

How trauma brought Derval to tranquillity

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DIET CHANGE: Derval Dunford

One woman's personal tragedies put her on a path to enlightenment, she tells **Joy Orpen**

SOMETIMES in life we are forced by events to walk an unexpected path. And if we heed the calls, we may end up in a much better place.

That is true of Derval Dunford, 42, who, having endured two traumatic events, has bounced back to health, happiness and the creative life.

When she was 17 and living in Castlebar, her father was killed and her mother badly injured in a head-on collision with a truck. Derval also suffered severe whiplash and a broken jaw; her brother was injured too.

It took Derval two years to discover she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In the meantime she continued with her arts degree in Galway, but she wasn't able to cope.

"I didn't handle [the death] well. There wasn't much counselling in those days. I didn't know what to do."

After moving to Dublin and giving birth to her son Stephen, Derval decided to do something about the emotional pain. For two years she took prescribed medication and with the help of a psychiatrist delved into her feelings about the accident. The therapy worked. "I got over it," she says succinctly.

Then she moved to Westport and opened her own beauty therapy salon, but was constantly drawn to Dublin for courses in alternative therapies. She also began to meditate.

This helped her prepare for the next very challenging situation. In 2003 Derval developed a severe intolerance to house-paint and suffered migraines, nausea and severe fatigue.

Over time the situation became chronic and she developed an intolerance to a whole

range of everyday products, including shampoo, washing powder and deodorants.

Upon further research Derval came to the conclusion she was suffering from multiple, chemical sensitivity (MCS).

She tried an alternative approach. First she went to a friend who she believed had the gift for healing. "I don't really understand how it worked but it did seem to activate my body's own healing."

Then, on the advice of the allergy nurse, Derval began a restricted diet as she appeared to have candida — a yeast imbalance — which may have been related to the chemical problems.

She cut out all yeast and fermented products, refined grains, sugars, cow's milk, tea and coffee. Fresh vegetables brown rice and flour, oat cakes, soya milk, oily fish, lentils, peas and beans, as fresh and organic as possible, were recommended.

She removed all chemicals from her home environment and tried to avoid going out.

"As I couldn't go to pubs or restaurants I found I had time on my hands, so I began to meditate again and found it helped hugely with the anxiety I had around the illness."

It took Derval almost two years to recover her health and develop an acceptable level of tolerance to chemical substances, but today she is well and full of energy.

"I still steer clear of chemicals and use only natural products. I eat a balanced diet, use spelt flour, juice fruit and veg every day, and grow and juice wheatgrass to build up my immune system. I also make meditation and relaxation a daily priority."

Derval has released a double CD called simply *Suí* (meaning "to sit") which anyone can use to achieve tranquillity.

"So what was a challenging time turned out to be a great opportunity for growth and learning," she says serenely.

Suí is available in health, book and music shops and costs

€24.95. To order or for more information visit www.sui.ie. Also visit www.btsireland.com or call (091) 7924-415 for information on candida testing