – but NAKED of anything that does not positively serve and support our Soul Essence.

When we suppress emotional pain inside, it eventually erupts and we often hurt the ones we love the most. Only we can heal ourselves and, in healing ourselves, we’re healing our relationships, families and future generations. We are the catalysts of change, the role models for our children, our grandchildren, and extended family.

No more Broken Wings

I keep to myself
In my comfort zone
Not venturing out
Just staying home
Safe & protected
Inside my nest
Transforming, aligning
Soon to emerge
A confident bird
With vibrant wings
Ready to fly
On winds of change

Adventures call
Challenged to change
Why? What for?
This is ‘Who I am’
Compassionate & complex
Sensitive to the core
Not ashamed of that
My gifts to the world
A sensitive heart
Conscious and aware
Always guarded
Cautious & reserved

I have to get out
Out of my shell
Lose the barriers
Shielding my heart
It’s scary out there
Outside my World
But it’s lonely inside
In the places I hide
Behind this mask
Of confidence & poise
Safe from harm
A false disguise

In my Mind I see
My loved ones lost
My Dad, My Mum
My Sister, with Me
Why did they leave
Create their demise
My parents gone
With no Goodbyes
Wandering aimlessly
I'm getting lost
Lost in my World
Again and again

I ask for their guidance
To light my path
Their love & presence
Lodged deep in my Heart
They give me courage
To emerge, fly high
Reminding me always
It was never Goodbye
With confidence now
I'm flying free
To new horizons
Waiting for me

Rhythm and dance
Music and wine
Dance all night
Watch the sunrise
Bathe in the light
Feel the breeze
Embrace the beauty
In all that I see
Life’s too short
To ignore my dreams
Take flight little bird
No more broken wings
Feelings of Failure

Working offshore gave me the opportunity to have time on my own, literally. I used that time to start to heal from my feelings of failure regarding my marriage, and my own perceived failures as a mother. These perceptions of failure had consumed me for a long time, and I carried a lot of guilt and shame for what my children had been subjected to in their young lives.

In August 2017, I spoke to my daughter Kiri about my desire to share my story with the intention to help and support other women who have had similar experiences of violence and abuse. Kiri has agreed to let me share our communications at that time. It was confronting for me, but it was also a significant part of my healing process. Following are our communications after our phone discussion.

Kiri sent me this text message:

*I want to share something with you that I wrote a few years ago. Like you, I find it easier to express myself through writing. So I started a blog about six years ago. I haven’t published much (but have many passages sitting in my drafts folder) and kept it private. It’s not something I share with people; it’s just my way of having an outlet without hurting people’s feelings."

This is Kiri’s unedited blog post:

**Hurt, Healing and Breaking the Cycle**

*The Realisation of WHY and WHAT has made me ME*

As a child, I felt as though a dark cloud hovered over me and followed me wherever I went. Occasionally the cloud would disappear and let the sun shine on me and fill me happiness, before it would return and I’d be back under that horrible cloud again. I experienced many sad times as well as happy times however it’s those sad times that still haunt me and frequently bring tears to my eyes - I say as I type through the tears.
I am the youngest of 3, and the only girl. So it goes without saying that of course I was treated differently, no fault of my own, and not always fair but I guess it came with being the baby girl. When I was 2 years old my parents separated and my mum entered a new relationship with someone a little too close to home. This was an unhealthy abusive relationship that took its toll on all of us. My mum was physically and emotionally abused and my brothers also suffered physically at times too. Again, no fault of their own - just a cowardly act of the said partner. Who returns home late at night, drunk and wakes sleeping children just to beat them? It angers me to this very day to hear of what my brothers were unnecessarily put through. We were force fed by this coward if we didn’t finish what was on our plates at dinner time, and most mornings he would “leave for work” while it was still dark out, and watch us from outside, through the dining room windows to make sure we ate all our breakfast. So controlling and nasty - a person who felt so high and mighty by belittling children and women. A disgusting excuse for a human being. We even left numerous times and stayed in Women’s Refuge Safe Houses. As young as I was, I remember more than what people assumed I would. And it still hurts. I can still see the police in our house, I can hear the yelling, the thumps, doors slamming and I can see the pain my mum and brothers suffered. This went on for a few years. Until the door closed on this relationship. Family never really intervened. Those who tried grew tired of the repeated cycle, and those who didn’t - well I can only assume it was because this horrible person was in fact “family”. I will never forgive him, and I try my best at family gatherings to avoid him. I am not rude, but I won’t pretend that I can’t remember what we were put through.

Then begins the next chapter. New relationship, fresh start for my mum, brothers and I? No, not quite. Similar to the above this also came with the abuse - only this time it was only my mum who suffered physically. But mentally and emotionally, we all got it. My brothers were sent away to live with our dad and I remained in my mum’s care for the pure fact that I was girl who needed to be raised her mother. At the time I was confused and too young (6 years old) to understand why my brothers were sent away, but I wasn’t too young to know that I was lonely. Although it had been a roller coaster ride for myself and my
brothers, at least we knew we had each other. And now they had gone, and I was on this journey all by myself. For years the cycle remained the same. Alcohol, domestic violence, mum and I would leave for a week or 2, then we’d go back and sooner or later it would happen again. Weekends away would be ruined by alcohol induced domestic violence that would leave my mum spending the rest of the time hiding in the room so no-one could see her black eyes. Why did she stay with him? False hope, love and maybe she was afraid of being alone are all I can put it down to. And being scared. Whenever we would leave there was always a fear that we would be found and worse things would happen. Yes I was a child, but I wasn’t stupid. I knew very well what was going on and I hated it.

I never felt truly loved or cared for. I was spoken down to, and dropped off to my grandmother most Friday nights and wasn’t picked up until Sunday night. I was home alone a lot - before and after school, and spent most weeknights sitting in a corner at the gym whilst my mum and her partner worked out for 2 hours. I was too embarrassed to walk down our street some days as our neighbours would come out and ask if I was OKAY because they’d heard a lot of screaming and yelling coming from our house the night before. I would jump at the opportunity to
have sleepovers at my friends’ houses because I felt safe and a sense of normality when with them and their families. I’d look forward to school holidays with my dad because I’d be spoilt and felt safe there too. On many occasions I begged dad not to be sent back, to please let me stay and live with you, but mum never allowed for me to stay. I was an inconvenience, a nuisance to my mums new partner, and what hurt most was that she put him and his feelings first. I always came second to him and what he wanted.

I witnessed so many things as a child. Things that no child should ever have to see or hear. Feelings that no child should ever have to feel. And this wasn’t even my journey, it was my mum’s - and she chose to take me for the ride. Its angers and upsets me every time I think about it. It makes me question WHY?? Why would you put your child through this?

As the years went on so did the abuse. My brothers returned to us at the ages of 16 and 17, I was now 14. From here on it happened less and less but still, it happened. At this point I’d been through it enough times to know it wasn’t right, nor safe, and knew that if mum tried hard enough - she could walk away from the situation. And now that my brothers were back I finally had a sense of security.

My teenage years were OKAY, they weren’t bad, they weren’t the greatest - but this is the time of my life that I gained my independence.

I soon found the man that I would later start a family with (a rather large family at that) and marry. We have had an adventure of our own, moved countries, then states, and had even more babies. I found that man when I was only 17 years old, and now 14 years later our love is stronger than ever.

Our kids are our world. He works hard to be our provider, and I take on the stay at home mum/housewife duties. Just like the old days. I tell my kids daily that I love them, I hug them, I kiss them, I cook for them, I clean up after them, I will kiss and cuddle my husband in front of them, we do anything and everything we can for them. I won’t wrap them in cotton wool, but I will do my best to protect them and I will make sure they have that sense of belonging. I pour my heart and soul into being a good mother and wife. I’m giving my children, the life I think they deserve. A happy family and safe place that they can call home.
In recent years I have been able to talk to mum about some of the above, and try to get a better understanding - but I don't think I will ever fully understand. I just know that it's not the path I want to follow. Her journey made me the person I am today, and I will continue my own journey, my way.

And her following text:

I just feel like after our talk this morning, that I was ready to share it with you.

My response to Kiri:

Thx bub .. one day I hope you truly understand me. There is not a day that goes by that I don't regret what I brought into your lives. I struggle every day with the guilt and shame, it's the one area in my life that I struggle to heal. You will see this coming out in the posts and my story. I love you, Charlie and Shannon more than life itself. Perhaps one day when you see my stories we can talk about it some more. I really need yours and your brothers' forgiveness. Thank you for sharing ... I love you so much .. xx

Kiri: I hope it doesn't upset you too much. I was just in a place at that time where I couldn't bottle it up anymore and needed to write about it. It was a few years ago now, and since you split from Ralph, I have seen the changes in you, and I can see you making positive changes in your life which makes me happy. We all make mistakes mum and I know it's not the life you would've intended for us. You did what you thought was right and safe for you at the time. We can't change it, but we can all learn from it. Accept what it was and make better choices from here on out.

Love you too, and am very proud of you for finally coming out and telling your story in hope of helping/saving others .. xxx.

Me: I always appreciate your honesty and wisdom way beyond your years. Although I didn't know exactly the details you've written, I absolutely know and feel the pain and suffering you all endured. Thank you again for sharing. My pathway now is a healing journey for all of us. Love you bub .. xx

I have always felt that Kiri was wise beyond her years, and I've often sought advice from her. None of what she has written in her blog was
a surprise to me. I often saw and felt the hurt and pain that she and her brothers endured, and it was heartbreaking. Being able to share her wisdom from her Maiden and Mother years offers another dimension to my story that needed to be told. It’s confronting to see and hear my child’s perspective of what she experienced. But I totally love and respect her honesty in openly sharing her thoughts and feelings. I feel blessed that she is supporting and sharing this new journey with me.

Along with my feelings of failure, I had feelings of accomplishments and happy memories, but I was more consumed by my perceptions of failure, and the happiness was buried beneath the failures.

I took the time I needed to find the balance, to look at my life more objectively, and to seek help and solace from my Spiritual beliefs and healing processes.

I committed myself to my journey of self-discovery and started to peel back the layers of the person I had become. I started facing my fears and my demons. I started to discern how much I had contributed to the outcomes I had attracted, and I learnt why my life evolved the way it did.

I identified what I needed to do to transform my feelings of low self-esteem, low self-confidence and low self-worth.

It was exhausting!

To transform from my learned behaviours and self-sacrificing ways. To look at the good, the bad and the ugly. To find forgiveness and self-respect. To be comfortable in knowing and understanding that my failures or mistakes were not deliberate or intentional. And to accept and start to believe that I had done the best I could at the time, with what I knew at the time.

Healing Abandonment

The most defining moment of my healing journey was a session with a spiritual healer, Peter Harris, well known in the spiritual community on the Gold Coast. I was well aware that the majority of my challenging life experiences were a result of my destructive relationships with men. So,
the session focused on my relationships with Mum and Dad and helped me understand why my relationships with males are not always healthy or beneficial.

We identified that I had unresolved abandonment issues around Dad leaving me, not once but twice. The first time when he had to leave our family when I was eleven years old. And the second time when he passed away. As a child, I did everything to keep my father’s love and attention. He was my Hero and his love and acceptance meant everything to me. And I continued this behaviour in my relationships. My feelings and fear of abandonment had transpired into my relationships with men.

My session with Peter also concentrated on the internal messages that have shaped my beliefs and resulting behaviour. I told Peter about Dad’s message ‘You made your bed, you lie in it’. Peter’s response to me was profound and life-changing. ‘Don’t you think that if your father was still alive he would’ve changed that message?’ Before Peter had even finished that sentence, I broke down again with uncontrollable sobbing and a river of tears. Of course!! Dad would never ever have wanted my children and I to suffer like we did. He would most definitely have changed that message, and he would’ve explained his feelings at the time, and why he said it.

Such a simple yet complex statement that finally set me Free and completely changed my Life!!

We also looked at the ‘Me’ I present to the world, and the ‘Me’ that I perceive.

I finally accepted that I needed to take time out from relationships and focus on ME to break this self-destructive pattern of behaviour. I had to sort through the pieces of my complex life puzzle, and the emotional and physical abuse over the 30+ years that I had buried inside with all my other emotional baggage.

So, my healing journey took me temporarily back into the shadows of my past and became the catalyst to propel me into a brighter future. Over time I confronted my demons and identified my self-sacrificing patterns of behaviour with intimate relationships.

It was confronting to discover that I had contributed to attracting my difficult life experiences, but I learnt to acknowledge and take re-
sponsibility for my actions, behaviours and choices, rather than let my past control and direct my future.

Healing My Inner Child

Part of my healing journey was accepting that the adult aspect of me had healed my relationship with Mum through love and forgiveness, but the vulnerable child I locked away inside when I was eleven years old still needed to be healed and freed from feelings of abandonment and unworthiness.

So, one day quite recently, I sat down and wrote a letter to Mum telling her how I felt as a child. I asked her to come and help me heal the child inside who still felt abandoned and unworthy of her love. As I was writing about needing her love, I had an overwhelming feeling of her presence and love. I felt the emotions of the eleven year old child within, and I cried and cried as I released those emotions that I had suppressed for over forty years.

It was a truly liberating and loving experience.

Celeste – My Inner Child

My inner child is sacred to me
Loves me unconditionally
Brought to me on Angel wings
A child as pure as nature’s spring
Spirited child so full of life
Sapphire eyes like starlit nights
Golden curls, and cherub face
A voice as soft as velvet lace

Imagination, wild and free
Full of innocence & curiosity
Mischievous smiles touch my Heart
Transforming my darkness into light
Fear and hate she cannot conceive
For only Love is what she sees
Tiny in stature but larger than life
Her vibrant energy, natural, Divine

My sacred Child resides deep inside
Safe and protected from hurt and lies
In a world that’s free of mediocrity
Perfectly balanced, whole & complete
No rules or restrictions to silence expression
Or censor her inquisitive Mind
My celestial child I truly believe
The existence of You fuels the Essence of Me

I feel Mum’s presence, love and guidance as I write this story and I know that she is okay with it. I’m still learning from her, and it’s a beautiful thing to be guided by her.

