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Welcome to Fab after Fifty

At Fab after Fifty we are passionate about women over fifty making the best of their lives. There has never been a better time to be 50! We'd love you to join in the conversation. Be Seen. Be Heard. Don't be invisible. Be Fab after Fifty!

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Today!

Sharon, overcomes mental illness to become an inspirational speaker in her 50s

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Interview by Ceri Wheeldon



Sharon shares with us her reinvention story as she recovered from depression and addiction in her 50s to become an inspirational speaker, poet and author.

About Sharon:

My name is Sharon Bull, and since September 2013 I have worked as an inspirational speaker, writer and poet under the banner of A Compassionate Voice. The sole purpose is to creatively help others through my own experiences with mental health, depression, addiction, recovery and well-being.

From the age of twenty I had battled with mental illness, including depression, anxiety and a spending addiction incurring £50,000 debt. For thirty years, my authenticity had played second fiddle to all the mad distractions I associated with being happy, and it wasn't until I reached my lowest point I found what I believe to be my purpose.

In 2010, I plummeted into months of total despair. I lost my job as a top sales executive with a British brand leader, my company car, wardrobe of designer clothes and shoes, credit cards, my home and consequently my self-respect, because I placed all this material stuff above everything else. I lost almost everything, including my life, but it's in adverse times we grow and learn, even though we don't see it at the time.

Up until 2010, my mind had been completely occupied by a self-cherishing attitude, a constant striving to be better than the next person by improving my status, climbing the ladder of success and accumulating material possessions, no matter what the cost. I listened to my ego far more than I listened to my heart, yet in both body and soul I was far more uplifted when the goals I set for myself were in place to help make a difference for others.

Reaching my lowest point as I turned 50

Just as I had turned my first half century, what must have been the lowest point in my existence, culminated into the most life changing experiences. I do believe we are eventually sent warning calls to divert us from a path which is destroying our true spirit, it may be illness, redundancy, loss, or even a break up in a relationship and although this may seem totally unfair, a complete travesty, or injustice at the time, it can so often be our saving grace. A series of light bulb moments triggered by meditation and present moment thinking

cut through the chaos that finally transformed my thought process, which more importantly transformed my life.

What challenges did you initially face? How did you overcome them?

One of the questions I continually asked myself during my meditations was why my happiness during the thirty years was always short-lived? The answer is simple. I didn't believe in myself, because I wasn't being true to myself. It would not have mattered how high I climbed the corporate ladder, how big my house, or car was, and how fancy my clothes were, nothing would have ever been good enough. I wasn't happy within. The biggest challenge initially for me, was to rid this built-in concept I had unknowingly been carrying around with me for years – that I simply wasn't good enough. Meditation helped, but most importantly I am now living authentically, being who I am, rather than who I think I should be. I am also embracing my passions, my creativity and talents, which have knitted perfectly together to create my new journey. I have also found a meaningful purpose that is helping and inspiring others, and giving a voice to the vulnerable and voiceless too.



Any Regrets?

No, I look back on the thirty years with fondness and appreciation, rather than regret. I have come to understand that although some of the routes I have taken were wrong, some of the roads were long and treacherous, the lessons I learned were palpable. I also have the knowledge, first-hand experiences and understanding with others suffering from mental health issues, addiction and debt.

What other opportunities have materialised as a result?

Since 2013 there has been much interest from the media about my story, with features over the past few years in national magazines, and interviews on key radio shows across the UK. A Huffington Post blogger, I have also been invited to write blogs with numerous national movements and charities, including 'Action for Happiness' and 'The Wildlife Trust'. I have spoken at numerous events too, including mental health seminars, AGMs, well-being festivals and charity events.

The biggest opportunity of all to materialise from this turn of events though, is one which I would never have dreamed possible. My first book titled 'Stripped Bare' will be published on August 28th this year. It is a true story based on my experiences and how after my failed suicide attempt I finally faced up to my fears.

It is a heartfelt journey in which I do literally strip myself bare, allowing readers to see behind the façade we can so often portray to others. There will certainly be aspects of this story many relate to after reading the honest and open accounts about situations and circumstances that were repeatedly determined by my past issues. I also wanted the book to lift the lid on the toxic effects our society can have on people's lives, and the huge pressure we put on ourselves as we tirelessly strive to live out the perfect lifestyles seen in magazines, adverts and media. Most importantly though, it helps to break down the stigma attached to mental illness and how our perceptions of others can be far from their reality.

What are your next steps?

From September, I commence a series of talks across the UK, linked to my recovery experiences, and the issues and values within my upcoming book 'Stripped Bare.' The tour kicks off at the Monastery, Manchester on Sunday 10th September 2017 and visits Derby, London and Sheffield. More dates will hopefully be added.



In-between this and the book promotion, I am also writing my second book called 'Step Outside the Box'. This book is less about myself and more about raising awareness to humanitarian, animal welfare and environmental issues, and how we can all help as individuals to create a better world to live in.

My long-term goal is for 'A Compassionate Voice' to have its own foundation, raising funds for the charities and causes close to my heart. Children, animals and nature are immensely important to me, so one of its key strategies would be to unite children with animals and nature. Children are the ambassadors of the future and its imperative in this twenty first century, which is bursting at the seams with iPads, Nintendo's and Xbox, we also educate them about our connection with all living beings and nature.

All-time favourite book or film?

I am an avid book reader; however, my choices are definitely not romantic novels, I much prefer authors such as Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, Dalai Lama, Matthieu Ricard and Wallace D Wattles.

My all-time favourite film is much easier, it's ET, but I am also an avid fan of the TV show 'Doctor Who'.

3 tips for women over 50

What 3 tips would you give other women over 50 looking to do something similar?

My three tips for resolving any long-term issues would be

- Face up to fears – the root cause behind repetitive, damaging actions.
- It is never too late; the time is always right for positive change.
- Have faith in who you are and your capabilities, because the only time we stop loving is when we lose faith in ourselves.

My three tips for success as a speaker, author and poet would be

- Step outside the box and just do it!
- Have patience and determination.
- Never give up and always have hope!

Three words that sum up your life after 50

Purposeful, Peace-of-mind, Genuine.

To find out more about my book and tour 'Stripped Bare' please visit <http://www.acompassionatevoice.co.uk> and <https://www.facebook.com/sharonacv/>



Ceri Wheeldon

Ceri is Founder and Editor of Fabafterfifty.co.uk She is a frequent speaker at events and in the media on topics related to women over 50 , including style and living agelessly. With 20+ years experience as a headhunter Ceri also now helps support those looking to extend their working lives.

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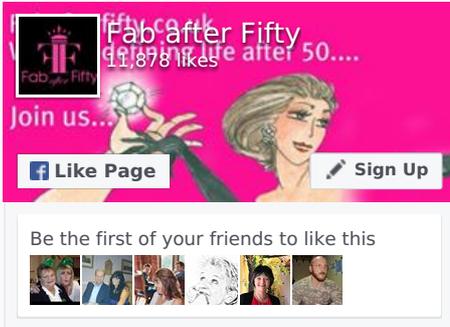


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A screenshot of a Facebook post for the 'Fab after Fifty' page. The post features a pink background with a woman's face and the text 'Fab after Fifty', '11,878 likes', and 'Join us...'. Below the post are buttons for 'Like Page' and 'Sign Up'. A section below the post says 'Be the first of your friends to like this' and shows several small profile pictures of users.



A Google+ button for the 'Fab after Fifty' page. It features the 'Fab after Fifty' logo on the left and a 'G+ Suivre' button on the right.