

Life's Little Gems

In my journey through life, there have been many valuable realities I have learned along the way. Some truths have been more difficult for me to accept than others, yet none can be ignored.

One certainty I have found in this wonderful human race, is the not so splendid notion that child abuse, and domestic violence, continues to exist today, as it has for many previous centuries. In my particular case, the physical violence and great psychological child abuse I've endured, and witnessed, from my parents while growing up, are topics I will be relating to as I write today.

For me to continue in my path through life, and not remain a victim, I found it was necessary to leave my family behind in my quest for finding answers, along with an overwhelming desire to heal from within. Unfortunately, when I chose to escape the violence and abuse, I was deemed a traitor who turned my back on the entire family. In standing firm in my convictions I lost all of my family, including aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family members I still hold dear to my heart. I remain the turncoat in their eyes, and any abuse I might have endured is not as important to them as the family unit is. To add salt to my injuries, some extended family members believe I have fabricated my story and they look upon me as being "mentally unbalanced." These family members came from good, loving parents, and fortunate to them they did not reside within the walls of secrecy; a place I was forced to live and refer to as my home.

Realizing I was pretty much on my own, other than having my husband in my life, I found jewels to collect along the way, in the way of friendships I have formed, and more importantly, I learned the value of those friendships. My heart has taken these friends in, and I have learned to love them as one would love their own blood. In return, the love I receive from my friends is priceless.

As I place friendship high up on the pedestal where it belongs, I can also claim other gems I've collected along the way. Learning to regain my self-esteem, along with finding my voice to speak out on the subject of child abuse and domestic violence, has truly been a worthwhile treasure to behold. The pure wisdom of learning to love myself, and knocking down the wall I have built around me, so others might love me back, is the jewel which shines the brightest, and will for years to come. Because of these jewels I've collected thus far, I am a true survivor.

By Joy McQuiston