

My name is Leeanne... I used to hurt myself and this is my life's journey...

As a very small child I was abused in the worst possible way. I could traumatise you with the details; however, I don't think that is the way to go as I now have moved on. At 8 years of age my siblings and I were removed from the family home and placed in orphanages, due to the chronic abuse we had endured. The first orphanage we were placed in we were experimented on with all kinds of medications and as a result of this three of my sisters and I ended up in the infectious diseases hospital in Melbourne with scarlet fever and small pox.

In my mind the abuse started because I thought it was my fault after we were taken from our family home because I was always the special one, the one who was abused the most. Maybe I gave a smile, let a tear fall, looked happy or didn't do as I was told at the wrong time, I don't know! I hated myself, no not hated, despised myself for everything that had happened. I learned how to disassociate myself from the trauma at a very young age and still find myself going there today to protect myself. Consequently, I began to hurt myself which started in primary school where I would fall over or jump off something to hit my head and not care about the physical pain so long as it kept the internal pain in check.

When you are in an orphanage with an average of 40 girls, not many staff, no love or hugs were given, only angry and negative things were said by the other girls and staff. I now describe the pain that was in me as an infected boil, where the staff would put a heated milk bottle upside down over the boil and push down with a huge bang and the boil would explode like a volcano. That is how the pain built up inside me and I would have to let out the pain somehow. This is when I would hurt myself in one form or another. The internal pain gradually increased as the years went by and so did the intensity of my self-destructive behaviour until many visits to hospital, both medical and psyche, to the point of many resuscitations.

For many years my days consisted of wake up late, get out of bed and stare blankly at the TV due to being medicated to the eyeballs. It was an extremely lonely time of my life. Sometimes I would do Art & Craft and it always seemed to be at my worst times that I would do the best art and find excess creativity. I would love and remember my own poetry, a friend would write it down for me as I could not read or write until much later in my life. I would now like to share a poem I wrote in 1991 called...

'The Real Me' ...  
I look happy with a smile on my face  
But that smile is a plastic smile  
If you could see what's going on  
Behind that smile  
You would see the real me  
Someone whose heart is broken  
Broken by a Mother who didn't love me enough  
To teach me right from wrong  
She bashed me and brainwashed me  
The only way she knew  
To show me that I was born to love  
And be loved by anyone who would pay  
I now have to try and change my way of thinking  
Thinking that says, "No-one could love me for just being me."  
Friends tell me they do  
But the real me has to learn to believe them.  
[Leeanne 1991]

I was given the opportunity to attend the first SAFE program when it came out to Australia in 2000. I originally found that I didn't like it, but it planted a seed deep inside of me. I completed the program and continued to hurt myself with reduced intensity. Slowly the seed that was planted deep inside of me started to grow and with the help of many other people. Not that I realised it then. I started to join different organisations for the mentally ill and oh what a stigma! This actually gave me permission to do more self-destructive behaviours as I still felt I was the devils child and hated myself for it. Another couple of poems I wrote called 'Good Days & Bad Days' and 'Beginning To Live' that I would like to share with you...

**Good Days & Bad Days**  
Some days I feel as though I can reach for the sky  
All I can see are good things  
Like;

The sun  
Rainbows  
Ice creams  
Friends  
Families having fun  
Pets of all shapes and sizes  
I enjoy;  
Playing with bats and balls  
Feeling my feet in the sand at the beach  
Watching the waves coming towards me and going away again  
Catching a fish that doesn't get away  
It feels so good to be alive!  
But other days  
I just want to cry  
All I see is darkness around me  
I see families breaking up  
Children left alone  
And best friends fighting  
I try to imagine a perfect world  
Without any sadness or pain  
But I know whilst the Evil One lives  
I will have to fight him all the way  
So in my struggles to stay alive  
I have to keep in mind  
That someday soon  
I will be going  
To that perfect place up in the sky  
Please take care of yourselves  
And your families  
Look for the good things in life  
May you one day turn around  
And find death and destruction left behind.  
[Leeanne 2000]

### **Beginning To Live**

This has been a mixed up week  
With many things happening  
I felt pushed into a group of strangers  
Who were going to help me  
Get my life back together again  
Ha! Ha!  
At first I felt different from the others  
And thought no one could help me  
I soon found out that we were all the same  
And we need to help each other  
Already after three long days  
I feel as though you all care  
And that helps me want to live  
I know it's not an easy road  
That we all have to travel  
We have so much to learn  
But I know we can learn to live A 'normal' life  
Without these struggles and pain  
We're not expecting miracles  
Just need a helping hand  
I thank each person in this team  
For giving me the chance to understand Leeanne  
[Leeanne - 2000]

The deeply planted seed kept growing and growing into a tree blossoming with flowers. Now I have many significant people in my life who accept and give me unconditional hugs, kisses and love for just being me and I don't have to abuse myself anymore.

I do now think that the SAFE program was the beginning of my life and is what inspired me on my own life's journey to being abuse free. I am now 50 years old and truly happy for the first time in my life. For the first time in my life I can honestly say that I don't hate myself and actually love myself and can even look at myself in the mirror.

Don't get me wrong there are still times when I fall back to thinking about hurting myself when times get tough, but I don't as it now only takes a short time for me to bounce back again once I get the thinking sorted! I'm no longer on psyche medications and feel so good about myself.

**[Leeanne - 2009]**

Here is more of my poetry, please enjoy and do not judge people by their behaviour; people hurt themselves as a coping mechanism to deal with the inner pain...

### **Life**

*Living is a funny thing  
One day you think you will never make it  
And the next day  
You turn around and find  
you have survived  
[Leeanne - 2001]*

### **A New Life**

*A new baby  
A new life  
Like this new life  
I am going to start mine  
As from this moment on  
I will no longer be a victim  
The past has happened  
And I can't change it  
But I want to start to live my life  
Free from the past  
I am letting go  
Of all the hurt and pain  
I am going to feel safe  
And to even like myself  
I have just been surviving  
All of my life  
Now it is time to live  
And enjoy myself  
I know this isn't going  
To be easy  
BUT  
**I am strong!**  
[Leeanne - 2001]*

*Be  
nice  
to  
yourself  
right  
now  
and  
let  
the  
love  
that's  
meant  
to  
be  
grow  
from  
the  
inside  
out  
of  
you*  
**[Leeanne - 2009]**