

Putting up with Susan

Ever have something happen in your life that profoundly affects you, but you don't realize it 'til years later as you are looking back? This book is all about that. We started out when I was about 6 years old, that is when I first met Susan.

She changed my life. She was a little standoffish at first, but within weeks, she warmed up. Susan would randomly pop up in my life in times that I felt alone. She seemed to try to keep me safe. Over time, I turned to her more in my times of need, when I guess I needed guidance. She just always had something to say.

At the age of 8, I reluctantly recollected a memory of when I started to listen to what she had to say. I realize now that it negatively made me into a version of myself I wasn't exactly proud of.

Ever meet someone you may label as “toxic”? It is hard to be a version of yourself you like when you are around them. Often, you may feel negatively influenced by them. Take a minute to think of someone who comes to mind when I say this. Write what you do not like about yourself when you are around them, and what thoughts trigger the change in your behavior.

So picture this now: It is overcast outside, almost on the verge of sprinkling, but not quite there yet. There is definitely moisture in the air, and it's a little hot because of that onset of humidity. The little hairs on my neck were starting to curl from it, actually. To set the stage accurately, I am standing in line at what was arguably the greatest elementary school game of all time- wall ball. There are two courts in use during recess against a brick wall which seemed to tower over us like a skyscraper. In reality, I had yet to ever really see a skyscraper to use in comparison. There are not many in Southern California, unless you go into LA. Obviously not being a child actor- as I

would not be writing this book now- I had no reason to be in LA at the time.

So I am waiting all of 5 minutes for the chance to play against Daniella, a 5th grader who had rapidly spurted up to a height that dwarfed the rest of us. Her long arms could hit the ball so fast that most of us lacked the reaction time to return the hit, let alone to get out of the way. A younger boy in back of me is crying under the pressure. I am watching Daniella's every move in the games leading up to mine to see how she plays, and what side she favors. It is her right side she is pulling to, she runs favoring her right side, yet hits the ball more with her left arm leading. She is great at short, close movements and hits, but when it comes to the outsides of the

court, she doesn't seem to be able to wheel the ball with as much force or drive towards the wall. She had beaten me yesterday, and the day before, but this is *the* day. I will use my new understanding and win. I am ready for this game. It will change all of wall ball history. Although I have witnessed many of my classmates limp away from the court in pain and shame, I stand ready to play.

Smirking, I think on one occasion about a 2nd grader who took a ball to the face so hard it knocked him out. It messed up his face so bad, he had to go home in what looked like a mummy-type face wrap. To be frank, We were all just in awe of her ability to ultimately defeat us. She would send us all off so ashamed of our inability to play, completely humbled by her greatness. It was my turn now, and I would give it all I had.

I looked forward to the challenge, and I would finally win. Today was my day! Have you ever practiced something, and felt confident in your ability only to then second guess yourself with someone else's less-than-supportive comments? Write below about the experience.

When they made these comments, how did it affect your attitude?

Did it make you doubt yourself or back down from an opportunity?

If so, how would your life have been different if you hadn't let their criticism affect you?

I started to enter into what at the time seemed like a large court. In reality, it was only about 6ft x 10ft big. Susan tells me to stop, though. She is really talking fast, and I can't make out half of what she is yammering on about. Susan is telling me to give up, and that I can't do this. It is all I'm

able to make out as she's speaking at a rate most ears can't translate. I'm baffled, but why? She says again, but clearly, "You can't win, it's simply embarrassing." My world comes crashing down around me as she pulls me back. As I'm caught between Susan and a crowd filled with other eager victims, Daniella looks at me, questioning my sanity in her dark brown eyes. She says she doesn't have all day, and then it happens. Susan wins, and I run off, afraid of making a fool of myself. I would lose, and everyone would see me lose. I can't have that. What had changed though? I had lost so many times before, never questioning my worth or making the game about me personally.

Sometimes, well-meaning people may voice their own limits in fear that we might make a fool of ourselves. When we take on their limits as our own, we then choose to limit ourselves with someone else's standards. Just like we wouldn't expect to have the same qualities as our neighbor or friend, we also have our own fears and limits as well.

Was there ever a time when someone voiced their own fears and concerns that you then start to think that could happen to you? Write about your experience.

Did those new limits that they set help or hinder your growth?

Where would you be today without those new limits?

