

Project: **'Reflections of trauma, challenges, and healing: An oral history'**

Respondent: Agnes McEwan

Year of Birth: 1956

Age:

Connection to project: Respondent

Date of Interview:

Interviewer: Dr Sue Morrison

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

Photographic Images: No

Length of Interview: 1 hour, 22 minutes and 21 seconds.

Location of Interview: Agnes's home in Milton of Campsie.

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.42	Interviewer asks the respondent where she was born and brought up.	
	Respondent replies that she was born in Rottenrow Maternity Hospital in Glasgow. She states that she grew up in Drumchapel until she was ten and then they moved to the Anderston area of Glasgow.	
1.29	Interviewer asks the respondent about her family when she was growing up.	
1.34	Respondent says that she has a brother Davy and a sister Cathy. She is close to them. She says that her mum had emphysema. She says that her dad was a character. He was a gambler. She says that the family were in poverty because of this but that he was also full of love.	
	<p>"But, I must say, that's my first traumatic time from the early days was we were sent to...most summers to a residential school. People when you mention it think-Oh, is that for bad people? It wasn't. A way back then it was...the government would send kids to a residential school that didn't have the means to go on holiday. And it was always in the countryside. And to make sure you were well fed you had three meals a day at these residential schools. But you're looking as if-oh, that's good. But, no it wasn't. It was an awful place. For me...Well, three of us have different perspectives on it. But, for me it was an absolutely traumatic time. I was moved away from my mum which was awful. But, I did have my sister so...I watched...I went with her...But, the people in school...I'll give you an example. I was a bed wetter at that age. And every morning you had to stand at the bottom of your bed. And this morning I'm standing and the steam's coming off my pyjamas so it was obvious that I had peed the bed. And this Miss Penrice...I even remember her name. This was the first, as I say, of the traumatic things that happened. She came over and she just slapped me. Right across the face. 'Get stripped!' Now that's not the only thing...'And get down to the bathroom.' Now, anyone who had peed the bed were put in a bath and everyone else had a shower. But, you were totally humiliated. You were in this bath in full view of everyone. So, you know what kids are like. They would call you-'Oh, there's piss the bed.' And all this kind of thing. But, you were left in it for about an hour. And that was, sort of, your punishment for peeing the bed. She was awful. But, I'll take you back to when she slapped me. My sister saw it and she jumped on her back. And she's like that-'Slap my sister again...' And we were only wee. She was tiny. 'Slap my sister again and I'll slap you.' So, she got taken away. Obviously because she had done that. She says she only got a talking to. Nothing happened to her seriously. But,</p>	4.05-9.06

	<p>that was me, obviously...Nobody liked Miss Penrice. And, och, there was just awful things. If there was something you didn't like you were made to eat it. And, again, the humiliation that you were called...There was no other kind of abuse but I would say physical abuse definitely. That would not be put up with nowadays. So, I hated it. And at one time...All the kids in Drumchapel, by the way, were sent to these places. So, it was...We didn't care about saying we were going to the resie. That's what we called it. 'Oh...I've got to go to the resie in the summer.' And everyone hated Miss Penrice. And at one point we were told at school that we were getting a new teacher and her name was Miss Penrice. I think everyone of us was like that-'Oh, my god!' And it was it was her. Oh, it was awful. You were told to write letters home and they would write on the board what you were to write. You weren't allowed to, you know, just say your own things. And actually I was only six so I wasn't that good at writing, you know. But, I had to copy what was on that board. It was awful. But, my brother he went to a different residential school and he loved it. They were sporty and went out and did all that kind of thing. And the clothes that you take. I know I'm jumping but I'm just remembering as I go along. The clothes that you take there you're not allowed to wear. You had to wear there's. So, your suitcase was just taken away from you. And you had to wear their clothes. And on a Sunday we were all taken to church and we all had the same kind of clothes on. We must of looked like poor wee orphans. Oh, when I think back I can just see myself. The fringe right up there because that's what my mum did. And these awful clothes. So, that's...That was one of my first ever traumatic things. Couldn't wait to get home. And we were sent quite a few times. But, my mum thought it was good. She thought it was the best because you were getting out in the air. You know, you're getting three steady meals a day. And how we lived that was a big thing for her. And she just thought it was great. And when I went home and told the story she used to say-'Och, you'll get over it.' 'Are you still breathing? Yes, you're fine.' I would tell her about this Miss Penrice. If my kids told me that I'd be the first...I'd be doing something about it. But, then it was just all taken and you just got on with it. Find your teeth kind of thing."</p>	
9.15	<p>Respondent talks about moving to Anderston in P7 and going to a school with outside toilets and no roof on them. She talks about it being a very good and a Mr McIntyre or McIntosh brought her out of her shell and spotted her writing abilities. She says that it was a great time when they lived in Anderston because the kids had part-time jobs. They gave their mum half their wages. Her mum also got a part-time job. She goes on to talk about passing the eleven plus and being sad to leave her friends to go to Woodside School. She says it was a great time though. She talks about being a hippy and going to see bands in Kelvingrove Park.</p>	
13.53	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent what she did after leaving school.</p>	
13.56	<p>Respondent replies that in her first job she worked making buttons. She had that job for quite a while and then she left and worked as a receptionist at an optician. She left this when she fell pregnant at seventeen. She says that she still worked and that she has done loads of jobs. She adds that she did want to be a nurse but that came later.</p>	
15.50	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent to talk her through her career path.</p>	
15.51	<p>Respondent replies that she also worked in the Royal Infirmary as a receptionist. When she had her second child she worked at night as a domestic cleaner. She describes this. She says that she then worked in shops. When her kids got older she went to work in the Royal as a radiology receptionist for many years.</p>	
	<p>"My first marriage I was a ...I was just a boxing ring, you know. So, I left that when I was expecting Louise. Because he was ready...He was ready to hit me one night. And I decided- I need to go he's going to injure the wee one. So, I packed my bags. I must tell you this story because this is...It's not hilarious but I laugh. So, I packed my bags and I had Peter, and I had...I was expecting. So, poor</p>	18.41-20.40

