

Submission
No 999

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Birth trauma doesn't go away. It festers in your heart and in your body, plays with your mind and eats away at your very being until it reaches its strangling tendrils into your relationships, your family, your work, your self confidence and your very worth.

I have my own personal story that I am sharing here for the first time and I already can't breathe and I'm shaking and I'm crying because recalling the memories has me reliving it and I don't think my body knows that it's a memory because it's just as vivid as the day. It's been 25 years and it's still affecting me.

Undergoing a medical termination in a different country, I was already so upset and my partner wasn't allowed in, he hadn't even been allowed to wait with me before I went in. It was all too quick, and a decision I didn't want to have to make. Legs in stirrups a whole lot of people who didn't talk to me or make eye contact and when I noticed there was no anaesthetist and asked where they were and was told we were not using anaesthetic as it makes you heal faster. Instant panic and I tried to get my legs out of the stirrups, shaking my head no and crying but it was like I was frozen and couldn't speak. I wanted to get off the operating table and trying to close my legs but they were trying to insert something cold and metal into my vagina. He couldn't get it in as I was struggling too much and so clenched. Inside I was screaming and screaming and screaming and screaming in my own head. Then a woman came in and told me I could come back tomorrow, she would do it herself and bring an anaesthetist if I paid an additional fee. They let me out. I had flashbacks for years, we broke up, I never actually emotionally recovered but I did a good job of burying it for many months until the grief caught up with me when it piggybacked a family tragedy. I ended up on strong antidepressants after depression left me contemplating joining the dead and planning it on too many occasions. I'd come home and changed profession completely, as I could no longer work with children. I didn't want to date because I didn't want to be touched. I did a passable job at living over the next 20 years, burying myself in my work and eating a protective shell around myself so no-one would get too close and see how damaged I was inside. Every pap smear was torture and when I ended up with a cervical cancer issue and a later operation and an infection just like what I developed all those years ago, the spiral began again. I have no children now and as menopause has begun knocking, the flashbacks have returned and I relive the day over and over, struggling, feeling pinned to my bed and wake up screaming. Writing this has taken me hours as I relive each minute, still crystal clear, right down to the smell. I recently began planning my exit strategy again and needing time off work for my declining mental health but that will eventually lead to the bank taking my house and me living in my car or not at all because frankly that would be easier than living through this all over again. And the worst thing is I believe they lied to me when they said my baby wouldn't survive to term and if I was better informed I could have made a different decision which I found out several years later was possible.

It never goes, it festers.