

## Sue — “My Gran can take her hair off”

“My Gran can take her hair off”. These were the words that I ‘heard’ as I imagined my first tiny, newborn granddaughter as a Kinder girl, comparing notes with her Kinder friends about what people in her family can do – as only kids can!

How would I react to that? At the time, I wasn’t in a place with my alopecia where I would be ok with it being made so public – and yet I really wanted to be ok with it! So began a journey towards freedom and release from the ‘fear of exposure’.

I had already been on the journey of focusing on physical health, ensuring I was doing all I could – supplements, alternate therapies – to keep my body well. Now it was about emotional health. Healthy Alopecia – emotionally.

The fear of exposure had such a hold on my freedom, and influenced decisions about doing things such as going to the beach, to the gym, travelling, even answering my own front door if I happened to be wearing a scarf. There is power in the hidden things of our lives – it’s not that everyone needs to know everything about us, but the things that rob us of our freedom to just ‘be ourselves’ have a degree of power that is not healthy. Taking steps towards being free was a gradual process, done with small steps, with safe people, in safe places, but each time my confidence grew and the freedom began to flow.

Then came the time to really step out, and act on my desire to be more open and free. I took the step of telling my work colleagues about my alopecia and discovered a tremendous liberty, as I faced my fears and began to confront and overcome them. At the same time I found that my being vulnerable triggered a response amongst my colleagues where I heard some amazing stories from the hearts of others who have had to deal with ‘hidden things’ in their lives.

And the more open I was as time went on, the more the burden of ‘fear of exposure’ was lessened. The question had become not so much “Can I do this?” but “Who or what is the master?” Fear had been too long the master of my alopecia – now I was becoming the master and turning the alopecia into a tool for positive things.

I am now in a much healthier emotional place with my alopecia. It still amazes me that I can now stand in my hot yoga class, without anything on my head, look myself in the eye in the mirrors and say to myself – ‘You look great!’

My granddaughter is actually in Kinder this year – and if she does happen to say to her friends “My Gran can take her hair off” – well, it’s true, and that’s ok!!

