

# Lisa Glen's Story

Hi all

I would like to share my incredible story of survival and how mental health can affect one's life.

Last year 2011, turned out to be the proverbial year from hell! The New Year saw my marriage end and my downward spiral into insanity begin. I was diagnosed with bi polar type 2, in which my moods were extremely extreme and I didn't know my ass from my elbow!

I got sicker and sicker, with many visits to the inpatient psych ward in New Plymouth. Despite this, I was terribly unwell and just got worse and worse until one day May 11th, I finally snapped. My husband, who had been emotionally, physically and mentally abusive, said something which saw me slip into the abyss of insanity. I went into a state of catatonia, which saw me go on automatic but I had no idea that I was even alive, which is very scary in itself. In this state of extreme madness, I walked to a field nearby, poured petrol over myself and flicked the lighter. The resulting fireball that engulfed me startled the surrounding people into a state of chaos. A man, who had seen me walk past, flung me into a creek while he called for help. The fire brigade, police and ambulance were on the scene quickly but by this stage, I was hardly breathing and very badly injured. I remember very little of all of this.

I was put into drug induced coma and flown to Middlemore to the National Burns Centre. There I was in ICU and on life support. My family all gathered round to say their goodbyes, as I was critically ill and not expected to survive the night. In my brains extremely traumatised state, I thought that I'd been sent to Iraq to die because I was such a bad person.

Well, in the following days, I did survive and then began the long, painful journey to recovery. I had to learn to breathe, walk and eventually eat again on my own. That and with the crippling emotional impact of the realisation of what had happened, and the knowledge that I had done such a dreadful and sad thing to myself, was beyond comprehension.

When I eventually was able to tell people what had happened, I told them that I didn't understand why it had happened and whatever they felt or thought, I had already experienced it myself.

I was a visual reminder to people who had lost loved ones through suicide. I didn't give myself enough credit to how strong I was despite my mental illnesses. My sense of humour didn't leave me, incredibly and helped me to recover from the worst nightmare anyone could ever imagine. My poor Mum got ill as well and we were both in Middlemore, a few wards away from each other!!!

It was an incredibly tough time for our family. There have been a LOT of positives come from this tragedy though. It sorted out the awful people I was surrounded with and I knew who my real friends were. Many were very angry at me, I had two children, and how could I do that? I tell them I lost total and utter touch with reality. My son, who was 20 at the time, still has issues about what happened. I have suffered much guilt and shame; I certainly never mean to hurt anyone else.

Time will help heal the physical wounds but the emotional ones will take a very long time. I made the decision to track down all who helped me in my time of dire need, from the man who initially came to my aid, to the anaesthetists, ambulance officers, police and the reporter who wrote a few articles. I have met so many incredible people that I never would've had the privilege of meeting otherwise and

although I wish that it had never of happened, you cannot go back, it won't change anything so you have to go forward and I'm pleased to say that I am coming out the other side a much wiser, stronger and better person. I've been given a second shot at life and my God, I'm going to take every opportunity to live every second to the full!

There's only one thing that has scared me so bad. Apart from the skin grafts etc, although I am an outgoing, generally cheerful person, I do not want to EVER get into a relationship where anyone can potentially hurt me so bad again. I am terrified of going to such a dark, awful place again. Other from that fear, I fear nothing and no one!!!

People have said 'Oh you're an inspiration, blah, blah, but I struggle to understand why anyone would think that, after all, I had done it to myself. Because I was so traumatised and have very little memory of the event, I still call it an accident. I'm a fireman's daughter and always thought to be burnt would be the worst thing. And it is.

I am a student at Massey University, doing my degree in History, have joined a band as a backing vocalist and life is finally feeling good again. I know what it's like to be judged and I truly don't care what other people think. The reporter, Matt, has done two follow up articles on me and my story. I was on the FRONT page (!) with a HUGE photo of me, telling the whole of Taranaki what a nut job I was. So I really don't care about others opinions. What other people think of me is none of my business!!!

I have had so many people come and tell me about their experiences, mental health issues, physical issues etc. Although I'm 44 this year, I feel like I've been reborn. Not in a religious sense but when I was so ill, I reverted back to a small child, yelling out for my "Mummy" lol. I feel so incredibly lucky in the sense that I can still function normally. It could have been so much worse. My lower face, chin and neck were burnt. I had a skin graft on my chin but at least I am still pretty (according to my gorgeous daughter!) and can scrub up pretty good too! My hands copped it, needing skin grafts on both thumbs. The worst of it was both thighs and my buttocks were severely injured. The petrol must have pooled around that area, shudder. Having skin grafts ANYWHERE is not fun but having then on your bum is definitely not fun. I had 500 staples on my legs, bum, and face. It was hard work learning to walk again but in rehab, I saw some severely disabled people with MS, strokes, etc. My skin may not look pretty but at least I can still walk. I can drive, and most things that I could before. I also thank my lucky stars that my private parts weren't injured but my God, it was close. I am also a type 1 diabetic of many years so was indeed fortunate not to have had my legs amputated. I also lost about 17kgs and that is good as I am only 4'10!!!

I would just like to say to you, never give up, never say die!

The most powerful thing we have in this life is our minds. It can make you feel euphoric or it can be the most deadly weapon mankind has.

I would be happy to speak with anyone, regardless of how you were injured. I have created a facebook page called Naki Nutters that anyone can join. I really want to push to get more funding for Mental Health Services in Taranaki, for I am the product of a mental health system failure. Please email me at [shortaphrodite@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:shortaphrodite@yahoo.co.nz) and share your story with me. I'd love to hear from you!

*Lisa*