As children, we do not fear a lot. You never see a toddler walking, being afraid of all the falls that they will make. They do not raise their hands up and yell, “That's it, I can't walk, it's not worth trying!” That is because fear of failure is modeled for us. We aren't born with it. When we are little, we know the truth and that we can do anything we put our minds to. It's after so many years in this world that we start to forget that truth. We take on the lies that society, our culture, and most of all our own families tell us.

This ranges from religion, to beliefs about money. That we aren't made for a certain sport, weather, or even social standings. That we won't fit in with that crowd, a belief I remember questioning in high school. I saw how silly it had been all along, but only after a friend pointed it out. I was told to try out for the cross country team and thought, "Well Moyers don't run". She asked why not, and I didn't have much of an answer. I had never seen a Moyer run... My grandpa and sister had asthma. We just didn't run places because we could have asthma attacks, I guess. "Have you tried?" this friend asked. "I see you have legs, so that's all you really need to get started" she pointed out, slightly making fun of my mindset. Sometimes it's easier for us to see

through others' limiting beliefs, but not our own. That week, I tried out for cross country... and found that Moyers could run. At least this one. Was a fast runner? Oh, only decent, in all honesty. But the sky didn't fall, and I kinda enjoyed it. Has your family ever imposed a belief system on you? If so, what is it and was it even true?

Where did this come from?

Was it useful or did it keep you safe from something?

If so... what?

Why did you continue to believe it or let it affect your life outcomes?

A simple belief we can see is the belief that we must eat all the food on our plates because there is a child starving somewhere. How does gorging ourselves help a starving stranger? Point is, it doesn't. But how many of us have over eaten ourselves into obesity because of this belief system, instead of just stopping eating when we are full?

What about keeping things we haven't used in years?

Do you keep it because of the belief system that you might need it someday just in case?

So that was score one for Susan. After this, Susan would win more often than I would like to admit. I was no match at the time for criticism and a subtle, but crippling, ability to keep me in my self-defeating place. Why was I putting up with Susan? This was a moment that would turn our relationship forever as she realized her power over me.

From then on out, Susan never had anything nice to say.

Going into 6th grade, I came back from over the winter break and had suddenly filled out on top. This got me some unwanted attention from both sexes. I was the only girl, except another in a different 6th grade class, who remotely had anything come in yet. As we were all just starting out in puberty, everyone seemed to notice it, despite me desperately trying to hide it, and not fully understanding what was going on. Girls stopped being my friends and would talk and laugh about me as I walked by in the halls. I had gained some weight in my stomach as well, and thought maybe that was what they had been laughing at.

There was Susan, and she said to eat my feelings of rejection. So I often did. I didn't want to feel like something was wrong with me, something that made me worth rejecting. I was good friends with a girl named Mindy. Everytime we made arrangements to play, her friend, Becca, would make up some elaborate attempt to try to keep her away from me. Once, she stated I had cooties and the two ran off as Becca yelled "Goodbye, Gross Jamie and your lopsided big boobs. No one likes you." Becca would not get a chest until paying for one well into adulthood. Little did she know at the time that she hated me for them, and that I hated myself for it as well. Ever been rejected and a situation made you feel like you weren't good enough?

Did you doubt your worth? Write below about what happened and how you would now handle the situation knowing that only hurt people choose to hurt others.

What could have been going on with the person at the time to make them hurt you? Why were they jealous of you and lashing out? We are not excusing behavior, but trying to better understand it.

Was what they said true about you?

How was it true or not?

How did basing your worth off of someone else's opinion make you feel?

Did it get you the results you wanted?

What did it get you?

How did it make you feel?

If you didn't get results you liked, which is often the case, how would you prevent this in the future?

Write an action plan to better know what processes you would take to prevent this.

Susan says, "Well then, maybe there is something wrong with you if even your best

friends wont play with you". I ask, "Well, what then?" I did not know much about the supposed cooties virus. I had expected that some made up shot drawn on you with two circles one dot would keep you from contracting it, safe from those infected. Why had I not gotten the shot before they so outwardly rejected me? "Boy, you must be pretty dumb," Susan insisted. Going forward, that was an all too common thought that Susan would start to enforce upon me. I felt it was true for the first time, sitting there alone on a field, on the verge of tears as I watched my so-called "friends" playing on their own without me. All I had left was Susan now. She made that clear.

Have you ever had a destructive thought come into your mind?

What was it?

Did someone say it to you or place it there?

