

The effects of my family relationships

Ryan Carty

Family History

I was born into a home with both a mother and father who had been married for two years. Both my parents were born in Jamaica and brought to Great Britain by their parents in the late 60's and early 70's. I also had an older sister at home who was 11 years my senior from my mother's previous relationship. My father had three other sons and two daughters, two of which were from a previous marriage, the other three were from two previous relationships.

At the age of three and a half my father our family home and my parents were divorced shortly after. Even at this tender age I had many vivid memories of arguments, happy times, confusing times and sad times. One very vivid memory I have is one on my Gran's (father's mother) door step. I was standing between my parents with my little suit case to stay the weekend. I remember hearing my parents asking each other back and forth "do you want a divorce?" and neither wanted to be the one to say yes. I remember saying to myself "What is a divorce?" I only realised what it was years later! Over the next few years what was left of our family, my mother, sister and I, had a hard time as we lost our home and had to move into temporary accommodation.

I do not remember seeing my father much after he left. My father had a son with another woman less than two years later. When I was six years old my mother got married to a man who had recently come to the UK from Jamaica. I did not know him very well and I had only met him the previous year during our family holiday to Jamaica and saw him every now and then as he started to attend our church. I now understand that as Christians we do not believe in long courting periods and this was why they married so soon. I am please to say that they are still happily married 16 year later! However as a six year old I was extremely confused and missed my dad very much. No-one spoke to me about what was happening and how things would change at home.

My mother and my sister were my all and I trusted and relied on them totally. We used to sleep in the same bed together, sing together and even hurt together although my mother used to hide in her room whenever she was crying because did not want us to see her cry. Despite how close we all were things rapidly changed, I did not get to spend much time with my mother, and my sister was always locked in her room doing college work and then uni work. I also found that I was getting beaten for things now, and this became a regular occurrence. Looking back I do appreciate the discipline, however it was a big change for that 6 year old at the time. A year after my mother's second marriage she had another son, two years later she had another daughter. Things were very strange for me as everything changed so quickly. My relationship with my mother, father and sister, the change of the family name, the 4 homes I had lived in by aged 7 and the family dynamics changing from me being the only dependent child, and the only male to being second eldest and one of two sons.

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I was a popular pupil as I was good at sports, music and the academics. Nevertheless I was bullied by those in the years above me and I did not share this with anyone at home or school. It felt like a Deja vu at every parents evening as I always heard "Ryan is a very intelligent child and has the ability to well however he is very disruptive in class and does not get his work done".

Secondary school was even worse as I had gained weight and was now chubby and I was no longer special in the sporting arena anymore, which had previously been the way I had gained respect from my fellow students. I hardly did my homework and I was more disruptive in class than ever, I was now the class clown! Because of this I clocked up a record amount of detentions which eventually lead to exclusions. By the end of my first year in secondary school I was already the talk of the staff room and teachers dreaded having me in their classrooms. I was put in a few bottom sets because of my behaviour and I was put in a few tops sets to combat my boredom in class. Nothing really helped me as a student so I was sent to see the psychiatrist on a weekly basis who concluded that I was normal.

Every time a letter came home from school it was almost certain that I was going to get beaten no questions asked, therefore I could not talk to anyone at home about school. Because of my reputation in school I did not have to do much to get in trouble as all eyes were on me in expectancy. I did not feel that I belonged in any group like most others, I played sports and was good but I did not quite fit in. I was "naughty" but didn't fit in with the bad kids, I was smart but did not fit in with the smart kids. I was a Christian but I certainly did not fit in with the Christian kid due to my reputation. Half way through my third year at secondary school I was excluded for a third time which meant permanent exclusion.

I was permanently excluded from school in March 2000, I was then out of school for three months before being sent to a PRU (Pupil Referral Unit). The PRU was a very strange experience for me as I was only going for three hours a day and it was full of criminals, drug users, teenage mothers and young people who were academically at lower levels than I was. This was a huge shock to my system because I knew I did not belong there and I wanted to get out! I felt very isolated as my mum was fed up and was not really talking to me, and my

so called school friends never even called, sent me a text or even came to see what had actually happened to me. Thankfully the staff at the PRU saw that I did not belong there, and they worked really hard to get me back into mainstream school. I had to work hard and prove myself to them and also be an example to the other students in the PRU. I managed to get into the second best school Lewisham and I worked hard throughout my final two years at school and got into minimal trouble. I achieved 7 GCSE's A - C, and two passes, I had the support of the PRU whilst in mainstream school as they came to see me weekly during my first year.

Achievements since then:

I am glad to declare that God has been extremely good to me and has guided me through all my hard and testing times.

In the last few years I have helped organise youth conferences to combat the high rates of exclusion in Croydon. These conferences were attended by students, parents, youth workers, representatives from the Croydon youth service, representatives from the metropolitan police, representatives from the social services and many more. I also gave a presentation at Croydon Council's "Beacon day" where representatives from other boroughs came to see what youth work and projects were being executed in Croydon.

In May 2007 God blessed me with a beautiful wife at the age of 21 and we are still happily married today, despite society's views and statistics.

Over the last five years I have been performing as a gospel artist, I have sung all over the UK and around Europe. I am also releasing my debut album this summer called "Journey 2 Purpose" which has already had label interest and has a good following internationally. I have recently been made a Minister at my local church and the assistant youth leader. I plan to put together a mentoring scheme which will allow me to go back to school and help those kids that are struggling as I was.