



Teentalk

The newsletter for teenage members of The **Birthmark** Support Group
Issue number 3, April 2006 email: teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk

Happy Birthday Teentalk!

Yes, Teentalk is one year old this month! So what's been happening since the last newsletter?

Well most importantly we have had a number of new members join. Our youngest will be age 10 next month and our oldest is a final year medical student age 24, with every age in between represented! This means that a year after we were officially launched by our Patron, Esther Rantzen, we can at last start doing what we set out to do, which is to put people of similar age in touch by email so that they can share experiences, good and bad, and generally get to know each other. But the more members we have, the better the group will work for everyone. So if you are aged between 10 and 20 something with a birthmark and not yet a member of Teentalk, please join us! There is a joining form on the website or just email your details to the address at the top of this page. We look forward to hearing from you!

You will see that we have also had a fun 'Fun Day' in Liverpool, with another coming up shortly in Birmingham, and also a training day for 'mentors' in London.

My thanks to those of you who have written articles for this edition of Teentalk and I hope we will hear from more of our members in time for the next newsletter at the end of August. Not only is it good to hear about your experiences of growing up with a birthmark but also about anything else that you have been doing that you think may interest our readers: a holiday you really enjoyed, a film that you recommend others to watch, or maybe you're an expert at producing puzzles, such as SuDoku!

BSG Fun Days

We had a great Fun Day in Liverpool in March which included, amongst other things, ball games organised by Liverpool Football Club coaches. Everyone who attended also received a certificate signed by all the Liverpool Football Club players! Later on in this newsletter you can hear more about the day from Jacki, one of our older Teentalk members.

Coming to a Fun Day is also a good opportunity to meet others and make new friends. Our next one is in Birmingham on Sunday 14th May at King Edward VI High School for Girls where, amongst other things, there will be a bouncy castle, swimming in an indoor heated pool, tennis courts, a barbecue and a host of other games and activities. Full details are on the website but if you are thinking of coming why not drop me a line at Teentalk?

We will also be having a Fun Day at Chigwell School in North London on Sunday 17th September and in Glasgow on Saturday 14th November. Watch the website for further details and photographs of what went on!

What other Teentalk events would you like to see?

Some of our members have said that they would like the opportunity to get to know other members better by perhaps having an event over a whole weekend, maybe an overnight camp, or a weekend on a canal 'narrowboat' (the 'Rosie and Jim' type!). If you would be interested in events like these, or have ideas for others, then please let us know by emailing 'Teentalk'. Remember, this is *your* group, arranged for *your* benefit!

Meet some of our Teentalk members

Jacki Lovelidge

Hi, I'm Jacki. I'm 19 so one of the older members of Teentalk. I got married last October to my wonderful husband Mike. It was shortly before this that I decided it was the time to let go of quite a hurtful past. I wanted to enter my new, married life with a fresh slate. This decision led me to join the BSG group. I knew I couldn't join and offer support to others until I was happy with my own life and this is where I now am. We have just bought our first house and have now moved from Bucks to Cambridgeshire. A few years ago I would never have dreamt I'd be here – I thought I'd be single forever. Now, I wouldn't change it for the world!

Jacki is one of our new 'mentors' who you can read about later in the newsletter.

Polly Calver

My name is Polly Calver and I am 11 years old. I have a birthmark on my face, arm and leg. I go to a village school in Buckinghamshire and have recently passed my 11 plus (I got the highest possible score) to get into grammar school. I was voted in as Head Girl of my school.

My birthmark has never held me back in anything- I do acting and have performed in 4 professional musicals: Joseph, Jesus Christ Superstar, Whistle down the wind and Gypsy Blood. Sometimes I don't get parts but that is the same with anyone; it just depends who they're looking for.

I am about to play Blousey in the school play Bugsy Malone and everyone says I am really good at singing. Next term, I am going to take my grade 5 piano exam and I also play the clarinet at which I am grade 3. People have sometimes said nasty things about my birthmark but they have never really upset me because I know that they would only find something bad about you whatever you are like - my friend once got teased about her middle name!

I don't mind people staring at me because I know what it is like to be curious about other people and if anyone asks me about my birthmark I just tell them about it and sometimes make friends with the person who asked. The most common things people say to me about my birthmark are "What is that purple stuff on your face?" and "What happened to your face?". Every now and again somebody asks about my birthmark when I thought they already knew and it is then that I notice how long they've been too shy to mention it. I'm never shy so I don't know what it's like.

I think 'Teentalk' is a really good idea as it's nice to know we can get to know other people like us. I can't always get to the main events because I have drama classes etc! I do want to go to one soon though. I would like to keep in touch by email with other teenagers so please get in touch.

