

Project: **'Reflections of trauma, challenges, and healing: An oral history'**
 Respondent: Dr Indira Pole
 Year of Birth: 1950
 Age: **
 Connection to project: Respondent
 Date of Interview:
 Interviewer: Dr Sue Morrison
 Recording Agreement: Yes
 Information & Consent: Yes
 Photographic Images: No
 Length of Interview: 57 minutes and 46 seconds
 Location of Interview: East Dunbartonshire Voluntary Action, Kirkintilloch.
 Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.37	Respondent states that she was born in a very small village on the west coast of India. She says that she was born in the middle of a field. She had a pollen allergy which might be related. Her mother helped with the farm. Her parents were married from childhood but not living together. Here mum moved in with her dad's family when she was thirteen or fourteen. She talks about grudging what boys were able to do when she was a child. She had to do the housework while they played. She talks about her dad having to take on the responsibility of his brothers and sisters at a young age. She talks about being amongst the oldest cousins and the oldest daughter in her family and that this meant she was expected to set an example of being a good housewife.	
	"My Mum...So, my Mum was the oldest of the daughters in law. So, we children were the oldest of the cousins. So, we had to set the right example. I, being the oldest girl in the family. Whole...All of us younger cousins, brothers and sisters and all...We were all living in, like, a big gang in the house. It was quite good fun. But, I had to set the right example to my younger siblings and younger cousins that I have...I'll grow up like a good housewife. And I could...It's only when I grew up older that I understood her way of thinking. That she wasn't my stepmother. She was my Mum. But, more and more I was not wanting to do it her way. The more she would punish me. She would punish me so that I'd do it. And I do remember the punishment too. She used to shut me away in a bathroom and not allow me to eat. Until I say I will learn what she's asking me to do. I think she must have had enough of me. She was fed up with me."	5.06-6.20
	"I also remember...I have a very happy memory of playing with my brothers and all. There were terms. They were like-'we'll let you play...You can do the bowling provided you stich up these buttons on our uniform.' Right, there were conditions set. So, I would do that so that I can get a chance to play. And they discovered I was a good bowler. I did not know that because I could spin the ball I could get the batsman out. So, they started liking me and they would let me play, you know. But this was like I was trying to find my way to break this system of...cultural system. Which I did not know why it existed but I just felt...I kept	6.23-12.01

	<p>comparing my brother and other cousin brothers and they were all getting priority over girls which became my biggest concern in my head. At that time I did not have the word 'concern'. But, I felt very rebellious, angry.. And for me rebelliousness meant do it one way or the other. And that just carried on all throughout my life. I wanted to be highly... I wanted to be highly educated. I wanted to be...At one point I wanted to be Indira Gandhi because I thought that was great. You can rule the whole world. Silly ideas like that. But, I was very much a liked student at school. My potential of...like being serious at education, getting good marks...All that was very much appreciated by teachers. So, yeah, I was a liked student. I was given support by teachers. And exactly the opposite was happening at home. Which was...Which was just...I constantly had a question-What's wrong with my parents?' Why are they not understanding? it's good to be educated? And when my Mum would sit me down and say-'Girls have to grow up and get married and they have to look beautiful. You cannot sit like that. You're to sit like that. You have to wear a sari. And I would refuse to wear a sari. So, I have a memory of all these contradictory experiences. So, that was in Mumbai. With my brothers, cousin brothers and all we were a great bunch of people, you know. Children have nothing against each other. So, when they learnt to climb the tree I also learnt to climb the tree and brought the fruit down and came down and all that sort of thing. Coming home from school with a torn skirt. We were playing Kabbadi which is a game where...It's a very violent game. And I was very much into sports and all physical things. I would come home with torn dresses. Which my mum would say-'You are just a terrible daughter. I don't know how you got birthed.' But that made me say-Ok, you can't do it I'll do it, you know. So, I learnt to sew it up and all that sort of thing. Yeah, it continued that way to the extent that I was separated from my younger sisters so I don't influence their mind, literally. And, my Mum would watch, like, that I don't talk about education to my sisters. Younger ones...That just gave me another energy to say-Right, I'll prove you...And I had got qualifica...I had grades to go into the medical schools. My big question was-Who's going to pay the fees? Because there was no free education. So, I started to see my Dad was in between. Like, he would side on my Mum and then he would side also on me. My Dad started taking me out...We