

LYNDAL'S* STORY

I was born into a middle class family in the late 60's and lived in the inner Western suburb of Mt. Druitt. I was the middle child with two sisters. I guess things in the early days seemed OK.

My parent's marriage broke down when I was 8. My other sisters were 5 and 9 years.

My mother did not cope with being a single parent and neglected her responsibility of caring for her children. In this process I was exposed to sexual and emotional abuse.

When I turned 12 and started high school my mother decided she would be with another man and raise his only son. Her husband emotionally and sexually abused me for many years without my mother being aware.

My sisters and I went to live with our father who had remarried a woman with 3 boys, and they had a daughter together. We all lived in a Department of housing 3 bedroom house, 7 children and 2 adults. This was tough for everyone, but we were safe and loved.

All the hurting from the past caught up with me. I did the first 3 years of high school and started to make some bad choices. I was associating with the wrong crowd and disobeyed society and my parents. I was expelled from year 9 and my father insisted I get a job. I did get a job, collecting chicken eggs from 5.30 am till dark, which is hard going when you are 14 years old. I then went on to work in the rag trade making children's clothing.

At around the age of 15 years I ran away from home and ended up in a refuge. I was out of relationship with my dad and stepmother but continued to relate to my biological mother.

In this wilderness I became pregnant and was determined to continue the pregnancy and raise this baby. The father of the baby was also 15 years old. I continued to live at the refuge until the late stages of pregnancy. I then went to live with a type of fostering system for young pregnant girls. At around 8 months of the pregnancy I had a strong urge to do the right thing by this little baby and give it the best start in life. I decided to have the baby adopted out. I feel I have been able to bless a couple with a baby very much wanted and loved.

I then went on to doing a secretarial course, which landed me with an amazing job in a computer dealership. I was living and renting a unit on my own until I was 21, then made a move into the Sutherland Shire. The best move I have ever made!

I was still out of relationship with my father until around the age of 25. My heart just did not settle being out of relationship, so I contacted him and my family received me back with open arms. It was a little difficult at first as I had missed 10 years of growing with my family. Even today after 10 years I still feel the pain of being alone in the big world.

I met my husband who was a "Knight in shining armour" at 21, and had a great time for years. We became pregnant with our first daughter when I was 26 and decided we would move in together and look after our baby. This only lasted a year, and we ended up living with his extended family of 3 generations. This went on for 5 years, with the addition of another baby.

Some of the toughest times were spent in this home with my husband working long hours while I cared for his extended family. The emotional abuse was horrific and I couldn't stand it any longer. I decided my husband needed to make a choice of taking us out of this situation, or I would have to leave with the girls.

I left with the girls...

In June 2001 my life seemed to be in the pits. My marriage had broken down and I was lacking a great deal of self esteem.

I had been attending a Christian Playgroup in Cronulla from 1995 and was continuing with my second daughter. But it was becoming too big and I felt like I was getting lost in the crowd, so I was thinking of moving.

Through the primary school of my first daughter I had become friends with Tammy and Kim. They knew me personally and encouraged me to visit their playgroup, which I did. I really felt there was a personal and loving relationship to be built, so I continued to attend.

After attending the playgroup I was invited to "Chatterbox", a monthly morning tea with parenting advice and childminding. The moment I walked into the church where Chatterbox was held, my heart just pounded. A room full of beautiful shining women. I just wanted to be where they were.

I learned it was simple: open your heart to God and Jesus.

I then took the step of attending church, just for the kids! From the first service I knew it was for me and the girls. Again, I was exposed to amazing people who have a heart for Jesus.

I continued to attend Playgroup and Chatterbox and have NEVER missed a Sunday service.

Playgroup and Chatterbox have changed my life forever. As my heart opened I fell in love with knowing more about God and growing closer to Jesus.

I then attended a seekers group in August, and made a commitment of my life to Christ in September, with Kim.

My life has never been the same. It has transformed my whole way of life and I thank the ministry of Playgroup, Chatterbox, and the Church. The amazing peace that filled my heart to overflowing is testimony to the amazing love and grace of our great God.

The awesome thing about this journey is that in January 2002 I became a Playgroup leader and took on Chatterbox leadership.

Knowing God has been a loving and awesome experience and I have a heart to see more and more families come to know who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

* Not her real name