

# NUMB

Tosin C. Ogwe

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## **LOVE NOTE**

A therapeutic profile of my life's journey with the hope to inspire and encourage others to face their truths, deal with them correctly and to live their best life.

Thank you to my husband, daughters and team for helping with my healing journey.

I'm grateful to my pastors, mentors, therapists and friends who took the time out to listen to my pain. You have aided this curative process.

This book is dedicated to those with PAIN THAT CUTS.

***DISCLAIMER:*** Please note that the author does not by any means assume to hold the role of a psychologist or a person of professional counselling standing. The reader is advised to acknowledge that reading "NUMB" does not replace the aftercare of a psychologist or other healthcare professionals.

The school bell rang and the teacher screamed, "Home Time!!!" I was alone. My brother had left school earlier in the day to go for his Holy Communion rehearsals. As I walked down the dusty roads of Ibadan, someone called out my name from a car. As an innocent and naïve 7-year-old, I ran to the car.

"Let us take you home", they said. "Your grandma and grandpa sent us." I did not know these people but I recognised one of them. Since they said my grandparents had sent them – and they knew my name, I thought it would be ok.

I quickly jumped in. I was given a banana to eat. I fell asleep. When I woke up, I found myself in the middle of a bustling market within another city called Lagos, holding a bottle of coke in one hand and Agege bread in the other. Fear gripped my heart. My whole world had changed.

Who are these people? Why did they steal me away?

I started crying.

*I want my grandma! I want my grandpa!*

I remember arriving at a strange house in Lagos. This was to be my new home for the rest of my life (so I thought.) I was stripped of everything that I knew. My clothes and shoes were left at the gate. I felt disorientated.

Not long after I arrived at the house, I felt my first penetration. It was a violation of my innocent body. Even though I felt bewildered, unsettled and insecure, this soon began to feel like it was the norm. The pattern of abuse carried on for the 2 years that I spent in that house. Day by day, different members of the household would come and take their turn.

My body was a playground for them, right there where I slept on a mat on the concrete floor. I felt like an animal without a voice.

For years, I was blamed for being sexually assaulted, I was only 7 years old and when I spoke about it, I was silenced. No one believed me, I was accused of lying. I had to deal with CULTURE, TRADITION, BLAME, and SHAME.

**Lesson Learnt****BREAK THE RULES, FORGIVE YOURSELF QUICKLY.**



The airport was busy. Those with authority did everything within their power to delay things - unless they were offered a bribe. I wore a dress with a cream jumper on top and on my way to a WHITE MAN'S LAND. They had said it is cold there. At age 9 I sat on a plane for the first time.

*I am ready... My new life is about to start.*

The air hostess came with her trolley. Her frame cast a shadow over me. "Would you like fish or chicken?" A British accent escaped her wide smiling mouth. I was too scared to reply. I was given chicken.

The tray of food and, drinks laid out before me. In my mind, I thought: *What is this drink? Orange in colour?* I thought it was a special type of tea. So, I poured the milk in and stirred. People around me saw and started laughing.

"No! That's not what the milk is for!" They chuckled. The food tasted different. The air smelt different. At that moment, it dawned on me. *THIS is now your home...*

### Lesson Learnt

I AM ONLY ON A JOURNEY.

I was 10 years old and it was my first day of school in the UK. The very first three words to hit my eardrums were:  
AFRICAN BUBU [derogatory term for being African]  
BABUSHKA [Bushy eyebrows]  
F.O.B [Fresh off the Boat]

1998 was not a cool year to be an African. Being black was... ok... as long as you were light skinned or from the Caribbeans!

I was spat at in the classroom and bullied during P.E because I did not have the name branded trainers. In the changing rooms, some of the girls would pull my growing breasts and I was nicknamed TANGERINE. My jumper was pulled, I was laughed at because of my Nigerian accent and my low-cut afro. I clearly did not fit in and certainly was not wanted.

One day, I took my anger out on a dinner lady because she raised her voice at me. I frustrated everyone that day. My teacher, out of anger at my behaviour, slammed the classroom door in my face. She didn't know that my fingers were caught in the door.

The pain shot through my hand like a fiery bullet.

#### Lesson Learnt

**THEY CAN NOT BREAK YOU, BE PROUD.**

“Tosin, stop talking!” Mrs M, in her Zimbabwean accent, spoke those exact words to me literally each day throughout my 4 years of secondary school.

