



Diverse Perspectives on Mental Health

Bronwyn's story

Bronwyn's home

Bronwyn: ‘

Bye ‘bye, sweetheart. Have a lovely time at nursery.

Don't forget to take that Library book back, Rob. We can do without another fine.

Bronwyn's home

Right, where did I put that shopping list? It must be here somewhere. What a mess this kitchen's in. What's all this stuff? Oh, it must be Alex's course work. I hope she's not supposed to have taken it with her. Too late now.

It needs a good clean in here. I can't remember the last time I washed the floor. Letting things slip. I don't seem to have any energy since that 'flu. I've not really shaken it off properly. Hardly slept at all last night. My throat's still bad and my head's pounding. Getting older, I suppose. You don't bounce back like you do when you're younger.

Here it is! It'd help if the children bothered to give me a hand once in a while. No chance! Why is it my children don't do anything around the house, except make a mess? It's not for want of asking. How are they ever going to look after themselves? And Rob for that matter. I mean, he's not had 'flu, has he? Why can't he clean the kitchen for once? He's got enough time on his hands. I know he feels funny about doing housework, not 'real work', but honestly, he hasn't done any 'real work' for years so he might as well do something. Male pride? Rubbish! Laziness more like.

Same with the kids, just bloody lazy. They assume mum'll do it if they leave it long enough. Well, mum hasn't been doing much lately, has she?
Not much of a mum

Right, where's the keys? You see, should be on the hook and they're not there. Typical! Someone's just put them down somewhere, any old where. Thoughtless. They're just selfish, don't think about anyone else. Where did I go wrong?
Here they are!

List, handbag, broly. Here we go again.

On the street

Look at all this rubbish. MacDonalds bags, beer cans. It'll be those kids from Willow Way, I bet, hanging round the bus stop late at night. Why can't they use the bins, for goodness sake? It always blows straight up to our gate, makes the place look like a slum.

This neighbourhood's getting worse and worse, I reckon. When we first moved here it was a nice place to live, nice houses, decent people. Now, no-one seems to care any more. It's gone right down.

Down and down and down.

Oh, hello Mr Davies! How are you? Can't hear a thing. Deaf as a post. He must be getting on, mind. He would have been in his late fifties when we moved here, when they closed the pit . All those years ago. That little dog is soaked to the skin. Doesn't look like it's going to last much longer though, look at it, all wet and shivering, poor thing!

No-one else around this morning. Not surprising with this weather. Most sensible people will be inside keeping warm and dry.

Here we go. Where's my bus pass?

On the bus

Good morning, Paul, and what a beautiful day it is!

At the Supermarket

Right, where's that list? If I'm not careful I won't be able to afford this lot. Well we can do without that for a start. Let's see what they've got on offer.

I'll have to get back to work soon. We can't go on much longer like this. It's tough enough when I'm childminding full time.

Though I don't think I could cope with a handful of little ones right now. I don't seem to have the 'get up and go' anymore. I'll have to pull myself together, find some energy from somewhere. No-one else is going to help.

That's no good, it's nearly gone off. That looks all right. And it's less than half price, we'll have two of them, then. I don't really like quiche, but we might as well get it.

I'll give it to Rob. He doesn't care what he eats, doesn't even notice most of the time.

Funny, that, because we used to enjoy our food together, cooking Sunday lunch and all that. We don't do that any more. We probably haven't had a proper Sunday lunch together with the kids since mum was alive.

I wonder if I'll get those kiddies back? I know the mums don't like to keep moving them around. Suppose they've found another childminder and don't want to bring them back to me? No, they wouldn't let me down would they? But I've let them down, haven't I? It would serve me right. No, Josie wouldn't drop me, nor would Lisa. I'd better go and see them, make sure they know I'm on the mend. On the mend! If only

Just bread now, and some beans. Good, they're on offer, too.
That checkout's nearly free.

Look at that, nearly everything she's got there is organic. Costs a fortune that stuff, and they say it doesn't make a blind bit of difference. What a waste! Fancy being able to squander that much money. How the other half live, eh?

Hey, come on, stop this! It's not like me to let the green-eyed monster take over. Not like me at all the old me ... wherever she's gone.

At the Checkout

Hiya love. Yes, dreadful weather, isn't it?
How much? Right, there you go. Thank you.

