

It was a fine and sunny Monday morning on August the 3rd as Jessica Brown made her way to the Mountainside Community Services Centre. She was prepared and dressed appropriately for an interview at 9.30am for which she was 20 minutes early for. Being early to work or to any engagement for that matter had always been the norm for Jessica, however in the last year and a half since the 'incident', she hadn't been her usual self. The 'incident' (as she now referred to it as) had been a traumatic event in her life that left her feeling emotionally and spiritually barren. Consequently, Jessica had felt as though time had been escaping her as well as regular periods of a lack of concentration. Her most recent visits to the community centre had been for counselling sessions for dealing with depression. These sessions had her feeling apprehensive every time she was there, however this time it felt different. Today she had something else to think about besides her own shortcomings, she was nearing a full circle of her healing process and for the first time in a long time, she felt happy.

Jessica took her seat in the waiting room and glanced briefly at the clock above the reception desk. She had been in that waiting room many times in the last year, but now after regular treatment and a lot of support from the staff, she was ready to give back. It had only been a month ago that her councillor at Mountainside had encouraged her to apply for a volunteer role in the palliative care division as a way of moving forward. The position included training and came with an opportunity for a full-time position after a probation period. The meeting would be like finally closing the door on an agonising 18 months for Jessica and allow her to open a new door to a fresh start.

At 9.20am Jessica looked around the waiting room at some of the other people in the room. Most were clients who were there for the range of services that the centre provided. She could instinctively tell the clients who were there for some form of counselling simply by seeing the pain in their weary eyes and it was in that moment that she was suddenly reminded of her own. A flood of painful memories crashed like a tidal wave through her mind, followed by a sea of feelings of unworthiness. For a brief moment she began to doubt whether she was truly ready to complete her circle of healing and that maybe her conscience was moving too fast for the rest of her mental state to keep up.

Jessica took a deep breath to compose herself. It was during her final counselling sessions that her counsellor encouraged her to make two promises to herself. The first, that she would no longer be a slave to any more fear in her life and the second, that she would free herself from the crippling pain that had consumed her. Having the courage to come for the interview was a huge step forward for her and as a result, she felt stronger, stronger emotionally than she had for a very long time.

With five minutes remaining before her interview, Jessica began to think about the position she had been encouraged to apply for. The Mountainside Community Services Centre, amongst its many other services, provided palliative care to the local community and they were well under-staffed and in desperate need for paid and volunteer staff to join their team. Only two years ago Jessica had enjoyed a thriving career in finance and marketing and at that time a position in any sort of caring role would have been the furthest thing from her mind. But now after everything that had happened in the time since the 'incident', her whole way of thinking had changed. She now had a sense of empathy and a willingness to want to serve others especially those who could not properly care for themselves.

Jessica began to think of her grand-father who had died 5 years prior from cancer. He had spent the last 3 months of his life in palliative care and in that time, not once had she visited him. The cancer had slowly worked its way through his body leaving him a mere shadow of his former self and her career at the time was more than enough reason in her mind to delay ever visiting him. But as she retraced the memory, the truth was that she just could not bare to see him in the state that he was in which she now realised was selfish of her. Tears began to fill her eyes as she thought about how her grand-father would have felt, about him knowing how important her career was to her and not wanting to bother her. Her career had been far too important for her to even visit her dying grand-father. That thought alone overwhelmed her with guilt. It was then that she swore to herself that she would never make that mistake again and more than that, she would do her up most to help provide a better quality of life for anyone in her immediate care.

As the clock ticked over to 9.30am, the nerves began to set in, so much so that she was suddenly startled when her name was finally called out at the reception desk. Jessica took another deep breath and walked purposefully to the interview room. The 'incident' would no longer hold her back and she was ready to finally complete her circle of healing.