The most important lesson I’ve learnt from my relationship with Mum over the years, is forgiveness and understanding.

I totally understand now that she always did the best she could for me.

Understanding our Dimensions

I firmly believe we are multi-dimensional Beings, much more than the one-dimensional human form reflected in the mirror. Much of who we are cannot be seen through the naked eye, and I’m going to attempt to give my readers some understanding of what I mean. I’m using what resonates with me, the parts that I understand, and what I experience and integrate into my day-to-day life.

There is so much more information available than what I share here in my book, but I hope that this is enough to get you curious, to whet your appetite to start thinking about the multi-dimensional Being whom you are.

When I refer to Energy, I’m referring to the life force energies that energise the pure essence of who we are from the time of our conception. The unseen forces, like electrical currents that ignite every aspect of who we are. The energies that continually reverberate and energise our non-physical dimensions.
Ancient Knowledge and Principles

In my story I referred to Whakapapa (genealogy) being paramount in our Māori culture. It’s about knowing our lineage back to our eponymous ancestors, and maintaining our connection to our tribes, tribal lands, mountains, rivers and seas. These form the basis of our Mana, and the solid foundations from where our ancient knowledge and principles originate and continue to evolve from over time.

The whakapapa of teachings makes total sense to me, it resonates within me, and it intuitively ‘feels’ right for me. The wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors is intrinsic in our DNA along with the physical characteristics we inherited.

Dr Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere CBE is a highly respected Matriarch in New Zealand, and she has shared a model of learning and teaching that has been transmitted from ancient ancestors Nga Potiki and Nga Uri-A-Maui. Dr Pere describes herself as follows “…. I am psychic, with intuitive intelligence gauged at a very high level by Scientists and Medical Professionals like Dr Christine Page, a renowned Psychiatrist, who belongs to ISEEM, an International Body. I have also received an International Award as a ‘Wisdom Keeper’, from ISEEM”.

The model Dr Pere has shared is called Te Wheke Kamaatu – The Octopus of Great Wisdom. The model is based on the eight tentacles (or dimensions) of personal Wellbeing and Development, and I’ve adopted these eight dimensions in my transformational journey.

I am a strong believer in the knowledge and wisdom of the ancient ones because the fundamental principles, values and beliefs they shared in ancient times are still applicable now. Sadly, much of our Matriarchal knowledge is being lost, or not recognised and valued in modern society.

A full explanation of Te Wheke Kamaatu is available on this link: http://www.natureplaynz.co.nz/pdf/tewheke_rosepere.pdf

For me, my sacred space of Mana Wahine is my inner sanctuary where I nurture Self-Love and Self-Respect. This is where my hopes, dreams and aspirations are manifested from. My sacred space is supported by the eight dimensions of Te Wheke Kamaatu and my corresponding Beliefs:
1. Ancient Wisdom (Ha taonga tuku iho) – I am connected to the Wisdom of the Ancient Ones
2. Life Force (Mauri) – I am in the natural flow of my Life Force Energy
3. Divine Vested Authority (Mana) – I Love and Honour my Self unconditionally
4. Spiritual (Wairua) – I am Eternal, Wild and Free
5. Physical (Tinana) – My body is a Sacred vessel
6. Mental (Hinengaro) – My thoughts create my reality
7. Emotional (Whatumanawa) – I acknowledge the natural rhythm (ebb and flow) of my Emotions
8. Kinship ties -Oneness (Whanaungatanga) – I have Love and Respect for all Humanity

The ancient principles of the Kybalion also resonated strongly within me, along with other more commonly known Universal Laws like the Law of Attraction, Law of Allowing, Law of Deliberate Creation, etc. I could see how these ancient principles aligned to some of our ancient Māori knowledge and wisdom, and this intrigued me.

Following are my interpretations of The Kybalion, and the seven Hermetic Principles.

The Principle of Mentalism

Absolutely everything we see and feel in our physical world has been manifested from thought. Take a look around the room you’re in and pick an item and ask yourself, ‘where did this originate from?’ For example, something as simple as a ballpoint pen originated from someone’s idea to improve on or create something better than the quill and ink, or fountain pens. Someone had an idea, a thought!

Our thoughts lead to the manifestation of things, situations and events. What we think about, we bring about – both negative and positive. Our thoughts ultimately determine our quality of Life. They create things and conditions. So, in the wise words of Dr Wayne Dyer, ‘Change your thoughts, change your life’.
Our thoughts and our emotions are determining or manifesting our behaviour and actions. We are totally responsible for the life we’re creating because we are creating our life through our thoughts and belief systems.

Being in awareness, and more conscious of your thoughts is key to changing or improving everything you are creating in your life.

When we can understand the Principle of Mentalism we can more consciously create a healthier and happier life for ourselves.

The Principle of Correspondence

One simple example to explain this principle is, our internal world often corresponds or is a reflection of our external world. Externally, if we are living in a toxic and unhealthy environment, then our internal physical health and wellness will reflect that environment. Our body will struggle to release the toxins and we will become unwell.

When I was in an abusive relationship, I was predominantly in my masculine energy trying to provide a home, financial security and protection for myself and my children. My masculine energy was controlling me. So, my internal world that was dominated by masculine energy definitely corresponded or reflected my outer world of being controlled and dominated by an abusive male. If I was more balanced with feminine energy, my experiences may have been quite different.

Similarly, if we recognise a trait or behaviour in someone else that we find annoying or unbearable, it normally corresponds to, or is a reflection of a trait or behaviour we are not recognising in ourselves. Or a reflection of something we don’t like about ourselves. The reverse is also true, and I’m more aware now that criticism or judgement of me from others tells me more about them that it does about myself.

On a larger scale, I believe that when we as women are reconnected to our natural birthright of Mana Wahine, and unconditional love for ourselves and others, we are a true reflection of our Greatest Mother of Creation, Papatuanuku.

When we, as a collective of women, are connected to our Mana and our sacred space of peace, joy and happiness, we will raise the
collective consciousness of wellness for all women and create a healthier environment for our future generations.

This is a measure of our Mana, our Greatness. When we are fully connected to our inner power source, we are in vibrational alignment with Mother Earth and her infinite energy and wisdom. This is our natural birthright.

Everything corresponds under this natural law.

The Principle of Vibration

Absolutely everything in our physical and non-physical existence is energy and vibration, always moving, never static – every particle or molecule if seen under a microscope is energy in motion. All forms of Matter are simply energy in a state of vibration.

Even our thoughts, feelings and emotions are vibrational, and are transmitted on a frequency similar to radio waves. We can control the tuning dial of our radio transmitter to our required frequency through awareness of our thoughts, feelings and emotions, and trusting our intuition or gut feelings. For example, when you first meet someone you generally get a feeling or sense about whether you resonate with them or not, or you can walk into a room full of people and instantly feel or sense the vibes in the room.

This happens because we are unconsciously tuning in to the vibrational frequency of the people and/or situations we encounter. The challenge for most people is to trust their intuition or gut feeling, but generally we tend to ignore it.

Positive thoughts, feelings and emotions vibrate at a higher frequency than negative thoughts, feelings and emotions.

When you can understand energy and vibration, you will realise that you can never become ‘stuck’. Stuck in a rut, stuck in your old ways, stuck in a relationship, stuck in a job, or generally just stuck! Because we, ourselves, are energy in motion. We just need to learn how to direct our energy towards the positive end of the polarity scale and get back into the natural rhythm and flow of our Mauri, our life force energy.
The Principle of Polarity

There is contrast and polarity in everything – everything has a polar opposite (High/Low, Hot/Cold, Fear/Courage, Sad/Happy, Fast/Slow). The challenge for us is to find our equilibrium or harmony space along the polarity scale, rather than continually experiencing extreme highs and lows on the roller coaster of life.

*Polarity Scale*

| Extremely Sad | Equilibrium (Harmony Space) | Extremely Happy |

The Principle of Polarity states that everything has a polar opposite, creating balance in everything. However, the two extremes of polarity (ie Extremely Sad and Extremely Happy) are not two separate states of how we’re feeling. We are often experiencing different or fluctuating degrees of feelings/emotions along the scale (ie a little sad, somewhat sad, very sad, extremely sad).

We need to be aware that we can’t have one effect without the opposite effect. For example, if we experience something ‘very happy’ it will be balanced by something ‘very sad’, but with knowledge of the Principles of Polarity and Neutralisation, we can anticipate and manage the negative effects through awareness and maintaining our equilibrium or harmony space.

When we understand this principle, we are better placed to maintain our equilibrium or neutral state. This neutral state enables us to function normally, make better decisions, or manage our behaviours and consequent actions.

For example, when we are more aware of our feelings and emotions, we can allow more time for our negative feelings/emotions to ebb before reacting or making a decision we may regret. We can allow a longer reaction gap between the stimulus and our reaction. It’s like managing our *fight or flight* reaction. We can learn to determine our response-abilities and become response-able, in a more empowering way.
I know this is repetitive, but it’s really important for us to be aware of our thoughts, feelings and emotions, so we can identify and control where we are on the polarity scale. The natural forces and principles of energy and vibration (remembering everything is moving, never static) will also assist us to move along the polarity scale – subject to the thoughts we are engaging. If we are engaged in positive thoughts combined with *feel-good* emotions – natural flow and momentum will move us quickly towards the positive positions on the scale, and vice versa with negative thoughts and emotions.

The Principle of Rhythm

There is a natural rhythm in everything. Everything is energy in motion that flows in and out or rises and falls like the ocean tides. As described above, everything has a polar opposite so if we look at the diagram below using a pendulum to illustrate the principle of rhythm, the measure of the swing to the left is the measure of the swing to the right.

If we’re feeling sad, we need to remember this is not a permanent state. The natural law of rhythm will cause the pendulum to swing towards the right (happy) and the feelings of sadness will eventually subside. I know that this is hard to fathom or believe when we are in the throes of sadness or overwhelm. The challenge for us is to learn to trust our intuition, and the natural universal law of rhythm.

Natural Rhythm will always compensate.
We can learn to control the degree of the pendulum swing through conscious awareness of our thoughts, feelings and emotions. We can learn to neutralise the swing and maintain our equilibrium rather than experiencing extreme highs and lows on this rollercoaster of Life.

The Principle of Cause and Effect

Every cause has its effect, and every effect has its cause. Every situation and its consequences happen according to this natural law of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’. There is no such thing as ‘chance’; there is a ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ for every situation.

It is true that we all have freewill to make the choices we make (the ‘cause’), but we also have a responsibility to accept and acknowledge the consequences (the ‘effects’) of the choices we make.

Through much of my maiden and mother years I focused mostly on the turmoil and trauma (the ‘effects’) in my life. Every decision or choice I made was to try to overcome the ‘effects’. Looking back now, I can see and understand the patterns I was repeating because I never understood or addressed the root ‘cause’ of my trauma – not honouring and loving myself enough to stop the self-abuse.

Also, physical dis-ease and discomfort are manifest from chronic negative thoughts and emotions. When we feel unwell, we go to the doctor who prescribes medication to deal with the physical symptoms (the ‘effects’) rather than the ‘cause’ (negative thoughts and emotions). The medication masks the symptoms or negativity but never deals with the ‘cause’ so we suffer with recurring bouts of dis-ease and discomfort.

We cannot break natural laws without consequence(s). The consequences are not always instant or obvious. There is always a time-gap between the ‘cause’ being set in motion, and the Universe bringing everything together (the effects) to align to the ‘cause’ we set in motion.

This time delay is often the reason why we do not recognise our self-sacrificing patterns of behaviour.

Basically, to overcome negative consequences and effects, we have to identify and address the ultimate ‘cause’. No exceptions.

Plane of Causality (Mental World/Thoughts) – this is where causes are set into motion prior to manifesting into reality. Everything starts
from a thought or idea or, in other words, a mental picture or dialogue. This is the ‘WHY?’

**Plane of Effect** (Physical World/Manifested Reality) – this is where effects are manifested from thoughts, from mental input. Any change or solution to the ‘effects’ cannot emanate from this plane of consciousness because it has already manifested into reality. The horse has already bolted.

For example, some of us may have an addiction to smoking to help us to cope with our pain or grief (cause). After a while the addiction starts to control our life (effect) and we seek support to stop smoking. We stop for a while, and then we start up again because we’re trying to deal with the ‘effects’ rather than the ‘cause’. We have to deal with the pain and grief first, not the addiction.

Change has to be effected from the plane of ‘causality’.

The Principle of Gender

Gender (or masculine and feminine energies) exist in everything and on every plane – Spiritual, physical, mental or emotional. The existing principles of procreation apply – it takes both the male and female energies to procreate balance and harmony.

**Mental Gender** – refers to the masculine and feminine energies or aspects of the Mind. For example, the left hemisphere (masculine) manages logic analytical and linear thought processes, while the right hemisphere (feminine or intuitive) manages the creative, compassionate and holistic thought processes.

For many of us who have experienced violence and abuse, we tend to be very much in our masculine energies or aspects. Basically, in survival mode protecting ourselves and our family. The challenge for us is to re-engage with our feminine energies of love and compassion for ourselves. It is difficult to achieve positive solutions or outcomes if we are not balanced in our feminine and masculine energies to co-create positive outcomes.

The Lost Principle (the encapsulating principle)

This principle encapsulates the other seven and refers to ‘Care’. This is different to love and compassion. ‘CARE’ means what are you giving
your attention to? What are you nurturing or caring for, to enable it to grow?

According to Mark Passio, ‘… what we care about on a day to day basis acts as the driving force of our thoughts and actions’. Therefore, care can be seen as the ultimate Generator of the quality of our experience. This Principle has often been referred to as the Generative Principle. The word generative is derived from the Latin verb genere, which means ‘to create’.