Write about any and all thoughts you have faced in your life that have left you feeling less-than.

Below we will outline when the thought took place and where it came from.

Thought is:

When was the first time it came up for you?

After or around what situation?

Who might have said it first? Or was it implied with how someone treated you?
Words used, tone of voice, a glance?

A couple of months later, before 6th grade promotion into the middle school, we were forced into having our first dance event. Boys stood against the wall awkwardly. They were mostly already shorter than the girls, which would become even more apparent over the next year when we all hit puberty earlier than them. I'm standing next to Philip, a nice, tan boy with dark hair that would often talk to me about his homelife, or deeper things he wasn't ready to tell others at the time. I had known about his mom immigrating here, only to then leave him with his American father, not knowing where she was now. He often would state how her actions made him feel alone or unwanted. Has anyone's actions made you

feel like less than a priority to them? Write about the situation and why it felt like that.

He told me how he was often alone at home, after walking from school waiting for his dad to get home normally at 9 or 10 each night. Sometimes, he would make himself dinner, do his homework and then put himself to bed, only to be woken up at 2 or 3am when his dad came in from a night out. He was 11 years old and cleaning up a grown man's urine stained pants and vomit covered hair. I would try to hold space for him as he told me, but my heart knew a boy

that young shouldn't have to raise himself like that. He shouldn't have to be responsible for an adult in that way. His dad ran a laundromat, if I recall correctly. Philip sometimes tried to give me coupons in exchange for listening to him, but what 6th grader wants part in doing their own laundry?

Have you ever had to take on someone else's emotional burdens because they wouldn't? Did you feel it was useful?

At the time, I didn't know that his situation was all too common for children. This was something they could get away with and hide from society, a child taking care of an adult who emotionally couldn't take care of themselves. His dad would feel lonely and

sad from his wife leaving, so he would act out in this way to try to hide the pain. When does this not actually happen?

As children, We look at our parents like they must have everything all figured out, given how much older they are. The fact is, a lot of age-appropriate “adults” are just emotional toddlers walking around in grownup bodies. Here's what a tantrum looks like: Mom's passive aggressive comments when you don't show up for Sunday dinner, Dad is borrowing money from you, Grandma expects you to drop everything to bring your specialty pie with only a day's notice. We accept these things like they are ok, but they are all signs of something being off. Here is why: Mom would respect whatever life choices you

make for yourself because if she was an emotional adult, she would know you make choices for yourself, and they do not reflect on her. When Barb down the street says you never seem to visit, Mom would respond back about how proud she was that you were so busy with your new career or life. She wouldn't take your choices personally. Dad wouldn't make his financial issues your responsibility. He also wouldn't make a comment about how he clothed you and how ungrateful you are. Him not getting what he wants from you would not be taken personally, or guilting you when his actions are questioned. Grandma would have communicated better a week before, saying that she loves your pie and would be thrilled if you felt inclined to bring it. Giving you plenty of time to make your decision and bring the pie if you felt willing to, but not out

of pressure. We want to be Grandma's favorite right? Choosing to stay in an emotional childhood keeps us thinking about ourselves and only our own emotional needs. How does everything affect us? Do we only do things so we can feel loved or deemed “enough” from outside sources other than ourselves? Have you ever devalued yourself to get praise from someone else?

Have you ever not spoken the truth about how you felt about something just to save face, or not hurt someone else?

Write about the situation and why you felt you did that below.

How did you really feel in the situation if you could tell them now?

How might things gone differently if you had voiced how you truly felt?

Emotional adulthood has us knowing that we do not make ourselves small to appease others. We do not need validation from anyone but ourselves. We are not constantly yearning for love and acceptance from outside sources. We are able to stand in our own decisions, our own opinions, no matter how conflicting they may seem to be. Knowing that what others may think or say about us is never actually

a reflection of us, but their own limits and beliefs.

Have you ever felt silenced because you were afraid to vocalize your own needs or wants in a situation? Write below about it and how you felt?

Did you feel empowered or disempowered at this moment?

Would you want your own child to feel that way?

If you were to give them advice on how to handle situations like your own, what would that look like?

Are you taking your own advice?

Why aren't you making your emotional needs a priority?

What are you scared of happening if you were to make them a priority?

What would you do differently to make sure your true, authentic self showed up more, now that you know you may have watered yourself down a little?

THEIR REJECTION OF YOU, MEANS
NOTHING ABOUT YOU. YOU ARE
VALUABLE.

