

CHAPTER 13

HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE

In this season, finance was now super tight. My husband was living the high life through work. I was living the high life with Martha and the ponies, away every weekend. Arthur was at a private preparatory school for boys where he too was thriving. There was more we wanted to do on the house, more we wanted in our lives.

My husband and I were now shells of our former selves, barely tolerating each other, trying desperately to find a way through. I wanted to downsize and be mortgage-free so we could continue to facilitate and support the children through their schooling and chosen sports codes. He did not want this. He'd worked hard to get where he was and have what he had. The ponies had to go, and the spending had to stop. We were now ultimately at war. I wanted one thing and he wanted another. We were now in a stalemate. I had come to New Zealand to give my children the best opportunities to live their best lives as possible. He was not prepared to sacrifice his beautiful home or image for them or for us. I couldn't have given a stuff about the flash house and cars. They were meaningless if they weren't being used to facilitate the lifestyle or activities that brought us joy.

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And so the abuse began. We fought a lot. Most of it was verbal, some was physical. I distinctly remember when he crossed the line. He said, "You are just like your mother— selfish and don't care about anyone other than yourself." It was like a red rag to a bull. I was so hurt, enraged and felt backed into a corner. I went for him and scratched his face. I could not believe that the man I had married could be so cruel, so callous and so controlling. Both of us were in real pain. Hurt people hurt people. I wasn't taking responsibility for my actions. I wanted it my way, and he wouldn't come to the party. And he was the same, blaming and justifying his way of thinking and actions, and I wasn't prepared to come to his party.

The final straw for me was an incident when he held one of our children down on their bed and told them that they were the reason our marriage was a mess. Enough was enough. Our two beautiful innocent children had nothing to do with our marriage break-up. We had done this to ourselves. We had fallen into the trap of chasing money and status. We were trying to keep up with the wealth around us, doing what we thought would make us happy, successful, whole and valued. None of this was the children's fault. All our striving had, while having some amazing times, made us more empty on the inside. And where did we dump that misery, frustration and grief? On each other and on our children, but only behind closed doors and out-of-sight of the world around us.

My husband was and is not a bad man. He was frustrated, and like me, was at the end of his tether. The violence grew. I was thrown across hallways; and the last time, it was across the driveway. I called the police and am so grateful to the copper who stepped out and asked, "Why are you with this man? Why are you with him and not divorced?" It was the first time anyone had been up front and honest with me. It was the exact wake-up call I needed.

I have a feeling that the policeman got into trouble for this. However, I firmly believe that I needed to hear those words. I can remember exactly where I was standing. It was like the world paused around me while I took a deep breath for the first time and contemplated his questions. It was a gift from God as it made me stop and question

myself as well as reflect on “what next?” Where was this path taking me? The trajectory we were on was destructive. The only way from here was downhill. Something had to drastically change.

My husband went off to the family bach in Taupo, which was his happy space, and on 15 November 2015, we started legal proceedings to separate.

I think one of the hardest times was going to all the end of year and school events for my children. Arthur was wrapping up five years at the preparatory school and Martha six years at primary school. I distinctly remember letting Arthur down. He wanted family photos with both his parents, and I just could not stand next to Alexander and smile. My face said it all. I was trying so hard to put on a brave face when all I really wanted to do was to cry and vomit. I so desperately wanted them to be able to wrap this up well. I did my best.

This had to be the most torrid time of my life. I had no family here, and most of the people I knew went back to Alexander’s schooldays. He was hurt. And he did everything in his power to make sure I couldn’t survive without him. He phoned everyone he knew, telling them he was worried about me and if they saw me to report back to him. Not that I knew this at the time. I had numerous messages from him after I had met someone for coffee. He knew where I’d been and who I had seen. I felt like I was being stalked. I couldn’t understand how he knew so much when he was two hours away. I didn’t know who to trust or what to do next. I was a mess. I was struggling. I had two children to look after, and I felt very alone and isolated. Those who I thought would stand by me didn’t. And those who I didn’t even know cared did. In the words of Charles Dickens, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

Hanging out my dirty laundry in public took courage, being honest and open about where my life was at. I had to step back from my work at Project K for a few weeks. Our previous Regional Manager came and stepped in for me. I remember her rocking up and bringing me lunch one day, offering to hold the fort with the mentors and students while I sorted myself out. It was such a relief as I was all over the place

trying to keep all the plates spinning when they were smashing around me.

