



## Dealing with a not guilty verdict

I was sexually assaulted by my babysitter when I was around 8 years old, the fact that I didn't know exactly what age I was seemed to be of particular interest to the defence, but at that age I didn't know what was happening let alone have the foresight to note the date or my age, it's not something I wanted to remember. I wish I'd been able to say that in court aged 28. I was there not particularly because I felt I needed justice but because I had felt guilty at not speaking up and having the chance to protect others, especially when I discovered he had gone on to work in a nursery. I wish I'd been able to explain my motivation in court too. After the not guilty verdict was delivered I felt let down by the justice system, everyone else in the court room was prepared, briefed and scripted, I had been armed with only a comment from an official moments before that all I needed was the truth. But afterwards I quickly realised that I could have been prepared for the type of questions they would put to me and aspects they would likely focus on. For work (I recently gained a phd in microbiology and landed my dream job) I present my scientific research, I go armed with the truth there too but I wouldn't dream of leaving it to chance that my points will be clear and easy to understand or not prepared to explain complex parts that could appear contradictory without proper explanation. Why no one went through my statement honestly and discussed the strengths and weaknesses and what to expect with me makes me feel abandoned whilst trying to do the right thing. Meanwhile he would have had legal preparation. When the defence put it to me suddenly that I made it all up for attention I was so stunned that I just stared in disbelief not relising immediately that they were waiting for a response. I was like a lamb to the slaughter, and I'd do it all over again but differently, more informed in a position of strength, not the vulnerable position I was thrust out there in. I feel I was let down, more so the children I was there trying to protect and it makes me sick to my stomach that this likely happens in courtrooms everyday to the very bravest of people. I was also left with unanswered questions, will he be able to work with children again? Would his charge stay on his record for future record checks? If others come forward can he be re-tried? As a group case? (he was also charged with another sex related accusation from a previous adult partner). No-one seemed to know the answers to these questions either. On top of that when I first went to the police the receptionist forced me to state in public what the nature of the inquiry was despite my saying it was a private/sensitive issue, I was terrified. I was also told that the uncomfortable hours of video evidence I had given could not be used as it had been done by someone inexperienced making it too long for a jury to sit through. This leaves me to conclude that victims are being let down throughout the whole process. It wasn't the outcome I wanted it was hard and has opened old wounds and triggered delayed sex adversion but I would do it all over again because at least I know I did what I could.

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