

Prologue

"If I ever tell you about my past, it's never because I want you to feel sorry for me, but so that you can understand why I am who I am." UNKNOWN

For years I sensed that something was wrong in my life, something was out of alignment, something wasn't quite right. This did not fit the picture of what the world saw and gave commentary to. People I knew coveted my perfect life, commenting on my good fortune of finding a man with so many endearing traits, people were envious of our lives. To all I seemed to have a charmed existence. The bad relationships from the past were over, replaced by a man who loved and adored me and my children, who worked hard in a good job to provide for all of us, a man who raised money for charities, who encouraged me to pursue a career, even if that took me away from my children. A man who could cook and clean and iron and had skills I valued as a working mum. A man who kissed me goodbye each morning, who hugged me and told me he loved me each day. A man who was charming and a good conversationalist.

What an illusion it all was. How I should have listened to those small

voices in the back of my head, whispering "it's all too good to be true", "something doesn't add up". The whispers in the chatter of your mind that are designed to destroy the good things in your life. I should have heeded them, but they kept being swept away by my desperation for a happy life and to be loved.

The only indication as to what was about to unfold, was a teenager who went from an innocent pre-teen to a destructive adolescent, prone to violet rants and outbursts. Gone were the innocent conversations of her pre-teen life, to be replaced by verbally abusive rants and outbursts. I expected this from a teenager, to some extent, thought that the developing adolescent in her was testing the world around her, trying to make sense of what her life had been up until that time. The velocity of the outbursts and the depth of her anger worried me though; surely this was not normal.

I attempted to get help from doctors, psychologists and through counsellors. I read and researched everything I could about teenagers, I talked to friends endlessly about the behaviours she was exhibiting and her treatment of me. Her hatred, her disgust of me and her belittling remarks chipped away at my confidence as a mother. I blamed myself for not being able to maintain a balanced relationship with my daughter. I thought that I was a bad mother. It never occurred to me that the issue was not the relationship between us, but the evil that had entered our lives undetected some years earlier, like a cobra; an evil that was envenomating my precious only daughter, doing unspeakable harm. This cobra managed to manipulate me to a point where I thought I was going crazy. Hinting that perhaps I was misinterpreting my daughter's behaviour, that she was normal and I was over reacting; all the while still professing undying love and commitment to me. The confusion of his words took the focus from my daughter and placed it squarely at my feet and had me questioning my right to be a mother at all.

My life up to that point had been a long series of setbacks, of failed relationships, of flawed decision making, hardship and pain. In many ways I had dealt with life as best I could, always searching out ways to succeed instead of fail, trying to right the wrongs and striving to make good from bad. Up to that point I was still dealing with the cards I'd been dealt, and I was a people pleaser.

I wish I'd known such a trait would create a vulnerability that would enable a perpetrator to slip quietly into my life, but worse still, my daughter's life. Now I understand how these evil masters of lies and deception work and I want others to understand too and to be compelled to ask questions.

So much of what happened to me in my life, has been inexplicable. I have suffered hurt, shame, anxiety, depression and fear and felt anger. So much anger. Now that I am older and wiser, I can see why things happened, how things happened. I have an insight into, not only my behaviour, but the behaviour of others. This knowledge has brought

me much solace. During each of those turbulent times, it was hard to see past my own emotions and it was only in more settled times that I gained this understanding.

I am not a psychologist, however I have extensively studied psychology and researched endlessly the multitude of science-based articles and books available, to familiarise myself with whatever I was feeling or going through at the time. Together with extensive therapy and counselling, it has combined in such a way as to give me understanding of my reactions, my decision making, my own thoughts and patterns and helped me to heal myself. I'm hoping that it will help to heal others who read this story.