had a system that after the evening meal we all went out for a wee walk. It was quite a regular thing. And my Dad would, Mum and everyone came...And my Dad would talk to me. And he started saying-'You want to be a doctor do you? But you're not...You're maybe not clever enough.' I said-'My teacher said that I'm clever. So, how do you know? You don't come to school.' He said-'You talk...You should not talk. You've got to have respect for older people.' I said-Yes, I understand that, respect. But you don't know what I do at school. So, I could, kind of, sense that he had...He did not reject the idea. So, when I got my grades and I had these...Three places where I could go for an interview. So, that was good. But, I still...I remember... I remember to date very vividly all night I could not sleep about whether my Dad would go with me and whether he would bring the money to pay the fees. And I...He came. He woke me up and he said-'Get ready and dress up properly and let's go.' And that was the best thing that ever happened, you know."</p>	
12.02	<p>Respondent goes on to say that her brother had gone into medicine before her but her dad had to pay additional fees as her brother did not get the grades. She went to a medical school which catered for lots of different types of people and she met people who were poor and she</p>	

	realised how lucky she was. She then talks about the opportunities she was offered to go to the UK for further study.	
	“My brother and I are still very...Very, very good friends, though, you know. But, I was jealous at that culture that supported men in the family and women were...Were to be there’s. You know for...The value of women not being there and given equal opportunity was my biggest anger, bugbear and it was a driver to my achievement. I can still today...I say to myself that had my Mum not said all this to me; not punished me. I would never had the energy to achieve it. Because I was just so angry at her. So, I had to prove myself that that is not fair. And it all turned out ok at the end.”	14.42-15.37
15.38	Respondent states that that is a rundown of her childhood.	
15.48	Respondent talks about getting what was effectively her license to become a doctor. She then talks about her one year internship all round India.	
	“But, having spent that six years... Five years of education, one year of internship getting experience all round India. We went to drought affected poor places to go and work as doctors. And you learn that you went there with food packages and basic hygiene material to give out to people. They were eating the soap they were that hungry. Children were so malnourished and flies sitting all over. And it was that horrible experience...Was humbling, equally humbling to see how some humans are just so unfortunate, unlucky. And that...Mumbai was so ok but the rest of India was so poor. And to be poor is not a choice. You didn’t make yourself poor, you know. You didn’t...And I remember one teacher was saying that-when you’re born you don’t decide to come to this world. Somebody else makes the decision. So, you’re either fortunate or you’re unfortunate or you’re somewhere in between. And that’s...that’s something that you have no control on. It never used to make much sense to me then. As I grew up I always remember...Even now I remember how some of us are just unlucky and you have to make the best of your life. And then along came...Like I even now remember mothers used to say that-I’ve got three children I haven’t got money for feeding them. And they’d rather die. Because to see them suffering is so painful that if it ended the pain would end. ‘Because I’m helpless I haven’t got money. My husband’s dead’ Etcetera, you know...And those stories really...They were really bringing the understanding of human suffering, human life. And that those who can do something for them make a difference in their life. Whichever way; whether you have knowledge you share or whether you help them...It became very obvious to me that everybody can make a difference in somebody’s life. And I was very much influenced by my Dad too he was very much for community, supporting community, helping community, building community. And I always...Even now I remember his words that-the whole world is lots and lots of community. And you help each other and you make trusted people and you become trusted friends. Then everyone would be good to each other. And if people are good to each other they will not harm each other. They will support each other. And he was one for always saying-Help the local business or help the elderly lady. I remember he used to say-You’ll get food if you go and help the aunty. See, she cannot walk properly. So go and put her shopping, and all this, wherever she wants and then come back home and you’ll get your food.’ So, this situation was not to punish you but to make you understand that you’re better so you share your ability to help somebody. And I think this whole thing, sort of, got into my head from a young age. More	16.11-19.59



	supporting community, supporting human beings.”	
20.00	Respondent talks about the Red Cross coming to her school when she was around seven. They got them to collect left over food for those who needed it in the leprosy asylum. This had a profound effect on her. She learnt about sharing happiness and about charitable work.	