There were moments that I felt needed and wanted. That someone that could confide in me, as if to prove that I wasn't rejected all

the time like Susan tried to make me believe.

The principal says something about those with last names beginning with M can now ask someone to dance. As my friend is rushed by six other girls, I am instantly pushed to the side. Almost breaking my half-inch heels, which were required for girls to wear to the dance. Heels are not comfortable shoes in general, and I always preferred being barefoot. I already had a hard time walking in the things, let alone now having to find my balance in them. My cool was taken from me - which I thought I had managed to have a little of when propped against a wall. It was now nonexistent, without any notice to me. Suddenly, my friend is gone and swept away by the prettiest of the girls with M last

name. Maddiers or Matterson I think was her last name. I just recall now, that her ice blonde hair actually bounced as she pretended to giggle at everything he said, funny or not. Not sure what teen magazine had taught her that trick, but boy was she working it today.

Trying to prop myself up again against the wall, I am alone now. Well, except for Susan. She is always there. She is now turned towards me after Philip has been taken away, and I can't hide from her. She is telling me no one is probably going to ask me to dance today, my shoes were ridiculous, and that my bangs were too short, which made my face round and appear fatter than it was. No one was going to ask, and I couldn't dance anyways. "Ok, Susan," I said softly under my breath in

defeat, "I get it, I'm not worth anyone asking me to dance".

Cue Justin. Not yet into boys myself, I didn't think much of him. But now looking back at pictures, he was a handsome, more rough in appearance, young man. He was actually my height, and always wore a white T-shirt and black jeans. He styled his longer brown hair kind of slicked to the side. It reminds me now of James Dean, if i think about it. He looked older than he was, like he had some life experience. He even was a bit more formal when he would talk, which wasn't often. Reaching out a hand, he didn't say anything at first. I looked at him confused. He then proceeded to pull me by my forearm to the indoor basketball court, which was being used as a fancy elementary school dance floor. Not knowing

what was happening, and not being able to walk correctly in the required heels, I started to stumble as I was being pulled. My face froze in fright as the fear of face planting it in front of everyone came to my mind.

The 6th grade teacher, now seeing what was going on, came up to correct the situation. Reminding us of what we had been taught the week leading up to this science experiment about consent and manners. We were human rats as they tried to teach us social skills before being released into a place like 7th grade. How would it look if we couldn't control our child-like behaviors going into middle school? We had to forget we were still children, after all.

Our teacher says in a shriek, “Hey, remember to ask dude, not tell her! Boys.” She then walks away, more in a stomp, which resulted from her heavy step from being in the men’s dress-styled shoes she always wore. That is actually all she wore, which looked like men’s dress clothes. She was my favorite teacher in all of elementary school, with her different approach to life. She was quirky, and I liked that. I wanted to be brave and not care what anyone thought of my personality as well. I wish I could have told her I had gotten there, but cancer took her when I went into my 12th grade year. Apparently, she had a brain tumor when I was actually in her class. Now I understand why she was always having to head to the bathroom sick after lunch. Eating triggered something, but it was taking her medication when she ate that

actually caused it. Sadly though, I hadn't gotten to this version of myself yet. I know she would say "You go show them what you are made of", like she used to. I can still hear her cheers and she would skip down the hall in front of our class lines.

Justin said something like, "I am sorry, I'm new at all this. Would you like to be my dance partner?" I said "Yes, but please take it slow with me, I can't manage much in these shoes." We proceed to "dance".

Which is really only the two step back and forth motion that they had taught us that very same week. We have to keep so many inches between us and arms apart as we do so. Justin leans in, which seems like he's smelling my hair. Why ? Had I washed it recently? Quick to react, the teacher puts a ruler between us, and corrects him.

Wasn't she all the way across the gym just a moment ago? I could swear she was getting juice with the principle. Where did she even get a ruler?

It's awkward now, if it didn't start out that way already. I look down at the floor, he's wearing black and white sneakers which had drawings done in blue pen all over them. Making small talk, I say, "I like your drawings, Justin". I look up after my remark, and he's looking at me. Which he must have been doing the whole time. Our eyes meet, and as he looks me dead in the eye he says, catching me off guard, "You should kill yourself." The Beatles music ends, and we are told to break and go back to the walls.

Susan tells me, “Well, if he thinks that, maybe he is right”.

Once in middle school, Susan told me not to talk to a boy, so I didn't.