In other words, this is how the Law of Attraction works. Where your attention goes, your energy flows.

It is important to be mindful of ‘What are you ‘caring’ enough about to make it manifest?’

Our Spiritual and Physical Connection

I firmly believe that when we are born, we are born fully connected to our inner power source, our Spirit, the conduit of ancient knowledge and wisdom from the Spiritual realm. Our Wairua or Spirit is our eternal connection between the physical and spiritual realms. Over time, as we evolve and adapt to the restrictions and boundaries placed on our physical life, our connection to our Spiritual home weakens.

To illustrate my belief, I want to share another personal story. This story demonstrates my beliefs and is also a beautiful example of sharing the Wisdom of the Maiden, the Mother and the Matriarch.

I’ve recently been blessed with the birth of another beautiful granddaughter, Mila. My daughter Kiri gave birth to Mila on 15 December 2017, five weeks early. Mila weighed 5lbs which is a healthy birth weight for her gestation period.

Kiri has strong maternal instincts and was very much in tune with her body and Mila’s progress and energy during pregnancy. For example, Mila would not tolerate junk food, and Kiri realised this very early in her pregnancy and focused on eating more healthy, nutritional foods. An indication of the strong energetic connection and ‘knowing’ between the Maiden and the Mother.
Mila was placed in an incubator soon after her birth attached to monitors. She had intravenous antibiotics, daily blood tests via heel pricks, and liquid oral vitamins as a precaution for premature births. She was put under a sun lamp for two days and had to wear eye shades. There was also the constant beeping of the machines in her cubicle, and surrounding cubicles.

Quite a contrast to the environment she was used to in the womb with the soothing sounds of water and her mother's heartbeat.

As a consequence of Mila's new environment that we had little control over, Kiri and I spoke about the need to keep Mila's new environment as calm and relaxed as possible. An example of sharing the wisdom of the Mother and the Matriarch. Our interactions with Mila were always gentle and positive, and we explained everything to her. We also wanted to reduce any stress and discomfort from unnecessary invasive procedures, so Kiri instructed hospital staff not to insert a nasal feeding tube without her prior consent. Kiri's first child, Gianni, was seven weeks premature so Kiri was aware of the post-natal procedures for premature babies.

Kiri expressed breast milk and Mila was bottle fed until she went home. Kiri made this decision to avoid Mila being confused between bottle and breastfeeding when Kiri couldn't be at the hospital for her four-hourly feeds. Reducing the confusion for Mila also helped to ensure that her weight gain was consistent, and we could take her home sooner than anticipated. However, on day four when we arrived at the hospital, Kiri became quite upset and tearful when she discovered that a nasal feeding tube and been inserted without her consent. Mila was visibly irritated and uncomfortable, and the tube had to be reinserted a number of times because Mila seemed to be wriggling and swiping her arms, to free herself from the tube.

We spoke to the doctor and asked for the tube to be removed but it was hospital policy for it to stay in for forty-eight hours while Mila's weight was monitored. We also asked to be advised if Mila was having problems with feeding, so Kiri could return to the hospital to feed her, rather than Mila being fed through the tube. Staff tied a knot in the tube after twenty-four hours, so it couldn't be used, and it was eventually removed six hours later because Mila was feeding just fine without it.
She had only been fed through the tube once for 10mls by a nurse who ‘couldn’t be bothered’ taking the time to feed her, but Mila endured thirty hours of unnecessary discomfort.

We discovered the ‘couldn’t be bothered’ attitude of that particular nurse from case notes and witnessed it with another baby in the unit. It was sad to watch the distressed response of the baby she was attempting to feed. We witnessed her ‘can’t be bothered’ remark to another nurse, and the intensity of her actions when inserting the nasal tube for that poor baby. Very sad. Kiri spoke to staff and requested for that particular nurse not to be involved in Mila’s care.

It was quite frustrating and upsetting for Kiri at times because she had to follow hospital policies rather than her natural maternal instincts.

I personally believe that babies instinctively know what they need and when they need it. Mila (like all babies) stretches on waking to realign her body. Asian cultures continue this practice throughout their lives to maintain the natural unimpeded flow of chi energy (or Mauri) through their aligned body. Mila was also sensitive to the energies of people and her new environment, and she responded accordingly. This was particularly evident when Mila responded to Kiri’s emotions when Kiri was upset about the nasal tube, even though there was no physical contact between them at the time. My observations reconfirmed for me that the energetic connection between a mother and child is strong, and eternal.

I believe that the same principle applies to a baby’s conscious connection to their inner power source, their Wairua or Spirit. It is fascinating to me how Mila developed in the womb environment without medical intervention for complications during her gestation (that don’t need to be mentioned here). Mila and Kiri were energetically in tune with each other and their bodies throughout the pregnancy, particularly Mila’s desire for healthy food so she could adapt to her changing environment and protect herself from unwelcome viruses or infection.

In the later stages of pregnancy, Kiri was being monitored for her condition and beginning to tire. She was almost placed on complete bed rest. Bed rest would not have been a good outcome, nor achievable, for a busy Mum of six children. But Mila was insistent on arriving early, and despite her early arrival she was perfectly healthy. It seemed like their bodies had worked in harmony to achieve the best outcome for both
mother and child, through communicating energetically with consciousness and Love. They achieved this without any invasive or unnecessary medical intervention.

Mila’s home environment with her parents and six siblings has an abundance of love and affection, and she is thriving and meeting all her milestones ahead of time, just like her arrival.

Babies are not taught any of these behaviours or reactions; they are following their natural born instincts as a result of their conscious connection to their inner power source and flowing freely with their pre-programmed life force energies.

To explain this further, I’ll use the simple analogy of a computer.

When we purchase a computer, we connect it to an electrical or battery power source in order for it to operate. The computer has already been pre-programmed with standard software to enable it to function, and we then install additional software or programming to achieve the outputs we require. We input the data, and the computer processes the data and produces the outputs. We have control over the programs we install, and the data we input to achieve the results we want.

Over time we uninstall software we no longer require, and/or update or install new software to improve or change the outputs we want to achieve. We also install anti-virus software to prevent our data from being distorted or corrupted, and to protect the computer from unwelcome viruses.

At any time, we can re-evaluate the programs and the outputs we’re receiving. If we are not satisfied with the outputs, we can return to the computer’s original default programs or blueprint and start again.

If we equate this to our physical bodies, we are already fully connected to our inner power source (our Spirit) at conception (or before, depending on your beliefs) and pre-programmed with our life giving, life force energies that support us to develop in the womb, prepare for birth, and adapt into our new environment. This is our original blueprint.

From the time of our conception, we are continually inputting an enormous amount of data into our bodies and Minds with everything we
see, hear, touch, taste or smell through our five physical senses. Much of this data is input unconsciously. Over time, our internal programming or software automatically changes to adapt to our environment through our experiences and learning. As we grow and develop, we start to take on new programming to help us assimilate to our environment and conform to our parents’ values, beliefs and behaviours, and society expectations.

As children and adolescents, we have little control or awareness of the programs we’re installing.

Our anti-virus software is our sixth sense, our intuition or gut feeling. The successful operation of this anti-virus software depends on our ability to understand and trust our intuition or sixth sense.

I initially found it hard to differentiate between my intuition (inner-tuition, or inner voice of wisdom) and my thoughts or internal dialogue. The easiest way I can explain the difference is to suggest that our thoughts will have emotions attached and evoke emotion in contrast with intuition, which is intelligence, advice, support, non-threatening, non-judgemental, and free of emotion.

Intuition is also about tuning into frequencies and trusting the feeling or vibes we’re receiving. You will generally feel what or who resonates with you, or not.

Our Spirit or Wairua (Soul, Inner Being, Higher Self)

Our Spirit is the non-physical part of us connected to Source (or God, Creator, whatever you personally believe). It is our own inner power source. When we are fully connected with our Wairua and Mauri we are in full vibrational alignment with who we are. We are operating at full capacity in our highest vibrational frequency state - truly standing in the fullness of who we are, standing in our own power, fully connected to All that is.

If we are not in vibrational alignment with our Soul or Spirit, we are not connected to Source and the abundance of universal intelligence available to us. Our Soul is pure consciousness with eternal life. Our physical body is the vehicle for our Soul, and when we pass away (or transition from this world to the next) our Soul essence or pure consciousness lives on.
Newborn babies are fully connected to Source from their time of conception (or even prior to conception). They instinctively know how to develop and survive in the womb, transition through birth, cry for attention, etc. Naturally this connection decreases over time as we became more dependent on our parents, and align to our parents’ and other peoples’ beliefs and values, rules, regulations, boundaries, influences, and our life experiences etc. So, over time we have lost our awareness and knowledge of our connection to our Soul essence or pure consciousness. (I wish I knew all this when I had my babies - I would’ve done things differently and nurtured their Soul connection, rather than imposing limitations on their individual growth and evolution.)

For some people, this is hard to fathom because we tend to only trust our five physical senses, i.e. we cannot see, hear, smell, taste or touch our Soul connection. This connection concept relies solely on belief and believing in and trusting our Sixth sense (instincts, intuition or gut feelings).

Meditation helps us to reconnect and feel the Soul connection. As we become familiar with how it feels to be connected it becomes easier to stay consciously in alignment in our daily lives.

Some people also believe that another time to feel/experience this connection is during and immediately after orgasm. Apart from being in a deep meditative state, orgasm is a time that people naturally experience total detachment from their reality and thoughts, and experience pure bliss and relaxation without the use of drugs, alcohol and other stimulants.

Our Soul is energetically connected to us. The more conscious and aware we are of this connection, the more aligned we are with our Soul and the higher our vibrational frequency. Our Soul does not judge us. Our Soul holds us in the highest esteem with unconditional love and supports us to continually evolve and expand.

Our Soul knows and understands our deepest desires and guides us towards achieving them by pre-paving the way for us. Déjà vu experiences are evidence of our Soul travels, bringing the appropriate people and situations onto our life path at the right time, and connecting us with our Soul tribe.
So, when we think of the miracle of a baby developing in their mother’s womb, the mother’s body naturally supports the baby’s physical growth and development. The female body is pre-programmed for pregnancy when a woman reaches puberty, and masculine and feminine energies come together to procreate. Her baby is pre-programmed to develop and prepare for birth into physical existence. Prior to birth, babies are pure-consciousness and fully connected to their inner power Source, their *Wairua* or Spirit, and they are pre-programmed with their *Mauri*, their Life Force energies.

As the baby grows and develops after its birth, its connection to their original power Source weakens as it becomes more dependent on its mother, and it starts to conform to its parents’ and other peoples’ expectations and behaviours.

These become the child’s newly installed programs that determine or influence their experiences. They become the child’s default programs. They are not necessarily programs that the child has chosen to install, so they will not give them the results they were destined for when they came into this physical world.

Our internal programming is also influenced by our internal and external environments and the people we associate with. As we grow and develop, we continue to adapt to meet our personal needs and other peoples’ expectations, and this becomes our default programming.

Eventually, our life experiences will compel us to question the results we’re achieving.

If we do not reconnect to our original inner power source, and review our internal software or programming, we will not achieve the results we truly desire.

So, transformation is about understanding how our brain, or the central processing unit of our physical computer system processes the enormous amount of data we input through our five physical senses.

From time to time, we need to review our default programming and our connection to our inner power source, our *Wairua/Spirit*, through re-evaluating our values and beliefs. Are they limiting or liberating? Because these are the filters through which our data are processed.

I believe that the more liberating our beliefs are, the more we are aligned with our inner power source. If our beliefs are limiting, they will
cause internal conflict between our Soul and our physical self. Those conflicting feelings are an indication that something needs to change.

We also need to understand that our thoughts, feelings and emotions help us to gauge how well our anti-virus software is working. The low vibrational emotions of fear, depression, sadness, etc, also indicate that we are disconnected from our inner power source. Conversely, high vibrational emotions such as love, joy, happiness indicate that we are connected, and our anti-virus software is working.

Learning how to consciously move from low vibrational emotions to high vibrational emotions, will significantly improve our experiences.

How many of us understand the pre-programmed energies or programs that are inherent in us from conception?

How many of us actually take the time to review our default programming, particularly our values and beliefs?

How many of us understand how our thoughts, feelings and emotions determine our behaviour, or actions?

How many of us understand how our thoughts, feelings and emotions affect our physical well-being?

How many of us know that our emotions provide a gauge for us to determine whether we are partially or fully connected to our original power Source?

Our Internal Programming and Filters

We are consciously and unconsciously taking in an enormous amount of data from our environment every second of the day, and our internal systems process and filter the data through our default or unconscious filters. It is estimated that our brain takes in sixteen trillion bits of information per second. Yes, sixteen trillion bits per second of information input through our five senses. But our brain, on average, processes only two thousand bits of information per second. The sixteen trillion bits of information are processed through our default programming filters and produces output equivalent to only two thousand bits. That’s an enormous amount of wisdom and potential knowledge we have access to but are not utilising! The more conscious and aware we are of what’s available to us, the happier and more successful we can be in life.
When we are more conscious and aware of life and our environment, we can tap into the infinite intelligence available to us. This is why it is so important to re-evaluate our personal values and beliefs, particularly if we are not achieving the results we want from our life experiences.

Our personal values and beliefs are key components of that unconscious filtering process.

What worked for us in our child and adolescent years, will not necessarily work for us in our adult years.

Personal Beliefs

Our personal beliefs determine how we feel, how we behave, what we attract and what or whom we are attracted to. Quite simply, our beliefs determine our results, or outputs.

A belief is just a thought that we have thought over and over until we believe it.

Our brain filters information through our belief system to determine our responses, results or outputs. So, like a computer, if the programs we are using are not designed to achieve the outputs we desire, we will not achieve our desired outcomes.

For example, if I had a belief that I was always going to be overweight, it wouldn’t matter how much I exercised, changed my diet, or took supplements, I would not be able to lose and maintain my desired weight because I have a belief that I am always going to be overweight.