<p>Peter, it was Christmas time and he kept saying, shouting-‘I want to take the tree. I want to take the tree.’ And I explained to him-‘I’m going to get a new tree. It’s alright. Don’t worry. We’ll get a new tree. But, we went on the bus and I looked and I thought-‘I’ve not got a penny. How am I going to get to my Mum’s? I can’t understand. What am I going to do.’ So, I said-well the only thing. I had a black eye by the way and a burst lip. So, I thought-I’ll just need to talk to the driver. And it wasn’t on his route the street that I wanted to go...my...Pembroke Street...Anyway, I said to the driver-‘As you can see I’m in a bit of a predicament here.’ I said-‘I need to get to my mum’s but I’ve no money.’ And he said-‘Oh, hen. Just get on.’ And then when we were getting to...I said-‘I want to go to Pembroke Street if it’s ok? And he said...He stopped the bus and he said to all the people on the bus-‘Do you mind if I take this wee lassie to Pembroke Street?’ And every one of them went-‘No, I think you better get her home to her mammy.’ And that’s a true story. So, that’s true Glaswegians for you. So, I was taken up to my Mum’s with a bus driver. And obviously it was great when I thought about what the driver did.”</p>	
<p>“So, I remarried and I married a policeman. And he took on...Louise, was three at the time. He took on Peter and Louise. And we were happy for a time. But my Peter, God rest his soul, was a character. And he just didn’t want a stepdad. So, there became problems with that. He just made...Aw, he just made anything that...to annoy Jeff, my second husband, Peter would do. And we tried to get through it but my ex wasn’t very good at being the adult in the situation either. So, eventually...We lived in Torrance. We’d moved to Torrance. That’s how we got out this way. I had thought that we were buying the house because it was police house and they did the same as the council houses if you wanted to buy. And my husband had asked me-‘Would you like to buy the house?’ And I’d said yes because I was working full-time then. I said-‘Yeah, we’ll work it out. I’m sure we can afford it on both of our wages. And I’m only mentioning this because I’ll tell you in a minute. So, I would pay the mortgage with my wages. And he would pay likes of the electricity bills and gas and food. And I thought- that’s great. But, when things were really going wrong. And I had to think- I need to leave because it’s between my son and Jeff. And Louise was actually just doing the same as her brother. And she loved him because he was really good to Louise. And I thought-no, I need to leave. Once again. But, I was pregnant. I was forty and I was pregnant with Jordan. Which was an absolute miracle because we had gone through IVF twice and lost...Because, we were having trouble conceiving just Jeff and I. And it just wasn’t happening. And I went through that horrible process. There you go. Here’s another real trauma of IVF. And we had to pay for it obviously. And it was way back when IVF was still relatively new. So I...My personal experience of it was dreadful. I just thought it was the worst thing in the world. But, I wanted to do it for Jeff because he didn’t have any kids. I could have left it cause I had to but I could understand why he wanted...So, IVF; every day you had to take these injections which were awful. And, when it came to the actual removal of the eggs. My first time that I had the removal the doctor didn’t give me any sedative. He just took me in and he said-‘Just relax. It’ll be over in a minute. Well, I had already given birth twice and the pain of that was a hundred times more. It was awful. So, anyway, I got that done and unfortunately miscarried. I did actually fall pregnant but I miscarried. So, we had the second...He persuaded me to try it once again. And I really didn’t want to because it was an awful experience. And we did it and it was a bit better the second time because I had a better doctor. And this time...And I told him I was terrified about going in and getting the eggs taken. And he said-‘Why are you terrified?’ And I said-‘Because it was absolutely the worst pain I’ve ever had in my life. He said-‘What he didn’t give you a sedative? He didn’t give you anything?’ I said-‘No.’ He said-‘Oh, my love I don’t know why or who that doctor was. But I’ll be giving you a sedative and you won’t feel a thing.’ And I thought-‘Oh, great.’ Because, I was obviously terrified. And he gave me a sedative and</p>	<p>20.41-28.12</p>

