THE FIRST TIME I HAD A PANIC ATTACK

1. Watch the following video and complete the text with past tenses or adverbs.



There is something that happens to me **every now and then**. I cannot control it _____ it gets hold of me. I'll be going about my day and suddenly it happens. I feel fear, panic and I'm left breathless. Everything seems dark. I have to fight to get back control over my body and mind. It can last a minute or much longer.

When I _____that first episode, I didn't understand what _____to me. I _____ learned that I was having a panic attack and that it was the result of a post-traumatic stress disorder. It's an anxiety disorder that can be caused by distressing or traumatic events. My PTSD is something I never talked about because

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it _____ to memories from growing up in Kigali, Rwanda; but when I look back, I can see the different events that led to it.

1980s

Some go as far back as when I was a **toddler**. It was me, my mother and my little brother, Junior. One day Junior developed a **nasty** cough and then, he _____. I remember the sadness. The other kids I played with in the neighbourhood had a sister or a brother and,_____, I had none.

1990s

With Junior gone, it was now just my mom and me. She was my everything. She was beautiful and _____ like sunshine. But **over time** I started noticing that she _____. She was getting thinner and her skin _____ the same to me. At weekends she sometimes visited the hospital but now she was going there all the time. The last memory of her is me sitting on the bed with her, holding my hand and telling me that everything was going to be okay. The most important person in my life was soon gone.

I went to live with my aunt's family and, for a while, things were good.

April 1994

It _____ 3 years, then, one night, heavy gunfire interrupted a quiet family dinner. War had come to Kigali, the capital. One moment we _____ready to return to school, the next, _____ packing and driving out of the city in silence surrounded by the sound of gunfire and bullets **whizzing** around us.

July 1994

We had now been in Gisenyi for 3 months, it _____ like it was as far as we could get from Kigali. We were waiting, hoping for life to get back to normal. But it was never to be. A **carnage** like we had never known was all around. We were hearing about the killings that were happening all over the country: a genocide that will see more than 800,000 people murdered in just a hundred days.

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I remember waking up one morning to a sea of people outside our front window, moving, fleeing, carrying mattresses, babies, bags. _____ we joined them too, crossing into Goma, in the DRC.

A lot happened in Goma. I became a refugee. Our life was tough, homelessness, hopelessness, fighting for survival. And I was in this survival mode for a very long time. It was only then, in a small village in Northern Norway, that I felt safe and it was then too that the panic attacks started.

What is PTSD?

PTSD can occur days, weeks, months or even years after the event; and it affects everyone differently. Some people have nightmares and flashbacks. I have my panic attacks.

I have now learned the various ways to help me deal with them when they come. There are more people suffering and living with PTSD than we will ever know; either because there is no access to proper care where they live or because of the **shame** that comes with saying that you suffer from a mental health illness. We must end the silence, we must end the stigma, so that more people can open up and get the help and care they need.

2. Match the words below (which are in bold in the text) and their synonym or meaning:

- **Every now and then**
- **Toddler**
- **Nasty**
- **Over time**
- **Whizzing**
- **Carnage**
- **Shame**

- **Humming or hissing sound**
- **Ugly**
- **Embarrassment, humiliation**
- **From time to time, occasionally**
- **With the passage of time**
- **Slaughter, bloodshed**
- **An infant who is 1-3 years old approx.**

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3. Write the past tense of the following verbs which appear in the text

- **FEEL**
- **LEAVE**
- **GROW**
- **LEAD**
- **DRIVE**
- **HEAR**
- **KNOW**
- **WAKE UP**

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