How many people do you know who have joined weight loss programs and lost the weight, only to regain it again, and sometimes more. This is because they unconsciously conform to their belief that they will always be overweight. It doesn’t matter what the scales show or what you see in the mirror. Your mind will manipulate the information you’re receiving through your physical senses, and make it conform to your belief that you will always be overweight. Unconsciously or unintentionally, we self-sabotage ourselves.

How many times have you heard someone say, ‘I knew that would happen’, ‘I told you that would happen’, or, ‘it always happens to me’. Well, it happened because they ‘thought’ or ‘believed’ it into existence,
they attracted the outcome through their belief system. Remember the Principle of Mentalism?

One of the keys to transformation is learning to actively challenge our Mind by intentionally observing and filtering the information we’re receiving, rather than operating on autopilot.

It’s important to be actively aware of how we’re processing the information we’re receiving, particularly when we’re in emotional or distressed states. We must understand how our beliefs shape our life, and how the data input from our life experiences will be automatically filtered (ie deleted, distorted and manipulated) to conform to our beliefs.

For the majority of our time, we are operating on autopilot and allowing our internal processing system to filter and file the data based on our belief system. For example, when we’re first learning to drive we have to think carefully and consciously about every action that needs to be taken. Over time, as we become accustomed to driving, we go into autopilot and don’t have to think about all the actions any more. It just happens when our thoughts and physical actions align to our belief that we can drive.

Sometimes I’ve arrived at my destination in my car and can’t recall going through the traffic lights or roundabouts. The drive was a daily routine and my unconscious Mind had filtered the data based on previous experience and taken over the controls.

Operating on autopilot is beneficial in some areas of our lives. In other areas, particularly if we are not achieving the outcomes we desire, we need to consciously adjust our beliefs and get off autopilot.

So, it is well worth the time to determine whether or not your personal beliefs are limiting or liberating?

If you want to achieve your desired outcomes or results, then adapt your beliefs to align to the results you want and stay focused on them.

Personal Values

Personal ‘Values’ are defined by what is important to you (ie Family, Freedom, Security, Money, Love, Respect, Integrity, Success). What you value determines how you spend your time and energy. How you spend your time determines the results you get. If you spend your time doing
something you value (ie Freedom, Health, Success) then you are more likely to achieve good results.

For example, if you value ‘Health’ you will be more motivated to eat healthy foods, train regularly and maintain a healthy body-weight. However, if you do not value ‘Health’ you will have difficulty staying motivated to eat healthy foods, train and maintain a healthy body-weight.

I’ve been in that position during a period of my life when I always felt I wasn’t pretty enough, skinny enough, etc. So, I paid money to join a weight loss program because I thought the cost of the program would motivate me to commit to losing the weight.

I wasn’t motivated by passion or something I valued, ie Health. I was driven by my emotions of not feeling like I was ‘enough’, and my guilty thoughts around wasting the money if I didn’t commit to the program.

For six weeks I stuck to the program and almost reached my goal weight. Well, if I was being totally honest, I didn’t really stick to the healthy eating part of the program. I continued to smoke cigarettes, and I’d basically eat one meal a day, and starve myself.

I was unintentionally self-sabotaging myself right from the start. I never reached my goal weight, and the weight I had lost, plus a little more, started to creep back on. Why? Because Health was not one of my personal values and, in addition I had a belief that I was always going to be overweight.

My unconscious Mind and body responded to that belief, and every bit of information I was taking in through my five physical senses was automatically filtered to conform to that belief. Self-sabotage!

My personal values and beliefs were not in alignment to what I wanted to achieve.

I didn’t listen to my intuition or inner wisdom, that was telling me ‘I am enough’.

It’s also important to ascertain your own definition of the value you adopt. For example, ‘Success’ means different things to different people. Success for some may mean reaching a salary level of $100k per annum, whereas Success for others may mean achieving job satisfaction from something they’re passionate about, regardless of the monetary returns.
Use your own definition not the dictionary’s. And don’t worry about how other people are defining their values. Measure your success or values using your own measuring stick. Define what is important to you and what you value and focus on that.

Remember, Values motivate you to stay focused on your desired goal.

Values are also a way of organising our beliefs. Problems associated with our beliefs can often be resolved when we achieve clarity around our personal values, and consciously apply these in our daily lives.

What are your core values and beliefs?
Are they your own? Or have you unconsciously adopted someone else’s, ie your parents, peers or other people of influence in your life?
Are your values and beliefs limiting or liberating?
How are your core values reflected in your daily life?
How do your values align to how you spend your time?
What are you passionate about? Why?
If those things you are passionate about, or are of value to you, are taken away from you, how would that affect you?
What makes these things valuable to you?

Mauri, Our Life Force Energy

Everything has a ‘Mauri’ or ‘Life Force’ energy. Our life force energy constantly flows through us like a river. It never stops, and it waits for no one. It is up to us to stay in the natural downstream flow of our Life Force, rather than becoming stuck like a boulder in the river watching our Life Force energy continue to flow around us.

We create boulders (or blockages) through our negative thoughts, feelings, emotions and subsequent resistant or destructive behaviours and actions. Wasting energy through resistance and trying to go against the natural rhythm and flow of our life force energy is pointless and disempowering.

Why try to paddle upstream when all of our opportunities are downstream?

All rivers lead to the ocean. Our Mauri or life-force is continually flowing towards this destination. The ocean represents a whole new
world, a vast sea of possibilities and opportunities. That is where our life-force is taking us. But when we resist the natural flow, we become the boulder, standing still, rock solid, in resistance. However, the boulder doesn’t stop the flow of our life force. It just continues to flow around us.

Sometimes self-doubts, fear, or lack of self-confidence arise, so we rest a little on the river banks or in a pool just off the flow of the river, just until we build up enough courage to get back into the flow again. If we stay in that pool of water too long, the still water becomes stagnant and bacteria starts to form in the pool. We adapt to that stagnant environment and become infected by the bacteria of fear and doubt. This impedes the natural flow of our *Mauri* and we start to feel stuck again.

But that’s okay. Sometimes we need to have some respite to recalibrate in the pool or on the riverbanks. The important thing to remember is to get back into the natural flow as soon as you can.

Occasionally, nature or the Universe will force our hand. A violent storm erupts and the flow of the river becomes intense and angry as it thunders its way downstream. The intensity of the flow clears the stagnant pools, and the force of the water starts to erode the banks as it expands and carves a new course downstream. The force of the river brings us back into its flow. However, even though the river is angry and intense, it never turns back on itself. It continues its natural course to the ocean.

So, expressing anger is beneficial to us. This is a sign that suppressed feelings and emotions, are being acknowledged and released. Anger is a higher frequency emotion than depression or powerlessness, but we’ve always been told, ‘don’t get angry’, ‘why are you so angry’. We learn that it’s wrong or weak to express our anger.

But it’s not, because just like the river in a storm of intensity, our anger is still taking us downstream, forging a new expanded path on its journey. We just need to learn how to express our anger in a non-threatening and non-destructive way and redirect our energy. Through conscious awareness of our emotions, we can learn to do that.

We can learn to let nature take its natural course.

Resistance of any sort, resistance to change, to self-love, to moving forward, to leaving unhealthy situations, to physical exercise, whatever – takes a whole lot of energy! Precious energy that could be used to propel
us downstream, moving us forward and closer to a sea of possibilities and opportunities waiting for us on our journey downstream.

Acceptance and Allowance

To release resistance and avoid becoming a boulder in the flow of our Life Force, we need to understand the principles of ‘acceptance’ and ‘allowance’. For example, we need to learn to accept the situations or people we cannot change or control; and allow things to transpire and people to evolve and expand as they desire without trying to control or manipulate them. We cannot control other people, nor should we even try.

Too many of us waste so much time and energy trying to change the behaviour of others or waiting for someone or something to change. We need to understand that all we can do is change or control our own behaviour and the way we react or respond to others. And accept that they too, have their journey and life lessons to learn.

Learning to apply the principles of acceptance and allowance is empowering to ourselves and others.

Our Thoughts, Feelings, Emotions

There were many times in my Maiden and Mother years where I experienced darkness, times when I felt paralysed by my fears, fears that emanated from constant self-loathing and negative internal dialogue. I was constantly in a headspace of self-destructive and harmful thoughts. Those thoughts created imagined scenarios constantly playing over and over in the theatre of my Mindspace. For every solution I thought of for my problems, there were associated fears and doubts that kept me paralysed and trapped in my internal world.

Intellectually I knew that I had to start to believe in myself. I had to believe I was worthy of Love and Happiness, but I was so conflicted between what I knew and understood, and my emotional state at the time. I had created an internal world that was so toxic, I just couldn’t imagine finding love and affection inside of me. How could love and affection possibly exist in the toxic environment I’d created in my Mind and Body? How could I possibly ‘feel’ love and affection for myself?
And so I started looking externally for that love and affection. Looking for someone or some-thing to make me happy and take away the pain I’d manifested inside. My life’s story is an indication of how often I did this and the results I got. Not good.

Our thoughts are more powerful than we can comprehend – ‘what you think about, you bring about’, ‘change your thoughts, change your life’.

If we constantly have negative or worrying thoughts, we will attract negative and worrisome people and situations into our lives and experiences. Conversely, if we maintain positive and loving thoughts, we attract positive and loving people and situations into our lives and experiences.

In addition, our physical bodies are affected by our feelings and emotions, and the state of our external environment. These are examples of the Principle of Correspondence in action. For example:

- If we live in a toxic environment or continue to harbour resentment and hatred, this manifests as discomfort or dis-ease in our liver, pancreas and kidney areas, the organs responsible for cleansing and filtering toxins.
- If we are finding life hard to digest, process or assimilate, we have problems with our digestive system.
- If we’re carrying too much responsibility or heavy burdens these affect our lower back or shoulders, i.e. carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders.
- If we harbour fear or concern about our future or moving forward in life we generally have problems with our legs, hips, knees, ankles, the limbs that carry us forward.
- If we are having difficulty communicating or speaking our truth, we’ll have problems in our throat area.
- If we have doubts or fears about our ability to nurture our family, we experience problems with our breasts.
- Emotional relationship problems will generally manifest in the reproductive and sexual organs; and
- Infections are the manifestation of feelings related to lack of affection.
Basically, illness and dis-ease are a manifestation of chronic negative feelings and emotions.

Western medicine generally treats the physical symptoms (the effect) and tend to ignore the emotional catalysts for illnesses and dis-ease (the cause). However, more western medicine practitioners are adopting practices that address the Mind/Body connection by treating the cause as well as the effect.

Good nutrition is also important for our physical and emotional wellness.

A competent natural healing practitioner (including acupuncture, cranial sacral therapy, cultural healing techniques, Reiki, etc) will address both the cause and effect.

It has been scientifically proven that our bodies can heal themselves when we can achieve the desired physical and emotional wellness in our internal and external environments.

Unconditional Love for Self is vital for beginning to transform our physical and emotional conditions.

We also need to accept that ‘where we are is okay’. When we’re feeling sad or stuck, it’s okay, as long as we do not stay in these low frequency states for too long.

We need to learn to allow our feelings and emotions to surface, acknowledge them, and release them before they transpire into negative behaviours or actions, or discomfort in our physical bodies. I know this is easier said than done, but it’s so worth the effort.

When we’re experiencing negative feelings or emotions we’re vibrating at a low frequency, and out of vibrational alignment with our Soul. The more we hold on to negative feelings or emotions or try to understand or justify them, the longer they’re in our energy and vibration, the more damage they cause and the harder they are to release.

Learning to understand our thoughts, feelings and emotions and how they influence our behaviour is one of the keys to unlocking the imaginary chains that bind us to allow self-love to flow freely through us again.

This is our natural state, our birthright! Unconditional love for Self and others.
Embracing our Female Archetypes or Aspects

A reminder here that the aspects and energies of the Maiden, the Mother and the Matriarch contribute to our magnificence and sacredness of Mana Wahine.

As we go through our daily lives it’s natural and indeed important for us to embrace each of our female archetypes or aspects, irrespective of age or daily life experiences. For example, wouldn’t it be nice if we can enjoy every day the innocence, fun, spontaneity and excitement of the Maiden child and adolescent energy; to acknowledge our dreams and aspirations, and learn from the challenges and responsibilities of our Mother energy. To willingly share our knowledge and wisdom with those who are open to receiving our Matriarch foresight and wisdom.

As you go about your day, try to be aware of the archetype energies you are experiencing.

How many female archetype energies have you experienced today?

Which energies are more dominant – the natural or the overwhelming energies?

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Growth & Development from Child to Adult

As you read through the following descriptions, be mindful of the computer analogy and the data we were exposed to as children and adolescents to input or imprint during our development years. Remember we were inputting the majority of our data unconsciously. We were not always discerning what was right or wrong, what was acceptable or unacceptable, etc.

Children will assimilate the messages, behaviours and situations in their daily lives, so we need to be mindful of the environment and experiences we’re providing for them. Small things like name-calling, whether in jest or anger, are easily imprinted into their psyche. If a child is told they’re ‘stupid’ often enough, this will become one of their beliefs (or filters) and affect their self-confidence and self-esteem, and their resulting behaviour.
These formative years are building the foundation upon which their young lives will evolve, until they’re mature enough to make their own life-changing decisions.

When you read my story, you will have seen how the defining moments in my formative years affected the decisions I’ve made in my life. It has taken commitment and time to release the limitations of my child and adolescent conditioning.

The Imprint Period

From birth to seven years old is commonly referred to as the Imprint period of life.

This is a time in a child’s life where whatever happens around them quickly becomes imprinted in their consciousness. They’re like a sponge, soaking up everything that transpires in their world. They assimilate to their environment and start to imitate the actions and behaviours of people in their lives.

They’re also learning the rules and how to push the boundaries of limitations placed on them.