	<p>you felt a bit discomfort but it was nothing like...And four of those eggs survived. And then I was pregnant with twins. And I thought-Oh, brilliant we've made it so I'll never have to do this again. And Jeff was over the moon. Absolutely over the moon. And I lasted till five months. And unfortunately we lost them. So, that was traumatic for him as well. And not...I'm sure you understand why things went sour with that marriage. And, again, Peter didn't help bless him. He couldn't help it he was just so in love with his own Dad that he couldn't believe that I had left. But as he got older, obviously, he understood but then he couldn't. So, here I was again. But, I fell pregnant naturally. When I was leaving my husband I found out I was pregnant and I thought-Oh, Gordon Bennett what are you doing to me? Now I'm pregnant but I'm definitely leaving because I'm not putting up with this. That baby's going to change my life anyway. So, I'm going to do it full-time. But, I'll tell you there's a funny side of that as well. I worked in the Royal (The Royal Infirmary) as I told you previously. And I was going into work and I kept being sick. But, not for a minute did I think it was anything to do with being pregnant. And one of the doctors looked at me one morning and he said-'Are you being sick again? And he said-'I'm sick of looking at you being sick.' He was lovely that doctor. Dr Allan his name was. I said-'I can't help it.' He said-'I'm going to give you an ultra-sound. Let's find out what's happening. Why you keep being sick. 'I thought-there's no need for that it's a virus. And he said-'Well, it must be an awful long virus.' And I jumped up, obviously, and got an ultra-sound. I've got to tell you the funny side. And he gave me an ultra-sound and he said-'See your virus Agnes.' He said-'It's got legs'. And I was like-'What?!' I was shocked. 'I'm telling you're about just over three months pregnant. I was joyful but at the same time I was...I had made my decision and I was leaving. And I thought-'How am I going to tell him I'm pregnant and I'm leaving? It was awful. So, it was a balance if you know what I mean? On one side it was the greatest thing ever to happen for Jeff. And, on the other side, it wasn't because I was intending to leave and I had a house to go to. But, and then I found out that we weren't buying the house. And I thought...Because, I thought, oh well, I'll be due half the money for the house I can buy another bit. He said-'No, I've got news for you. I never bought the house.' And I thought-Well, what were you doing with all the money and I was paying it...I would give him the money. So, I thought I was paying the mortgage. And he said-'Well, I wasn't' And I said-'Well, what did you do with the money?' he said-'I've been saving it 'But, he said-'There's no way you can get...show where the money's come from if the lawyer comes.' So, that was me stuffed. But, I got a house in Kirkintilloch and it was the best flat I've ever had in my life."</p>	
28.13	Respondent goes on to describe her flat and friends she made there. She says it was happy times.	
30.05	Interviewer asks the respondent if she is still in touch with both of her ex-husbands.	
30.08	Respondent replies that she is to varying degrees. She talks about her elder son and daughter's half-sister coming to stay sometimes.	
	<p>"So, for years Peter had this struggle with alcohol which, of course, was another traumatic time for me because, as any mother would do, I did everything to help him. Numerous detoxes in hospital. Detoxes at home. I would bring him to live with me and he would have detoxes at home. And his behaviour was absolutely awful. And I eventually again, cause I had Jordan...I said to him-'You'll need to leave and go and stay with a pal or whatever. Because I can't have you here the way you're behaving. I just can't do it. You're just always drunk and you're always fighting. Or, you bring some woman in.' And I said-'And I've got a so...a young boy here and I just need to ask you to leave.' And many a time that happened. And eventually he left. As I was telling you earlier about Louise. And he went into a homeless unit but he actually got stabbed when he was in the homeless unit. And I blamed myself. The guilt that I lived with because I had to ask him to leave. So I had this great guilt on my shoulders. And he was in</p>	32.35-41.44