It was time to take responsibility for my own actions. If it was meant to be, then it was up to me. I got myself into this mess. I could get myself out of it. I had failed my commitment to God—"in richer and poorer, in sickness and in health." To be honest, that ate away at me more than anything else. I wasn't going to church or hanging out with God in any way, but my conscience was tugging at me. It was such a peculiar time in my life. Things just weren't adding up. I believed in God, but I hadn't acknowledged Him or had anything to do with Him since leaving school. Even then at school, I was disruptive in chapel and often got the giggles. I was not a "good girl" by any stretch of the imagination. However, there was something deeply rooted in my heart—that wherever I was and whatever I was up to, God/my Father was with me and loved me. And in this season, as with many of my toughest times, I had a sense that there was calm in the storm and that my currently upside-down world would get turned the right-way-up.

I have never known grace and favour like I had in this time. The Project K mentors and students turned up with the gardening tools needed to prune trees and roses, trim bushes and mow the lawns. Working bees were a common thing in the UK. When a big job needed to be done, everyone put a pause on their own lives to help get the job done. I have always felt this was where the expression 'many hands make light work' comes from. And that is exactly what I saw that day. I was blown away that they would all give up their Saturday to blitz the garden, flower beds and trees to make it presentable, so that photographs could be taken of the property for its up and coming sale.

Two incredible ladies, sowed into my heart at this time, scrubbed my house and walls from top to bottom when we moved out. And the pony crew came with horse trucks, strong arms and big hearts to help me move. It was my darkest hour, yet I felt the most loved and cared for. Each one of them sowed love and compassion into my heart at a time when I had nothing to give in return. The owner of the pony that Martha had the honour of riding offered to pay for everything so that Martha could have something in her life to bring her joy. These were

incredible blessings and miracles. When I had nothing to give, they all poured in abundantly, playing their part, giving what they had in their hand. It was a truly amazing time.

I kept looking up. I did a letterbox drop, hoping to find some land in the area that I could afford and then put a small house on, as I wanted to maintain as much of what I valued as I could. And from that leaflet drop came a small home with a paddock and three sheds that we could rent to give us breathing space while we found our feet. Another amazing gentleman, who ran the local boxing club, also offered me some office space so that I could switch off and “go to work” for my twenty hours a week, no charge. This was an incredible blessing as working from home at this time was soul destroying. The house felt empty, and being there twenty four - seven didn’t give a break from the grief. Having an office to work in allowed me to find some respite. And it enabled me to keep my job and actually do some great work.

A huge thank you to all those who covered and poured love into me at that time. It is thanks to each and every one of you that I am here today, living my best life. You were there when I needed you most. You stood in the gap for me. I remember visiting and speaking to the parents of Arthur’s best mates, asking them that whatever happened between Alexander and me, would they still welcome Arthur at this time in their homes and with their boys. They were outstanding, and the three boys are still best buddies now, all in the South Island carving very different paths, living their dreams.

One of my most challenging moments was plucking up the courage early on to visit Alexander’s parents. I knew there was no way I’d be able to afford the children’s school fees. I didn’t know how long my separated husband would be able to hold his job for either. I wanted to ask if there was any way that they could support their grandchildren through their schooling as it was their family line and they were already supporting another grandchild.

I knocked on the door and was invited into their home. And then was spoken at. I have never seen such hatred in someone’s eyes as I did that day in Alexander’s father. He pointed a finger at me and said,

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“You are the problem. You are the reason my son is in this state.” I had no perceptions or understanding of how much baggage they were carrying and how much this was hurting them.

I remember being uncharacteristically calm and saying, “I am sorry that you don’t have eyes to see and ears to hear; I bid you good day” and left. The whole experience was surreal. I had not gone to beg. I had hoped to reason and to appeal to their hearts. I was emotionless, which, for anyone who knows me, would have been completely out of character, even moreso under the circumstances. I believe I was covered by the Holy Spirit that day. The words I spoke were His, not mine. It wasn’t until years later I saw the exact same words in the Bible.

