

Laurie-May Lane

Age 33

Sister to Victoria Hicks

Before

I am a wife and mother of two, Freya-Rose, age ten and Dylan, age seven. My sister and I, Vicky, have always been close. From knowing each other's secrets, making up pranks together and borrowing each other's clothes (mostly me borrowing hers!). We have never gone longer than a few hours without talking.

When I found out my sister was going to have stoma surgery, not knowing anyone who had ever had this, I had no idea what she meant. I have heard of people needing to have a colostomy bag but have never heard of a stoma.

When we met up with Vicky, she talked me and my children through exactly what a stoma was, she had been sent some bags to try so she showed us and explained how they were used. I had a lot of questions for her and I also researched online. I felt scared and upset for Vicky but seeing how calm and accepting she was put me at ease.

Day of the Surgery

The day came that her surgery was to take place, to say I was feeling anxious was an understatement; but still Vicky was not worried at all. I called my mum quite a lot that afternoon to see if she had heard from Vicky, but she had not which made me worry. Mum finally heard from Vicky early evening and she was in a lot of pain and feeling groggy from the surgery. Mum rang me at around 10.30pm that evening to say she and dad had just left the hospital, she said Vicky was in a lot of pain which was upsetting for them to see. I had a few tears on the phone as I felt so helpless.

The next day I went to visit her, she was feeling a little more comfortable but struggled to get out of bed. She showed me her stoma. Three days after I received a message from Vicky saying she had managed to get some sleep, had eaten breakfast, showered and had changed her stoma bag by herself. I was so relieved to hear she was feeling better. When she had finally passed poo, she was allowed home. She had to take it easy and get used to her new diet, but every day was better than the last.

One thing Vicky was not aware of was the sound of passing wind, she had no control over it which she hated and felt embarrassed. She became a recluse; she would not leave the house or eat in front of people visiting the house as food made the wind worse. We all tried to encourage Vicky to venture out but the more we tried the more she said no. We were all worried about her but had no idea how to help. She became depressed and anxious and spent a lot of time in her room alone. When she eventually started working again, she would go all day without eating.

The Change

Four months after surgery Vicky told us she had reached out to a support group. She was feeling excited and we were glad she was getting out to meet people exactly what she was going through. The support group is for people that have stomas. They get together and discuss any worries or experiences they have had. Getting in touch with this group is the best thing Vicky could have done. She has made new friends and looks forward to the next meeting with them. They are a great support and put on activities such as swimming, where they hired the whole pool to make everyone feel comfortable.

Now

A year on Vicky is so happy. The wind is no longer bothers her and seems to have settled as her anxiety dropped. She has joined an exercise class to strengthen her stomach muscles. I am proud of how far she has come and how positive she is about everything now, thanks to The Stoma Heroes. Nothing seems to worry her now and she is living a great life. She is such a great role model to me and my children. A true inspiration, I'm so proud to call her my sister.