intensive care for a long time. And I went up to visit him. I went up to see him, obviously, when he was in the main ward. I saw him all the time but this one particular incident in the main ward I went up to see him and he was getting better and looking more like himself. And, obviously, as I thought, hadn't had a drink for all that time. Because, he had been in about 6 weeks by now. And I went up to him. And I always took in chocolate and goodies and things like that like you do. Toiletries.... And I went to put them away in his locker. And here in the locker is a bottle of Buckfast. And I looked and he must of forgotten about it and he went-'Oh, sorry Mum. That was one of my pals that had brought that up.' And I said-'Well. You know what I'm going to do with it then. Don't you?' And I said-'And how many times have they brought it up?' I said-'So, you're obviously not detoxed.' And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I thought-right. And I took it up to the nurses. I know they can't watch what's being brought. But, they knew his situation that he was an alcoholic. And I said to them politely-'I have to ask you. Look what I've just found in Peter's locker. I think his friends are, obviously, bringing him up drink. Don't you notice that he's intoxicated?' 'Oh, well. I can't say that there's any notes on that.' I said-'Well, being a nurse I think even if you were going over to get...change his drip or whatever you would notice. And Peter's not quiet. He was a lovable boy. Everybody loved him and he was full of jokes and especially if he had had a drink. 'Aww, we just thought that was Peter.' And I said-Well I'm bringing it to your attention now. So, I hope from now on you keep an eye as much as you can.' I said-'I know you can't but you should notice when he's drunk.' So I left and I think it was about a couple of days later I went up again. And here's his two pals with a bottle in each pocket. Peter hadn't got it but I noticed it. The bag in the guy's pocket. I'm laughing because you've no idea the stuff that used to happen with Peter. Oh, God rest you son. So, these two guys had a bottle each in their pockets and I just lifted them out. And they're-'Oh, what you doing? They're mine.' I said-'I don't care whose they are you're up here visiting. And what I'll do if you're saying that they're yours is I'll ask the nurses if they can look after them and give them back to you when you leave. And the nurses thankfully did. Because, if they didn't I was just going to pour them out and take the consequences. So, off they went. And I obviously had words with Peter again. But, what a boy. He left anyway. And from that I eventually got him into a rehab place. Which...Castle Craig it was called which was in Perth. I don't know if you've heard of it? And, because of what happened to him I only had to pay so much. And I actually don't know who paid the rest. I assume it must have been the council. I don't know but anyway he was there for six months. And it was great. What a different boy. And he had everybody laughing and joking as Peter did. And he took over...that he was doing the kitchen...he would do all the kitchen duties. Not cooking but he would do the cleaning duties. And he got everybody...They were doing a play at Christmas and he had organised all that and they were doing this play. And I went up at Christmas and I said to him-'I was going to invite you home for Christmas dinner.' He said-'No, I'm doing a play. It's really nice of you but I'm doing a play.' I said-'It's just as well I've brought up goodies then isn't it?' So, I left...they lived like four in a house then so I'd taken up all of these things for all of them to share. And he came out from there absolutely fantastic. But, no back up. And this is what happens. I'm going to say it; with alcohol and drugs they do have people that help but they forget that when they come out they also need this help. They need to get help. They're bored. And what happens when you're bored? They go back again to the things that they know. And that's what happened with Peter. So, that was years of trauma with Peter. Years and years because the same thing happened; he would come and live with me and I would have to ask him to leave. I don't know how many times. And I went get him a house and I would get it furnished and I would do it up. I remember painting the house while he's...I don't know what he'd be doing but I wanted to just make sure that it was nice. I'd got to charity shops to get furniture. And och, the

	<p>amount of... I think there were three houses I did. I think three houses. And, again, he would mess it up because he didn't have...he'd use it as drunk people coming in and they would drink there and that was the place that they would go. And once, again...He was never a fighter but he also thought he was when he was drunk. And he got thrown over a balcony and ended up in the hospital again. I thought-Somebody up there must love you because what kind of states are you getting in? But, that was him until the end of his life. Two years before he passed he moved to Aberdeen; him and his friend. And I remember saying to him-'You'll be well out of my way. You know, I hope and pray that you are going to stay sober.' And he didn't. But he would phone me up when they were in dire needs. And it was quite funny he'd say-'Can I get a Red Cross parcel please?' Because I got that I wouldn't get him money. But I would get an Iceland order, or something, or an Asda order sent to their address; The two of them. So, that was his joke-'Mum, I need a Red Cross parcel.' So, I would send up a Red Cross parcel. But, as I say, he was out of sight and out of mind. Although it wasn't a traumatic time it was always in the back of my mind – what on earth is this... Because his pal was as daft as him. And unfortunately for his friend. He's actually...Peter had come down to see his sister for her birthday. By then his sister was following suit with the alcohol because she was having trouble with her marriage. And I was replaying a video of what had already happened with Peter. So, I kept asking him-'Will you please talk to your sister? Will you please? I cannot do this with another child.' And he was really worried about her. And he did talk to her and say-'For God's sake look at me. You don't want to be like me.' Blah, blah, blah and whatever else brother and sister said. And he came down that weekend and he spent the day with Louise. And I actually didn't even get to see him. Because he phoned and he said-'Oh, Mum I can't come over.' And I clicked. I said-well, must be inebriated. And I could hear the...in the background what was going on. And I said-'Well, that's ok and remember I love you. And if need a Red Cross parcel give me a phone.' And that was my last words to him. That night he died. And it was his flatmate that found him. He went in in the morning and he was already gone. And it was a combination of drugs and alcohol. So, whether he went peacefully I'll never know."</p>	
42.00	Interviewer asks the respondent about looking after her nephews and nieces.	
42.05	Respondent talks about her sister's health issues and how that meant that she looked after her children at times when she was in hospital. She talks about having a house full of children and she loved that. And then she describes working in a nursery. She goes on to talk about how her sister met her husband.	
48.00	Interviewer asks the respondent about her own physical health.	
	<p>"Well, another traumatic time. I was working in St Ninian's at the time. So, I think I was just over fifty. But all my life I've had silly symptoms that were explained as different things. For example, I would be dizzy for no reason. Really, really bad with it and the doctor had explained it as agoraphobia. So, he put me on valium which I refused to take after I'd taken a few. I thought-I'm looking after kids there. And, so I stopped taking them. And I started getting tingles and numbness down this one side of my body. And I couldn't explain it. So, I went to the doctor and the doctor said-'Maybe is sciatic...Maybe it's the sciatic nerve or something. 'And she said-'Let's just look at it for a while and see if it goes away.' Well, it did go away because this...that happens in MS (multiple sclerosis) I now know. But, I still wasn't happy with all these things. I started getting a twitch in my eye that I couldn't control. I just could not control this twitch in my eye. And It was always...and I thought that's not right. So, I went back to the doctor and I explained to her. She said-'have you been to an optician?' I said-'It's nothing to do with my eyesight. It's this...As you can see. You're looking at it you can see.' And she said, again-'Let's just leave it and see what happens.' But I always say-from the age of fifty I've gone downhill. But, I wasn't working...I was working in St Ninians. I wasn't in the hospital so I hadn't</p>	48.06-59.30

