

The Change

It was a surreal experience, like it was happening to someone else. There was no great impact just a feeling of shock at what I had done. My father was a bully. He had suffered from depression and had taken out his emotions on my elder brother, which I didn't mind as we didn't get along. Then he turned his attention to me. Aged 14 I didn't know about his problems, but learned pretty quickly.

I had remembered his left hand was his strongest, although he didn't box southpaw. I had avoided his punch for the first time, having received plenty on previous occasions. It was an automatic reaction. My fist drove into his chin, shoulder pushing through to add weight and timing. This was the second that defined and changed my relationship with my father forever. He must have regretted taking me to a gym and teaching me to punch.

We have never spoken about the incident; we haven't had to. From that day on my father changed. He came home a couple of days later and told us that he was going for 'some treatment'. Much to my mother's relief, she was never his target; but it really upset her when he was angry with us children.

After the treatment started, the change was slow but perceivable, the outbursts reduced then stopped and life became more predictable. For seven years he was back to how he been during my early childhood. A comic and fool, good fun with a great memory for jokes. Then when I was 21 he started to change back, the temper started and his aggression levels raised. Action was needed.

When he was younger, the child of a violent father himself, I remembered him saying he had enjoyed his time playing in an orchestra and singing. We had a good friend who was in a male voice choir. After some persuasion from both of us because he thought he wasn't good enough, my father joined. Through the power of music, comradeship and discipline he became humorous and very good company. Once again he was a pleasure to be around, he still is. Maybe the physical can overcome the mental, provided it is done to create rather than harm.

Many years have passed and he is an old man now. No longer physically able to do many of the things he could, he still sings. Without the singing there would not be a family to visit. My mother would have left home and father would have destroyed himself. They are still happily married and are well on their way to a Diamond Anniversary.

There are many things I would change about myself. Knocking out my father in the kitchen, thinking I had killed him isn't one of them. Time suddenly catching up and the realisation that his reaction would be terrible and painful. It wasn't, he simply got up and went out for a walk. A switch had been thrown, change for the better.