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MARCH 2010
\$9.90 (INCL. GST)



“I believed in myself enough to take control.”

Abandoned and subjected to a childhood of abuse, Andrew Griffiths broke away to live the fulfilling life he deserved.

Words by **Andrew Griffiths**

Life takes us in many directions, and how we get to where we are is often a great mystery. Right now I am fortunate enough to be a best-selling author with 10 books sold in more than 50 countries. I talk at conferences around the world and I am an entrepreneur with a strong desire to help people achieve their dreams. But my life was very different early on.

I don't have a birth certificate and I'm not completely certain when or where I was born. I do know I started life in Melbourne in early 1966. For some reason, when I was about six months old and my sister Wendy was about 18 months old, my parents left us both with an old lady, Winifred, who used to live up the street from us. She immediately packed up and moved us to Perth.

Our life with Winifred was somewhat surreal. She was 75 years old when she took us to Perth and as I look back, I realise she had severe dementia. She would talk to herself, was brutally violent, an incorrigible kleptomaniac and, in many ways, she was quite simply stark raving mad.

We were always covered with bruises, cuts and burns. I wasn't allowed to sleep inside the house so I slept on a mattress outside. We washed once a week and I didn't brush my teeth until I was 10.

I lived in a state of constant fear. Winifred could fly off the handle in a fit of rage at any time and I was regularly woken in the middle of night by her beating me with whatever she could get

countless half-healed injuries. The welfare was called in to investigate the 'suspected' abuse, but not much changed.

When I was about 11 years old, things flared up badly. Winifred went on a rampage, attacking me with a metal rake and knocking me unconscious. Wendy and I were taken away and put in emergency care.

After a few stints in various forms of shelter, we

I had long since moved away from my foster father and, fortunately, a wonderful woman called Val had taken me in and provided a safe haven for several years. Throughout my life there have always been a few angels close by and I think of them often.

It was quite a spiritual moment for me as the late afternoon clouds split and the sun started to slide behind the hills. Pondering what was happening around me, it was easy to see the road I was heading down. I saw Winifred kill herself with bitterness and anger. I saw friends kill themselves with self-loathing in the forms of drug and alcohol abuse and I saw far too much violence from people who were tragic and lost and looking desperately for someone to be angry with. I was on the verge of heading down one of these dark paths myself.

I realised right then and there that I had the power to choose my way in the world. I didn't have to follow the predictable path that I saw so many others following. I was in control and I could change if I wanted to. I believed in myself enough to have the confidence to take control of my life.

“I knew that now was the time to break away from the world unfolding around me and be my own man. So that is what I did.”

her hands on. As strange and surreal as this life was, I didn't know anything different, so there was a degree of normality about it. Living with fear became my normal state of mind and it wasn't until I was older that I knew it was wrong.

Eventually the welfare department became involved when, during a swimming lesson at our primary school, I took off my shirt to reveal a big cut on my stomach and arm from where Winifred had attacked me with a pair of gardening shears. I had

ended up in Sydney with new foster parents. But it wasn't to last. Our foster mother died from a terrible and aggressive form of cancer not long after we arrived in Sydney and our new foster father then lost the plot. In many ways, so did I. Drinking became a huge part of my life. Then drugs and petty crime started to creep in.


One Friday afternoon, when I was 17 years old, I was standing at the end of the driveway of the house where I was living, waiting to get picked up for a night of drinking and taking drugs.



Andrew Griffiths has overcome his childhood to become a best-selling author.

This was incredibly profound for me. I knew that now was the time to break away from the world unfolding around me and be my own man. So that is what I did.

From that day on I have tried my best to live my own life, changing what needs to be changed and becoming a better person in any way I can. Sometimes it has been hard, other times very easy. I have been a door-to-door salesman, travelled the world, owned my own successful businesses, and many other things in between.

Now I get to share my experiences with others, encouraging them to let go of the past and get on with living the life they want and deserve. Every experience I have had has played a part in me becoming the man I am today and I am very grateful for that. 

Andrew Griffiths is an international author, keynote speaker and trainer. Andrew owns The Marketing Professionals and advises small business and large corporations (andrewgriffiths.com.au).

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MY STORY

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