I loved secondary school so much. It was my safe haven.

My school friends were amazing. We laughed, cried and fought each other but our minds and thoughts were innocent.

I was not the most academic but Mrs M was like a mother to me. She was determined to see me and everyone in her class succeed. I was given extra Maths work to do at home, but I hardly ever did my homework because I did not have any support with that. I really wanted to be an Accountant. Mrs M knew this. She would offer me extra coaching lessons during lunch time. I would go sometimes, but most of the time, I would just play with my friends instead. I had my first work experience in an Accountancy firm and I loved it!

I got on really well with Mrs M, she was the most amazing teacher anyone could come across. I would

sometimes come in to school late because I had run in to trouble with the 'mandem' – or because of one drama or the other at home, but Mrs M was funny, strict and non-judgemental. She would joke around regarding why I was late. She understood it and did not punish me for my circumstances.

Because of Mrs M, I managed to pass 7 GCSEs out of 12. Her words of encouragement still ring loudly in my ears daily - 13 years after leaving school.

**Lesson Learnt**  
**FIND YOUR MRS M.**

I was in Croydon, South London where I hung around every day. I decided to walk into a shop called 'Jus Looking'. It was a store that sold cheap market type clothes for women. I asked the female owner if I could work for her. She said that I was underage but I negotiated with her, as I was willing to work for any price. She agreed and offered to pay me £3.50 an hour until I turned 16 later that year, when she would pay me the normal rate.

I was so happy. I worked for 5 hours every day during the summer holidays. She paid me weekly in cash. She taught me how to fold clothes and how to treat customers with respect. She taught me the concept of the customer always being right and that stealing was unacceptable.

I was in awe of this woman. I wanted to grow up so fast so that I could be like her one day. She was in control, independent and hard working.

Working at 'Jus Looking' was my escape. I did not have to live in fear when I was with her. I felt safe. I did not have to sell on the streets to make money. I loved trainers, designers and gadgets. I wanted to have my own money and buy whatever I wanted. I did not want to have to beg or get permission before I could eat.

I worked at 'Jus Looking' until the age of 16. I later moved on to working at McDonalds, Marks and Spencer's, Odeon Cinema and Prince of Wales Theatre.

**Lesson Learnt**

**LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE.**

The year was 2004. I was with a friend hanging around outside my house in South London. Then two guys walked past us. My friend and I looked at each other and said "Ooooooooo they are fyannn!". We followed them, and as we were walking past them, one of them said, "Excuse me ladies, can we talk to you?" I was dressed in my white New Era hat, all white trainers, white jeans and white Nike T shirt. I found the shorter guy attractive...His sense of style, his lips and the way he smelt.

I was lost in his presence. His accent and his love for the same music had me in a trance. We swapped numbers, and that's how our unhealthy obsession for each other started. At this time, I was still also involved with other men from the estate that I lived on, who were taking advantage of my body.

There is a fine line between love and lust. I was in lust. I thought I was in love. I had no clue, nor did I have any examples of what love looked like. He treated me well, showered me with money... with anything that I wanted and desired. He got me my first car and I believed he was MY FOREVER.

Then slowly, the drinking crept in, followed by the wild parties and the smoking. Yet he offered me the love that I yearned for. He was like a drug that I had become addicted to. Our fascination for each other became unhealthy. And soon, cheating came into play, coupled with 'baby mama' phone calls ... lies began to slip in and then the fights and eventually the disappearing acts.

**Lesson Learnt****KNOW YOUR WORTH, IT'S OK TO LEAVE.**



## **8. HOMELESS**

Get out now! We ran out of the front door in the middle of the night. My brother was in his tracksuit whilst I was still in my vest and pant. It was snowing outside, and we were both barefooted.

We stared at each other shivering, wondering what we did wrong. My brother took off his jumper for me to put on.

A knock on our neighbour's door gave us refuge for the night. The next morning, she told us to visit the council. They put me in a shelter full of teenagers who were dealing with various life challenges. They told my brother to help himself as he was too old for the system. He was only 17. I was 16.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**A HOME IS WHERE YOU FEEL SAFE.**

I was escorted to a very large house in South London. This was now to be my new home. My new parents were: A Key Worker, A Social Worker and The Authorities.