Noticeboard

Let's have a look what's on the noticeboard. Conservatories – lovely idea, completely impossible! If we got one of those I could lock myself in there and leave the rest of them to sort out the mess in the house – how would they like that?

Wonder if I ought to put something up here about my childminding? I might have to, it might come to that. I really must go and see Josie and Lisa. I can't face them at the moment, though.

What else have they got here? "Work from home" ... oh, "computer skills" that's no good, I don't have computer skills. Haven't got any qualifications to speak of. No, I don't really stand a chance with any of these. I'd be up against kids straight out of college. They've all got computer skills, brought up with them, aren't they? And Welsh. You've got to have fluent Welsh these days. They never bothered so much when I was at school. If they'd have pushed me a bit harder, I could have got it under my belt. It wasn't such a big deal then. Not like it is for the kids now. They're as fluent in Welsh as they are in English. I'd better stick to what I know ... which isn't much.

Is there anything here about benefits? Here we go: "Benefits, entitlements, money advice, Citizen's Advice Bureau". Suppose it wouldn't do any harm to go in and ask. No shame in it.

Oh, hiya love! Didn't see you. I was just looking at the conservatories. You had one done last year, didn't you?

Bronwyn's home

Hello, I'm home. Did you take that library book back, Rob?

I'll take that as a 'yes'. Thank you.

Thank you so much. So very, very kind of you to put yourself out. Now you just relax in front of the telly after such a hard morning. You deserve it, Rob, you really do! Let me unpack the shopping, do the washing up, clean the kitchen floor, sort out the washing. No, really, you put your feet up, please.

Oh my head! This damned migraine won't go away. I'll have to take another pill. I don't like taking too many, but they don't seem to be working. Oh, there's none left, damn. I forgot to take the repeat prescription in. I suppose I could just go and buy something over the counter. I could have got something at the supermarket. Too late now.

Shame the corner shop closed, I do miss it. I miss Val, too. We used to get on so well, have a good laugh. It's not the same without her. I expect they're doing well for themselves. She won't be yearning to come back here. Look at it: grey and wet and miserable. This place is enough to get you down.

Look, there goes Florrie. She's nearly bent double now. She wouldn't be able to walk without that zimmer. She can hardly walk with it! God, I hope I don't finish up like her, stuck here to the end of my days. No way. No, I need the sunshine. I'd like to fall asleep on a sunny beach listening to the waves gently lapping, warm breeze in the palm trees. Let the sand trickle through my fingers. The sands of time. I could drift off quite happily and never wake up. Ta-ra, world, I've had enough.

I wonder if the kids will make it out of here. Alex, she's a clever girl, she's got the computer skills, and fluent Welsh. I reckon she could end up getting a good job. Perhaps she'll look after me in my old age. She wouldn't want to now, though. I can't seem to do anything right for that girl. Doesn't matter what I say, she snaps at me. Then there's Danny. I'm not so sure about him. He doesn't seem to try, just falls in with the wrong crowd and tags along. There's trouble ahead with that one, I bet.

Being a mother doesn't ever get any easier. When you're stuck with them all in nappies, weeing and pooing and screaming and getting under your feet you think, oh, this'll soon pass. But then other things just come along instead. Worse things to worry about. Things you can't do nothing about. It's never-ending.

Oh, that made me jump. Who is it? Alex. What's happened? Something's wrong. 'Danny has asthma attack, gone to hospital', What? Didn't he have his inhaler? Where is it? I should have checked he had it with him. He must have left it here. It might be here somewhere in all this stuff. Oh my god. Hospital, I'd better ring the hospital, no, the school, no, the hospital. Oh god, what shall I do?

Bronwyn's home

Rob! Rob! Listen, Alex just texted. Danny's had an attack. It sounds bad, very bad. Quick!

We've got to go!

On the bus

Watch out, look where you're going! There's no need for that! Honestly. I don't care, Rob, there is absolutely no need for rudeness. Shoving past like a bull in a china shop. Who does he think he is? There's no call for it. Just pure bad manners. He could do with learning some basic decencies.

I know there's no point in saying anything. It won't make a blind bit of difference. It just gets my goat, people pushing and shoving like that for no reason. Great big bully. It makes you wonder about his parents.

Oh, Danny, Danny, I hope you're going to be alright. Why didn't you have your inhaler, you silly boy? I should have checked. Why didn't I check he had it? I usually do.

It's a killer, asthma. I remember the doctor saying, 'it's a killer. People don't think it is, but it is.' Or, it can be.

