

Warning message: ([00:00](#))

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Cameron: ([00:19](#))

I don't think I struggled with my sexuality in the same way. I think I did struggle with being sexually abused and I definitely feel like the domestic violence that I went through growing up affected me.

Cameron: ([00:33](#))

Welcome to lifelines, holding onto hope, a podcast in which people who have reached dark places in their lives share their stories. This is Cameron's story. He's a musician. It's a story about a hidden terror no child should have to endure. It's also a story about how passion and people can transform an ugly start into something very beautiful.

Cameron: ([00:57](#))

Yeah. I grew up in Sydney, in a beachy kind of area and I would say from the outside I had, I've, I was very lucky in many ways. I mean, I grew up in what is a very beautiful neighborhood and I had access to a really good education both for primary school and high school. Um, and for the most part I would say I was a pretty well behaved and motivated student. And, and I do think that I have, I had have a family that really was very loving and supportive in many ways. But, I guess like most families, we had our difficulties in particular my father was really violent. And had a drinking problem. Uh, my dad was a primary school teacher, um, and in his school he was, he was very charismatic. Um, and in many regards, probably the most popular teacher at his school.

Cameron: ([02:19](#))

But on an evening when he would come home in the afternoon, he would pretty much drink every day. Um, I often remember when he would collect me from my school once I was done during primary school, uh, a trip to the bottle shop and our way home would be a regular occurrence in the afternoon. Um, and while I was watching TV in the afternoon, he would drink continuously in our back room until my mother got home from work. And um, and every Friday was regularly spent at a pub nearby to where he worked until very late in the evening. At about 11:00 PM or 12, we would usually head home. And around that time I was probably about eight to 12 years old, I would say. I remember growing up that I became really used to listening out for what I guess were distress signals, um, from my mum or to certain sounds. Usually like an elevated or a louder sound, either somebody talking or maybe a door slamming or it could be anything like that really, that would signal that some

kind of danger was about to happen.

Cameron: [\(03:44\)](#)

Um, and looking back as an adult now I can see that, I was very anxious during that time period growing up. I would remember that, you know, if I, if I heard the sound of any kind of raised voice, I would, I would take myself to the hallway in our home where I was able to hear what was happening clearer and would, um, would kind of wait in this limbo position until things either cleared or they escalated and further steps had to be taken. Which could involve me going to a neighbor's house to phone the police or, um, my mum and I having to leave home, uh, under very short notice to go stay in a hotel. Christmases and birthdays and, uh, often big significant occasions, were often the worst times for violent, uh, events to occur. Um, and I guess, uh, they're also often occasions where people tend to drink more, um, as well.

Cameron: [\(04:59\)](#)

Uh, I remember one particular Christmas in my memory had been very tense for a few days leading up to this event. Um, and on Christmas Eve, my father, uh, was very drunk and smashed my mum's head against our dining room table so hard that the, the table actually split in two. And I had been sort of peering from around the corner, uh, watching the events unfold. And I remember I was, I was so frightened, but I think, I think because it was Christmas time, I, I really, I really just, I guess, tried to, to be brave in that moment and walked, I remember walking out in my pajamas, with my mum lying on the floor. At the table is now broken. And I had just witnessed my dad, uh, well I guess knocking my mum's head into the table. And I remember coming out and saying at something on the lines of, you know, could, could we stop? It's, it's Christmas Eve, please stop. Please stop. Um, and instead of the situation clearing, my dad was so drunk that he lowered himself to my level and approached me asking me if I knew who Santa Claus was. And I remember that I could hear my mum, you know, saying, no, no, don't, don't do this. It's, it's not right what you're doing is wrong, in the background. And then he asked me if I knew his Santa Clause was and then put out his hand and introduced himself as Santa Claus and told me that, um, that, that Santa Courts wasn't real and that he was Santa Claus. Um, and then produced a some hidden presents to prove his point. And it was, um, it was a very, uh, it was a very crushing moment from my childhood. And, um, later on that evening things became much worse. So, uh, I remembered my mum and I left to, I think drive to her parents' house who was still arrive at the time. Uh, but they lived about three or four hour drive from where we were. So we ended up staying in a roadside motel for a couple of days on the way. And it was a, it was a very bleak time.

