

ANONYMOUS REAL EXPERIENCE

BREAKING THE CYCLE FOR MY SON

Learning to speak so the next generation can feel safe

SHARED ANONYMOUSLY • SHAPED COLLABORATIVELY BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



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"I grew up in a family where emotions weren't talked about. My dad was a hardworking man who loved us deeply, but if something upset him, he dealt with it quietly. That's what I learned. Keep going. Don't complain. Don't let anyone see you're struggling.

Without realising it, I started doing exactly the same with my own family. I worked long hours, carried every worry in silence and convinced myself I was protecting my wife and children by not talking about how I felt. Looking back, I wasn't protecting them at all. I was shutting them out.

Everything changed after a friend encouraged me to attend an ANDYSMANCLUB meeting. I wasn't sure it would help, but listening to other men speak honestly about their lives made me realise how much energy I'd spent pretending I was okay.

Over time, I became more comfortable talking about my own mental health. I also started seeing a counsellor, which helped me understand why I'd found it so difficult to ask for help.

The biggest surprise wasn't what changed in me. It was what changed at home.

One evening my teenage son came home from school looking upset. Normally I would have told him to keep his chin up or tried to solve the problem straight away. Instead, I sat beside him and said, 'Do you want to talk about it?' We ended up having one of the most honest conversations we've ever had.

A few weeks later he thanked me. He said, 'Dad, I know I can talk to you because you talk to me.' Those words stayed with me.

I realised that breaking the silence isn't only about improving your own mental health. It's about showing the people you love that they never have to hide how they're feeling either.

If my son grows up believing that asking for help is normal, that emotions are part of being human and that strength includes honesty, then perhaps the cycle really has been broken.

That, more than anything else, is the legacy I hope to leave."

A Note About This Real Experience

This is a real person's lived experience, shared anonymously in their own thoughts and feelings. The contributor spoke openly about what happened, and Maggie Learoyd shaped the piece collaboratively, preserving their meaning and voice. They want their experience to be heard and understood but have chosen not to be named. Some identifying details may have been changed to protect their privacy.