

A mother's report: Rebirth of a Family

Two and a half years ago I left Sarasota with 13 people to attend a workshop in North Carolina. I returned home to find my honor roll, thespian, music major, star basketball player 15 year old daughter had run away from home. *What?!* I'd expect perhaps an overrun curfew or "little white lie" as to her whereabouts, but to run away? I felt catapulted into a Twilight Zone I knew nothing about. I had no friends with experience of run-away children. I was faced with a terrifying, confusing, exasperating situation.

All night pacing, wondering what I had done wrong, anger, hurt, all these swirled through my being. For the next several months I would chase her through yards and lure her home only to have her sprint off like a startled deer. I tried to make a semblance of sense out of what was happening. I went to therapists (I am a therapist!), run-away support groups, group therapy and finally to the woods. I'd heard about MDMA from therapy circles, and when I inquired about its availability, it was there. I bought it and took it with a trusted friend, later realizing that it was what I had needed. It was like TNT blasting through the shale to uncover the clear crystals.

I'd been a psychiatric nurse for a dozen years, lately specializing in women's issues of incest and sexual abuse. My daughter was showing those same symptoms. It was not just the ordinary teen rebellion, she had started into a downward spiral that no talking or logic could touch. The puzzle pieces started coming together for me. "Armed" with insight from the MDMA experience and a past-life recall, I began my strategy. Beth returned from an extended Christmas visit (we had hopes that the change of scenery could be healing.) She was immediately admitted to the adolescent unit of a psychiatric hospital where I worked. Apparently, it was not time for her to face her issues, because she reared back like a roped mustang and dug in deeper. Insurance forced an early discharge. It was not long before she was on the streets again.

Easter 1992

My husband (not her father, we had divorced) and I had planned to take our four other children (ages 13, 11, 8, and 3) out on our sailboat for the weekend. I got word to Beth to please join us. I invited a well-loved old boyfriend of hers for the trip, as well. She arrived a couple of hours before take-off, when we were all busy packing. My breath drew short as I reviewed my plans. A couple of weeks previously, my husband and I had taken a tab each of

MDMA, rowed out to the boat, and talked all night on deck, in the moonlight. Ecstasy's effects on me were similar to a mellowed pot of coffee: sharp memories, connected thought patterns, erasure of extraneous pollution from mind and feelings. It felt to me that being on "X" is what life is supposed to feel like. In fact, I now can find my way to that same space most easily with a sunrise, a focusing on the present, or a loving exchange with friends. I guess I'd label MDMA a "chemically induced meditation." I trusted that the same calming, opening effects would translate for my daughter.

The difficult part of presenting the drug to her remained: we had been holding a firm stance on abstinence, primarily for her sake. How could I rationalize giving her an illegal street drug? The benefits that I saw outweighed the liabilities. I chose to give MDMA to her with herbs (peppermint for calming, vitamins and minerals for seasickness), right before we were to leave on the excursion. A short while later, Beth was running around the block. She returned panting, wide-eyed and said to me, "What's happened?! What's wrong with me?! Did you drug me?!" I put my arm over her shoulder and said, "Let's walk."

Beyond my wildest dreams

What happened next went beyond my wildest dreams. For the first time, it seems in years, my daughter had eye contact with me. She said she thought at first that I was drugging her to "put her in the psych unit." She was acting emotionally unlocked and empathic. Since she demanded to know what I'd given her, and she was having such an exaggerated reaction, I felt it was time to be honest. When I told her what I had done, there was a sigh of relief (later I found out that she thought she was "going nut.") After the sigh came tears. We walked arms entwined as she cried, stamped her feet and yelled out anger and betrayal at two men who had molested her at ages seven and ten. This was hard news for me to take. She cried, thinking of the daughter one of the men had and of the other girls perhaps similarly abused. I held her and consoled her. Step after step, sob after sob, she told me of her pent up embarrassment, guilt, anger, of feelings of betrayal and abandonment. Spirit gave me the strength to connect with her heart to guide her through self-forgiveness. To be emotionally intimate with my daughter and still remain objective, I had taken a pill and the handful of herbs, too. The walk was like a bottle of poison being slowly poured out, to be replaced by sparkling water ready to refresh.

We headed back to the marina. After hearing and seeing the effects of the afternoon on Beth, and →

her connection with the family, her boyfriend said, "I'm going to write a book about this! I'll call it *The Drug that Saved a Family!* That night we all talked and laughed as a family of seven + 1 for the first time in a long time. The next day in the rain we played games below deck, sharing, laughing and crying. It was indeed a rebirth for our family, an Easter to always remember. To me, that's the story.

Aftermath

What subsequently happened was a lesson from ignorance and my own optimism. Because of the phenomenal breakthrough of Saturday and Sunday, I thought "all was healed." Beth felt like going back to high school on Monday and I thought "why not". Now I know that more processing and the involvement of an MDMA-accepting therapist would have completed the experience. Not having any protocol to follow, I rejoiced in my daughter's return to school. I did not realize she was still raw and too vulnerable. Her "friends" convinced her I was an abusive mother who'd tricked her with drugs and that she should call the state health authorities. I felt gashed upon the rocks. I realized all too late the route I'd chosen was an unmarked trail and my next lesson was in battling the powers that be. The following week was one of disintegration. Confusion plagued me. What had happened?! I'd gotten my daughter back only to have her stolen from me? Accusation came over the phone from friends, her father, and finally, the police.

Without follow-up therapy, and perhaps another MDMA unlocking, Beth was a sheep among wolves. She stole money, threatened suicide, and an eventual court order to Baker Act her ensued. It was a comedy, no, TRAGEDY of errors that landed her in lock-up. She spent less than 24 hours in crisis intervention but it was long enough to "slip" to the counselor that her mother had "slipped" her an illegal drug.

When the detective called me, I assumed it was regarding the rapes. I dutifully went to the courthouse. It was the same man who was overseeing her rape case, so I thought I'd have to answer a few more questions and be done.

Interrogation

The door closed, and the interrogation light came on...

"Mrs. Rose, is it true that you gave your own child the illegal drug known as Ecstasy?" My heart felt stabbed. I was in disbelief - an act of love to save one's child - was I being prosecuted for this? I stammered out "I believe I should have a lawyer." He

stomped out of the room as I collapsed in anguish. My license, my career, my children! What had I risked to break through to my eldest? And what more could I say? I'm an honest person. I would tell the truth with or without an attorney. By the time the detective returned with another police witness, I felt resolved to "take my medicine." Signed and witnessed consent forms.... The recorder ready... The man across from me, poised for the kill...

"Do you realize that I can take your other children away from you?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

"Sir, do you have any children?"

"Yes, 3 daughters."

"If you walked in and saw a man raping your daughter, what would you do?"

"Why of course, I'd kill him!"

"Sir, isn't murder illegal?"

"Ah... well... yes... But I'd be saving my daughter..."

"Well, Sir, I was trying to save my daughter."

Once the tape recorder came on he never asked me another implicating question. Other lawyers later advised me not to tell the truth, but I've concluded "the truth shall set you free." Between the detective's recommendation and Rick Doblin's immediate response to my plea for help, I was acquitted. My nursing license is intact. I continue to deliver babies and counsel new mothers and I plan to pursue an advanced degree.

As far as my own baby, Beth, I just learned that she'll be a mother. I know she'll be a great one, too. She continued on her self-awareness path, was initiated into my Moon Lodge and took her vision quest in the mountains of North Carolina with some friendly mushrooms, always open to life's teachings.

Sarah