Cameron: [\(07:54\)](#)

I find any kind of assertive behavior, particularly if there's course language involved, directed at me, very difficult to process. And I often find that I can't speak back in the moment even if it's even if it's not something terribly distressing. I um, I find myself lost for words and I don't, I don't know what to do in the situation really, I do clam up and yeah, it's unbearable and it, it does remind me of when I was a child because I, I often felt, I mean it was, it was distressing to be in those situations with my father. But it, there was, there were often elements of humiliation and shame as well because I didn't, I didn't have the mental capacity at that time to really understand what was happening. And often in a lot of the situations I really felt that I was to blame for things that, now I realize were definitely not my fault.

Cameron: ([09:13](#))

I mean my father could become irate and violent over the fact that you made him a sandwich incorrectly. Or I remember once he said that I borrowed too many books from our local library. So he threw them all at me one by one in my room. I think you have to remember as well that, all these things happened when I was between the ages of 8 and 11 or 12. When you know, by no means is a child that age, um, expected to, you know, to not make mistakes or to not have accidents happen.

Cameron: ([09:52](#))

I had a, I have a sibling, who came to live with us when I was 14. Um, we have the same dad, but we have different mums. And they grew up in another state of Australia and they wanted to move to Sydney to seek further education and job opportunities. An argument arose around something really quite trivial. I mean, uh, my sibling is slightly about six to six or eight years older than myself and I think in the early twenties, they, there may be able to be irresponsible with a credit card, but nothing, nothing dramatic in any sense. My Dad got so angry about it, he threw my sibling down two flights of stairs and they broke their arm in the fall and continued to terrorize both my mum and myself and my sibling. Um, and we locked ourselves in my bedroom to protect us. Um, and I rang the police, um, cause I was a little, a bit older then, and every time I tried to call the police before, uh, I mean under my mum's request, I remember growing up she would always cry out for me to go to the neighbor's house to go, and call the police. But I was, I was too frightened, I guess in that freezing response. I didn't know what the correct thing was to do. But as a 14 year old, I think, I think you have more of an idea. Um, and as my father tried to escape in his car, the police blocked him in at the garage and uh, arrested him. That night changed many things. My father still holds me responsible for his arrest and for having that AVO and mark against him, in his records. I was very anxious after my dad was arrested. And I think things really changed between my mum and I, because she, I think still really wanted to be with my dad during that time. And I don't think that the events really changed her

perception on that. She, she has described it as a sacrifice that she made in order to have me stay with her.

Cameron: ([12:32](#))

But shortly after my dad left. My mum found a diary that I had been keeping under my bed that, uh, that revealed a, my sexuality to her as being gay. Um, and that also revealed that I had been, um, already engaging in sexual behavior with other men, including being sexually abused by a stranger. And she felt very confronted by the information. And I think, so soon after my father being arrested, uh, she didn't type to the news very empathetically. My mum was really concerned with things like aids, or if you would even meet somebody, um, who would want to be in a relationship with you. And, uh, you know, the, the grandchildren sort of conversation and all those kinds of, fears that people had about homosexual people. Um, whether even being homosexual automatically made you a predator, which I think confused my mum even more having read in my diary that I had been sexually abused by a homosexual stranger.

Cameron: ([13:55](#))

There was a real fear and a real myth around that time that perhaps people who were gay or, um, did feel they had a different sexual orientation had, were that way because they had been abused by somebody else, which is not true in any case. I mean that's unfortunately just, um, seems to be a run of bad luck that I had during that time. Um, so I think, I think it was all, I think it was all very difficult for my mum to take in and, and even though it doesn't make me happy to think about the way that she reacted during that time, uh, I, I think I can understand that her life was changing at a very quick pace, that she was probably unable, unable to keep up with mentally during that time.

