

Until my mid-thirties I thought I didn't want to be a mum, even though I liked children. When the realisation dawned, it was immediate panic stations for me as early menopause ran in the family.

Two years of sort-of-trying with a reluctant partner was followed by a year of IVF. The process, and my grief and depression, destroyed what was left of our relationship. By the end of Year Four, I was alone - and boy, did I feel alone - with no savings, a mortgage, a hormonal hurricane, and a spiraling mental health crisis.

Then we lost my mum to pancreatic cancer. This awful nadir also became my turning point. It sounds like a terrible cliché, but it hammered home the brevity and preciousness of life. I had a responsibility to Mum, my brother and sister and myself to keep going, to see the beauty in the world again and to make the most of my time here.

Three years on from that point, I've bought and renovated a house that I currently share with a young Ukrainian refugee and got a promotion at work. I channel my mothering urge into supporting my colleagues, being a friend, nurturing plants, 'rescuing' vintage furniture - and learning to be kind to myself. I'm nearly done with the menopause and have realised some of my old self is still in there somewhere. And I'm mulling over the idea of adoption.

Best of all I'm able to enjoy the company of my seven-year-old niece, and nephew who's nearly three. Four years ago, I couldn't bear to be around my gorgeous little niece because the pain was too acute.

I hope your path won't have to get so low before you can climb again and see a beautiful vista, with routes to explore and exciting possibilities ahead.