*What was your home environment like in your childhood?*

*What or who influenced you in that environment?*

*How much of that influence is inherent in you in your adult life?*

*Are those influences liberating or limiting?*

The Modelling Period

The stage between the ages of seven and fourteen is commonly referred to as the Modelling period.

This is an impressionable age when positive role-models are so important. It’s a time of hero worship, and children start to model people they idolise.

With the availability of television, internet, social media, and other technology, children and adolescents are exposed to and influenced by a myriad of personalities and role models (TV personalities, sports stars, celebrities, super-heroes, etc).
The child or teenager may start to adopt the values of the people they idolise or aspire to be like.

What or who impressed you the most in your adolescence?
Who were your role models?
What aspirations did you have?
Who did you aspire to be like?
What experiences influenced you most in your adolescence?

The Socialisation Period

Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one years old is commonly referred to as the Socialisation period.

This is the time when adolescents start to make personal choices about what’s important to them. They start to develop and adopt their own unique social, sexual and personal values and beliefs, and are less likely to adopt something because someone else has.

What personal choices did you make in the Socialisation period of your life?
Were those choices supported and encouraged? If not, why not?
How have those personal choices influenced your adult life?
Are your personal choices limiting or liberating?

To illustrate the above, I’d like to share a poem that was written by my beautiful seventeen year old granddaughter, Kaylen. This poem was inspired by an experience in her Maiden-adolescence:

**Mum, I have something to tell you**

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am in Love
Mum, I am in love with a boy whose smile could charm a thousand princesses, his eyes light up when he looks at me because he believes I am the only princess he needs.
Mum, I have something to tell you
I have lost something I cannot get back
But Mum, I promise it's okay. He whispers kind things to me and I feel safe when I am with him.
I know that you know what it's like to be in love.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am worried about him
Mum, when he smiles his eyes don't light up anymore. When he laughs, I can hear it come through the hollowness of his heart.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am losing him
Mum, I've lost all control and everyone else has a grip on the reins, but it just keeps slipping out of my hands.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am losing myself
Mum, everybody keeps trying to tell me what I want and who I am. Nobody asks me what I want anymore, and I am afraid that if they did, I would not know the answer.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am not happy
Mum, every word turns into a fight, he keeps pushing me away, nothing I do feels right anymore.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am alone, I couldn't cope anymore
Mum, my heart breaks with every step I take, and I can't help but wonder if I made the right choice. I can't tell the difference between wrong and right anymore.
Emerging From The Shadows

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am afraid
Mum, I am afraid of the way he grabs me and
corners me when I am alone. I am afraid of the
way he threatens me and my friends.

Mum, I have something to tell you
I am in Love
Mum, I am in love with a boy whose smile could
break a thousand hearts. His eyes water when
he looks at me because he thinks I am the only
broken heart he needs.

For me, the poem illustrates how easy it is for our young girls to be
influenced by their experiences in their maiden-adolescent years. Her
words describe her feelings and emotions during a journey from a princess
to a broken heart. I am extremely grateful that Kaylen had the freedom
and confidence to share her experience with her parents, family and
friends. They have reinforced her own feelings of self-worth and self-love
through encouragement and advice to not let anyone else influence or
measure her worth or limit her personal choices in the future.

Another beautiful example of sharing the wisdom of the maiden,
the mother and the matriarch.

Other Aspects or Energies of our
Multi-Dimensional Being

There are many other energies or aspects that contribute to our multi-di-
mensional Being:

• Gender (Feminine/Masculine energies)
• Genealogy
• Culture
• Spirituality
• Religion
• Astrology
• Numerology
In terms of the astrological dimensions of Me, I’m a Scorpion. A water sign with emotions that run deep and often distract and consume me. In Chinese Astrology I’m an ‘Ox’, strong, determined and stubborn! Sometimes this is a great combination, other times it’s not. My challenge is to bring myself back to conscious awareness and make decisions from tapping into my inner power source, rather than instantly reacting from my emotions and stubbornness.

There have been many times in my life when I’ve been in emotional states and I’ve been too stubborn to ask for help. Often to my own detriment.

It’s not necessary to learn all aspects or dimensions of our Self. The important thing is to acknowledge and accept that we are indeed multi-dimensional, and we are connected to everything and anything far greater than anything we can imagine in this physical world and existence.

Accepting Help and Support

During my transformation, I accepted help and support from a friend who I considered to be my coach, for almost three years. My coach has been invaluable for me. Having a coach was a major catalyst for change after I separated from my marriage, and fully committed to my journey of self-discovery.

After thirty-five years in relationships, raising a family, and a corporate career, I had lost connection with my essence, my Spirit, and who “I Am”.

My coach encouraged me to discover the real “Me”, face my fears and start stripping back the layers of the person I had become from adopting other people’s values and beliefs, and generally coping with life. He helped me identify my passions and goals and kept me on track. He constantly challenged me to ‘get out of my comfort zone’ and encouraged self-belief and self-love. He absolutely believed and held my vision (sometimes stronger than I did) that ‘from broken wings I would fly’.

I truly believe that I would not have achieved so much without my coach.
One challenge I set myself two years ago was to spend four weeks in Thailand at a Muay Thai training camp, Tiger Muay Thai (TMT). This was way out of my comfort zone! It meant I had to travel internationally on my own, stay four weeks at a training camp on my own, train six days a week, and talk to strangers!

Talking to strangers was the scariest part for me! My lack of self-confidence and reticence have always kept me hiding in the shadows, literally. But I knew that if I wanted to improve my self-confidence I had to challenge myself.

I could not have even attempted this challenge if I tried to launch it from my normal default space of fear and doubt. I had to launch my desires from a space of empowerment. My sacred space of Mana Wahine.

While I was on the plane to Thailand I thought about the challenges ahead of me, and I gave myself permission to ‘just do my best’. I didn’t put any pressure on myself to achieve unrealistic goals because this would have resulted in feelings of overwhelm, and fear of failure. I knew that it would be more beneficial for me to arrive at the camp feeling excited and empowered, as defined by me.

Giving myself permission to ‘just do my best’ was my definition of empowerment for this particular challenge. And this worked for me.

While I was at the camp, they held a monthly event called BBQ Beatdown. It’s a social function attended by staff, TMT visitors and pro fighters, and invited guests. My coach messaged me to tell me that Mark Hunt, Samoan UFC World Champion, was a special guest at the event. And he set a challenge for me to get a photo taken with Mark Hunt and send it back to him. Geez, talk about pressure!!

The BBQ Beatdown event was being held right outside my room where the pro fighters trained. I could clearly see that there were probably 250-300 people there. I had been in the camp for three weeks by then enjoying the training and interacting with people confined to only the groups I trained with.

But the BBQ Beatdown presented me with a new challenge. I had to venture out of the safety of my room and the smaller confined groups I trained with, into a large group of strangers!

I got ready to attend the event, had a look through the window, and lay on my bed trying to pluck up the courage to leave my room.
It took three attempts to complete the challenge. I’d come out of my room, literally stand back in the shadows and observe people, and go back to my room. I’d lie on my bed and talk to myself: ‘This is what you came here for … there’s nothing to be scared of … take a leap of faith … get out there … stop being a chicken and JUST DO THE BEST YOU CAN!

On my third attempt, I identified Mark and his group. I approached one of his entourage, requested a photo with Mark, and gave him my phone. I quickly had two photos with Mark and went back to my room to send the photos to my coach. Mission accomplished! Phew!

Despite the three attempts I was proud of myself, and I went back to the event to enjoy the pro and amateur demonstration fights. I spent most of my time with the trainers I’d met in my classes rather than mingle with strangers, but I still felt that I had accomplished something. I felt empowered because I had given myself permission to ‘just do the best I can’. And I did.

Of course, I started with smaller challenges before I ventured off to Thailand. One of my first challenges was to go to a busy café on my own for lunch. No big deal to some people, but it was a major deal for me.

Now I can do it without even thinking about it.
If we can learn to take just one small step at a time towards self-empowerment as defined by ourselves, we will start to emerge from the shadows.

A journey of 1000 miles starts with just one small step.

My coach also encouraged me to develop a personal plan for one year, including my goals, timelines and action steps. I also had to keep a journal to record my progress and, more importantly, my feelings and emotions. He kept me accountable for these activities on a regular basis.

The journal was probably the best tool I ever had during my transformation journey, and I encourage everyone to have one. Not only is it a record of my challenges, losses and glories, it’s a reference point for how far I’ve come on this journey.

Writing in my journal, or writing poetry, is healing for me. It is also a way of expressing the Mother aspects of creation and breathing life into something, a project, a piece of art, a passion or desire.

The following poem was inspired by my favourite card in my Tarot deck, and my coach. The Star card is from The Gilded Tarot by Barbara Moore.
The Star

These words like a river flow rapid and free
From the energy and time that he shared with me
From voices and images I see in my dreams
Of sunsets fading on calming seas
From feathers and butterflies floating into my space
Bringing comfort and joy for the challenges I face
The Crow near my balcony speaks telepathically to me
His words illuminating what I’ve failed to see
‘Raise your head, no more tears, stand tall with Pride
Release all those emotions you try to hide’

So, the words on this page are healing for me
Like my Shooting Star sent from the galaxies
Guided to me by Ascended Masters above
To teach me to value self-worth and self-love
Through rose-coloured lenses he looks at me
Ignoring the flaws in the mirror I see
Each flaw is a scar from the life I once knew
When in my darkest moments, on broken wings I flew
Seeking solace and escape from my sadness and pain
Just wanting to soar and feel loved again
But in spite of my fears and the tears that I cried
I always believed with broken wings I could fly

He tells me of men who lust after me
Who with downcast eyes I choose not to see
Worthless egos of male hunger and greed
Would never respect the Goddess in me
They would savour my Body, not my Soul or my Mind
And never consider my feelings or pride
No thoughts of my sacredness or beating Heart
Just a conquest, a tryst, their intent from the start.
Emerging From The Shadows

So, this man I have trusted to expose the real me
This invisible Iceberg hidden under the sea
Has no fear of the depth of emotions I hide
Or the tears and intensity behind my disguise
Every cell in my body reacts to his love
As he awakens sensations of doubt and mistrust
I retreat again to my fantasy world
With fairytale thoughts of a boy and girl
Every thought a reflection from mirrors and glass
A kaleidoscope of colours merging in dance
When the dancing has stopped and the fantasy fades
I am left with strong feelings of memories made

Now I reflect on my Life as this physical being
Evolving from experiences, desires and dreams
I see clearly now that I’m never alone
I’m connected by Love to the place I call ‘Home’
So The Star depicts who I want to be
Believing and loving the Fullness of Me
Comfortable in nakedness, natural and true
Immersed in still waters, calm and blue
Focused on unity of thoughts of Love and Spirit
Patient and humble, aligned and transcendent

From pitchers of Love, my emotions will flow
Released to the waters where my reflection glows
Where my life is not measured by the mechanics of time
Just ageless images locked in a timeless Mind
Through belief and trust my wish will emerge
Like my Shooting Star sent by the Universe

Initially, the writing in my journal was more or less a report on what I did on a daily basis, and how I was feeling. I have policy and procedure writing experience and my journaling reflected that, very black and white and matter-of-fact and grammatically accurate.
One evening in my room offshore, I had an epiphany, a sudden flash of intuition suggesting that I just write, letting the words flow through me and not worry about spelling, grammar or keeping the writing tidy.

Another challenge, to surrender control of the words on the page and let it be messy!

So, I trusted my intuition. I’d meditate for ten to twenty minutes, get into a relaxed and open Mind state, and just let the words flow on to the page. I’d just write until I ‘felt’ compelled to stop. I relaxed my Mind and stopped ‘thinking’ about what I was writing.

The results were amazing! I started to write intuitively, and it gave me a whole new perspective on my challenges, feelings and emotions. Sometimes, I’d start to write consciously about my day, and then suddenly it seemed like I was watching my hand and the pen move across the page.

When I finished writing, I’d read the pages and sometimes it made no sense to me, so I’d wait a couple of days and go back to the passages. And they made perfect sense to me.

This was an exciting breakthrough for me. I started to learn to trust my intuition more, and the pure consciousness and messages coming to me from my sacred space, unfiltered by my limiting beliefs.

Here’s an example of the writing that came through me soon after I purchased my apartment in October 2015. (I eventually sold the apartment to free up finances for my self-development aspirations, but I still rent an apartment in the same complex.) The apartment is in a complex called ‘Harmony’, and the whole complex and all the apartments are designed around Zen and Feng Shui. This is the place I’ve wanted to live since we first moved to Australia. I had been here before with Rana, and I immediately fell in love with the energy and environment. I hadn’t intended to purchase an apartment, but I trusted my intuition and the synchronicity of events that led to having my own place.

The synchronicities were just too strong to ignore.

Here’s the excerpt from my journal:
Yes, Elaine, you have done well. We are all extremely proud of you. There is no greater feeling than that of achieving your goals. Although this was not something you had planned, you were destined to live in the Harmony place. A place where you can feel safe and at peace with yourself. Be sure to celebrate your success and give yourself more credit for the distance you have travelled in such a short time. There is more to come for you, it will not always come easy for you, but you have strength and determination to hold you in good stead. Your home will be your happy place, a sanctuary where your dreams will begin to manifest. Be ready to move forward at a pace that will surprise you. It is not often that these synchronistic events will be so evident, some we rarely notice, some we realise when we reflect on past events, and the roads travelled. We wish for you to remain focused on what is best for you on every level, continue to put yourself first, never succumb again to the demands of anyone else. No doubt you will be tested, but we have witnessed your growth and the strong woman you have become. Through adversity you have blossomed from self-nurturing. This shows you that you do not need anyone else to depend on. You must continue to rely on and trust yourself. There will be someone for you when the time is right. You have come this far, a little further will not harm you. You have much more growth ahead of you. This time alone will help you to be more confident to do what you need to do to follow the healing and writing path you have chosen.