Cameron: ([14:50](#))

I don't think I struggled with my sexuality in the same way. I think I did struggle with being sexually abused and I definitely feel like the domestic violence that I went through growing up affected me and definitely, definitely I felt very distant and maybe hard done by by my mum during such a such a developing time of your life. And I, I'd like to think that maybe I would do, I don't know that maybe I would react differently now, but I, I would, I would probably have to say that that sadly, that that distance probably continued through up until today. And that I think, I think the events that really happened over that time period really shaped the relationship that I would probably endure with my family until now.

Cameron: ([15:48](#))

Incredibly, Cameron's father kept returning to the family home.

Cameron: (15:53)

Uh, my dad asked me to do a specific task on the day of my sister's wedding, which it turned out my sister had hired somebody to do the job professionally. And told me not to worry about doing the tasks that my dad had asked on the day of the wedding, which is just to take photos. And they had hired a professional photographer, obviously I am not a professional photographer, so anything I did wouldn't have been as good. But the next day at home in the evening, the conversation turned to wanting to reflect on the event the day before. And my father asked to see the photos that I'd taken on a very small and cheap digital camera that he bought. I had taken a few photos and specifically of him, but because I didn't have enough and I explained the situation regarding the professional photographer, uh, he just became so angry, which, um, which I actually think was more that he wanted physical evidence of him engaging in this fatherly role of the wedding. He wanted to see physical evidence that he had been a great dad on the day of this wedding and because he couldn't immediately validate himself, I think he became so enraged. He had probably drunk at the wedding, and either had continued to drink the next day or was very hung over. And he smashed the camera out of my hand and beat me over, over my head with both of his fists at once in my temples, which caused me to bleed out of my right ear and, fall to the floor.

Cameron: (18:01)

My mum quickly took my dad out of the situation, uh, and they had booked a trip to go to Byron Bay the next day and instead of canceling the trip, uh, my parents still went on the holiday and left me by myself at home. Uh, I mean they left pretty much immediately after the event happened and my mum just transferred some money into my bank account and told me to go to the doctor if I need it.

Cameron: (18:35)

I, I did have a couple of relationship failures that year. I'd also just finished studying at university as well that same year, a couple of months prior to the wedding. And even though I had a lot of friends, I just remember thinking that I didn't really have very many options. Uh, I mean I was, I was working pretty much every hour or minute I could when I wasn't studying. I had a very intense study schedule from nine to five, uh, five days a week cause I went to like a college type university and I would work after school after university until about nine or 10 in the evenings.

Cameron: (19:19)

And I just remember thinking in the few months leading up before that that I just, I just, I didn't really know what I kind of saw in my future I think. Um, and I think it was because I was largely in a situation where I didn't, I didn't see pathway out of the situation I was in, even though I guess they were probably

kind of there I guess. But I'd been down for a really long time and I remember I, I had already wrapped up university. Uh, my parents had been and gone after the wedding and kind of come back and I was finishing up work for the year. It was my last day of work. I do some work as a teacher and I remember just feeling really calm on the bus home. And I'd already had suicidal ideation for quite a few months. I kind of thought off and on about how I might do it if I was going to. Um, and then I, I came home and I said good night to everybody and as soon as I got in my bedroom, I laid down in my bed, um, and tried to take my life. Then I woke up a couple of days later in hospital. Apparently I'd been found by my family.

Lifeline: ([21:05](#))

There is always hope, lifeline is here to help, reach out to us on 13 11 14 or via web chat each night at [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

Cameron: ([21:22](#))

I'm sure this is a very millennial thing to say, but um, I, I had written on my personal Facebook and on Twitter about how I was taking my life or I was planning to, and I guess, cause I, I really didn't think that I was coming back. By this time, you know, you kind of have people from all sorts of your walks of life on your social media and those sorts of things. Yeah. The hospital had been alerted to the fact about the social media too. So I wasn't given my phone back or access to social media, um, until a few days after when I was settled at home. But I remember reading a lot of the responses, comments and things and private messages or even voicemails and texts my phone. Which, which sounds, like it should fill you with comfort during that time. But I think it almost made it worse because I wasn't, I mean, as I said, I wasn't really expecting to wake up from what happened and I wasn't really ready to deal with the fact that I had now in this new circumstance attempted to commit suicide.

