Chapter: Motherhood

Title: No such thing as a perfect mum

I used to carry a guilt so heavy it felt welded to my bones. Not just guilt for the chaos my addiction caused, but for the moments I wasn't truly there for my kids. I'd ask myself, What kind of mother does that? I might have been in the room, but I wasn't present. They'd try to talk to me and I'd nod along, pretending I was listening, while my mind was already planning how to get my next fix.

I did my best to ensure that all their practical needs had been met, but I had neglected their emotional needs enough to give them something that looked like comfort. They needed a steady mum, and I was barely steady on my feet.

Those memories used to haunt me in my early recovery. All the mornings I had woken up promising myself I'd do better and then didn't. Initially, I thought that the only way to make up for those years was to become perfect. I believed that if I wasn't an ideal mum, someone would judge me, or worse, take my kids away from me.

Trying to hold myself together, my recovery and be present for my kids at the same time was a juggling act. On the surface, I had put down the drugs and got my shit together, but underneath it all, I felt fearful of relapse, afraid my past would always be louder than my love for them.

SAMPLE

One evening, after a long day of trying too hard, my son sat beside me on the sofa. I told him I was sorry for all the times I hadn't been fully there; it hadn't been the first time I had apologised. Only this time he leaned his head on my shoulder and said, "You're here now, Mum. That's what matters."

In that moment, something shifted. I realised my children didn't need a perfect mother. They needed a present one. A mother who could sit with their feelings without losing herself. A mother who could say, "I'm struggling today," instead of pretending everything was fine. A mother who can show them what repair looks like and also share some of the new coping skills and strategies that I hadn't been taught as a child.

I'm not flawless. But I'm here. And that, I've learned, is enough.

Reflection question for the reader
If you fully trusted your own needs, what would you stop agreeing to? Tracey and Mulka can help with this

Short Bio A little about you, you could include
Where you are from? Age? Profession? Married/Single? Kids? Grandchildren