Divine intervention and guidance. This is a good example of intuition. Intuition is intelligence, advice, support, non-threatening, non-judgemental, and free of emotion(s).

Sometimes the words come so fast that I struggle to keep up with my handwriting, and I can lose the essence of the message. My intuitive writings are an endless source of empowerment and support.

Most of my poetry also comes from my intuition and sacred space. Often, I’ll just get the first line and the ‘feeling’ for what the poem needs to represent. My poem ‘The Phoenix’ is a good example. The first two
lines of the poem, and the kaupapa or topic just popped into my Mind out-of-the blue when I was at work one night. It made no sense to me because my thoughts or feelings were nowhere near that point in time from my past. But I trusted my intuition again and sat in front of my laptop and typed the first two lines and the poem just kept evolving.

The poem has been in my files for over a year, and now I can clearly see the purpose for it. Truly amazing! This is also a good example of how our intuition or Divine guidance works sometimes. Often we will get a feeling or undeniable urge to do something but we ignore it because it doesn’t feel relevant at the time. But this is how Divine guidance works. We are always being guided towards our future and Divine guidance is preparing us for something we may not be consciously aware of. We have to learn to trust our intuition and follow our gut instincts.

I also realised that previously I’d been writing about everything I needed to do to fix myself, rather than what I wanted in my life. Continually writing about everything I needed to fix, kept me in the energy of feeling ‘broken’. When, in reality, there was nothing to be fixed. There was plenty to be acknowledged and released, but I didn’t need fixing. I was in the process of transformation, growth, discovery, exploration, curiosity and spontaneity. I was in the energy of the Maiden, re-writing my life’s script.

So, I wrote about where I wanted to be in a year’s time. I wrote about loving myself, being happy with myself physically, emotionally and Spiritually. I wrote about all my hopes, dreams and aspirations. I also wrote five things that I was grateful for every time I wrote in my journal. And by doing all of this, I noticed the change in my energy and my motivation to focus more positively on my future.

Gratitude is a high vibrational emotion and it can break down resistance and the walls we build around our Hearts. Resistance takes up a lot of energy and it keeps us stuck. We are much better off without resistance!

Slowly but surely, I started to move more deliberately towards my goals. I kept my personal plan folded in the back of my journal and referred to it often to keep me on track. If I didn’t meet some of my deadlines, I didn’t beat myself up about it. I’d just readjust the timelines.
It was more important and beneficial for me to reset my goals, than default back to my default foundation of ‘fear of failure’.

As long as I was making even small steps towards my goals, I was achieving something. I was moving forward!

Meditation

I started to meditate more often to still my Mind. I have a naturally analytical and logical Mind that goes into overdrive when I’m faced with challenges or overwhelming emotions, so it was hard at first to get out of my Mindspace and into my HeartSpace but I persevered.

Sometimes I could go into a deep state of relaxation and a feeling of Oneness. The feeling of Oneness is hard to explain. It’s like being one with everything, not confined to a body. It was surreal. It was at those times that I’d get still pictures, like photos, flashing in front of me or brief images like a short video playing.

Other times, I’d find myself having telepathic conversations.

Once during meditation, I had an experience with a kuia, an old Māori lady with a moko kauae, a tattoo on her chin. Historically, Māori women with moko kauae were considered to be great orators and healers. They were chosen by their tipuna to learn ancient karakia and whakapapa.

I don’t know who the kuia is yet, but I’m sure she will appear in a book, or painting, or photograph, and I will recognise her instantly.

We spoke in te reo, and her Wairua and presence in the room was overwhelmingly strong. She took me through a cleansing and cord-cutting exercise, to release the energetic cords that tied me to the past. It was an amazing and liberating experience. I literally had to stand and actually go through the motions of cutting the cords with a patu (weapon) she had given me.

This may seem strange to some people, but it happened, and it felt as if she was physically in the room with me. Her image is etched in my Mind, and one day I will know who she is.

I’d come out of meditation and record my experiences in my journal and refer back to my notes from time to time. Much like a dream journal. Often the images and videos were signs or warnings for me to be aware of. Or they were healing, on some level.
I’m really fortunate to have trusted friends who I can talk to about these experiences. Friends who understand me and my Spiritual beliefs. I regularly share my experiences with Teresa, my Soul Sister here on the Gold Coast where I live.

For many years I couldn’t share similar experiences because I worried about what people would think about me. But I truly believe that my Spiritual beliefs and experiences have pulled me out of some very dark places in my lifetime. They have been a constant source of strength and fortitude, particularly during my transformational journey.

Aligning to who “I Am”

After years of trying to find ‘myself’ and searching for the answers to ‘Who Am I’, I finally discovered my essence and My Spirit where they had always been – locked away inside ‘Me’.

It’s truly amazing how life can change when we are in full alignment with who ‘I Am’, where we discover that our freedom, growth and joy is not dependent on anyone or anything else.

I now understand and believe that I am fully responsible for my own happiness, and I can achieve a more constant state of happiness through conscious awareness of my thoughts, feelings and emotions and maintaining my equilibrium or sacred space of Mana Wahine.

No one can take my happiness away from me because it is not dependent on another person, external events or attachments. As a consequence, my happiness and confidence radiate outwards and influences my external environment and the people who share my journey.

Now that I have achieved enlightenment and alignment, the time and money spent on books, seminars, resources and healing methods while attempting to find ‘Myself’ are so much more valuable because I now understand their significance and application.

Another lesson I’ve had to learn is to stop caring or worrying about what people think about me, and to ignore those who judge me. Because
whatever they are judging about me is a reflection of something they are failing to see in themselves. Just like I did with Mum. Yes, I’ve learnt my lesson.

My Journey of FORESIGHT

In this context, FORESIGHT is defined as *the ability to predict what will happen or be needed in the future. Care in providing for the future.*

Everything that I have shared here in my book is acknowledgement of my journey to Foresight. This is a time in my life where my matriarchal wisdom and knowledge is continually evolving. It’s a time of reflection and setting goals for this exciting stage of my life.

A time to honour my life experiences and enjoy my continued growth and evolution.

My journey through my Maiden and Mother years was challenging, and many other women have experienced similar situations. It seems to me from my experiences and observations that many of the problems faced by adolescent girls and young women eventuate from not having the nurturing love and tenderness of their mother. Some do not receive or have motherly advice or a positive maternal role model during their formative years and later life. Or perhaps they just didn’t have good relationships with their mothers, for whatever reason.

Adolescence is a poignant time of our lives. It’s the bridge between childhood and adulthood. If our childhood experiences cause challenging thoughts and emotions such as confusion, abandonment, frustration, doubt or fear, we are more likely to carry the energies of those emotions into our adolescent life.

If we do not have the loving guidance of our parents or peers through adolescence, then we undoubtedly carry those challenging thoughts, emotions and behaviours into our adult life.

Some of us were not able to fully express and enjoy the maiden child aspects of our lives, particularly the purity, innocence, spontaneity and adventurousness. Innocence is unconditional love, pure and spontaneous. We wanted freedom to explore our horizons, but our parents and society told us that it was unacceptable or unsafe to be free and fully express our Maiden aspects.
And these became the restricting beliefs we grew up with as many of us adopted the values and beliefs that our parents, our peers and society dictated or displayed.

I feel that my maiden years were often limited by my parents’ traditional values, beliefs or concerns, as well as society’s rules, limitations and boundaries. These feelings were exacerbated even more when my parents separated when I was eleven years old. The maiden child aspects of Me became suppressed and I rebelled against my parents and society.

I often wonder how different my life would’ve been if I had had the love and guidance of my mother and my grandmothers during my formative years. Many of us are denied this natural birthright through personal family circumstances, losing mothers through their passing, or absent mothers who had to go to work to financially support their families.

We underestimate the wisdom and knowledge we gain from our Mothers and Matriarchs, or we simply ignore it. Often, we don’t realise that our mothers are our greatest teachers.

Unfortunately, there is so much pressure on women in our society to have to work to help financially support their families. Many women are also raising children primarily on their own without support from the fathers of the children. Women are often stressed and exhausted, and don’t have the time or energy to fully embrace and enjoy their natural maternal instincts to provide nurturing love and tenderness for their children.

We are also expected to take care of our partners or husbands and fulfil their needs while trying to run our households and keep everyone happy. Some of us have had to fulfil both the mother and the father roles, and often this leads us to primarily become more entrenched in our masculine energy of survival.

We sacrifice our loving and nurturing feminine energy, our feminine qualities become suppressed, and this causes problems in our intimate relationships.

Many of us have also sacrificed our own physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
Self-Abuse

All this adds to our feelings of guilt and shame of not being a good wife or mother, or not living up to other people’s expectations of us. These feelings then result in a stressful, self-sacrificing, and non-fulfilling existence.

As a consequence, we either try to make up for our perceived inadequacies in other ways or attempt to numb our feelings with alcohol, substance abuse, over-eating, sexual promiscuity and other addictions, or absolute denial. To compensate we may try to find love and acceptance from others and tend to attract people with the same experiences of lack or abuse or abandonment, or all three. A recipe for disaster.

All these experiences result in low self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and self-love. Not loving and honouring ourselves is a form of self-abuse.

The uncontrolled use of alcohol and drugs, addictions or other substances are all forms of self-abuse. When we are abusing ourselves, we unconsciously invite or attract or allow others to abuse us because at some level of our Being we believe that we must deserve it, or we’re not ‘good enough’ or worthy of anything better. And, like attracts like - the natural Universal Law of Attraction in action.

We find ourselves on a roller coaster of extreme highs and lows, riding the waves of our emotions and not understanding what our emotions are trying to tell us.

For me personally, my emotional state also affected me physically with ongoing gynaecological problems and endometriosis, breast lumps, and lower back problems. I manifested these physical problems as a result of my emotional states at the time. I suffered with intermittent bouts of depression, and sometimes when I was at rock bottom I admit I had suicidal thoughts. Some people say it’s okay because I never went through with it, but it’s not okay. The fact that these thoughts even enter our Minds is an indication of how desperate and debilitating life can be when we do not love and honour ourselves enough to change the debilitating life we’re experiencing.

I recall one particularly dark time in my life where I was in that desperate and debilitating state, physically and mentally. I was surviving
on only coffee and cigarettes. Smoking cigarettes gave me temporary relief from the stress and anxiety. Or so I thought at the time.

I decided I needed help and I made an appointment with a hypnotherapist to help me stop smoking. On the day of the appointment I had a strong feeling that the session with the hypnotherapist was not going to focus on the smoking. And I was right. The therapist asked me a few questions and gave me a questionnaire to complete. The results of the questionnaire confirmed his suspicions that I was experiencing depression. (I purposely use the term ‘experiencing’ rather than ‘suffering’ because the latter term evokes negative thoughts and emotions.)

When he told me his diagnosis, I went straight into defensive mode. ‘I am not depressed, I’m just going through a rough time at the moment. I’ll be okay. I can look after myself. I’ll work this out myself’. So, he asked me to give him an example of a typical work day and what I do on the weekend. I told him I get up, get ready for work, catch the train to work, go through my work day, get the train home, do some housework if I need to, cook dinner, go to bed. On the weekend I get up, do my housework, read some books, meditate, watch some TV, potter around the house.

After a few more questions and more defensive responses and tactics from me, he told me that I had basically shut myself away at home because that was where I felt safe. Home had become my safe place, and I was avoiding contact with people because I knew I couldn’t continue to hide or control my emotions. And I worried incessantly about what people would think about me if I lost the plot.

I was trying to ‘stay strong’ and not show my weakness.

We ascertained that I had done this gradually over about two or three months. I tried to convince him that I enjoyed being home by myself and gave him a few unconvincing reasons why I enjoyed being at home. His consistent response to all my reasons and defensive declarations was ‘No, you don’t’.

I finally dropped my defences and burst into tears and uncontrollable sobbing. Everything he had told me was true. And it hurt like hell!!

He explained that the smoking was really just providing me with a ‘smoke screen’ for the situation I was in. He also explained his
own experience with recurring bouts of mild depression that occur in cycles of six to eight weeks. He suspected that I had a similar type of depression, so he explained how to recognise the early signs and how to manage my condition without the need for medication. He also gave me little challenges to slowly start venturing out of the house again. He challenged me to accept two invitations in the next four weeks.

He took me through a hypnotherapy session that addressed the ‘cause’, suppressed emotions. Rather than the ‘effect’, smoking to try and smother the stress and anxiety. The surprising thing for me was I had thought my problems were related to my marriage, but the session brought up and released suppressed feelings and emotions relating to my unresolved issues in my relationship with Mum.

This was the first of two times I was diagnosed with depression. The second time related to a work-related incident where I sought support from a counsellor through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provided through work. I went through the same denial process, and eventually agreed to take anti-depressants. I took them for three days and turned to some holistic healing instead.

Over time I’ve learnt to recognise the early signs and understand my feelings and emotions. I accept that there are times when I feel down, and I allow myself to feel like this. But I don’t stay in those low frequency feelings like I used to.

Our emotions are our guidance system. It’s important for us to learn to understand, accept and allow our emotions to emerge and subside like the natural ebb and flow of the tides. Allowing the natural Principle of Rhythm to guide us out of the turmoil.

It’s important to also understand how our thoughts, feelings and emotions determine our experiences and cause us to become unconscious creators of our own reality. I know this is repetitive, but it’s so important!

The realisation that I created my own reality seemed hard to swallow at first. Why would I create such an awful reality for myself? Why would I do this to myself and the people I love? Why? Why? Why?
We tend to focus on ‘why’ something happened, rather than ‘how’. How are we contributing to, or attracting our life experiences? We focus on the ‘effects’ rather than the ‘cause’ of our problems, and this is why we keep repeating the same mistakes.

