

‘My broken soul has been healed by God’

Abuse survivor **Caroline Kindell** was suicidal. She found hope with a loving husband, baby and new faith

CAROLINE Kindell was sexually abused as a child between the ages of six and 14. The horrific experience scarred her so deeply that she tried to throw herself off a cliff as an adult when the memories were triggered.

She considered suicide every day, even after meeting a loving husband. She was diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder and went into treatment.

The abuse was so serious that she was unable to remain pregnant as an adult and suffered a number of miscarriages. The birth of her daughter Rosie, through surrogacy, helped to restore her faith in life itself. She also discovered that she was loved and valued by God, and this was truly transforming.

“I have a huge scar that won’t ever go away,” she said. “But I believe that meeting our surrogate and then having Rosie is a gift from God, and meeting Jesus has made a massive difference to my life. It’s the final bit of healing that I needed.”

Caroline was brought up in a fervently atheist family and she

had no exposure to church or RE. Her parents both worked full-time, had few friends, and split up when Caroline was nine. One of her mum’s few friends lived nearby, and Caroline was frequently left with that family.

“I was actually very alone,” she said. “My mum’s friend had disabilities, so was confined downstairs. That meant her son could abuse me upstairs without being disturbed. He was older than me, and he told me my mum would die if I told anyone, which scared me into silence. My mum used to go on holiday without me sometimes, so I used to dread having to stay there.

“I became pregnant as a teenager as a result of the abuse, took a massive overdose and had a miscarriage. My mum didn’t even know I’d been pregnant. I had one more fortnight when I stayed there shortly afterwards and slept downstairs near my mum’s friend.

“After that, I never went to that house again. When mum went away, I stayed at home. But I was still anxious that she might die. So if she went away for the weekend,

I’d stand at her bedroom window waiting for her to return, so terrified that I’d be unable to sleep or rest.”

She married her first husband at 19, but they split up after 18 months. She was then in a string of long-term highly abusive relationships.

“I had no self-worth, so I assumed I had no value,” she said. “It’s quite normal for survivors to end up in abusive relationships because they don’t know the normal way to be treated. I became a workaholic, doing 60-80 hours per week. Some survivors turn to drink or drugs, so in a way I was lucky it was work. I was a senior nurse and I now understand that throwing myself into work was a way of me disassociating after childhood trauma.”

She met Jeremy via a dating site in 2013 and they married in 2016. But six months later, Caroline tried to throw herself off the cliffs at Beachy Head. She’d blocked out memories of the childhood abuse until she was attacked at work by a patient.

“A patient came up behind me and strangled me to the point of unconsciousness,” she said. “Three



Caroline Kindell serving hot meals at the Kitchen Table, based at Christ Church, Gosport

Join us at the kitchen table!

FOR Jessica West and her nine-year-old son Elliott, the hot meal offered every week at Christ Church, Gosport, is a godsend.

She’s been struggling with rising bills as part of the cost-of-living crisis, so eating a two-course meal at the church each week makes a real difference.

The meal service is called the Kitchen Table, and it mainly uses food donated by the Trash Café, a waste food project that collects food the supermarkets can’t sell but is still safe and good to eat.

Volunteers cook a hot, nutritious meal from whatever ingredients they receive, including a vegan option and pudding, and

offer them to families free of charge.

Jessica said: “This has been a massive help, as it guarantees that we’ll have a hot meal every Monday.

“Money is tight and it’s nice to get together as a family here. I’ve been each week that it has been happening so far, and the food is amazing. They are really imaginative with how they use whatever has been given to them.

“I’ve been involved with the church for a few months and it’s a real community. It has given me real hope, as I’ve been suffering from alcohol addiction. My faith is growing and I’m forming a relationship with Jesus.”



Jessica West with volunteers from the Kitchen Table

Anyone who would like a meal is asked to come to the hall behind Christ Church at 5pm each Monday, where volunteers will be cooking in the

church’s kitchen. Tables and chairs are laid out so people can eat together and volunteers in branded t-shirts are available to chat.

nurses had to pull him off me. It triggered my past trauma, and the next night, I decided I wanted to die, as I couldn’t live with the memories that had come flooding back. I dressed myself in a black balaclava and ran towards the edge of the cliff.

“It was actually a vicar who wrestled me to the floor, three feet from the edge of the cliff. I tried to punch him and bite him to let me go, and he just said ‘Caroline, God loves you’. I was sectioned and kept trying to commit suicide in hospital. In the end, I had 36 rounds of electro-convulsive therapy to try to deactivate my brain from the PTSD storm it was in.

“Jeremy has been amazing and has often said that I broke down and the memories came back because I finally felt safe and loved. He is an incredibly kind and caring man and I feel so blessed that he supported me while I was struggling with my mental health.”

Caroline was in hospital for two months and saw a therapist regularly for five years. Initially, she still felt like killing herself each morning, and found it difficult to convince herself she was worth something. Even the voluntary work she did came from a sense that others were more deserving.

Caroline and Jeremy tried for a baby for a couple of years, but she couldn’t stay pregnant. Her friend Chloe – who she knew from the Trash Café in Gosport – offered to carry a baby for them as a surrogate. Her daughter Rosie was born in June 2021, and Caroline helped to deliver her. The experience then led her to God too.

“I’d always had faith, despite everything, but I’d never spoken about it,” she said. “I would pray for patients and for other people, but not for myself as I thought I didn’t deserve it. I’d never held a Bible or been in a church. But I knew the padre at work and when Rosie was born, I felt I had to go and thank God for giving me a daughter.

“So last year, I saw there was an Alpha Course at Christ Church in Gosport. The church is opposite the Trash Café where I’d been volunteering, so I used to hear the band rehearsing. When I walked into the Alpha Course, I suddenly felt at home and felt comfortable.

“I was baptised last autumn, and my testimony was: my mind has been healed by therapy, my broken heart has been healed by Rosie arriving, and my broken soul has been healed by God. I’ve never felt so happy, so settled and so whole.

“Of course, any abuse survivor has had their life fractured into minute parts, and putting it all back together is a lot of work. I’ve been learning about sanctification – God can’t always stop evil, but he can help you to use the experience to help others.

“I’m telling my story because I want people to look harder, to see the lonely people in our midst who may be vulnerable. I’m already seeing people at work who need trauma-informed care or who have already disclosed abuse.”

Caroline is now part of the Christ Church team offering free food to Gosport families struggling with food instability. They offer hot meals each Monday from 5pm-6pm. And she’s now trying to find the right motivation for helping others.

“Until 2017, I’d deliberately put a stone in my shoe, to help disassociate myself from the pain,” she said. “I’d also never made myself a cup of tea. I’d made them for other people, but I wasn’t worth making tea for – or putting the heating on for.

“Now I tell myself that God loves and values me, my church family values me, my husband values me – and that’s a much better starting point for me to help others.”