my precious doctor to go and ask or I would have. Anyway, I was working away and I was getting really tired. And, to me, fifty isn't that old. And I was never...I never act old. I was still going out when I could and still doing things and working. And it was coming up to Christmas so I actually, at one point, had three jobs. I worked cleaning in Poundland after school. And at the weekends I worked at the Premier Inn cleaning at the weekends. And my god did I lose weight in that place. My heart goes out to these cleaners. You have exactly eight minutes to clean each room. And the biggest thing...I do digress, I'm sorry. But the biggest thing is putting those covers on those big quilts. My god, you had to do that and clean a room in eight minutes. I must of lost at least two stone when I went and worked there. But, anyway, again I digress...But, I had all these pains and all these symptoms. And my feet were burning. And I kept saying-'It's because I'm on my feet all day. And you're not getting a rest. As we do; we diagnose ourselves. And, my hands started burning and I'm like-what is this? And my hands would go really extremely red. And that's quite calm for them but they would go really, really red. And that is burning. My hands are always burning. But, I didn't anything about nerve pain. I'm not a doctor and, unfortunately, didn't finish my nurse career. But, I went to the doctor again and I told her about my hands and my feet. And she did give me pain killers as doctor's do. And I said-'But what's causing it?' I said-'That's great if they help. But, what is causing that? That's weird. Just to have your feet burning and your hands burning and numbness down your leg. Is there not something going on?' And she said-'Maybe we should get a wee CT done.' And I was like-'Well, maybe yes we could and I'll go.' So, we went for a CT and we had this vaguest of reports-There are...'We can see some indication of something going on...' They had other words but meaning something going on in the brain. 'But, we can't actually decide what it is.' And even my doctor was like that-'What can you do with that report?' And she showed me it. I said-'Well, that's no use. That doesn't tell us anything. So, where do we go from here?' And she said-'Exactly/' She said-'I'll get on to them. And I'll refer you to a neurologist. She said-'That's the only thing I can do. I'll refer you to a neurologist. There must be something happening.' And I thought-great, great stuff. And she did but before I actually saw my neurologist my sister and were up visiting from England. And it wasn't the kids it was just them. They've grown up now. And we had a visit from them, which was great, she spent the weekend. But, when she was going home on the Monday. I'd got up in the morning And I thought-I don't feel well. I feel really dizzy and I just don't...I feel out of sorts. And I had to look at the clock because I was hoping that there could then be a way that I could get to work. That I wasn't going to be late. So, I looked at the clock and it was seven o'clock and I thought-great, I've got plenty of time. I'll make them their breakfast and I'll wake them up. So, I sat on the couch and the next thing I remember I looked at the clock and it was ten o'clock. And I don't remember falling asleep. And I thought-Oh, my god. And they were still in their bed because I had said-'Don't worry. I'll waken you up' So I ran in to them and I said-'I'm really sorry it's ten o'clock. You'll need to get up if you want to catch your train. And they did have time. But, it was very fast. I couldn't say to them that I felt unwell. So, after they left I went to my bed and I slept the whole day. I did nothing but sleep. But, when I woke up I couldn't stop yawning. I was consistently yawning and I was really numb. Really numb down this side of my leg. And I thought-'I'm going to have to go to the hospital. I thought-This isn't right. But I phoned my doctor first and I got an appointment. You could get an appointment then. We don't now but...you could get one. So, I got an appointment with my doctor and she was... I was talking away to her and telling her I had, had visitors round. I was rather busy over the weekend blah, blah, blah. And I couldn't stop yawning. And, I said to her-'What is happening?' I could not stop yawning. Not just particularly now and again it was every second. Like a breath was a yawn. She said-'Ah, I can notice.' She said-'I want you to go up to the hospital.' She said-'And I'm getting