It might not be so bad. The school acted quickly. The hospital know's what they're doing. God, let him be all right. He's pulled through a few bad ones before now.

That's right, think positive. Be there for the boy. He's not going to want to see me all tearful, is he? Let's put on a brave face for him.

If only I had some energy. I've got no stamina left in me. Still got that bloody headache.

There it is, up the hill. How many times have I been to this place? Too many, that's for sure. Last time was mum. That went on and on. Poor old thing, two months in here before she finally died. What a place to go in. I wish she'd been back at home. Not that the nurses didn't do what they could. They did their best, but they were understaffed. 'Understaffed, underpaid, overworked' one of them said.

But dying in the ward like that. I wish I could have made her final days better for her.

That used to be the maternity wing. Looks like it's been refurbished. I had all my four in there – just about. Katie nearly popped out in the ambulance but we made it just in time. At least I knew what I was doing by then. Not like the first time with Alex. Seems like a lifetime ago.

Alex. She's a good girl really. I hope she manages to make something of herself. I haven't been able to do much for her. I'd like to have given her more more.... I don't know. Not just more things. I know just having things doesn't really matter, though it would have been nice. But something to set her up in life, somehow. I don't know. I feel like I've been a disappointment to her in a way. She'll probably find what she needs. She won't need me much longer. None of them will need me eventually, I suppose. Still, Danny needs me now. I must concentrate on Danny, stop all this day dreaming.

What's going on over there? All them people, placards. It looks like some sort of protest. Unions, I suppose. Good luck to them, they'll need it. Look what happened to the miners! 'Save our local hospital', 'No to hospital closure'. I didn't realise they were going to close it. This'll be because they're expanding St Matthew's, I bet. Yes, look 'Keep your hospital local.' I think I read about this in the papers.

See that, Rob? What if Danny had to go all the way to St Matthew's? It could take hours. Let's go and sign that petition on the way home, it won't take a minute.

Outside the pub

'Bye, then. Thanks for a great evening. I've really enjoyed it.

Yes, I'd like that. Ta-ra. Good night.

In the street

At least it's stopped raining. Well, that was a nice change. I suppose I could have stayed a bit longer. Still, it's getting late, and I'd've had to buy another round sooner or later so just as well to leave before it gets embarrassing. Anyway, I'm shattered.

But I should get out more, it really lifts my spirits and they're nice girls. Even though I don't know them that well, we seem to have quite a lot in common. I haven't had much company since Val and Tom moved. Hardly been out at all. In fact, this must be the first time I've been

out since their farewell do, and that's six months ago at least. It's like I've been tucked away all that time, inside, under a blanket.

They're not the same as Val, of course. Old friends are the best. But I wouldn't mind seeing them again. They're good fun, quite easy going. Not that I could afford to go out very often. But once a month, maybe....

God, what's that noise? Are they all right? Oh, they're just mucking about... or are they having a fight? I can't see from here if they're just playing around. Don't want to stare. Suppose they turn nasty. No, don't be silly. It's just that lot from Willow Way again.

I don't know how those girls can be out on a night like this with so few clothes on! They must be freezing. Don't they feel the cold? I suppose it's all about showing off. Still, I'd feel better if there was a policeman around somewhere. I don't suppose they'd take any notice if there was, but it'd make me feel safer.

This neighbourhood has gone right down. I never used to feel like this walking home at night from just round the corner. You can't tell what those kids are up to. It might be innocent fun. Heaven knows, there's nowhere else for them to go round here. But you hear such terrible things, drugs, knives, gangs.

Alex knows them. Thank god she doesn't hang around the bus stop. It probably won't be long before Nicky and Danny do, though. I can see them two falling in with some gang, doing whatever the bullies tell them to. They're not strong enough to resist.

You have to be strong in this world, don't you? I don't think I'm strong enough. That's where I've failed them. I've not helped them to be tough. And Rob's no use. He's hardly a role model for them. And I haven't been much of a role model for Alex either. Not exactly the liberated, independent, career woman, am I?

Still, they haven't got themselves into trouble yet, so there's no point in worrying. They're not bad kids, really. What's the betting the little darlings have left the washing up for me? Why do I even ask?

Look at that, more junk food cartons! I picked up a load only this morning. I might as well get a job as a dustman, at least I'd get paid for doing this.

Here we are again, then. Hiya love, I'm home.