

Kathy's Story

My mother would regard herself as agnostic.
My father was atheist, almost devoutly so.
They brought us up in the spirit of questioning
and one could say non-conformity, with a small 'n' and a small 'c'.
I wasn't baptised, deliberately so.
And I think I regarded that status with something of pride
and identified quite positively with my parents' wish not to prescribe for their
children
what they should believe.

So I grew up with a lot of features of outsider-ness in my upbringing.
My parents were outsiders in Yorkshire, having come from Kent
and we were outside the predominant C of E labelling that most people gave
themselves.

Soon after I came to university,
I met someone I became very friendly with who used to go to the Unitarian
Church
and she suggested I might be interested in going there.
I found it a remarkable place,
very welcoming and accepting,
tolerant of scepticism and sceptics,
people who didn't otherwise conform.
So I joined in with them and that was very enjoyable
and I felt a sense of belonging which I think I had probably been searching for for
a long time,
which I wouldn't put down to having found necessarily so much a spiritual home
as a group of like minded people who were welcoming and accepting.

When my husband and I had children
I got involved with a local organization that provided support to new mothers,
the popularity of which I'm sure has a lot to do with the fact that women found
themselves geographically separated from their family,
and it was a very supportive community in which to undertake this very important
task of having children.
And because this group had been very supportive to me,
I became very interested in supporting other mothers.
The woman with whom I was particularly friendly at the time
had attended the first cohort of a professional counselling course.
and I was encouraged by her experience to apply.
It was a very powerful learning experience for me,
from which I've never really looked back.



Kathy's Story

I was wondering whether one of the reasons why I'm in psychotherapy myself,
that is not as a recipient at the moment,
though sometimes that would be nice,
but giving it instead,
is because perhaps one of my desires is that psychotherapy will help to
rehabilitate the outsider,
bring the non-conformist or the non-believer in from the cold
and give them salvation.
Is that what I'm seeking?
It's a troubling thought!

This interview on which this script is based was conducted in the course of a research project supported by AHRC/ESRC (AH/H016589/1) and the script was developed with the support of AHRC (AH/K000527/1). Both projects were undertaken by researchers at the University of Edinburgh. For further information, see www.counsellingandspirituality.co.uk