<p>an ambulance.’ She said-‘You’re not going up on your own.’ And I said-‘What do you think it is?’ And she said-‘Possibly a stroke but you’ve not got slurred speech or anything.’ She said-‘But, we’ll need to look into this.’ She said-‘There’s something going on.’ So, I went to the hospital and I got all the tests done there. MRI...I got the big one done the MRI. And when that came back they said-‘Yes, you’ve had a stroke. So, we’ll just keep an eye on you.’ By then I wasn’t slurring my speech but I had to really think about every word. And I wasn’t getting a great movement. Like, you know how they tell you to push? I didn’t have any strength on this side of the body. Thankfully, so grateful, that came back and they decided it was a mini stroke. They call it a TIC or something like that. But they said-‘We don’t want you to go. We want you to have further tests. And I said-‘What you thinking?’ and she said-‘Nothing. It’s just we want to have another test.’ And they gave me a lumbar puncture. Have you ever had any of these? Aww, not recommended. But, it did the trick because they need to get the spinal fluid. Because they were obviously, I now know, looking for MS. So they did it all and I was in the hospital and as usual I got up. You’re supposed to lie for a few hours after having the spinal tap. But, I got up because I decided I was going home that day. Don’t ask why. But I had decide-Well, that’s all the tests done. I’m going home. And I got up and I’d phoned for somebody to bring me up all my stuff. And the doctor came and he said-‘I really don’t want you to go home.’ And I said-‘Well, you tell me when I get a neurologist because they only come here every so often. And even if you get them to come out and look at the report...’ They had to have a neurologist look at it. I said-‘I’ll be just sitting here doing nothing. I’m ok now. I’ve had all the tests done. ‘So, why would I be sitting in a hospital bed that’s needed for somebody else?’ And eventually he agreed with me he said-‘Ok, ok’ He said-‘Well, as soon as possible we’ll get you an appointment with the neurologist.’ As soon as possible...I think it was six months later that I actually got the appointment with the neurologist. It’s like trying to see the Pope and it still is. So, anyway, I went along to the neurologist. And he was lovely. He was a really lovely man. And he said-‘I’ve got the report. And did you have any thoughts on what we were looking for?’ And I said to him-‘I’m not daft. ‘ I said-‘MS’, I’ve researched it. You don’t...when you’re ill you know you look at things.’ And I said-‘Is it MS?’ And before going in I’m going-I don’t know much about ME but it’s terrible. And I remember before going in-please, if I’ve got to have something make it ME. It’s so ridiculous. As if you’re praying to have an illness. But I didn’t...I just didn’t want MS. But, as sod’s law goes it was MS But, I was relieved because I now know what it was. And I know there’s no cure but at least we can get something for the symptoms. And, we’ll take it from there. I did think that I would be able to work for longer than I did but unfortunately I wasn’t. But, I’m not...I look for the best in life. I don’t, you know, say-oh, my god. And I kept saying-it’s not a death sentence. It’s just a change of life. So, just keep it in your mind. And...but, in saying that, I think I had to say that every day for god knows how long-I’ve got MS. It’s not a death sentence. I always like affirmations. I don’t know if you’ve heard of Louise Hay? That book was my bible for a long time. She got me through many a crisis. So, anyway, I got through that. So, as I say the worst thing about that very, very traumatic...And I think the worst thing is just the acceptance. I think we spoke about that earlier. Acceptance that you’re not that same person that you were. But, you’re still you. And it was and I took it from there.”</p>	
<p>“As I say unfortunately I had to leave my work (due to having multiple sclerosis) but being me I know work for a char...or, voluntary work for a charity. There’s no way I’m stepping down and not moving. And at first I could go a lot more than I can now to GRACE. And, GRACE saved my life. It’s an amazing place to go. I would actually tell anybody if they’ve been through any traumatic thing in their life. Go to GRACE because the people there will help and give you your confidence back and get you up and doing things. And we share what skills we have. There’s a girl does jewellery making. There’s myself, I do the sign</p>	<p>59.33-1.01.50</p>

	<p>language. There's another girl that does what's called-'Elaine's House of Fun.' And that's just basically games. We go there like kids and we play Pictionary and different things like that. Just to lift our spirits and it's...When I first went I thought aww...Because, a lot of addicts go. And I thought-what am I doing here? And I hate to say I had this stigma-this is just for alcoholics. I've had enough about alcohol. What am I doing here? But, I take back every word that I ever said. And I utterly regret it because the friends that I've made there incomparable...And it's a great place to go. It just...there's so much goes on. You've got art, you've got yoga. And myself now; you've got sign language. And we bring in other things too. I also taught what's called heart start programme. It's like a mini First Aid. And I taught that for years. And I taught that to the kids at school and I taught it to the people at GRACE. And now that they've got two branches in Auchinairn and, I was going to say Woodside there because I was talking about my school, and Hillhead. That's where I...I've taught them there. And now...I can't do it now because I have to get my training certificate renewed. Which I keep saying I'm going to do. But I haven't done it yet. But I will. Before I'm too immobile to get it. But, no. I keep myself as busy as I can. But, there's not a lot I can do now because it is getting worse."</p>	
	<p>"It's a progressive disease (multiple sclerosis) and that's traumatic. That is very traumatic. Because, there's days...there are days I wake up and I think-What is it today? What's going to be wrong with me today? One day I woke up I'd lost the sight in my eye. But, it came back. But, you do it gets like-oh, am I going to be able to walk today? So, you have to try not to ponder on that. And be grateful for what I can do. As much as I can be; I'm normal. I'm human. But, I do try always to be grateful for the things that I can do. But, easily, that's one of the most traumatic things. Like any illness would be. When anybody's told that they're ill."</p>	1.01.51-102.33
1.02.35	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent what her coping mechanisms are.</p>	
	<p>"Coping mechanisms...Well, I now have this little wee dog, who is great. She's not actually my dog. I have her through the week because my daughter is working. But, she has been a god send. I got her to look after, after I had lost Peter. So, I think I just poured all my love into this wee dog. So, that's one of my coping mechanisms. Going to GRACE; that's a coping mechanism because I've learnt a lot of things about anxiety and how to cope with anxiety. And different tools that you can use to cope with anxiety. Which I use and I did use. I'll again bring up Louise Hay because a lot of these things when I read that book...like, the mirror work. Looking in the mirror and saying-Oh, you're gorgeous. And making yourself feel gorgeous. And just being positive about yourself. I have my bad days. I won't lie. I have my days when I've got to just stay in bed. And it's Jordan that helps me cope. He'll come in and he'll say-'If you need anything I'll get it.' and he'll get me a cup of tea. And, if he sees that I'm sad he'll say-'Mum, do you want me to get you a writing pad and you can just sit and write?' Which if you look over I've got wee poems all over the place. I write poetry. So I cope...I like writing because I find it therapeutic. So, I can get into writing a story however daft it is; a children story or poetry. At the moment it seems to be a lot of poetry that's coming to me. Or, reading a book. Just accepting today I just have to give in to it and I'll read a book. That's really...I can't think of anything else that I do to cope."</p>	1.02.38-104.32
1.04.33	<p>Respondent adds that the odd night out and drink is fun but drink is not a coping mechanism for her.</p>	
1.04.44	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent if the peer support aspect of GRACE helps her.</p>	
	<p>"It helps me because, as I said, I teach sign language. And seeing the other people learning. And seeing that they're coming on with it and enjoying it. Because I also have a sign choir. Music I love. Rikki I'll tell you. I sing constantly. They can hear me singing coming down the corridor at GRACE. And they'll say-'Here's Agnes.' Or, laughing one of the two. So, I developed this choir. Which,</p>	1.04.52-1.06.49

