

Andy's Story

How We Met

My name is Andy. I met Tanya, the mother of my daughter Molly, when I was a school-aged teenager, and we spent years talking online before ever meeting in person.

The anticipation and excitement of finally meeting her in Oxford made everything feel vivid and real—like stepping into a world I hadn't fully understood before. For six months, we shared the intense emotions of a first love: the joy, curiosity, and nervousness that come with discovering someone who feels important in your life.

Then, without any explanation, Tanya left, just as my grandfather had passed away from a brain tumour, leaving me grappling with a mix of grief, confusion, hurt, and a sense of abandonment. Losing her so abruptly at such a formative age, alongside the grief of losing my grandfather, left a deep mark, shaping how I would understand connection, trust, and the complexity of emotions in relationships for years to come.

The Morning I Became a Father

One spring morning in 2016, I received a text out of the blue from Tanya that simply said, "I've given birth to a girl and she's yours." I fell to my knees in shock, overwhelmed by a mix of disbelief, awe, and fear.

Unsure of what to do first, I reached out to my operations manager, who told me to go and do what I needed to do—full-paid—allowing me the space to process the moment and meet my daughter, Molly, for the first time.

When I arrived in Oxford about six hours later, I fell in love all over again—not just with my daughter, but with Tanya, unaware of the challenges that lay ahead. I moved into her flat, but things quickly took a dark turn. I discovered that Tanya was spending £600 a month on weed after emptying my bank account. One memory that stays vivid is the day I returned home from long hours working away, terrified of what I might find. I had eaten my tea in the kitchen—a rare moment, as I was often refused use of the kitchen—and noticed that Molly had been crying unusually.

When Tanya brought Molly out of the bedroom, I immediately realized my daughter was grey and struggling to breathe. I told Tanya I was calling 999, and she threatened me, saying I would "get a crack" if I did.

I called 111 and waited for the ambulance. During treatment, Tanya sat smiling in the chair, and when instructed to accompany Molly to the hospital, she refused, saying she would rather stay home with her son. I later learned that Molly had been left in her cot with a bottle, which she had vomited and accidentally inhaled. Thanks to my quick intervention, Molly survived—but if I hadn't acted when I did, my daughter could have died.

In the months that followed, the abuse escalated. I was strangled, dragged by my face, blaming the scratches on Molly's sharp new nails, and chased around the garden with a screwdriver. Living in that environment was terrifying, and every day was filled with fear for both my safety and Molly's.

The Day That Changed Everything

One winter day shaped the course of the rest of my life. I had called my sister, Cathy, and she immediately saw the marks on my face. Horrified, she informed our mother, who quickly devised a plan for us to return to Huddersfield. We told Tanya that we were coming up north for two weeks with Molly, framing it as a temporary visit to give ourselves some space.

As I was trying to drive away the next day, Tanya clung onto the car door, refusing to let me leave.

When we finally returned to Huddersfield, the doctors delivered a shocking revelation: I had been six days away from death due to starvation. The reality of what had happened—the danger both Molly and I had been in—hit me like a tidal wave, marking a turning point in my life and forcing me to take decisive action to protect us.

I didn't hear from Tanya again until the day before my 21st birthday. Little did I know that she had applied to the family courts for custody. I attended the hearing in Oxford, where the judge explicitly told me that, by default, children belong with their mothers. What followed was a period of blackmail. During a second hearing, when we both had Molly for two weeks, Tanya told me that if I didn't sleep with her, I would never see my daughter again.

The real turning point came one morning when I woke to abusive phone calls from Tanya and her family, threatening to come to Huddersfield. I contacted CAFCASS and revealed that I had lied in court about Tanya's situation due to abuse and blackmail.

The court then instructed CAFCASS to undertake an S7 report. When I received the report, it confirmed that Molly lived with me, but I still had to attend one final court hearing.

A year to the day, I returned to court, waiting anxiously for the deliberation from four female magistrates. The verdict was in: Molly was to live with me. My knees buckled, and I fell to the floor. As my eyes filled with tears, the last thing I remember hearing were the words of the justice of the peace: "Take good care of your daughter." In that moment, I felt a profound mix of relief, love, and the weight of the journey we had survived.

Step 4: How I'm Doing, Giving Hope, and Lessons I've Learnt

Since those traumatic years, life hasn't been an easy ride. Molly and I have faced homelessness and had little to no support—until my now wife came into our lives. By court order, Molly's biological mother should see her once a month, but she hasn't seen her for five years. Through this, both Molly and my wife have been my anchor, giving me strength, stability, and a deep understanding of what it means to be loved and cared for.

Since then, I have dedicated my life to supporting others. I am currently in my final university year studying law with the goal of becoming a family solicitor. I am also a McKenzie friend. There are a range of organisations that can help and one I used was [this](#).

I know what it's like to face adversity alone. I've been where you are, and I overcame it. You don't have to go through it alone—you can find hope, strength, and a path forward, just as I did.

Conclusion: Resilience, Purpose, and Hope

Looking back on everything I've been through—from my first experiences of love and loss, to the terrifying moments that threatened Molly's life, to the court battles and years of hardship—I can see how each challenge shaped me. I have learned that resilience isn't just about surviving; it's about taking the pain you've experienced and using it to protect, nurture, and inspire others.

Through it all, Molly and my wife have been my anchor, my motivation, and my greatest teachers. I have learned the true meaning of love, responsibility, and perseverance. My journey has also taught me the importance of using my experiences to help others, whether it's through law, advisory work, or simply sharing my story.

Life hasn't been easy, and there are scars that remain, but there is also hope, strength, and purpose. Every day, I strive to be a better father, a supportive partner, and someone who can guide others facing adversity. If my story can offer even a glimmer of hope to someone who feels alone, afraid, or trapped, then sharing it has been worth every painful memory.

I am living proof that even in the darkest moments, you can fight, survive, and build a life of meaning, love, and resilience.