Cameron: ([22:51](#))

There was a whole sense of humiliation and identity that had kind of now come with that, that I wasn't yet able to process. And instead of it being maybe a private matter that I was just able to deal with close friends and the people that were involved during my admission into hospital. It had now become something that people who maybe I had only worked with at a cafe for a couple of times that we're probably on my social media became aware of. And it became a question that came up publicly in conversation at least in the couple of years after that. Almost like a constant reminder I guess in a way.

Cameron: ([23:43](#))

People generally seem to know that age span between 11 and 18 or 20 or I, you know, I thought they, they're always kind of extending when adolescents

ends, I think I read the other day, it was like 27 or 28 now. But I think everybody seems to know it's a really important time. I mean there's so many books and films about the coming of age story and how events define you during that period. But I actually, I actually don't think maybe parents in particular or the children realize how important it is until you're through it and you'll look back and you kind of realize that the events that have happened during that period do kind of shape up to who you might be today, but more importantly how you react to them. And sadly, I think it's always put my family at a bit of an arm's length from me because I was unable to feel safe in their company during that time. And in certain circumstances as an adult, I have still felt that sense of unease and it's something that I don't think will change. I mean my parents are in their early seventies now and it's something that I think I just have to kind of live with. They took up so much of my youth, filling it with their problems and anxiety, which really resulted out of a fact that they wanted, selfishly, I would say for the most part, to continue having their relationship despite anything else that happened. I was in my early thirties, and even though my dad was arrested when I was 14, he came back into our lives on multiple occasions.

Cameron: ([25:35](#))

I had a very nice counselor, I remember that. Um, but of course I'm sure that anybody who's just attempted to commit suicide probably ends up with a nice counselor. I think that she was really helpful. She was good to talk to. And I think because you have to have structured appointments, especially after you've just, you know, gone through something like a suicide attempt. Uh, and if you don't show up, there's definitely some concern about what's going on. I mean, you, you have to have somebody, you have to live with, somebody that can watch you for the couple of months afterwards. You have to go and travel to an appointment in my appointment was about an hour away from where I lived by public transport. So at least, it definitely got me out of the house for at least three hours during that time when the rest of it was, I mean, quite honestly, just I guess I spent sleeping, or in my room.

Cameron: ([26:34](#))

I mean, I, I do think that helped get things moving again. And it did get me thinking beyond that immediate point that I was in. Maybe about planning for the future in some way or what, or what I could do now. And during those sessions talking about my music or my writing was definitely a focus of mine. Whether I was using it as maybe a distraction to talk about some deeper issues. Um, it was the only real thing that I kind of saw as a way forward, um, during that time. Yeah, I did have really good friends. I had, um, I mean I've, I've always been lucky that I've, I've always, and I hope this doesn't sound conceited, but I've, I've always found it quite easy to make friends and I've always found it very easy to talk to people. Which may be in a way is

interesting because I think that there's definitely a school of thought that perhaps extroverted people don't suffer from depression or don't suffer from those same things that maybe someone who is more introverted or doesn't talk as much and would go through, but Um, you know, in recent years we've seen all sorts of people including somebody like Robin Williams for example, deal with these issues. And it, it shows the broad spectrum of people that can be affected. I mean, you don't, you don't really know who is going to be, I guess is the ultimate answer to that. But, um, but I, I do have some wonderful friends. And I mean, it's the small acts of kindness that I think make a difference. Like, I don't think anyone who's been through a situation like that needs anything big or surprising shortly after. I mean, they do really simple things. Like maybe they would take me to the park or maybe they would just show up at my house and watch a movie with me or we would walk down to the beach. And it was those things that put some difference into my life again, you know, took, took me out of the bedroom or just lying down for hours a day.

Beverley: [\(28:40\)](#)

Cameron started going to the gym, enjoying the experience of pushing himself to fitness levels he'd never imagined himself capable of. Despite some reservations from those advising him. He also found comfort in the accountability of work.