I was shown around. "Tosin, here is the common room where all the young people hang out... Here is the kitchen where you can make your meals... This is your personal space to keep your food... And up here is your room." In my room were my single bed, my wardrobe and my roommate... sitting in the corner... stoned.

Reality hit me instantly. 16, homeless and a ward of the state. I was now a statistic. I had to sign in and out.

My rent for half a room per week was around £120.

Months went by and I lived every day in fear. In search of love. In need of hope.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**MANAGE YOUR MIND.**

Aged 17, on my way home from a dance rehearsal, one of the mandem said hello to me on the bus. After bantering with each other, he asked if I wanted to come and jam with him. So, I followed him, where he lured me into a house full of other mandem and they all took turns after strapping me down.

With shame, I left the house limping. It was dark outside. I tried my best to get on the bus back home, but I did not make it far before I collapsed. I found myself at the hospital helpless. They asked loads of questions, but the code was understood. I must stay mute. All I could think about was how to get to the hostel as soon as possible.

**Lesson Learnt****FACE YOUR FEARS.**

I was intoxicated. Those I lived with had done it to me deliberately. I laid there flat and unable to move. I was completely numbed out physically. I could still smell, see and breathe but I could not move.

One by one, they took advantage. They enjoyed whilst I endured. I was so embarrassed and angry. *I should have stayed in my room*, I thought to myself.

After the incident, my friends who were at the house saved me from the final round and took me to my room where I felt safe. My male friend stayed back to look after me. Tearful and frustrated, I fell asleep. He held me and cuddled me. I thought I was safe with him until I felt the push against my back. I burst out crying during the toggle. Once it was all over, I took myself to the clinic the next day for tests.

2 weeks felt like 20 years.

I got the text message and it was All Clear. At 18 years old, I felt like I had won a lottery.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**REPORT VIOLATION AND GET CHECKED.**

It was a spring Sunday in 2008. The doorbell rang and in walked my SOUL MATE. He strolled past the kitchen where I was cooking up a storm for a friend's birthday gathering.

"Hi" he said.

"Hey" I replied.

We got talking and realised that we both attended Kingston University. Although, we stayed on different campuses.

I invited him to play a round of video games in my friend's bedroom. In that space and time, we conversed, shared telephone numbers and made a pact to see each other again.

It wasn't love at first sight but our spirits connected, we became inseparable after our first date. He gave me peace in my storm and I gave him joy in his times of weakness.

#### **Lesson Learnt**

**ALWAYS SIEZE THE OPPORTUNITY WHEN IT STRIKES.**

Shortly after meeting my husband at that house gathering, we moved in together. This was the first time that I had had stability since I was aged 7. I would sit there next to him in reverence of his peaceful nature, character and gentleness. Then, triggers started to form. I had temper tantrums. I would throw things... break things... fight the invisible. I would scream, shout, cry and thrash out. I was so unstable, unpredictable, yet through it all, he aimed to keep me grounded.

I would try to harm myself when he was not around. I would go on sudden shopping sprees and buy lots of trainers, though I was in debt.

I appeared to be normal to my friends. I would act as if I had no demons that I was battling. I was a chameleon.

I remember once, coming face to face with death. Suicide was on my mind. I was ready to let it all go. I did not want to be here anymore. But then I realised that I had found true love in the midst of my pain. This man loved me without judgment, he created a sense of stability from an inner place. He was ready to love me just like Christ loved the church. I felt his heart, but I did not even know what love was meant to feel like, nor what it meant.

## **13. PROMISE**

Nine months into our friendship, on my way to work one evening, he came out of the bathroom of our rat- infested studio flat and asked me to promise to be with him forever with a £20 promise ring that we had picked together earlier that week.

I said yes to FOREVER at age 19.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**A DIAMOND IS JUST A PIECE OF CHARCOAL.**

Out of excitement, I went to share my wedding invitations with old friends at my former church in Croydon after a Sunday service. I had left this specific church because I was being bullied and controlled and was told that I must marry a man who hailed from the same church as me. The church started to treat me like a second-class citizen because I refused to break up with Andrew.

Many churches refused to marry us for a number of different reasons.

Some said we were too young, some said we were not their church members, others refused because he was not 'saved'.

