

An AB Discovery Book

Living with Chrissie

My life as an Adult Baby

"A wonderful insight into growing up AB and struggling."



Dylan Lewis

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

I. Introducing Me and Chrissie

The world-at-large knows me as a reserved, bookish, dependable, heterosexual man in his later fifties, married for over thirty years to the love of my life, and happily retired from a career in the public sector. That's all true, but what only my loving wife knows is that I have an alter ego. She is a delightful, demanding, loving baby girl named Chrissie. Chrissie has been part of me since, at least, from when I was aged ten.

I am an adult baby.

This is my account of coming to know and to accept Chrissie as a vital and integral part of me. For most of the years since I was aged ten. Chrissie was unrecognized and unnamed, and yet created merry-hell with my life. She was an irresistible compulsion to act out in ways I found bizarre and confronting. I experienced her as an addiction, a fetish and a profound challenge to all I thought I was, should be, or wanted to be.

I now know, accept and rejoice in the fact that Chrissie is an essential part of my identity. She isn't an affliction, a fetish or an addiction. She will always be with me. She is a source of innocent happiness, hope and child-like faith that makes life happy and fun. Only accepting her has given me any peace about myself. Over the years, I tried everything else.

I denied that she existed.

I ignored her when I could.

When she erupted in compulsive confronting behaviours, I tried to scourge her from me with furious self-loathing. I bargained with her – if she would stay in her box most of the time I would let her out occasionally.

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

None of that worked.

She always bounced back, demanding my sensible, reserved, workaholic adult-self, recognize she was a real baby girl, that she needed to be loved and she wanted to play.

Chrissie can be a handful. She can be a 'little Mary', a real 'princess', who demands her way and throws tantrums when she doesn't get it. She can do world class sulks. She gets frightened - of people, of bad things like going to the dentist. My wife has showed me how to recognize when my behavior and my thinking is driven by Chrissie's unacknowledged feelings and unmet needs.

I have a life-long interest in psychology and access professional counselling when I need to. My wife is an experienced counsellor. I understand some of the psychological processes behind my thinking and my actions. Some might say there are other, better psychological explanations for what I attribute to a baby girl alter-ego. But I know that Chrissie is a real part of me. I know it when I sleep peacefully like a baby, every night, in a thick nappy, plastic pants and soft-to-the-touch pink baby clothes, sucking on an adult sized dummy, with beloved soft toys 'Dolly' and 'Bunny' snuggled either side of me, between a little girl's patterned flannelette sheets. I really do sleep like a baby and there is nothing else like it for feeling safe and knowing that all is right with the world. It just feels 'right'.

Let me tell you how I eventually came to know Chrissie.

Every adult baby's experience will be different. What I have learned for myself, about what is true or not true, good or not good, safe or not safe, may be different for others. I do not intend to disparage others, if their positions are different from mine.

II. Beginnings

I am a child of my times. I was born in Australia at the tail end of the baby-boomer generation to Australian-born parents who had lived as children through the latter part of the depression, and then the second world war. They were good hard-working people, determined to better themselves and see their children succeed in life. They came from emotionally austere backgrounds, my father especially so. Both worked in the professions. Those were the times women were forced to leave their profession when they got married. My childhood coincided with a hiatus in my mother's career before times changed for the better, and she was able to resume her profession.

I can recall only glimpses of my early childhood, some prompted by family stories and photographs. I am a first child. In the late stages of her pregnancy my mother had a physical illness which threatened her life and mine. I was born a sickly, starved-looking premature baby. Though I recovered quickly enough, I now believe that my initial physical fragility had a strong and lasting effect on my relationship with my mother. I never fully bonded with her. I have never had that instinctive closeness that a child ideally has with their mother. I now understand that this is not uncommon.

My mother has an anxious personality, which I share, perhaps because it was passed on by the circumstances of my infancy. When I was born, my family lived in the country, far away from any family and friends. My father, like the men of his times, took little or no role in child raising. Caring alone for a sickly new born baby must have been terrifying at times. I don't know if my mother had post-natal depression, but she definitely had the risk factors.

My sister was born when I was two-years-old. I don't recall my reaction to her arrival, but subsequent family history suggested I

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

probably felt the usual pangs of a first born, displaced from his mother's sole attention. As she grew, my sister had the typical younger child's more outgoing, demanding personality, while I was quieter and liked to play by myself. As a first-born boy I was evidently expected to grow up quickly and be a good example to my little sister.

My earliest actual memories are from age three or four - of getting a tricycle and of being desperately upset at a temporary separation from my mother. With the tricycle I can remember both the bike and my mixed feelings about it. It was a reward for overcoming some late failings in potty training. I loved the bike, but retain to this day, an enduring sense of shame and embarrassment for the basis on which I got it.

I understand many adult babies link the development of this personality to bedwetting or incontinence into later childhood or adolescence. That's not true of me. I was a very compliant "good" child, determined to meet the expectations of my parents in all things. I understand there is some thinking in psychoanalytic (Freudian) psychology that undue pressure on a child to toilet train can contribute to adult personality traits such as anxiety, constricted emotional life and expression, compulsive neatness, and over readiness to comply with authority or undue fear in not so complying.