To not sit next to a girl who was all alone because she hated me.

In highschool, to cut myself because the reality was that no one really cared. That it would help numb the pain.

To not apply myself in classes because smart girls were not liked.

To not apply to the colleges I wanted to go to because I would never get it. No one wanted me.

Every negative thing that would happen to me in life was the result of a one-sided conversation from Susan. She owned my choices, and who I was now.

That boy I didn't ask out actually liked me, and then dated my friend to get close to me.

That girl I didn't sit next to decided to skip school and fell into the wrong crowd because no one else befriended her.

As for cutting, I dealt with that form of coping until well into adulthood when I then turned to food as a more socially acceptable form of numbing.

I didnt have to hide the fact I was obese like I hid the cuts and scars.

I didn't get the grades that would have gotten me into the colleges that I wanted. Having the ability to go could have changed my life's path.

Why was I ever putting up with every negative word from Susan's mouth, let alone letting what she had to say dictate who I was then?

Years went by, and Susan was always there. She told me that I didn't look pretty enough for dates, so I just didn't show up. That my husband didn't want to really marry me as I got ready for my own wedding. I was sick of Susan at this point, so I started to fight back. I told her to shut up, she didn't know what she was talking about. Why would she ever talk like that to me? What kind of friend was she?

Reading this, it is clear to label Susan as a horrible friend. She is not a good person to have around if I wanted to like myself better. The fact is, there was no getting rid of Susan though, and she merely represents the internal dialogue that went on in my own head.

Often, we talk to ourselves like this, but if any other person did it, we would cut off their relationship with us. How do we correct that unhealthy relationship with ourselves when we are in the dark reality of actually being the abuser of ourselves? What we allow our inner Susans to dictate in our abilities to love ourselves, shows up then in every aspect of our lives of who we are. We short-change the clerk, and are rude to our partners when we do not love ourselves. When we cannot hold space for

ourselves in failures, in turn when our kids mess up, we reflect that lack of grace in our overreactions and sudden berations of their lack of responsibility. How we feel about ourselves shows up in the words we use and our limits in loving others. I can not teach my children how to love themselves unconditionally when I don't even know how to do that for myself. It is like grasping water in our hands. As the knowledge passes through our fingers, we become desperate to hold on to it, yet there is no water left to hold on to because we did not have the right tools to do so. Now if I handed you a bowl, cup, or container, you could later on retain and use what you experienced. I will proceed in handing you what you will have the opportunity to use the rest of your life, if you choose to. Even with the correct tools given, I cannot force

you against your own choice in applying it. I hope we all choose what is best for our own individual healing. I will admit, I do not know what's best for your personalized journey, for that is for only you to decide.

As life went on, things escalated with Susan. Our relationship dynamic went from talking terms, to ignoring anything she said, to eventually fighting with her. I was angry all the time. It began to transition when I was about 14. Puberty hit me more hormonally in my physical transformation, and to the highs and lows of depression. The more I ignored Susan, the more depressed I got. The more I fought her opinions of me, the more tired I became in my own existence. I mean, I was always trying to prove her wrong. I didn't want to exist in these defeating moments, which

was really the majority of the time. My hormones were all over the place. I suffered from body image issues, where I would run 10 miles a day, yet never eat. Most of the time pretending I had already eaten, or learning how to hide how little I actually ate with tricks like spinning food around on my plate or covering it with a napkin before I left the dinner table. I was a master at self denial.

Life is too short to be a teenager and already not wanting to live. Yet, so many of our youth feel this way. They fake it, hide it, or try to distract themselves from their own inner Susan's opinions. What if we just stopped fighting or giving it power over us? What if we just listened instead, and sat with ourselves for a time? Got to know all the parts of who we were, not just the pretty, presentable ones?

Tried to understand, if not for just a moment, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. We could get good at holding space for our egos eventually, couldn't we?

At times I am disappointed. In myself and in my inability to learn to cope with life sometimes. How many years have I blamed others for things I had contributed to? Shut down other opinions because I couldn't have an actual discussion without taking their difference of opinion personally? How much self growth did I reject because of my own insecurities? A lot.

How many times did I lash out at others because of it? In reality, my opinion was not the only one to matter. Yet, Susan told me someone else's being different was a threat to me and mine. So I listened. I reacted, instead of taking time to respond.