I had no love for any man within that organisation. Andrew was my ONE LOVE. I was escorted into the preacher's office. He ordered me to leave immediately and to never return to his church. I was told that I was not allowed within 30 miles of his territory. I laughed my head off thinking: Mate! I live 8 minutes away!

Before I was lead out of the building, I was told all sorts and he used what he knew about my past against me, in front of the congregation that were present. I was



## **14. OPPRESSOR**

banned from seeing my friends and everyone was cut off. A few of them attended the wedding. I was so broken and left in isolation. It took me years to get over it.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**A BAD LEADER IS ONE WHO IS CONTROLLING.**

"Babe wake up! Babe! Wake up! ... Hello! Can I have an ambulance please?"

"Is everything ok?"

"No! My wife! She... She's coughing out blood! She's been coughing out blood for weeks now but this time she's bleeding from the mouth whilst coughing in her sleep!"

"Mrs O, we need to do a chest x-ray, we must do an MRI scan, a biopsy and some blood tests but first, we must quarantine you."

*Why am I being isolated? What is wrong with me?  
Am I contagious?*

They admitted me and wheeled me into a room, leaving me to die there at age 22.

As a newly-wed, I was saying and thinking all sorts. I was in that room, drowning in my own thoughts for months. My mind tormented me. Anyone who walked in was covered up from head to toe. They wore face masks, aprons and gloves. They struggled to diagnose me correctly. To be fair, I was suffering from a 19th Century disease in a 21st Century world.

After all of the invasive examinations, a woman walked in and did a skin prick test on my left arm. She said if I

react, then I definitely have Tuberculosis (TB). My arm started to bubble. The reaction was deep and painful. By now, my lungs were drowning in blood because the TB was in my lungs. *HOW did I catch TB?!* It didn't make any sense! The lady on the day explained that TB is air borne.

By now I had lost my appetite, I had lost so much weight and could barely walk or breathe. Days later they came back to my room with 10 antibiotic pills.

"Mrs O, you have to take this each day for 1 year under supervision".

"Pardon? Is the disease that bad?"

By the time, I had returned back home from being in hospital for so long, I had lost my job. People stopped visiting. My husband had to work 3 jobs to keep us going. The bills and debts were piling up.

Every day I would walk 30 minutes to the chest clinic and 30 minutes back because I had no money for travel. I was not allowed to drive either. The medication made me ill. At first, I started to lose my eye sight. My vision was grey, I was losing the gift of seeing in colour. They said the medication could potentially stop me from conceiving in the future. I had no choice, I had to choose

to either die or live. On the 6th month, they tested me again:

"Your meds are working Mrs O, we can reduce your doses now."

It slowly went from 10 to 6, then from 6 to 2.

1 year later, I was fully discharged and I could start life again... But with a permanent scar on my left arm and lungs.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**TOMORROW IS NOT GUARANTEED.**

I remember returning from the chest clinic feeling extremely hungry. By this point, our relationship was already heavily strained. With only one person working and being newly married, being sick felt like a burden.

I was dependent all of a sudden.

I walked into the kitchen to fetch myself some breakfast. The kitchen was empty. He had eaten the last portion of cereal that we had left. It was Cheerios.

With our bank accounts in minus and with no money to buy food, we had hit rock bottom. Out of anger and frustration, I literally threw the cereal bowl at my husband but he ducked. The bowl hit the wall. I burst out crying.

I felt like all the forces were against us during that season. We felt like with all our education, and hard work, we were still struggling - even just to buy the basics.

That day, the journey to debt began. We both walked to the local payday loan company and took out £50, with

the condition that we would pay back £65 when we got paid. All we wanted was something to eat. Life felt like a dead-end.

**Lesson Learnt****WE MADE IT OUT.**

GCSE results were in. I took myself to school to collect the brown envelope. As I opened it, my heart skipped a beat as I pulled out the results sheet. All I could see were Ds, Es, Fs and Us. Out of 12 GCSEs, I managed to leave school with 7 Cs.

With my poor results, I was just able to scrape a place at a college where I studied Health and Social Care, Media and Sociology. 2 years later, results were in again. Ultimate Fail.

I then thought, *let me take a gamble and why not apply to University?* Kingston decided to accept me to study a Foundation Degree in Science. I passed that year with flying colours.

