

'My story' by Sylvia Mac, Disabled Entrepreneur & Founder/CEO of Love Disfigure Talent Agency.

At the age of 2 and a half, I had a terrible accident that left me fighting for my life. Whilst playing a game of Hide and Seek, my sister pushed the bathroom door and I fell backwards into boiling water.

Being the youngest of 5 sister, it was known that my mother spoiled me quite a bit however I think I deserved to be spoiled. My father wanted us to all be strong and stand for our rights so it was a good mix of the two. I was secretly scared of my father. So apart from spending loads of time visiting hospital and having surgery procedures done, I enjoyed listening to my mother telling me I was beautiful and special. I didn't really understand why I was special but my mum seemed to mollycoddle me and treat me very differently from the other children.

I remember that I spent time with my father watching my elder sisters swim at the local club. I really wanted to swim but by the time I hit my teens, I began to think more about my body. Then one day, my father took me to a lovely swimming teacher called Brenda and she taught me to swim in a quiet pool with no other children around. My father told me that I was going to swim with my siblings in our local swimming club. I felt scared but once I joined the other swimmers, I felt great! Until one day, whilst on poolside, some children were stood behind me calling me names. It was the first time I experienced body image issues. I did everything to stop the children from recognising me. I couldn't tell my parents what happened but instead asked for big towels. My father continued to buy me open back swimming costumes but I hated them. I cried a lot in secret and I hid away from everyone and learned how to navigate my world without being caught. That sounds so sad but it's so true. Imagine as a young teen thinking that if I were caught with the scars on my body, it would be awful.

In school, I had terrible issues with tightness and the only way I could describe it is feeling like I'm tied up in ropes. The contractures on my body that are thick scars and bowstring scars deep under my skin criss cross their way up and down vertically, horizontally across my back and around my sides down my legs. I would say the worse part of having these scars was feeling full up after eating but in fact the tight scars across my tummy caused me loads of pain always sitting alone on a bench in the playground holding my tummy. I wouldn't eat very much so I ended up with an eating disorder but my family had no idea.

Sports in school was horrid. We were made to wear short shorts that would show my burn scars on my leg. My first day of sports was my worst being made to shower in front of everybody. I didn't like anyone coming near me as I noticed everyone wanted to hug each other. If they hugged me, I would get caught out and then I would have to explain my scars. Things went from bad to worse even though I had loads of love in this world to give, I spent my time suppressing the real me. I was too embarrassed of this ugly body.





I grew up self body hating and suffering severely with depression and suicidal thoughts. My family knew nothing about my alcohol addiction and what was going on in my head. I always put on an act around my family because I felt like my worries and problems were mine and nobody else. Throughout the years, I continued to have surgery and struggle with who I was and where I belonged in this world. I didn't see any representation of me in press, media or society. There was nothing online and no campaigns showing real bodies. So in 2017, everything changed for me. I began to create brand campaigns, photoshoots, protests and get togethers because I wanted to change the way society see us. I became the 'go to' person online appearing at the Commons talking to MPs and bringing people together that were different with their scars, skin conditions, health conditions, invisible illnesses, disabilities.