

# **RHODA'S STORY**

**I don't know how others come to the decision to end their lives, but I know I came to it out of despair. I was certainly depressed, but there was much more to it than that. I had become consumed by all the pain and hurt I had encountered in my life and I couldn't take any more.**

## **EARLY YEARS**

My early years were difficult and left me feeling unloved and unwanted. I was a difficult child, being expelled from school at 4 years old, only 6 weeks after I started. This combined with other explosive situations left my mum feeling helpless and frustrated. Unfortunately, I bore the brunt of that frustration, which added to my feeling of isolation.

At age 7 I was the victim of horrific sexual abuse. I was told by my abuser that it was a punishment for all the hurt I had caused my parents, that I deserved it and that they would never come back to get me unless I promised to be good. I believed him. Something inside me chose to believe that I was the worst person that ever lived and I deserved everything. This became the belief system that would invade my every thought and bring me to the end of myself.

## **GROWING UP**

As I grew up I learned how to cope by stuffing all my fears and pain deep down inside. I finished school, did well, went to college and travelled. All the things everyone calls 'normal', but I never felt normal.

When I was 22 I married a wonderful man. But although I knew he loved me I still always had a part of me that I would not trust anyone, even him, with. I was scared to be vulnerable. Yet early in our marriage that vulnerability came flooding out when we had the first of what was to become five miscarriages. The pain of losing a child mixed with the shame that it was somehow my fault, was very difficult. I tried so hard to stuff that inside too.

## **PREGNANCY**

By the time I was 26 I was heavily pregnant with our third child. The cracks were starting to appear in my coping strategy and by the time I gave birth to our daughter, I was falling apart. The nightmares came and crippled me. I was cutting myself with blades on a regular basis to try and numb myself. But it wasn't enough. I had experimented with drugs and alcohol, but they only made me worse.

## **SUICIDAL**

My first suicide attempt was more a desperate cry for help than an attempt to actually kill myself. But help never came. My husband tried, but had no idea what to do.

I knew what to do. I was filled with so much self loathing and hurt that everyone would be better off without me. My second attempt would have succeeded had my husband, hell-bent on keeping me alive, not got me to hospital.

There were several more attempts after that. Each one worse than the one before. Intensive care, resuscitation, blood transfusions. My husband being told to accept each time that they may not be able to save me. Me getting more and more desperate each time they did.

## **LOVE**

Yet in the midst of those horrific years, we functioned, somehow, as a family. We raised our kids and did the shopping and went to church. Every week someone would tell me God loves you and I would always say "I know". And I did know. God loves everyone, I always knew and believed that. He just couldn't love me, that's all. Could He? I had really started to question God. I needed to know if He could love someone like me. He answered. I asked Him to give me a reason to live. Again, He answered.

## **THE ANSWER**

His answer came through my husband. I was in hospital. I had overdosed on blood thinners and had a massive internal bleed. I needed a blood transfusion. I was very sick but still alive. I cried out to God to help me. That evening I talked to my husband. He was crying. He told me he loved me so much and would do anything to help me, but that this was the last time I could ever do this. He needed to protect our children. He told me if I was going to kill myself I wasn't to come home. I was shocked. Not come home. Never see him or my kids again. I knew I couldn't let that happen. And I realised God had shown me a reason to live.

## **THE REAL DEAL**

I made a promise to God, and my husband, to never try to kill myself ever again. And I haven't. But all that pain was still inside. I had started to deal with it but there was so much. In our church we had found a couple who, no matter how hard I tried, didn't hate me. They had stood by me through it all and were always the voice reminding me God loved me. With my husband, they helped me pick up the pieces of my broken life. Nothing I told them scared them away. I slowly learned to accept God's love for me and allow Him to heal all the pain inside me.

## **THE JOURNEY**

I'm not fully there yet, but every day I get a bit closer.