I was then finally accepted to study a Sound Engineering Degree. I was doing great but had to drop out to work full time so that I could survive.

A 3-year degree took me 6 years to achieve but not giving up gave me the opportunity of becoming a Films Studies Graduate in November 2013.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**IF YOU FALL, GET BACK UP.**

After completing my Degree in 2013, we packed our bags and flew out to *The Smiling Coast of Africa*, The Gambia. It was finally time for our honeymoon after 2 years of marriage. We had saved enough to get us out there. Landing in the Gambia, we were welcomed with beautiful dark faces and bright white teeth and joyous conversations. It was a welcomed breath of fresh air. The lush warm weather lifted our moods.

The hotel host handed us a fan and bottles of water whilst they loaded the van with our luggage. After a 30-minute drive, we arrived at our Colonial looking hotel. It was well staffed and impeccably maintained. We were escorted to our rooms. An upgrade was requested and we were gifted an awesome suite, free of charge!

We spent time exploring and enjoying the great food and culture. The local people there were amazing, friendly and accommodating. I laughed a lot with Andrew. We spent quality time finding ourselves. We enjoyed time alone at the beach dreaming about our future, children and change. A sense of being content overwhelmed me because even with so little, people in the Gambia are always happy, smiling and willing to have nice conversations.



I found my sense of unconditional love and compassion for people out in the Gambia. I felt an urge to give our holiday money away, to invest in small local businesses in the market and to pay for young girls to be sent to school.

The Gambia did something to me. It brought a sense of unqualified love. My hardened heart felt softer. I saw Andrew differently.

I loved Andrew without any sense of reservation. I loved him without reason.

**Lesson Learnt**

**LOVE WITHOUT REASON, LOVE WITHOUT SEASONS.**

In 2007, I picked up the camera for the first time taking pictures for fun and out of curiosity to see more. I loved capturing the moments as it unfolded in front of me. I would use other people's cameras to document moments from birthdays, to printing on the spot, to taking pictures at music events.

Between 2011 and 2013, a few friends got married. Some asked if I could film the entire wedding for them. Others asked if I could film the behind the scenes of their wedding. I gladly agreed to all of these requests because I loved being behind the lens.

One wedding was uploaded on to YouTube and it went viral. My phone started to ring. I was honest with people and told them that I did not have much experience in the field but these people somehow believed in me and trusted me with their wedding films. I took on my first properly paid wedding in 2013, I uploaded it onto my own YouTube platform and then again, the phone would not stop ringing. I was working for a TV station back then so my editing skills were being developed. I had no money for equipment. But luckily for me, as a Films Studies student, I could borrow limited equipment from the University. I used these cameras to film the weddings I was getting booked for.

I started to save up and then bought my first ever camera, lens and tripod. I would go to business seminars, then I heard of O2 Think Big. I went for their programme and was awarded a £3,000 grant which I used to set up my media business back then, called TOCH of Class. I got the opportunity to film a wedding that gave me my big break. The dancing couple did a dance routine that went mega viral. My phone has not stopped ringing since!

With popularity and access to business coaches, I had the chance to expand the business in its first year from an individually run company, to a fully operating organisation, with governmental cash injections and support. I decided to do a complete rebrand from TOCH of Class, to Christiana Andrews: *Your films made with love*.

A company known for its quality. A growing business built from curiosity and love of heART.

**Lesson Learnt**

**FEED YOUR CURIOSITY.**

Post TB, we started to officially try for a baby.

You guessed right! Every month was painful. We got negative results month in - month out. We decided to see our GP, who referred us to see a Gynaecologist.

She went through my medical history and then moved on to my husband's medicals. They sent us off for various tests. Once the results were in, she sent me for a more invasive examination and requested for a keyhole surgery to check the condition of my tubes.

It was a simple procedure at the hospital but it took a couple of hours to perform. After the keyhole surgery, at the next appointment I remember the gynaecologist saying, "After a series of tests, we need to schedule you in for the IVF process. Your tubes are fine but because of your TB, you might struggle to conceive due to all of the medication that your body has had to endure."

I wanted the floor to open and literally swallow me up.  
*After everything I have seen and been through in life, can't I just make love and get pregnant?!*

She booked us in for more appointments and explained the next steps. I remember her voice just slowly fading

away, whilst my brain was working on overtime. I was thinking about every negative outcome that could possibly happen.