That certainly feels like me.

Being an adult baby with a fixation on nappies feels like some kind of reaction to being compelled to give up nappies before I was ready and being made to feel bad about my reluctance.

Around the same time that I got the tricycle there was an incident which I still recall as the most traumatic in my life. My mother went to a sporting club, presumably for some much-needed respite from caring alone for two small children. While she was playing, I was

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

left with my sister in the care of other adults. My sister became inconsolably distressed at the separation. I felt responsible, either for caring for her, or at least for showing a good example. But in the face of her distress, I couldn't contain my own and ended up bursting into tears and wetting my pants. I couldn't see my mother and she seemed to have gone beyond hope of return. I felt terrified, overwhelmed and abandoned. I had failed to be the 'big boy' I was expected to be. My sister was picked up and comforted by the other adults, but I don't remember being so comforted. My mother recalled the event as sufficiently traumatic that visits to the sporting club were not soon repeated. The event necessarily passed from my mind, but when it was recounted by my mother in later childhood, I could recall it vividly. Many, many years later I would understand this was where baby Chrissie sprang from.

III. Childhood

We moved to the city before I went to school. The rest of my childhood took a usual course until I was about nine or ten. Then it seems that, over a few years, the wheels fell off just about everything. My best friend left to live in another town far away, my mother returned full time to her career, I was bullied at school and traumatized by fear of learning to swim – an Australian rite of passage. At around the same time I have the nicest memory of being the baby in a game of ‘mother and baby’. I’m not sure if the game was with my mother or with an older girl who was babysitting my sister and I. It must have been a treasured interval in a bad time, because it stuck. Sometime later, no later than age ten or eleven, I was pinning nappies on myself in secret and finding consolation in imagining myself being babied.

I experienced my mother’s return to her career as an abrupt cessation of my childhood. Her focus shifted completely to re-establishing herself in a profession that she had been forced to leave by rules we now rightly regard as unfair and wrong. For me, however, it was like a switch had been turned off. The times gave women the sole responsibility for child raising and absolved fathers of any role or responsibility. I had no bond with my workaholic father to offset the emotional absence of my mother. He had an affectionate relationship with my sister. However, I was physically afraid of him. He had never done more than once threaten to hit me with his belt, and he was emotionally disconnected from me. There was nothing on which I could anchor a relationship with him to offset the fear. To this day, there is no safe place for a male caregiver in my fantasies or daydreams of being babied.

My parents placed great importance on me learning to swim, perhaps because my father could not. I had a fear of water, especially

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

of putting my head under the surface. I had not been successful at government run holiday swimming lessons that were a rite of passage for kids of my generation. My parents enrolled me for private lessons with a brusque, intimidating male instructor and a small group of kids. It was the middle of winter. We were forced to jump into the deep end of a cold unheated pool. I desperately wanted to be brave, but I was terrified. I thought I was going to die. My parents persisted. I would wait with mounting terror for the time for the next lesson to roll by. I remember being driven crying and distressed to early morning swimming lessons in the winter rain. Eventually they relented, and I was sent to a psychologist. Evidently on his advice I was allowed to give up swimming lessons until I was ready for them several years later.

In those times bullying was something boys, even at primary school, had to sort out for themselves. It was physical bullying joined with cruel public taunting. The elder boys' playground was an oval well out of sight of the main school complex. It was 'Lord of the Flies' territory, but you never 'dobbed'. I can remember standing in line waiting to go into class after a fight, unable to hide my tears. On being asked by the male teacher if anything was wrong I said no. I eventually lost it and retaliated, and the bullying stopped. I can't remember ever telling my parents about the worst of it. I can't remember that they ever intervened.

In hindsight, I can see that these events re-awakened the traumatic sense of separation and abandonment from when I was three or four years of age.

I realise now that there was just too little loving warmth to go around in my family. Everybody was needy and doing their best to get by. Emotionally, it was everyone for themselves. I doubt we were very different from many other families of those times. There was no abuse

Living with Chrissie – my life as an Adult Baby SAMPLE

or neglect, rather a deficit of warmth and nurturing to cushion the usual hurts of growing up. My family prized stoicism. You might talk politely about feelings, but they had no place in upsetting the applecart. You were expected to grow up quickly to be a credit to yourself and the family. Those expectations weighed especially strongly because I was the elder child and a boy. They seemed to weigh less strongly if you were the younger child and a girl.

At this time, being babied in a game of mother and baby felt wonderful. It involved pinning nappies on me and my sister, over our clothes. The nappies were folded from soft cot blankets. I think my sister and I must have acted the part of babies, but I can't remember many details other than the nappies. I can't remember whether the game was with my mother or a babysitter - a teenage girl from a family my mother knew. If it was the teenage girl, I thought she was pretty and I think I had a bit of crush on her. In any case, the wonderful mother and baby game was a once-off, never repeated.

To read the rest of this book go to:

<https://abdiscovery.com.au/living-with-chrissie-my-life-as-an-adult-baby/>