Alex Sexton

Hello. My name is Alex and I have a congenital naevus on my leg. When I was in my infants school, I used to be teased because of the birthmark on my leg but as I grew up, people started to make less fun of it because they saw less of it and they were very used to seeing it.

If you do have a congenital naevus, don't think of it as a bad thing, as my birthmark has done many good things for me and it can do it for you too. Like it helped me make new friends and gave me the opportunity to join this group.

If people ask about it, explain what it is and they might understand rather than tease!

When I was born, my mum and dad told me it was my special mark. I like to think of myself as unique and anybody who does have one should try to feel the same and it will help to build your confidence and self-esteem.

Thank you for reading this article about me.

And thank you Jacki, Polly and Alex for telling us about yourselves. Perhaps we can hear from other members for the next edition?

If you would like to get in touch with Jacki, Polly or Alex then email Teentalk and it will be forwarded on to them

So who and what are Teentalk Mentors?

Although it's good to have buddies of the same age to share experiences with, sometimes it's helpful to be able to share a problem with someone a bit older. Teentalk Mentors will therefore usually be in their late teens or early twenties and are just the sort of people who can talk about situations like changing schools, meeting new people, bullying, going to university or, indeed, anything that is causing concern.

If you would like to be a Teentalk Mentor

then you need to be aged at least 16 and attend a training day (the next one is in June in Lancashire and there will be another in September in London). You will then be expected to attend a Teentalk Training conference each year in London. The Birthmark Support Group will pay the reasonable cost of your travelling to these training events. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, or would like more details of what it may involve, or **if you would like to be put in touch with a Teentalk mentor** then email teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk

I know that some people on their joining form said that they would like to be put in touch with an older person with a birthmark. I am sorry that this has not happened because we did not have any trained mentors. Now we have, please let me know if you would still like me to arrange for a mentor for you.

Jacki's account of the Liverpool Fun Day

"Beep beep, beep beep. Beep beep, beep beep". Turning over in a state of dazed confusion I could see the blurred numbers on the mobile. 6.00am, time to get up. What day is it again? Ahh... Saturday, THE day.

"THE day" for any of you that haven't worked it out, meant my first journey to meet other people with birthmarks. This was something very new for me. I had only ever seen someone with a birthmark when I was in hospital for general anaesthetic and too young to really remember. I boarded the train at 8.22 from Watford Junction, turned the MP3 player on, shut my eyes, and 3 hours later I was in Liverpool.

I was met from the station by Emily, a fellow BSG member who I had been in contact with for a few weeks through Teentalk. Those that have met us will realise why we immediately had a common interest and hit it off! After a coffee and a chat we headed off for the Bridge Chapel Centre which was not the easiest place in the world to find.

After being met by the beaming smile of Jodie, we were shown through and introduced to a few of the people who were already there. After a quick chat with Chairman Nick and 5 minutes talking to Orla, I think we were quite relaxed and I knew I had made the right decision in going. I was no longer the only person in the world with a birthmark!

A great lunch was provided with the soup being a big hit when the weather was bitterly cold outside. The food was certainly needed to keep the energy levels up with all the people interaction. When you meet people you've never met before there's too much to talk about and I think we could have kept going all night!

There was certainly lots to keep everyone occupied, whatever their age, thanks to Jodie's hard work. Games with the Liverpool coaches and Easter egg hunts – what more could they, or the Dads(!) want?

I know I felt one of the biggest benefits of the Funday from an adult point of view (and yes, I know I barely count adult!) was the chance to talk to others with a birthmark and hear others stories. It's such a relief and weight off the mind to realise you're not alone. Everyone has a different story to tell, but there are always similarities.

I would recommend going to anyone that wants to find out more, or just a day to enjoy. It's made me want to get involved with the group even more, especially Teentalk. I plan to take the husband to the next fun day in Birmingham so he can see what I am getting involved in and why. Look forward to meeting some more of you there!

And, to fill a space!

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For those not in to Su Doku you have to fill in the missing numbers so that every row contains all the digits 1 to 9, every column contains the digits 1 to 9, and every 3 x 3 block contains the digits 1 to 9. It does not require any mathematical expertise, just a bit of logic!

Do we have any Su Doku enthusiasts among our members who could design a puzzle for each edition of the newsletter? Maybe we could even run to a prize for the first correctly completed puzzle!

The next edition of Teentalk will be published at the end of August and so if you would like to contribute something to it then please send it by 31st July but, better still, NOW while you are thinking about it!

If you would like us to put you in touch with someone of similar age, or a mentor, then either email teentalk@birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk or write to Teentalk, BSG, PO Box 327, West Malling, ME19 6WW.

To all of you with exams this term, the best of luck, and to everyone, have a great summer!