It was the 24th of December 2013. We had some guests over. I was feeling unwell and having terrible cramps. Our first IVF meeting was scheduled for the 17th of January 2014. I was thinking the worst... maybe they had left something in me after the surgery. I went to the hospital for a scan.

There was a heartbeat. We were 8 weeks along.

**Lesson Learnt**

**GOD HAS A SENSE OF HUMOUR.**

*"What's going on here?"* Those were the panicked words bellowed out by the consultant who was to save my life...

13 of them rush in to help the 2 midwives in the room.

"Get me the forceps!!!"

In goes the numbing injection.

"We are going to cut you now. You are going to feel some pulling and stretching."

Out comes the baby.

"We need some paper towels!"

I can hear alarms, I am vomiting from my mouth and nose. It feels like I am escaping away... high on medication.

I can hear some gushing - like something is being flooded. My husband's face is a blur in the background ... silent and panicked.

The baby is quiet - but is being checked over.

"She's healthy" they say.

That gives me strength and hope.

"We need the vaginal pack now!"

I feel like I'm in an episode of ER!

"We need blood now!!!"

I am losing a lot of blood.

"We need to do a blood transfusion!"

My miracle is here but I can't hold her- not just yet anyway.

I am in so much pain...

...But the drama is over now.

I am stable.

I can HOLD her... SMELL her ... TOUCH her.

August 2014 - I became a mother.

**Lesson Learnt**

**THANK GOD FOR THE NHS.**

At around 6pm, in 2007 after a session of recreational activities, I fell to the ground and started to fit. The seizure episode lasted for about 5 minutes. My ex-boyfriend at the time, sprung into panic mode. It had never happened in our 2 years of being together. He waited for me to stop fitting and then he took me home. As I got home, I told my brother what had happened and we thought it was just a one off.

Then it became a regular occurrence.

I would drop to the ground and fit - usually when my brain was working on overload. I knew my triggers, but rest was not an option for me. I over worked myself. I was admitted at one point because of my constant fits. They carried out tests but they could not pick up a cause for my seizures and could not diagnose me as Epileptic.

These fits occurred before I had met my husband and I did not tell him about them because I thought they had stopped. Then one day, I suddenly fell to the ground. He held me so tight in panic. From that time, my regular fits became an everyday worry.

When I returned home with AJ from the hospital, I had a seizure that felt different. This time, I was ready to say



## **22. SEIZURE**

goodbye. I told my husband to stop holding on and that he should just let me go. The man refused to do so. Holding our 3-day old baby, he ran and called for the ambulance. He sat next to me and held my shivering body.

**Lesson Learnt**

**HEALTH IS WEALTH.**

March 2016, I woke up that morning in serious pain. It was not the regular period pain. I saw clots, I felt like I was going to die! I went for days feeling progressively worse but also hiding it from my husband. I couldn't imagine having to tell him that I was unwell again. 60 percent of our time together had been spent with him nursing me back to good health... so I struggled alone.

I could not bear it any longer. The fever had now kicked in, so I went to see the GP. She told me to go to the hospital for a proper check-up, to make sure that all of the tissue had been ejected. I was thinking *how is this even possible?* I had no clue that I was even pregnant, let alone that I was having a miscarriage. After I got the all clear from the hospital, I eventually told my husband and he allowed me to cry it out on his shoulders.

I was not ready for another baby however, I was just shocked and saddened by the experience. Emotionally, I thought I was over it but the truth is that the loss triggered some unspoken and unresolved problems within me. Hence, I called The Shrink.

### Lesson Learnt

**DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU IN TIMES OF CRISIS.**

After discovering that I had lost the baby at 8 weeks, it really hit home because I knew that at 8 weeks there was a heartbeat. I felt like I was choking, I felt like I could not breathe anymore. I felt like I was fading away. I went from coping alone, to sharing the news with others, to spiralling down a road so dark that my mind had never reached such depths before.

Not thinking about my husband and daughter, I came home one day from a wedding booking. I filled the bath tub. I left a message on Snap Chat saying *I wish I could drown away the pain*. I sat in that tub and let my entire body slip deep beneath the surface of the water, hoping that I would drown and end it all there and then.