I am pregnant with my first child. She is about 6 months along in my belly when I start hearing Susan more often than normal. The hormones and my growing belly, my reaches in weight, had caused several insecurities to surface for me which I had not dealt with. When you suffer from an eating disorder, gaining a couple of pounds, let alone 70, is emotionally crippling. Truth is, I hadn't dealt with any of it. No one had taught me how, because they themselves didn't know.

I remember Susan using a painful experience against me, like all abusers do. It was always my fault. Everything was. Your lack of value was the very reason why people left or hardships happened. I had lost the pregnancy before this one. We had

gone in and the doctor had said, “Well, there is no heartbeat.” That was ok, because I was still young and could always get pregnant again. At least that is what the doctor said. All within a week, you go from shocking positive tests that say you're starting a family sooner then you had planned to, to no your baby is dead. It was recorded as 2 months into the pregnancy. I not only took a test that came back positive, got excited and started planning a family, but went to the doctor and found out I was in fact pregnant with a dead child. Dream created and dashed in a matter of 7 days. I blamed myself. If I had taken care of myself, or if I had wanted it, I could have kept the pregnancy. Susan came in hot and strong, confirming my thoughts that I would not be a good mother. Why would anyone want me for one? I would ruin my child.

In those next several months, I fought with Susan on everything. It didn't matter what it was. I shut her up the moment she would start, I didn't want to hear it. I wasn't strong enough to do it anymore. I was hardly holding on these days. About two week after I had my first child, I remember sitting in the shower. I was tired from almost never-ending labor, and to top it off, they don't want you taking baths, which is what helped relax me when I was stressed. I was living off little food, little sleep. As far as breastfeeding, I was a total failure. I couldn't keep up my milk supply with her not properly latching. Motherhood was not what I had thought it would be. There Susan was, now screaming, louder than ever. "Well Justin was right all the way back in 6th grade, Jamie. You should have ended it then. Look at what a mess you are, your

own child would be better off without you.”

This broke me. I couldn't recover. I didn't. At least for a long time.

So many years of listening to Susan, but not really hearing her. Why did she say such awful things to me? Did it make her happy to completely break a person? Did I deserve this? I couldn't live with this voice inside my head anymore that was telling me how worthless I was. See, over time, Susan had escalated things. Why? Susan wasn't just my own thoughts anymore though. It was everything I had experienced and what was said to me. A 3rd grade teacher told me I would never amount to much because of my learning disability, and that I wasn't smart. Oh, Susan ran with that one. When friends rejected me, or what I perceived as rejections, she spoon fed that back to me in proof I wasn't loveable. All of my failures or

mistakes were just more on her list, showing me how worthless I was. But why did it get worse?

I allowed it. I am not victim blaming here, even if you are the abuser of yourself, you do not deserve it. No one does. We allow it to continue though because deep down inside, we think it's useful, and that it keeps us “safe”.

See, if Susan is telling us not to try, then no one can see us lose. No one can make fun of us because of it.

Susan primarily tries to keep us “safe” in whatever twisted way she sees fit. When we actually address our inner critics, tell them how much we appreciate their input and comfort them, they are soothed like any

other toddler throwing a tantrum. Susan just wants to be validated.

Here are some exercises to practice on your own with your inner voice. The next time you hear the self doubt set in, turn and face it to ask yourself why you are feeling that way?

Brenda had a sister. They were best friends and then suddenly they weren't. Brenda ran off with a man twice her age, and years went by before her sister reached out to Brenda again. Well... Brenda didn't respond. The next and last time Brenda saw her sister, it was at her wake. Why do you think this relationship conspired in this way?

Brenda's inner voice tried to keep her “safe”. Thoughts like, “She will just up and abandon you again” controlled the outcome to both these women's relationship with each other. It destroyed it before it could ever come to be again. If Brenda had held space and listened, what might have been different?

Brenda could have said, “Well, even if she does do that, I've survived without her, it won't hurt like it did the first time.” Instead, she just didn't try, and both sisters never got to know the other again. How sad is it to live a life full of missed opportunities and

relationships all because we are really just scared?

Days are a lot more joyful. Instead of resisting Susan, I hear her out and comfort her. She is still with me but she's a lot kinder when she feels heard and validated. When I ignore her, she goes back into her normal worry routine, so I try to address her concerns as often as possible. I know she's only trying to keep me safe, and after all, she means well. I love you Susan, as I choose to love myself. I am no longer just putting up with you.