	<p>we have performed... We've performed in the Kirkintilloch City Halls. And we've performed. We had a gig at St Ninian's. Not the school, the chapel. And we've performed in their hall. And obviously within GRACE if there's a celebration coming up. There was one recently and we'd a lot of counsellors and people there and the Mayor. So, we performed in front of them and the choir love it. And that's therapy for me because I see that they're really enjoying it. And doing it. I can teach them it but it's not me up there doing it. They're the ones that are up there doing it and it's a fantastic buzz to see them doing it, it really is. And, obviously I'm at the front and just doing the signs to make sure that they're doing the right things. And, I've got this eye look. If I look at somebody like that they know-Oh, sugar I've done the wrong thing. But I've told them all just let that go. Who knows? Unless they know sign language who's going to know you've made a mistake. But, watching them...What I'm trying to...The point I'm trying to make is that helps me. I teach them and they give back to me because they're letting me and they enjoy it. And, I love the choir. So, that's great therapy for me. I really don't know what I would do if I couldn't go out and do that. And, I'm lucky I've still got students keen to come. And, I will get back to my First Aid because I also enjoy doing that."</p>	
1.06.50	<p>Respondent goes on to describe a joke about her and the resuscitation dummy. She then talks about teaching First Aid in schools.</p>	
1.09.00	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent what sort of advice she would give someone who was struggling with their physical and/or mental health.</p>	
	<p>"That's a hard one because I can only work on my own personal experience. I think if it was...I'll go...I'll start with illness. If they've been told that they have an illness. Give themselves time to recover from what they've been told. Take the time to lick their wounds, if you like. But, don't do that for too long. The, start thinking of the positives. Because, with everything there is a positive. And, even cancer. My sister's had breast cancer. And there is a positive because you know that you can get help and you know that you can get through it. You can be strong. Again, I'll say the Louise Hay book is great because...By the way, I'm not on commission for Louise Hay. God love her I think she's actually passed now. But, that book I would advise anybody to read. If you're that kind of person who would do affirmations and start thinking positive. You've got to be positive whatever life throws at you. You've got to be. And there are times I'm not. I'm not making out that I'm always positive because I'm not. But, I know how to bring myself back and be positive. So, that's what I would say. The first thing if you've been told you have an illness. Give yourself time to grieve. And then accept whatever it is and then deal with it. But, that. Again, I can only tell you how I did it. And that's what I did. Mental health is a different issue. Because mental health is obviously...your brain is working differently from...Again, I'll quote my sister because she loves me and she won't mind. She can have bi-polar, she can be high as a kite, really high or she can be suicidal. There's no in between. It's either that or that. She is better now because she's on meds that cope with the moods. But, when she was really down she was on suicide watch because that's how she felt. Unless she's really high. It wouldn't matter what she bought on credit card or anything like that. 'Och, it's only money. Come on let's have a good time.' Great absolute person. So, I really don't think I would know how to advise her apart from saying go and see your doctor. Please, I'm your friend. I love you and I'm really worried about you. Will you please go and see your doctor? I wouldn't attempt to say-I think you've got bi-polar or I think you really have anxiety problems. Oh, you have depression. I'm not trained to do that. But, I would advise to go and see your doctor and if they ask me why I would tell them. Because, recently you've been really depressed. Recently you've been tearful. You've been tired. You don't want to do anything. And that's just not you. You know. If I was speaking to that person. That just isn't you and I'm worried and I think there might be something that can help you. And hopefully they would say ok. Or, say-get lost. You're talking a lot of rubbish. So</p>	1.09.15-112.54

