

As a primary school teacher for 25 years, I had put my poor mental health down to overwork. I was a mum and a successful teacher with a responsible, conscientious nature.

I lived with depression, fatigue, anxiety and stress until my doctor gently advised me to try a new career, by now I resigned myself to the fact that I was clearly unable to deal with the demands of the teaching profession.

I had ripped an article from a magazine on one of my visits to the doctor a year earlier. It was all about commercial companionship. I hadn't had the courage to pick up the phone and enquire so far, but did think to myself, 'I could do that!'

I was signed off for six weeks by the doctor. For most of that time, I sat lifeless on the settee and dozed.

Slowly, I managed to resurface and return to the job I loved and became a relief teacher instead. Then it happened again, and again.

By 2015 I reached a point where I could no longer keep going and then one morning I snapped! I was relieving at a west Auckland school and walked into the staffroom at morning tea time. I took a cup, poured some tea and sat down.

"Oh you can't sit there", came a voice from behind me, "that's the Deputy Principals chair." I moved to another chair when another teacher informed me that I should take a cup from the top shelf, not the bottom one at lunchtime as the cup I was drinking from belonged to another teacher. It was ok to finish my tea in the cup I was using for now.

Incidents like this happened frequently being a relief teacher. I was often on the receiving end of the most hurtful comments. But then I realised that what I had faced throughout the latter part of my career was bullying – and that it had had an incredible physical impact on me for more than a decade. It was always the women who behaved like this.

I summoned the courage to call Private Arrangements.

Three weeks later, with a new mobile home, I crossed Cook Strait.

I called Pam and said.
'It's Vicky - I've arrived!'

The transition was easy. How very delighted I was to enjoy two wonderful years on the PA site. I'll sign off with the perfect quote:

“ Everything You've Ever Wanted Is
Sitting On The Other Side Of Fear ”

Vicky