Then, from beneath the watery grave that was forming around me, I could hear my 18-month-old daughter knocking on the bathroom door calling out, *"Mammy! Mammy!"* Then my mobile started to ring.

I brought my head back up, sat there, and burst into tears.

I left the bathroom and headed to our bedroom, crying my heart out. I called my husband to the room. Seeing me crying like this, he was in shock. All he kept repeating

to me was:

*BREATHE. BREATHE. BREATHE. JUST BREATHE. PLEASE  
BABE...*

**Lesson Learnt**  
**JUST BREATHE.**

Working from home has its perks, I took to my laptop and started to search for houses whilst simultaneously watching my favourite show on the TV. It was a morning property show that features homes bought at auction. I called Andrew at work and said to him, "Can you just imagine if we were to buy our own house this year!"

Andrew laughed and said, "Babes we have no money saved for a deposit."

I said to him, "Bruv, have faith and leave it with me." Determined, motivated and geared up, I started to do some research.

I called mortgage brokers, financial advisers and got valuable information which helped us to make vital financial decisions.

The mortgage broker gave us a budget of what we could afford based on our income. Trust me! It was hilarious, however, we fired him because the information he provided was not accurate. I then continued searching for another company that was willing to work with us. It all felt like a joke at first, until gradually, it started to feel like it was becoming a reality. We began the property viewing process, looking at contenders both within and outside of our budget.

I spoke with my God sent accountant who miraculously cleaned up my messy accounts and helped to release some tied-up finances, coupled with Andrew's salary and help from his folks. Before we knew it, we could prove that we had a small deposit and could afford to pay our mortgage bills.

We had obstacles. I had to get rid of my expensive car finance and some small accumulated debts. With all that cleared out, we got our mortgage in principle which allowed us to make an offer on a house that I personally hated but Andrew was in love with it.

After an excruciating dragged out 6 months of going back and forth, long emails and document verifications, we got the call: *Your offer has been accepted, here is your exchange date, and you can collect your keys from the seller on the 16th of November 2016.*

We started the year without plans to be home owners, and ended the year with keys to our new home.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**HAVE A LITTLE FAITH.**

The final day of 2016 was a day of interesting and mixed emotions for us. But prior to this date, I was the Queen of Paranoia. Everything he said or did got on my last nerves. I would cry for no reason. My emotions were out of control.

I was always busy working and on the move. The last thing on my mind was pregnancy, considering we had just completed our journey of Therapy and buying our new home.

I could not articulate my thoughts or my words properly to him. I'm sure I had become his worst nightmare! That day, we had started to get ready for church and I thought to take a test before leaving the house. *I thought to myself why would it be positive, we haven't been active in a while.*

I reluctantly took the test, gave it to my husband, and went off to get our first daughter ready for church. He came into the room and asked, "What does two lines mean?"

Me being me, my response was "Check the package innit". The test was positive.

I was in disbelief! I sent him out to buy three other brands ranging from the cheapest to the most expensive type. He came back and I took the tests: All Positive.

En route to church, I thought to myself: *Kai! [Oh no!] It's all over! What will I tell my clients? What a mess.*

I had already planned my 2017. And now this!

### **Lesson Learnt**

**OUR PLANS ARE JUST PLANS.**



Already sceptical of this booking, at 6 months pregnant, I loaded the car and drove for 2 hours to get to the location. As I got to the venue, I stepped out of the car and offloaded what I needed. I walked straight to the hotel and just by the entrance, I fell flat on my face with my 6 months' pregnancy hitting hard against the concrete pavement as I fell on top of the metal rod.

I tried to pick myself up with pride and walked into the hotel. I sat down for a while and cried for the first time in a long time. It was an angry cry. One of those painful, angry cries with tears that burn.

After crying, with the help of my team mate, I got to my feet, walked across the hotel lobby and took the lift to see my client.

I carried on working without blinking an eyelid. At about 8pm that day, the pain had kicked in and I felt so much pressure in my lower abdomen.

I went home and used the Sunday to rest.

By Monday, I had lost sensation in my waist. The ambulance came and drove me to our nearest A&E, which is an hour drive away from our home. On arrival at

the hospital, I was admitted straight away. They could not find the heartbeat. To make matters worse, I was berated for not coming into hospital within 24 hours after having the fall, as I was supposed to come in for an Anti D injection – due to my rare blood type.