The main ‘cause’ of many of my challenging life experiences was, I didn’t love myself. I always believed that I wasn’t ‘good enough’, ‘didn’t measure up’, ‘not worthy’, ‘not clever enough’, ‘not pretty enough’. I believed my own negative internal dialogue about myself! My friends and family could tell me how successful or attractive I was, but I never truly believed it myself. Consequently, their words were never going to change my thoughts and feelings about myself.

Only I could do that.

And that is what my transformational journey has focused on in the last five years, discovering who I AM at the core of my Being and learning to love myself.

The truth is - if we can’t love and honour ourselves unconditionally, how can we expect others to truly love and honour us? If we can’t love and honour ourselves unconditionally, how can we truly love and honour anyone else?

The painful truth is, we can’t!

Breaking Free from Self-Abuse

I know from my own experiences that learning to love myself was the toughest lesson to learn in life because I carried so much hurt, anger, shame and guilt. My internal dialogue told me I wasn’t good enough, not pretty enough, not clever enough, not enough … not enough .. not enough!

There’s nothing nurturing, loving and affectionate in those words.

As women our natural maternal instincts compel us to give and keep giving, to put others first, and, yes, even to those who don’t deserve our sacrifices. So, our feelings of resentment and/or anger start to surface, and we suppress those feelings because we’re not supposed to get angry and we don’t want to appear selfish. If we keep suppressing the feelings we’ve fuelled with endless negative thoughts and internal dialogue, the feelings manifest into physical dis-comfort or dis-ease. And that’s our body telling us there is something seriously wrong.
Then we go to the Doctor who prescribes medication to treat the physical dis-ease (the effect) and we don’t treat the ‘cause’- the emotional self-abuse! So, we suffer through recurring bouts of physical dis-comfort or dis-ease. A never-ending cycle of self-abuse. (More repetition, but it’s necessary to hit the message home.)

As part of ending my cycle of self-abuse, I have forgiven those who have made my life hell at times because to hold on to resentment and hate (a strong word, I know) did not serve me well. Hatred creates a desire for revenge, but seeking revenge only provides temporary relief and serves no purpose.

Negative thoughts and feelings kept me anchored in the past and prevented me from pursuing true happiness in my life. My ongoing challenge was to acknowledge and accept my mistakes, feel the painful emotions and allow them to surface and subside, and learn from the lessons.

One of the most important things we absolutely have to do is forgive ourselves and others.

Learning to Love Myself

I absolutely believe that allowing and accepting self-love was the major catalyst for immense change in my life and I wish I knew how to do this years ago. How many times were we told not to be ‘so vain’ if we put a little extra effort into our appearance? How many times have you heard the comments ‘oh she thinks she’s shit hot’ or ‘she’s so full of herself’ or ‘who does she think she is’?

How many times have comments like this stopped you from loving and being who you really felt compelled to be from that sacred space deep inside of you?

‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me’. Bullshit! Words are wounding, and those wounds take far longer to heal than the physical wounds. Our internal processing system processes those words and aligns them with our internal programs or beliefs that we are “not good enough, not pretty enough, not clever enough”.

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'You made your bed, you lie in it’, the words my Dad said to me when I was seventeen years old leaving the maternity hospital with a newborn baby in my arms. I know he never meant for these words to hurt or control me, but they did.

One phrase, eight small words that are almost meaningless on their own, made up of twenty-four little letters from the alphabet. A phrase that took maybe three seconds to express. Let’s look at that again, eight words made up of twenty-four letters of the alphabet arranged into a powerful phrase that took three seconds to express. Those three seconds of utterance influenced my life for thirty-five years! Those words were etched in my Mind, and I lay in the bed of self-destruction.

And that is the power of words. Actually, no, it’s not the words that have the power; it’s the power that we personally assign to the words.

Here’s something to ponder? An anagram of WORDS, is SWORD. So, words can become a powerful double-edged sword, that can either cut you down or carve a way forward for you to transform and transcend. It’s your choice.

We have to stop our own cycle of self-abuse before we can stop allowing and accepting abuse from others. And I repeat, the only way to do this is to learn to love and honour yourself, physically, mentally, emotionally, and Spiritually. When we reach this sacred space, we will not allow violence or abuse towards ourselves or others. We will set ourselves Free!

I can honestly say that I love and respect myself too much now to ever let anyone emotionally or physically abuse me again.
My Aspirations, Hopes and Dreams of my Maiden Years

My life experiences in my maiden-child and adolescent years obviously compelled me to want more from life. The contrast of what I experienced has provided the clarity for my aspirations, hopes and dreams born of my Maiden years. In addition, transformation in the last 5 years, has bought many suppressed feelings of abandonment, fear, anger, resentment, sadness, guilt and shame to the surface.

And I’m really happy and excited about that. This was all part of my transformation journey!

I realised that I had suppressed a whole heap of feelings and emotions for many years. I equate it to inflating a beach ball with all those negative feelings, emotions and experiences and trying desperately to hold that beach ball under the water. I discovered that I could never enjoy the swim in this pool of life while I was so intent on fighting to keep that beach ball under the water. So sometimes, when I was on my own in the pool I secretly let that beach ball come to the surface and it became my safety mechanism to keep me afloat. However, when someone joined me in the pool I’d shove that beach ball back under the water again.

Eventually, my beach ball became so over-inflated with negative feelings and emotions that I was forced to release it, and it exploded to the surface with an outpouring of grief, tears and temper tantrums that I’d suppressed since I was a child.

What a relief to finally release everything I’d suppressed! Of course, there was a little more to it, but you get the picture.

Now I can look at my childhood from a more positive and panoramic viewpoint and shift my focus onto the lessons I’ve learnt from my experiences and use them as the catalyst to propel me into a brighter future.

Following are the key lessons I’ve learnt from my experiences in my Maiden years. One of the most liberating actions I took on my transformation journey was to release my beach ball and acknowledge everything I had suppressed. When I acknowledged my suppressed feelings and emotions I was able to look at life more objectively and positively, and the healing process began.
I stopped blaming everyone else. And I was able to take responsibility for my actions and find love and forgiveness in my heart for myself and others.

1. I totally understand and accept that Mum and Dad did the best that they could with what they knew and had at the time, and I love and respect them so much for that.
2. I learnt to fully appreciate everything Mum and Dad taught me, and the strength and determination I have as a result of the lessons I’ve learnt.
3. I learnt how to change the traditional beliefs and values that I adopted from Mum and Dad and my life experiences, and redefine what is best for me and who I Am.
4. I learnt to forgive Mum and Love her unconditionally. I understand that her own life challenges influenced the decisions she made, and I have totally accepted that.
5. I learnt to celebrate that the adult aspect of Me had forgiven Mum a long time ago, and we had reconciled our Love for each other.
6. I learnt that the eleven year old child aspect of me who I had locked away inside of me still had feelings of unworthiness and abandonment, and I needed to heal and free her myself rather than blame my Mum.
7. I learnt to understand how my experiences during the Imprint and Modelling periods have influenced me through the Socialisation period of my life, and throughout adulthood.
8. I learnt love and forgiveness had set me free.
9. Most importantly, I learnt how to release my suppressed feelings and emotions, so I can enjoy my swim in this pool of Life.

My deepest desire throughout my Maiden years was to have our family back together again, Mum, Dad, my sisters and brothers. That was my dream, and it has always been my dream, to have a family again.

My experiences in my Maiden years compelled me to want more from my life, and what I hoped for the most were:
• Love and affection
• A stable home environment
• Freedom and independence
• Trust and loyalty
• Stability and security (emotional and financial)

Looking back, I can see that the overwhelming energies and aspects of the Maiden were dominant during my formative years. I was irresponsible and unreliable, and I measured my self-worth against what I perceived all the other girls had.

I’m happy to say that I have achieved my hopes, dreams and aspirations even though they seemed impossible and so far out of reach at times. There were some things that were unachievable because they were out of my control. But where I had control over the outcome, I achieved what I wanted.

My advice is, ‘never give up on your dreams and desires no matter how unachievable they may seem’!

Key Lessons Learnt

I’ve learnt a lot about myself and what I’m capable of when I’m focused on my future, and where my journey is taking me. The lessons I’ve learnt have been life changing. I now understand that I am responsible for my own happiness. I cannot rely on any “thing” or any “person” to make me happy. My happiness is my responsibility.

So, these are some of my lessons:

• I learnt that it was safe and okay to just Be, to just be Me.
• I learnt that I have spent the majority of my life trying to live up to my parent’s expectations, traditional values and beliefs.
• I learnt how to stop focusing on ‘why’ things had happened, to learning how I had contributed to, or attracted my difficult life experiences
• I learnt I have always had the freedom of choice, my own freewill, to change the childhood messages that had been so ingrained in me.
• I learnt that true happiness comes from within. From accepting and believing in who I Am.
• I learnt that no one else is responsible for my happiness, and I am not responsible for anyone else’s happiness.
• I learnt to accept responsibility for my challenges
• I learnt to forgive myself, and others
• I learnt to understand how I process information, and the filters or programming that I use.
• I learnt to re-evaluate my personal values and beliefs and adapt them to align with who I Am.
• I learnt to understand how my thoughts, feelings and emotions determine my behaviours.
• I learnt to live in more conscious awareness of my internal and external environments.
• I learnt to release the victim mentality that kept me stuck in the past.
• I learnt to relax through journaling, writing, meditation, listening to music and walks on the beach
• I learnt about universal and ancient laws and how to apply them in my life.
• I learnt to share and be proud of my Spiritual beliefs.
• I learnt to mix with like-minded people who help me stay on track and keep me grounded.
• I learnt new healing techniques and coping mechanisms
• I learnt that the judgements I make about other people are often a reflection of something I dislike about myself
• I learnt to connect more readily to the infinite wisdom of my HeartSpace.
• I am continually learning to trust my innate wisdom and intuition.

I have also determined what I wish to experience in a committed relationship, in addition to love, trust, honesty, loyalty, and protection etc. I would hope that all women are encouraged by their husbands or partners to embrace and freely express the principles of Honouring the Wisdom of the Maiden, the Mother and the Matriarch.
To put these personal desires and expectations into context, here’s a reminder about the masculine and feminine energies or aspects of the Mind. The left hemisphere (masculine) manages logic, analytical and linear thought processes, while the right hemisphere (feminine or intuitive) manages the creative, compassionate and holistic thought processes.

- Encourage and accept our natural birthright to express and embrace our natural feminine energies and qualities of the maiden, the mother and matriarch without fear of judgement, ridicule, anger or retaliation.
- Encourage and accept our right to be vulnerable and freely express our feelings and emotions without the fear of judgement, ridicule, anger or retaliation.
- Encourage and accept our right to evolve and grow outside of our family and relationship responsibilities without the fear of judgement, ridicule, anger or retaliation.
- Love us unconditionally. Neither partner should place conditions or restrictions on the giving or receiving of Love to ourselves or others.
- Encourage and accept our natural birthright to speak our truth without fear of judgement, ridicule, anger or retaliation.
- Encourage and accept our right of freewill and freedom of choice. Obviously, this works both ways and communication and understanding is so important. It’s important to understand that some of our choices come from our feminine energies of compassion and creativity rather than the masculine energy of logic and analysis. Understanding the difference is helpful.
- Encourage us to freely express and follow our dreams, hopes and aspirations. Try to ‘feel’ what these mean to us rather than just ‘hear’ them. Listen attentively, and remember, they come from our place of compassion and creativity rather than the masculine energy of logic and analysis.
- Encourage and accept our right to express and pursue our dreams, hopes and aspirations without the fear of ridicule, judgement and unsolicited advice. Unsolicited advice can introduce ‘doubt and fear’ whether it’s intentional or not and causes conflict. It can also cause us to suppress our desires and become resentful.
My Journey of Self-discovery

So, this has been my focus over the past five years on my journey of self-discovery – discovering who ‘I Am’ – learning to apply the principles and lessons learnt in my everyday life.

It took me a long time to realise that I allowed people to disrespect and physically and emotionally abuse me because I didn’t love and respect myself. But now I love and respect myself too much to ever let that happen to me again.

I also believe that you cannot truly love someone until you love yourself. The more unconditionally you love yourself, the more you are able to share unconditional love with someone else.

I now have a stronger focus on my internal state/environment rather than my external state/environment. I am learning to trust that if my internal wellness and love of self is nurtured first, then this wellness state will be reflected in my external environment.

We often form attachments to people, material things or external events to make us happy because these are tangible things that we can see, hear, smell, taste or touch. They appeal to one or all of our five senses. However, the happiness derived from people, material things or external events is often temporary because it relies on external stimulus or events that we have no control over. Once the desire has been fulfilled we tend to look for something else to make us happy again. So, our happiness becomes dependent on other people, external events or acquiring ‘things’, and if we don’t achieve the desired happiness from these, we blame someone else or berate ourselves into an unhappy state, and the cycle starts again.

My belief now is that I am fully responsible for my own happiness. I can achieve a more constant state of happiness through conscious awareness of my thoughts, feelings and emotions and maintaining my equilibrium.

No one can take my happiness away from me because it is not dependent on another person, external events or attachments. As a consequence, my happiness and confidence radiate outwards and influences my external environment, and the people I meet.
Let Your Diamond Light Shine!

Each one of us is unique in every way.

There is no one exactly like us anywhere else on this planet. Everything about us is different, we are a unique creation, we are whole, we are complete, we are perfect just the way we are. But we waste so much of our precious time trying to change ourselves before we truly understand who we are at the core of our Being - when we are standing in our own power in the fullness of who we are physically, mentally, emotionally, and Spiritually.

Who are we when we’re not being someone else’s daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, aunty, niece, girlfriend, partner or wife?

What if I told you that you are so much more than the person you see reflected in the mirror, or the person other people see and know, or the labels that society places on you? Or, more importantly, the labels we place on ourselves! What if I told you that you are unique, a unique creation of perfection, a multi-faceted jewel, a brilliant Diamond in a multi-dimensional world?

Would you believe me, or wonder what planet is she on!

