

It is not often that I respond to current issues, but this one hit home and I clearly had to say something. I am a grown adult now with grandchildren, old enough to understand my past, and recognize the damage shock therapy did to my childhood.

I was adopted and how the story went was, my (adoptive mother) and father were looking at divorce. She was in her early 40's and he was 45. I will refer to her as Mother as she is the only mother I had. I learned a great deal of this information when I was an adult, so bare with me if I get ahead of myself.

Mother did not want children. I think she recognized that she suffered from an illness that she tried desperately to conceal. She said that her true depression started after getting Novocain for a tooth problem. After that she had difficulties dealing with much of anything. The family always said that mother was sick, again. She would go to the hospital and come home a different person. Prior to going she would be irritable, agitated and down right mean. She would go to the hospital and come home like a zombie. That is no exaggeration. She would sit and stare for hours. Slowly she would remember things. Like who I was, and who the neighbor was, and in about six months she was back to her usual bitchy self. Then six months would go by, and back in the hospital for the regular shock treatments, because the antidepressants weren't working. She told me that it was as if a cloud formed around her, she always made a point of saying how she loved life, and she hated the cloud.

As a teenager I welcomed the hospital visits. She was so much easier to live with. She would forget my old boyfriends name that she wanted to kill a month before. She got to the point of blaming me for her bouts of depression. She would drag me into the shrinks office, and I will never forget his words "What do you think causes your mothers breakdowns".

Immediately, I thought is he referring to me? I just said I don't know. Shock treatments became the norm for most of her life. The tons of medication never worked. I could name so many of them, none worked in her mind except shock. It was as if she enjoyed the experience. Like a drug of choice. Eventually she got too old to have shock treatments, so she lived under the cloud. She eventually had a stroke and lived in a home for three years as a vegetable, she couldn't talk or respond. Had two legs amputated, and was fed through a tube. Quality life.

What I want to say is shock treatments made my life a living hell. When my father died and was bed ridden in the house, mother had just gotten out of the hospital after shock, the burden of him dying was just too much for her to handle. She was painting the house room by room, because she said company was coming. My dad was in the front room dying from the paint fumes. The funeral was awful, for mother didn't remember who died. She would be told but forget immediately.

We always talk about the patient, but never the victims, in my case the child. I would not wish that type of dysfunctional family life to anyone.

I feel sorry for any young children subjected to a parent who is placed on shock treatments.

Charlotte Dicken