	that's... that would be...I would advise...try and advise. But, only from my own personal experience. Cause everybody's different."	
1.12.55	Interviewer asks the respondent about accessing services like GRACE.	
	<p>"I found out about GRACE through my friend Liz who I've talked about. At the very early...GRACE had only been up and running for about a year so it was early for GRACE itself. It was just getting together. And Liz, she does the yoga. She doesn't have any traumatic problems that I knew of. I now know different but she kept saying to me-'I want you to come with me to GRACE. Come with me...' Because, after work, stopping work. I really wasn't doing anything apart from writing and just keeping myself occupied. "Please, please, come to GRACE with me. You'll never regret it. It's a lovely place.'The people that are there have all had something so, everybody supports each other. And if you want to cry, cry. If you don't, don't. But nobody would think anything of it. And I went along and I'm ashamed to say my first reaction was-What am I doing here? Why am I here? Because, I had the stupid stigma of thinking this is all alcoholics or drugs. I've not got that problem. But, it was Liz who said-'No, but you've had a traumatic experience. It's very traumatic being told that you have MS.' She said-'So, that's what I'm thinking of.' Within two days I was one of them. I was in there and they were great. And I have met, well, really amazing people there. And we've done so much together. So much that GRACE has achieved is incredible. Even presentations and the things like the workshops for their art. I spoke about the choir. We've performed in different places. And Elaine who has MS as well...Another girl that goes. She makes lovely jewellery. Everybody shares their won knowledge there and it's great. Everybody in life has had some sort of trauma. And that's the place to go. Because you can talk about it and be in a comfortable surroundings to talk about it. And don't feel pressured. If you go one day and you don't want to talk, well, fine. We've all learnt because we know each other. Oh, she's not in that mood today. And we'll leave her and if she wants to talk then fine. But, that's how it goes when you become part of family. Because, it is...GRACE is a family, definitely. And I definitely would advise people to go. Even if it's just to get a cup of tea and a chat. Not everybody wants to join a group and do something. And that's fine. But, there's a cup of tea and a chat."</p>	1.13.00-1.15.50
1.15.54	Interviewer asks the respondent how it would impact her if theoretically GRACE was to close its doors.	
	<p>"Absolutely awful. I would be devastated. Not only for myself but for everybody that goes there (GRACE). If they didn't have funding and it was closed down the community would really lose out. It's a brilliant place. And, I don't even want to think about it to be honest. Because I would be devastated. That's the only word I can use. It would definitely devastate me because the people that I've met there. The things that I've done. And, I know that they're always fund raising to try and keep it going, keep the money. And, Robert, god love him. He's great at that. But, I mean the film making that they've done as well; It's amazing. It's just a great place. If you've got any skills and you want to do a college course or whatever. That opportunity's there for the community. So, if that was closed down Hillhead community would just lose out and it would be awful. I can't think of any other word except I would be devastated."</p>	1.16.05-1.17.17
1.17.20	Interviewer asks the respondent what her hopes for the future are.	
	<p>"My hopes for the future. That's a good question. That's a very good question. Because I'm going through a wee turmoil, as I said, about my daughter. So my hopes for the future would be for Louise to get her life together and be happy. That's all you can ask for your children is just to be happy. But for myself my hopes are that this progression goes slow. I'll be honest. I don't want it to go fast. I hope that this progresses and I'm mobile for as long as I can be. Because my biggest...I know fear sounds awful. But, I told you I would be honest. But, my biggest fear is being in a wheelchair. And, I've already had the OT (occupational</p>	1.17.29-1.21.15

therapist) talk to me about it. And she's saying-'Don't think of it as that. Think of it as an aid to get you further.' And, I've just got a barrier up. And, again, I said I'd be honest. Only, because my Mum...When my Mum had to use a wheelchair two months later she died. And I know that brain wise I think-Why am I relating that to the wheelchair? And I am and I'll have to work that through for myself. It's just something I know I have to work on because I'm not going to say inevitably but not inevitably...But, that's my biggest hope for the future that I don't need to do that. And that I can still go out. I don't go out a lot now because of other symptoms. But, just to be healthy, as much as I can be, and enjoy life. I always enjoy life. I mean why can't you enjoy life? Life is for living and until my dying breath I will live it. So, that's all really I can say for the hope for the future I don't want much do I? Cause, I love my house and I love the area I'm in. That's Louise and my wee dog.. I'm happy. And my son Jordan. Oh, of course, for Jordan. I would love in the future for him to have a job. He's the love of my life. He's a miracle baby. And if you've heard all why I went through IVF and then suddenly Jordan appeared. A gift from God. Oh, and I've also got another wee gift from God that I haven't managed. Again, my son who died. God love him. His son has had a baby boy. So, I'm a great grandmother. And his name is Connolly and he is gorgeous. And I'm in the process of knitting more cardigans because his Mum said-'I've run out. He's grown out of all these cardigans. I want some for the winter. Do you think you could?' I said-'of course I can. I'll get some wool. Which, I haven't done yet (slaps hand) but I will. So, yes my hopes for him are just to have a lovely life. He is a gorgeous wee boy and from the beginning I can see Peter's spirit in him. I really can. He's a happy, happy wee boy. I've not yet, of course I only visit, but I have not yet heard him screaming or scratching but, terrible twos is still to come. So, I don't know. But, obviously, being the gran or the great gran I'm biased. He's gorgeous. So, I think in summing up. I'll leave you with the thought of my Connolly. "

Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for her contribution to the project.



Group Recovery Aftercare Community Enterprise is a registered Scottish charitable organisation SCO043551