



#depressionhurts

My Story— Maura

My name is Maura, I'm in my 40's, I'm a mother and a teacher and this is my story.

On a bleak February night, 21 years ago, my younger sister Hilary, told my parents that she was going babysitting and she would be staying the night. There was nothing unusual about this, she was a regular babysitter; she was going directly to school the next day, so took her schoolbag to do her homework and borrowed my grandmothers umbrella, with a warning not to lose it!.

The following morning, my father, a detective, came home for his coffee break and proceeded to tell my mother that a woman had drowned in the River Shannon the night before. They had found no body and didn't know who she was but she had left an umbrella on the bank.

Perhaps with a mother's instinct, my mother sent my father back to the station, to bring home the umbrella. He arrived back with it in an evidence bag and the nightmare began.

It took 3 units of Garda, Navy and local sub-aqua divers, two weeks, to locate my sister's body.

Trauma, grief and heartache accompany any death but this type of death also incurs guilt, analysis, nauseating, never ending soul-searching for answers never to be found.

The horror of my sister's death was further compounded by the fact that at the last minute, Hilary changed her mind and called out for help but the life-buoy had been vandalised,

The post-mortem showed Hilary had no water in her lungs. It was a 'dry drowning.'

We never saw it coming but then did we? The previous summer, she'd fallen at her job, fainted or blacked out...she was painfully thin, ate nothing and was using laxatives. Her jaws clicked when she did eat, she hated school. I thought she was receiving hang-up bullying phone calls but stupidly thought it best to let her sort it out herself.



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My sister was the most beautiful baby and toddler, white curls, blue eyes. She was just as beautiful as a 17 year old.

On the day she died I was returning to Uni, my mother driving me to get the bus, when we saw my sister waltzing down the road in the rain and pulled in. Looking at her, long legs, blonde hair— 'how', I groaned, 'did you produce two daughters so different'? ... :)

With hindsight, signs were there 6 months before my sister's death. It's just normal teenage stuff we individually thought, as we justified and rationalised any odd or moody behaviour.

Hindsight is no sight...it has been a cruel and merciless loss.

I went to the graveyard some weeks ago with my Dad and my own sons.

Its as hard today as it was 20 years ago when my lovely sister died.

It's the waste, her not having lived long enough to know that things always get better. Sometimes she'd ask me to help her with an essay, but I was too lazy and would fob her off, never believing I'd be writing an essay ultimately **about** her.

Depression can be a silent killer, we need to look out for teens suffering from depression—eating disorders, moodiness, tearfulness, inability to sleep or communicate ...the same things that affect an adult. All the information is there.

I now work with teens, can usually sense a troubled teen when I see one. The difficult part is knowing when to intervene; as an English teacher I try to find opportunity to land some life advice through the poetry and drama and film we do, to send a message that life is important, that all problems can be solved.