24.30	Interviewer asks the respondent to come back to her career.	
24.35	Respondent talks about how her experience of helping victims of leprosy sparked an interest in medicine for her. She talks about how this led to her studying biological sciences at school and then to her medical degree.	
25.45	Respondent explains that she was going to do paediatrics which she did for a year.	
	<p>“And then I also happened to meet my husband then. So I met this man. We were together at one of the camps serving the poor people and learning the medicine. And we happened to bump into...He was a lot senior to me. Three years senior to me. So, he had already, sort of, achieved more education. So, it became a good exchange. We met and we both thought that we would go to the UK and the US and gather another ten years of experience. And that’s the time we wrote to the UK and, yeah, we both got the chance to come here. And when I first came I was in Cambridge. I did not like people at all. I suddenly realised that what people say is true that there is racial prejudice. Brown skin, you didn’t fit in...You went to the corner shop to get your milk and eggs and they would not pay you...You stand in the queue and nobody...Just people pass buy you and not let you get...Variety of comments like-they don’t speak...You’ll never understand what she’s saying. But, the hospital environment was very, very friendly. Very supportive. So, it was again a contrast when your colleagues, nurses, doctors were amazing absolutely amazing. And outside was quite different. That was...So, I came here in 1975, March. 1975, 1976, 1977, part of it. And, I was finishing a year of training and I said to my husband then-‘I don’t want to live here. I feel very, very traumatised that it’s the same thing again. Why are we different? Why do people think that...Beneath the skin we are all the same. Why is it like this?’ But, there’s no answer to it. So, I said to him— ‘Let’s explore the United Kingdom there is something called Scotland.’ And I’d seen the pictures of all the hills and mountains and lochs and all. And I’m an outdoor person so...There was one elderly gentleman who was actually from Aberdeen but had then moved to UK...Cambridge area and then he had settled in Surrey and he said-‘Oh, it’ll be cold.’ And I said-‘But are people nice?’ And when I said to him that this was the experience I was getting outside. Cannot make friends with neighbours or anyone. He said-‘Why don’t you go up and experience yourself? Go and take a little break and go visit.’ And he told us about the train going all the way from there to there. And so we took a trip and yeah we went to Aberdeen then Inverness then came down to Glasgow. And really it was different especially in Glasgow. People just spoke what they felt, you know. And they were welcoming. They were very down to earth. Quite often I didn’t understand when they were speaking fast but I could see that I could connect your smile with their smile. And you could see into their eyes. And nobody was ever in a rush to go away from you. People chatted with you. Or if you said I do not know...Where is that place? They would explain to you in their language-‘You canny miss it’. So You canny miss it but where do you find it? So, there was a giggle about it. I started to like them. I started to feel more at home. And then I decided to...We decided to come to Scotland. And that was that and then there was</p>	25.59-30.09

	another journey of medicine so..."	
	<p>"It was quite another trauma in my life. A quite significant trauma. My husband suddenly took a very severe attack of headaches. He became dizzy and he collapsed. This happened in the hospital when he was working. We were both in one hospital. And it was just like...He was rushed into emergency and a variety of things and they couldn't find anything wrong with him. But, this then continued on and off. He'll get an attack of headaches. He will lose balance, he'll fall down and he would be so unwell for six, seven, eight hours, things like that. And then the whole thing will get better. This is talking about 1978. So, the latter part of '77, '78. And I thought-Nobody knows what's wrong with him. And it took nineteen months of a variety of tests and tests and test. 1978...End of 1978, the Institute of Neurological Science was to get its scanning machine. There was going to be five scanning machines in the United Kingdom and one of them was going to be in Glasgow. When it arrived they said-'We're going to scan his head and find out what's wrong. And then they found that he had a tumour. So, that was another trauma. I was so new here I did not know what happens now. And the neurosurgeon said-'Well, if it is operable we can operate it.' But, I said-'I tell you. I don't have money for that. We don't have money for that' And he said-'No, you will not need money. Learn more about the NHS services and things.' Although I was a doctor I did not know the other side of it the receiving side of it. And when they did the second scan they said it's so deep they said it's so deep down and sitting right close to his heart. The part of the head that controls the heart. So, they asked him and he said yes, he would consent for the operation. He said-'You've got more than a fifty percent chance of dying during the operation.' But he was just determined to undergo the operation. So, he had the mental capacity to consent. I was petrified of what is going to happen. And the