Reflect and Reframe

We all have pivotal moments in our lives. This was certainly one of mine. I had to take responsibility and get on with my life. Blaming others, circumstances or feeling sorry for myself were not going to help me to move forward. I had created this mess. It was down to me to get myself out of it. If it’s meant to be, it’s up to me. I was on my own again and if others could do this, so could I. All things are possible to those who believe. The key here is the responsibility triangle that Lynette Breen shared with me way back when I first coached with her. There was no time to waste blaming my ex-husband or justifying my actions. It was time for this Yorkshire lass to dig deep and get real.

We can choose connection or disconnection. We can choose to love or hurt. Out of our heart, our mouth speaks. And our tongue is like a double edged sword. We can build up or break down with our words.

I am reminded of the story of the nails in the fence, author unknown:

I’m not sure who the author is but the “Nails in the Fence” story packs quite a punch. It’s an impactful story that I recommend teachers share with their students. It will help kids of any age to see the damage they can cause if they lose control of their emotions.

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven thirty seven nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learnt to control his anger the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there."

The little boy then understood how powerful his words were. He looked up at his father and said, "I hope you can forgive me father for the holes I put in you."

"Of course, I can," said the father. (unknown)

Dear Reader

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12, NIV)

Words have power. Just as with the example above about the nails in the fence, we have all been on the receiving end of someone's unkind words, and we have probably spoken some unkind words. This chapter shows me at my worst.

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I encourage you today to consider some of the words that have been spoken over you that have been unkind or hurtful. Consider how they made you feel and the outcome of those words. If they made you feel “less than” or made you pull back and withdraw, I encourage you to write them down and put them in your God/ Tissue box. Ask God for the exchange as shared in Chapter Two.

I also encourage you to consider all the words that you say over yourself or have said over others. Follow the same process as above and exchange the old unhelpful words for new helpful ones. It is time to leave the old behind, that which doesn’t serve you or belong to you, behind and move freely into the new, amazing, loving, kind and caring you.

In both of the above suggestions, write down the helpful, uplifting exchange and focus on that. As you highlight that in your brain the unhelpful will fade away naturally until it no longer hurts or exists. Love conquers all; it really does.

The new you focuses on the good, not the bad. I encourage you to consider all the uplifting, empowering, kind, inspiring words that have been spoken over you by others or yourself. Claim them as your inheritance. Have fun with this. It’s time for you to be the amazing, uniquely designed, brilliant person that you have always been called to be.

Call to Adventure:

“Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”
(Philippians 4:8, NIV)

Most people are unaware of the power of their words and the impact and implications that they can have. I have an exercise I do with many of my clients around the link between words, emotions and outcomes.

I invite you to consider your words, emotions and actions. For each point in the following exercise, I'd like you to write down these three things in this order: What did they say? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

1. Think of a time when someone has said something negative, rude or unkind to you. What did they say? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?
2. Now think of a time when someone has said something positive, encouraging or kind to you. What did they say? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?
3. Think of a time when you have said something negative, unhelpful or unkind to yourself. What did you say? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?
4. Think of a time when you have said something positive, encouraging or kind to yourself. What did you say? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

For me, this is black and white, good or bad. One has His signature all over it, making you feel connected, loved, chosen, valued, seen, heard, honoured. The other has the enemy's signature all over it, making you feel disconnected, unloved, like no one cares, undervalued, ignored, alone and dishonoured.

While there are some in life who do not believe in God or who have not met Him yet, many would agree that there is good and bad in the world. Many would agree that there is a moral code of conduct that comes from our spirit, otherwise known as our conscience. I have been threading scripture through this book, not to condemn you, but to open your eyes to a whole new world of wisdom and insight.

Of all the self-help books I have read, of all the courses I have been on, nothing compares to finding out your true North Star. Nothing compares to choosing words of love rather than words of hate. I have found the Bible and knowing the heart of His Word has transformed my life and given me an inspiring perspective. For those of you who have a Bible at home or are curious, have a look at Proverbs and the

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book of John. I found this was the best place to start for me to get my head around some of this stuff. I really started to understand how and who we are as human beings. These small sections within this book fired me up to learn and know more. Enjoy.

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (Luke 6:45, NIV)