How long are we going to trudge along on the treadmill of life searching outside of our unique selves for some illusive dream to bring us true joy, peace, love and happiness? We may travel to a different part of the world, to different circumstances to what we left behind but we are still the same person who boarded the bus, plane or train. Wherever we go, there we are!

We cannot escape our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

We cannot find joy, peace, love and happiness anywhere on our planet until we discover that the real and authentic joy, peace, love and happiness we crave is inside of us. We were born with it, we were pre-programmed for it, it’s our natural birthright!

We will absolutely enjoy happy moments and create happy memories on our journeys. But how do we find lasting happiness in our normal daily lives?

Partly, it’s about understanding our internal software and programming, and what we need to do to update or delete those programs that are not producing our desired outputs, or results? Un-
derstanding how our CPU, or brain processes all this data that’s input through our physical senses? How our internal processes are configured to delete or distort information to fit our current programmed values or beliefs?

It’s about learning to uninstall our default programs!

I’m not going to lie and say it’s an easy process because it’s not. It’s not a ‘one size fits all’ approach either, because we are all unique, with unique experiences.

It can also be a painful confronting experience, but I promise you that the rewards are life changing, and the challenges will teach you perhaps your greatest lessons in life.

So, have a think about your honest, heartfelt and authentic answers to these questions:

• Who are you at the core of your Being?
• What lights your fire and ignites your passion?
• What are you passionate about?
• What drives or inspires you?
• What is your Soul desperately trying to guide you towards?

When you can answer these questions honestly and objectively, you will immediately start to feel a change in your energy and presence. Because your passion is an indication of the true essence of who you are. A physical expression of your Soul, and your Soul only wants the best for you and lovingly guides you towards your passion and true desires.

We just have to stop! Literally, stop and recalibrate our internal workings.

It is important for us to get off the treadmill. To understand and connect with every aspect of who we are from our birth to Now – the most important time of our life! Now – this precise moment in time when we cannot change our past or predict our future.

Now – is the time to start creating the future that we want and deserve.

If you’re still with me, then it’s time to be honest with yourself. Are you truly happy with your life, or have your life experiences compelled you to wish for something more?
If you are truly happy with your life, then my story may serve only your curiosity or perhaps be of some entertainment value to you. But if you have a strong desire to change even the smallest thing in your life then my story may inspire or encourage you to believe that anything is possible.

I strongly believe that this is my calling, and I know that my passion to serve and support women will generate lasting Freedom, Fulfilment and Foresight.

- I encourage you to discover and embrace the Essence or Ahuatanga of Mana Wahine – that sacred inner sanctuary where you will feel empowered, safe and protected.
- I encourage you to connect with the natural infinite wisdom and energies of Papatuanuku, Mother Earth.
- I encourage you to reconnect to your inner power Source that energises the multi-dimensional aspects of who you are.
- I encourage you to emerge from the Shadows, walk into the Sun and let the shadows cast behind you.
- I encourage you to let your Diamond Light shine!

Most importantly, I encourage you to Love and Honour yourself unconditionally, first and foremost.

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I want to share my poem again to reconnect us to the energy and vibration of Greatness. This poem was inspired by my journey from Abuse to true Freedom, but the essence of the poem could easily apply to all of us.

**I AM – Eternal, Wild and Free**

*I AM, I am Unique, I am ME*

*I am the physical creation of my English Father and Māori Mother*

*I am not the colour of my skin, nor the languages I speak*

*I am my thoughts, my feelings, my emotions*

*I am more than my physical body, my appearance*

*More than who others see, hear, smell, taste or touch*
I am not defined by my house, my car, my status, my job
I am feminine and masculine energies merging in dance
I am a precious and multifaceted jewel, a Diamond

Mai i te whai ao, born from the spiritual realms of Papatuanuku, Mother Earth
Ki te Ao Marama, into the physical World of Light, Ranginui, Sky Father
A multi-faceted jewel in a multi-dimensional Universe

Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua, ko au
I AM the Land, the Land is Me
Ko au te Rangi, ko te Rangi, ko au
I AM the Sky, the Sky is Me

I am a descendant of the ancient ones
Of tribal lands, skies, mountains, rivers and seas
I am the Mauri, the life force energy flowing in me
I am the blood that pulses through my veins
I am Wairua, Spirit, a vibrational, intuitive Soul
I am pure consciousness in a tribal Multiverse
Traversing universal pathways of Io-Matua-Kore, the Creator of All
Seeking esoteric knowledge and enlightenment
Filling my kete o te waananga, my three baskets of knowledge
Sacred knowledge, Ancestral knowledge, Life’s knowledge
A tauira, student of ancient principles from ancient lands
Still relevant to every race, every culture, every creed

Ko au te maunga, ko te maunga, ko au
I AM the Mountain, the Mountain is Me
Ko au te awa, ko te awa, ko au
I AM the River, the River is Me

My Heart is sensitive, my Mind is complex
I am compassion, I am empathy
I have sinned, and I have served
I am the Maiden, the Mother, the Matriarch
I am Mana Wahine, strong and humble
I am whare tangata, my body, a sacred vessel
Blessed to nurture and birth new life
Expanding and contracting through labours of Love
Birthing my tamariki, their Wairua into this physical world
Whakapapa, generations woven in time and space
Extensions of Me, but never belonging to Me
Their Wairua, Spirit must always fly free

Ko au te hinengaro, ko te hinengaro, ko au
I AM the Mind, the Mind is Me
Ko au te tinana, ko te tinana, ko au
I AM the Body, the Body is Me

I AM, I am Unique, I am ME
I am awareness, I am consciousness
I am temporarily physical, eternally Spiritual
I have flaws, I have perfection
I am not a slave to society standards or law
Or to judgements made by colonised minds
I dance to the beat of my own drum
To the rhythm of tribal and universal lore
Expanding in my physical time and space
I AM the full expression of ME
When my drum beat fades, I shall return to Papatuanuku
The Circle of Life will begin again
Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au
I am the Land, the Land is Me
I AM Wairua, Spirit – Wild and Free

Hei oranga mo ake tonu atu – I AM Eternal
Tihei Mauri Ora! – Behold the breath of Life
My Passion and Life Purpose

I have always believed there was a higher purpose for the challenges I’ve endured and the life lessons I’ve learnt. I can now consolidate and incorporate all my personal and professional experiences and learnings into my life purpose. I am passionate about helping other women to succeed and experience abundance in all areas of their lives through living life by *design* not by *default*.

We get so busy with work and families and easily lose sight of what’s really important for ME:

- Who am I?
- What am I passionate about?
- What gives me pleasure and satisfaction?
- What makes my heart sing?
- Where am I now?
- Where do I aspire to be?
- How will I get there?
- What’s stopping me from getting there?
- How will this impact my life?
- What will my life look like when I achieve this?
- How will I feel when I achieve this?
- How will I celebrate my success?

If your life experiences have compelled you to want more from life, I encourage you to visit my website www.elainelees.com and consider participating in one of the transformational programs:

- FREEDOM
- FULFILMENT
- FORESIGHT

And please feel free to leave me a message. I welcome any feedback on my book.

Also, if you would like to share your knowledge and wisdom, please check the Foresight service information on my website about a new initiative to capture, record and share the *Wisdom of the Maiden, the Mother and Matriarch.*
Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story. I sincerely hope you have found something that resonates with you. I feel truly blessed to be able to share my story, and if it helps just one woman to transform her life, then it has served its purpose.

The healing principles and processes I refer to in my book are my own perspectives of *Mana Wahine* and learnings that resonate with me and what I wanted to achieve in my life. By way of a disclaimer, I am not a qualified counsellor nor do I have academic qualifications in psychology or social sciences. What I do have is a passion and strong desire to become an authentic teacher of my own life experiences. To share principles and processes that helped me to emerge from the shadows.

We are all unique individuals with unique life experiences. What I’m offering in my story is hope and compassion to women and children who wish to find Freedom and Fulfilment in their lives.

It is really important that I repeat again that I do not encourage or support any woman or child putting themselves at risk of physical and/or emotional harm. The situations I have described in my book are examples from my own experiences. They were not necessarily the best or safest actions or options to take. In fact, I regret many of the decisions I made whilst I was in highly emotional states and feeling desperate and debilitated.

If you are in a violent or abusive situation or relationship, please keep yourself and your children safe, first and foremost. If you fear for your safety, contact the Police immediately.

Please reach out for help and support. (Refer to the resources and services information published at the end of my book.)
There is absolutely no shame in domestic and family violence. There are many women and children experiencing similar situations. One in three women are experiencing violence and abuse in their own homes.

You are definitely not alone in your experiences, and your Life matters.

In closing, I encourage all women to reconnect to their foundation of Greatness, their own unique and sacred space of Mana Wahine. This applies to all women of every culture, every race, every colour, every creed because there is not a woman on this planet who does not want to be loved and nurtured and treated with gentleness and respect. We all deserve this!

Before I sign out, I want to issue you a personal challenge:

When you next look in the mirror, take a good look at yourself and be gentle with yourself;
irrespective of what you think about your physical appearance,
irrespective of your thoughts, feelings and emotions
irrespective of where your life is in this moment in time,
I challenge you to see your Mana, your Greatness – even if you don’t believe it or feel it

I challenge you to see your MAGNIFICENCE and the SACRED Being who you are!

And while you’re there, say ‘I LOVE YOU’ and feel your Diamond Light start to shine.

With much Love and Gratitude – E xxx
| **ahuatanga** | attribute, trait, phenomenon. |
| **aroha** | love |
| **atua** | god, demon, supernatural being |
| **awa** | river, channel, gully, valley |
| **haka** | dance, commonly a war dance |
| **harakeke** | flax - a general name covering all varieties |
| **iwi** | bones; tribe |
| **kaha** | strength |
| **karakia** | charm, spell, incantation |
| **kaupapa** | topic, plan, item(s) for discussion |
| **koha** | gift |
| **korero** | tell; say; discussion |
| **koroua** | respected older man/men |
| **kuia** | respected older woman/women |
| **Mana** | authority, prestige, influence; psychic force |
| **Māori** | normal; usual; ordinary (hence: person of Polynesian race, i.e. not a foreigner) |
| **Māoritanga** | explanation; meaning (hence: lore and customs of the Māori) |
| **marae** | flat area of ground in front of a meeting house - the village square or piazza, place of weighty discussion and consultation - Heimat, one’s true home |
| **matauranga** | knowledge |
| **maunga** | mountain |

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2 Source: https://www.Māori.info/Māori_language.htm
mauri  life principle, life force
moko  (ta moko) tattooing (on the face or body)
Papatuanuku  Mother Earth
patu  strike; beat; club, weapon
paua  abalone (shellfish)
pipi  *Paphies australis* - common edible bivalve
po  night
pounamu  greenstone, jade
powhiri  formal welcome
rangi  sky
Ranginui  Sky Father
tamariki  children
tangata whenua  people of the land, Māori
tangi (tangihanga)  lamentation; mourning (hence: funeral)
taonga  treasure(s)
tapu  forbidden or sacred; under strict religious or superstitious restrictions
tauira  student
te reo  the language
tino  rangatiratanga self-governance
tui  *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae* - parson bird
wahine  woman
Wāhine  women
Wairua  Spirit
waka  canoe
wānanga  educational seminar, conference
whaea  mother, aunt, aunty
whakapapa  genealogy, genealogical table
whanau  family (note: it is questionable whether the Māori had any real concept of the family as a nuclear unit)
whare tangata  house of humanity, womb, uterus
whenua  land, country
White Ribbon is a domestic violence primary prevention campaign—they specifically work to change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women. If you or someone you know is experiencing violence and need help or support, please contact one of the support hotline numbers below.

**Counselling and support**

**1800RESPECT**
24-hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
Call toll-free 1800 737 732.

**Lifeline**
Lifeline has a national number who can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State.
Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call 13 11 14.

**Police and Ambulance**
Dial 000 in an emergency and in cases of immediate danger.
Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline
Victims Services has a dedicated contact line for Aboriginal victims of crime who would like information on victims rights, how to access counselling and financial assistance.
Call the hotline for help 1800 019 123

Translating & Interpreting Service
Gain free access to a telephone or on-site interpreter in your own language. Immediate phone interpreting is available 24 hours, every day of the year, on 131 450.

Suicide Call Back Service
Free counselling 24/7, whether you’re feeling suicidal, are worried about someone else, or have lost someone to suicide.
Call 1300 659 467 for help.

Mensline Australia
Supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. 24/7 telephone and online support an information service for Australian men.
Call 1300 789 978 for help.

Kids Help Line
1800 551 800
Free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25 in Australia. Call 1800 551 800 for help.

Australian Childhood Foundation
1800 176 453/ 03 9874 3922
Counselling for children and young people affected by abuse.
For information, email them at info@childhood.org.au.
For counselling services, call toll-free number 1800 176 453.
Relationships Australia
1300 364 277
Support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners. To be connected to the nearest Relationships Australia, call 1300 364 277 (for the cost of a local call).

Blue Knot Foundation
1300 657 380
Telephone counselling for adult survivors of childhood trauma, their friends, family and the health care professionals who support them. Call 1300 657 380 between 9am-5pm for counselling services or email at helpline@blueknot.org.au.

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
1800 880 052
An Australia-wide telephone hotline for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability. Call the free hotline on 1800 880 052.

Penda
Download in Google Play or the iTunes App Store
Penda is a free, national app with legal, financial, and personal safety information and referrals for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. It was developed by the Women’s Legal Service Qld with funding from Financial Literacy Australia.
For Assistance And Support In New Zealand

New Zealand Helplines

- Domestic Violence Crisis Line - 303 3939
- HELP - www.helpauckland.org.nz or 09 623 1700
- Counselling Services Centre - www.cscounselling.org.nz or 09 277 9324
- For a list of sexual assault services across New Zealand see www.rapecrisis.org.nz
- In an Emergency phone Police on 111