operation lasted sixteen hours during which he died three times. So, this was quite, sort of, complete uncertainty now in my life, his life. And like, you know, why do some people survive through all this? He survived. He came out after a very prolonged illness, lots of rehabilitation. And he was coming on. Six months went and he was still quite ill but he was gradually coming on. And then suddenly one day I was cooking in the kitchen. We had a small flat. And I hear this bang noise and I come out of the kitchen and he's just fitting, he's convulsing. So, six months later he developed all the complications of...He started to develop lots of the complications of the what's is called...surgical brain trauma...Ok, by this time I had learnt a lot about it, neurosurgery and what not. Here was a very ill man. So, that just put a big, big fear and isolation and uncertainty about the future and a variety of things. But he had to be looked after. Now, he was not a husband he was an ill man. He was...And he was very upset because he felt he was getting better. So now which way it would turn...He had to stop working as a doctor altogether because he was not a fit person to work as a doctor. So, that took me to another part of my life where either I buckle under or support him and survive through. We were planning children but that was put on a hold but he kept saying-'Before I die I want children. That one thing you'll have to promise me.' And I would say-'Is this man mad?' But, no, that was the desire of the man. Father...When you lose everything all you want is something of yours, you know. So my sensible mind started to think-He feels he's lost everything. His professional career...We came here for something we cannot get it now. He cannot drive. He's ill. And as much as I did not want children I had to make this decision as to whether it is...Whether I make the sacrifice for</p>	30.10-43.50

him or stay stubborn. Like as I was always. And just live my life. And that was the one time I went against my own wishes. I never wanted children that was determined and he had agreed. He was fine about it. But now the whole thing had changed and then like how would I cope with children and an ill husband. How do I study? And I'm here to study and I want to educate myself. This was a big fight. It was a fight, fight, fight...And I was confused as to do I become selfish or do I become caring? Do I have a bigger, wider understanding that allows, should allow me to...And I would go out from the house and go for a walk and think and think and think. What is the solution here? Why do human beings...Why do we live? What is the purpose of life? I would ask all these questions. And the relationship with my Dad had improved significantly. And I hadn't told my parents that this has been the situation until all these new things started to happen. Then I told my Dad that this had all happened. That I was not writing to you because I was too busy with all this. And he said-'Oh, I'm feeling sorry for you. Will I come over?' And I said-'No.' I don't want extra work. Don't come over here. What's the point in you spending so much money coming here? But I want some guidance. First time I'd turned to somebody for guidance in my life. But, I felt that my head was confused. I need support. That's where the support part comes when you're mentally traumatised. So, he said- I...'You know Indira it's so good that you're looking for support. That's one good thing. And I'm not going to give you support. I'm going to give you some books. Because I don't know what the support here is. I'm not a doctor. And I'm not educated. I had to give up my education.' So, he sent me some books. And I made friends with the books. That's why I call them silent friends. Books are a great thing. And I read and it was quite...Gandhi, the great man who had made a lot of sacrifice for different reasons. It wasn't for him it was for the nation. I read quite lot about Gandhi and he said-'It's not like your story...It's not like your story but you will learn about why we live. What's the purpose of life?' I got the message. I got the right message then. I must of read it a few times, you know. I came to a decision that yes we will have children. He still had to get better and then... But, his health was getting worse and worse. And then comes another big blow. He develops psychological problems. He kept saying-'You're the one. You put the tumour in my head.' This is the constant accusation. 'You made me ill. You wanted to kill me didn't you?' 'You put the tumour in my head.' This is a doctor speaking like this. So it was all...the wiring had all gone, you know. And we had two children. I had to shield them from this. So, life was just becoming so...Going against me I felt. Everything was going against me. I'm steering back on to it and then I lose it and I say-'Right, I know what we're going to do. I'm going to sit this exam for admission to an American university. And you can do the exam because you still can study. So, we started doing studies. We've got kids. And I passed the exam and he fails the exam. That wasn't good on him. That was just a stupid idea I had. But, only on reflection I realised that he can study but he cannot retain. His memory was so badly affected. So, fine, I said, -We'll stay in the UK because we've got no other choice. You would need support from a variety of services. So, we continued here and I then... I was at that time specialising and I was specialising in anaesthetics and working in the ICU, in the high dependency unit. These are very, very traumatic experiences. You see patients very ill or suddenly dying. I actually found a big buzz doing that because you needed to be alert all the time twenty four/seven when you're on duty. But it was. It was affecting me on the day after. When