Having been oblivious to this fact, I was disappointed in myself. I agreed to take the Anti D. I was more concerned about the heartbeat. After being at the hospital for 4 hours, my baby's heartbeat was found.

Anti D check...

Heartbeat check...

*Now please help me to walk.*

The physiotherapist came to the ward. She spoke to me about using a walking aid and before I knew it... Here comes the crutches! Silver and grey in colour. My husband helped me out of the hospital bed whilst the 'Physio lady' showed me how to walk with the crutches. Next, came the strong pain killers.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**UNDERSTAND YOUR MEDICAL BASICS.**

During my pregnancy with Haven, I had completely fallen out with my parents and extended family members. I must have asked a question that touched some nerves and it exploded into angry blow ups. I am used to these blow ups to be honest, however this time, I was determined to not allow myself to be drawn in and dragged into the mess created by people who have no control over their emotions. And so, I cut off everyone for the rest of my pregnancy. Everybody stayed in their lanes and I certainly stayed in mine.

I had my elected C-section and my beautiful Haven was here! Oh! Was she massive! Yet so peaceful in nature like her dad. And she was hungry! She gave up on my breast milk before she even arrived home from the hospital. I survived 3 months of breast feeding and then off she went onto the formula. Whilst healing from the operation, I went on a Mind Journey of discovery. I wanted permanent change in my life, business, friendships, family members and I just wanted peace that made sense for once in my entire life.

I decluttered my mind. I cleared everyone out and started to let people that matter in. I am now in a place whereby I have forgiven all those who have hurt me. I

have found that forgiveness is a lighter weight to carry and anger is a heavier burden.

I restructured my business operations and hired people to do the work that took a lot of my time and mental capacity. I set targets and made sure that they were met.

I then decided to start counselling again, but this time in church because I knew I needed a new set of communities around me. I purposefully began to pursue a relationship with God to keep me grounded.

I have chosen to stay conscious. I pay attention to my triggers and I choose to deal with every external tantrum, nagging and negative challenge that I face, with love. I do not respond to situations instantly. Rather, I pause to think about what outcome I want from this first, and then I respond. Usually, if it is something that I cannot handle or tolerate, I ignore it or simply decline.

### **Lesson Learnt**

**SET BOUNDARIES, YOU COME FIRST.**

I have chosen to forgive myself through all of the pain and adversity that I have faced in my 30 years of life. I will embrace the lessons learnt.

I believe that my past has influenced the woman that I am today.

I believe my NOW will shape my FUTURE.

I understand now that God will never give me more than I can handle.

I have forgiven every individual who has caused me pain.

I choose to be in a healthy emotional state of mind.

I choose to act from a place of love to towards all those around me.

I hope that my journey can be an anchor for all to find hope in their pain.

I have gone through my healing process by writing this book.

Let me take you on journey of my take on love. The truth is ... love hurts - A Lot!

It hurts not because I am a bad person and not because my husband is a bad person. But because love requires sacrifice and balance. Sacrificing things, we love like our career, more pay and fast cars in order to have a family, hurts. But then, we gain something more precious in return: LIFE.

Two valuable lives under our care to love, care for, lead, nurture and protect. That is now our duty. A duty we cannot neglect because of our selfish desires.

In our love, we are willing to work together, we choose to be patient with our love allowing it to unfold the way God intended it to be. We were stuck in a dark tunnel before. Now that we see the light, our journey out of the tunnel has just begun in this new chapter.

Love is a doing word, I choose to love in all that I do through my work as a film maker and as a business woman, I choose to treat those I work with, work for and get in contact with, with respect. I choose to love Andrew by being the wife he desires to be with, a

homemaker and a good mother to our girls. I choose to be present for my friends in good times and in bad times. But most importantly, I choose to love me.

In my pain, Love saved me. I found true love even though it took me 10 years to realise that he is a good man. Oh! He is a really good man. But I was clouded with pain, bitterness, un-forgiveness, anger and a hardened heart.

Choosing love is like choosing freedom. I choose to be free.

**Lesson Learnt**

**GIVE LOVE A TRUE CHANCE.**

SUMMARY

An honest, transparent and shocking journey from childhood to adulthood with 30 Life Lessons learnt.



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'My heART yearns to Empower, Motivate & Support.'