Cameron: [\(28:55\)](#)

And I was so glad that I did because even just getting out of the house and being treated as a normal person, given responsibility again, earning money again, which allowed me to go and do well, I guess whatever you want to really, really within your means. It really did start to give me a sense of self and identity back. And I would say that that would probably be the main thing that got me back on my feet, after attempting suicide and being hospitalized. Probably a month or two before being hospitalized, I had sent away to be assessed by some prominent Australian musicians who had quite well known careers. And in the few weeks after coming out of hospital actually received a response from them that they were really impressed with my work and that they wanted to get me in for development and to possibly go on a tour around Australia.

Cameron: [\(30:00\)](#)

And I guess this kind of talks into that point that I mentioned earlier that um, you know, after something like this happens, people kind of really advise you against doing anything, right? They really want you to have a big time out. And I was advised against taking those opportunities, the development and the tour and things because people didn't think I was, well they didn't think I was mentally stable to be honest. And they thought that perhaps going on these

opportunities could lead to, could lead to an eventual suicide, I guess. But you know, I can understand why that may be the advice in some cases, but, um, but I really think in the same way that I spoke about returning to work, that getting this vote of confidence from people who are so respected in a field that I had been working in or trying to get ahead in for, um, you know, all through my early twenties really meant so much to me and I didn't, I didn't want to listen to anybody who thought that I couldn't handle this opportunity.

Cameron: ([31:11](#))

And in fact, it kind of became that these opportunities were the only things that really made me want to keep going because they, they were really so amazing. Um, and they gave me enough during that time to be able to become fully functioning and fully independent, again. I mean I was, that's a very unique experience and I was very lucky to have that. But I think, you know, I've heard sometimes other people return to hobbies that they felt they really excelled at as children or just things that gave them a sense of self and a sense of safety and security or things that really boosted their self esteem. I mean exercise is always great in these sorts of situations, but you might hear stories of how people did ballet as a child and it's something that they stopped doing as an adult because of the things got in the way, but they, it was something that helped them refined themselves because they knew it was something that was kind of so intrinsically linked to who they are. And I was lucky or I am lucky that what I was passionate about, or my hobby as a child is something that I've continued as an adult professionally. And it, it is really the best thing ever happened I think. And maybe if I hadn't have had those opportunities, I still think that music would have been the way out for me. I guess.

Cameron: ([32:53](#))

I think it would be lovely to be able to say that, after my own experience that, you know, I've never kind of had negative or depressive thoughts again or that, you know, I don't feel sad or really sad over or anything now. But, but that's, that's not the case because I think especially especially I think if you have early trauma, I think it's something that you have for life, but I would say that it's something that you can manage. And I definitely feel after having been through the experience of an attempted suicide, I don't think I've ever felt as sad or as low as that particular time. And I don't know how I got to thinking that way. But I did. And I definitely spent a long time ruminating over my feelings during that period. And that's something that I tend not to do anymore. But I don't do it anymore because I've tried to fill my life in other ways. Cause I don't, I don't feel like I want to sit around and just ruminate and reflect on my past so much anymore.

Cameron: ([34:00](#))

I try to work whenever I can and I'm not an athletic person, but I, I try to

exercise for an hour every day because I don't want to be on medication. So I found for me that doing my best with my work, exercising for an hour a day, which keeps me feeling good on the inside and the outside means that I can present a better sense of self to the world. And being more in touch with my friends about my feelings has become really important as well. And if I feel down or I feel sad, you know, I try to do some activity in that moment that surpasses it, whether it be playing music or going for a run, organizing to do something, as a way to try to deal with the feeling at the time. And acknowledge its existence and that it's there instead of, you know, keeping on battling it away until it becomes like something hiding under the bed.

Cameron: ([34:56](#))

And more often than not, if I do get really down, I try to think about the last time that I was really happy and it doesn't have to be, you know, a huge occasion like a birthday or I know I think, I think when people say this that some things I want you to think of something really big. But it could actually just be like one of those instances where you have helped somebody accomplish something personally for them or maybe an act of small kindness that somebody had shown you. And I think when you think that way you realize that actually kindness is kind of everywhere in day to day society. And if I feel really down, I just tell myself that a small act of kindness or a time that I will enjoy myself is just around the corner. And that kind of goes on in a cyclic fashion and it always means that I have something to look forward to.

Beverley: ([35:53](#))

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