	<p>you were supposed to be resting I was relating that to what had happened to my husband's life. And I could also see that these people behaved...Either they were very angry or very sad. Big, big man, traumatised, car accident; and they were behaving differently. And their wives and their mother would say-He's a different man now. He's a different man. All this was making sense to me. I was learning from my own experience and this medical experience. But, equally I had to look after my own husband. And work was very demanding in hospital because you are...Every second you are doing twenty four hour duty which was extremely demanding. So, I was very tired and I did not like the idea that the children are staying overnight with a child minder. I just thought-they're my children. I need to be with them. They were telling me they don't want to go with me when I was coming to pick them up. They wanted aunty such and such. 'Aunty Mary's good.' I was realising that this is a rejection to them. So, I had to change all this and I said-I'm going to go into general practice now and do a lower level. Lower level means you're not dealing with any acute, severe trauma. And I went to university and spoke to the university professor-that these are my circumstances. I want to now...He said-You're very lucky because you're so highly qualified for that speciality you will need to do only one year of training as opposed to three years. And that...That was a good joy to me. Then I specialised in general practice and then became a GP. And in between when he was very, very ill I gave up GP again went into child health which was a part-time job I could take; which was quite a help towards general practice anyway. He was extremely ill and I just had to be there to do everything for him. Yeah, so, I did the child health which was the development from the time you are born till age five. That was a great field because children are so...they just make you laugh, you know. I always remember the one little boy who was just so talkative. "Did you know that I used to be two?' When he became three. And then he learned to say-'Did you know I used to be three?' He would say it so many time till you engage. Giggly talk...And children were always giving me great happiness. They're so...Absolutely amazing people...So, I quite enjoyed it and that gave me the upper hand when I went to general practice I continued doing that for the practice. So, then I continued doing general practice. And I just stayed in general practice till I retired at the age of sixty two."</p>	
	<p>"You know the trauma to me was a driver to my empowerment and achievement. And I have always questioned as to why...Why this emotional trauma that occurs in a lot of people's lives. Literally, everyone's got something. Why some of us see it as a complete block to progress and why others find a push, energy. They want to overcome it and they fight it and they achieve something. I cannot say that any of this trauma has held me back. Of it all I said that-thank goodness that happened. So, I'm always searching for solutions to any problems in life. May it be minor or major It doesn't frighten me. It just...So I feel.. So, everyone must have that energy to, or ability or capacity to overcome. But why isn't there? That is my question all the time. And if you're asking me why I have so much interest in mental health support. It's because I feel as a human we are all wired the same way except if you've got a genetic disorder. So, it has to be something else. It has to be like the way you're brought up or the way you felt when you were a child. Or the love and support and encouragement. And the variety of things that you need when you're growing up. And that took me deeper into learning more about mental health. And all my medical work allowed me to see the part</p>	<p>43.52-53.41</p>

of the mental health that comes along with everything. Maybe diabetes or maybe rheumatoid arthritis or maybe a brain tumour...Any illness comes with that feeling of something you have lost from you. That sense of grief that I...My body's not working just the same or will not work. And if it's something that I have to say to patients that-I'm afraid it's not going to go away. It will improve but you'll have to learn to live with it. Who teaches you how to learn? Who teaches you to rewire your brain? That isn't there and pills don't cure it. They can suppress the symptom of feeling sad but it will not teach you life skills. So, my interest in why it is not there. How do we do it? What is the solution to it? All these questions keep buzzing in my head. Takes me into this community and supporting and helping people. And making that tiny bit of difference to make you feel that little bit more empowered. It's my body but with support...With the right trusted support I can see a little silver lining in the dark cloud. And once you give that a bigger push and a bigger push you should not just say-I've done it. It's a continuum. You need to do it all the time and you need to find the right time. And then is my interest in this mysterious mind, as I call it...Because, you can't see it. I wish you could scan it and see what's wrong. Just like your hip. It's gubbed. it's arthritis take it out. You can't see it. So you become...You feel mysterious at your own head. What is it? Like, you're autistic. Why am I not like the rest of them? But, it's a mystery isn't it? And it's a mystery to the researchers. Mystery to science. So anything which is, which to me you cannot see is my big passion. I want to find out what's in the sky. Because you can't see it. What's underneath the skin? What's in the mind? And mind at the human level I felt mind is perhaps more important than the physical machine of the body. Because the physical machine we've understood. We've got a load of science. We can cure it. We can replace it. But the mind has remained very obscure from this understanding. And it is to me to help people with mental health that has become a major part of their life. We need to provide collective support and it has to become... Like to me such a wonderful organisation like the NHS need to level it up with the other disciplines whether it's cancer therapy or whatever. We talk about it needs to be multi-disciplinary that not just the doctors... The scientists who are interested, the psychiatrists, the psychologists. Even to humans...Get them in and ask- what's happening to you? What do you think we can do for you? What do you think you would like? And we need to build up this multi-disciplinary approach. Just like with cancer. Like it's the radiologist, it's the person who does the imaging technique. We need to all be together and then have a therapeutic approach through that. And then perhaps we will make progress. Then people...mentally they will feel empowered. They will not feel so down. And then the stigma will go away because it will be out in the open. And people will be appreciative. And people will be able to say that-today I'm feeling very sad or I'm feeling angry or I'm feeling I hate that person. Why do you hate them? People will ask -Why do you? What is wrong? And things like that it has to be on both sides. Maybe you hate somebody but there must be something else from the other side. And then understanding that little bit about the child. Child...We now know science has shown us that if that pregnant woman is going through a significant traumatic experience. Say, like an earthquake or a car accident or something and she survives through that and the baby's fine. Goes in the hospital. The scan shows the baby's fine. You've been in a car accident but you're fine. Baby's fine. Keep going. No further support given. But that woman has gone through a significant traumatic

	<p>experience. She is going to end up with post-traumatic stress disorder. I have been in a car accident and I know how frightening it was to drive that car again. But I could overcome she may not be able to overcome we don't know it. And you cannot take it for granted that she will be able to overcome. But that stress level causing so much of the stress hormone called cortisol is going through that placenta across to that little baby which is forming. Science today knows that that's happening. What we don't know is whether it is affecting that baby which is not even born. It could be. Why are some babies born and not want to play? Why are some babies so frightened of spiders and insects and things. Is this the start of their fear because they've got a high level of this stress hormone floating about them? Is the way the brain is wiring up changed already before they are even born? We have lots of knowledge. We have definitive science. We need to now find the resources, financial resources...Funding for more research and things. But we need to come together and help the human mind. The human mind is a mystery and it can be helped and it should be helped. Because it's the biggest power that we have. The body's not the power the body's a machine. Hands, fingers what not...But, the mind is the power. And power is what we need. And I think an organisation like GRACE has achieved a lot. Because it's continuous oral history. Tell me why you're angry-Oh, I've had a horrible night. I haven't slept a wink. So you are able to speak about it. What is the cause? Don't say-You'll be fine. That's not the answer. The answer is whatever is in your head get it out. Let's put it to bed. Calm yourself down. It's not finished. It might come back but make the best use of the time you've got just now. And feel good about yourself. Because when you're mentally traumatised you don't feel good about yourself. You don't. And some of us do not feel good. They find a way to feel good. Like, I think I've found a way to feel good."</p>	
53.42	<p>Respondent talks about how the teachers at her school were her support group although she did not realise that at the time. She talks about the importance of giving people that support. She says that all the love that surrounded her as a child counteracted her mother's reproaches.</p>	
	<p>Interviewer thanks the respondent for her contribution to the project.</p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="279 1395 472 1491">  <p>Heritage LOTTERY FUNDED</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1145 1384 1382 1500">  <p>Oral History Research & Training Consultancy</p> </div> </div>		
<p>Group Recovery Aftercare Community Enterprise is a registered Scottish charitable organisation SCO043551</p>		