

Actual data from non-fictional Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Incest. Reports of Torture, Rape, Horror, Shame, Trauma and Abuse beyond imagination. How do the abused learn how to identify themselves as Survivors and heal from the emotional pain that has been carried for years?

Self-Empowerment and Self Help tools to help you heal as they did, while you read.

Tiffany L. Werhner, MS, LMHC, PA
Licensed Mental Health Counselor

THERE'S A LIGHT WITHIN
YOU THAT NEVER GOES OUT
TRUE STORIES OF ACTUAL SURVIVORS OF
SEXUAL ABUSE AND/OR INCEST ABUSE THAT
HAVE OVERCOME THE TRAUMATIC PAST

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The incidents and stories shared in this book are true reports from actual survivors of sexual abuse and incest. Their names have been changed for privacy and security reasons.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this book to my “survivor group”, which not only shared their precious stories with one another in a healing group setting, but allowed me to document their thoughts and guidance in order to help others recover from shame and guilt associated with abuse. The members of the group will remain anonymous, however, to me, never forgotten. Thank you.

INSIGHT: You **MUST** break yourself down in order to rebuild yourself up. In the end, you **WILL** feel empowered and strong. You **CAN** and **WILL** be able to gain insight and find emotional peace. It is vital to see clearly light **IS** at the end of the “tunnel”. You can gain life changing power to see clearly that there is light at the end of the tunnel and you can gain life-changing power to not only feel strength by facing this pain you have endured, but each and every struggle or obstacle you may encounter in life. Just knowing that you took a chance to face the past and studied ways that you may be healed is a brave move forward and you should begin to feel proud of yourself. Taking that initiative is not an easy thing to do. You have a choice on how you want to live your life. Only you can make this happen. I believe once the effort is made, your life will only improve moving forward.

There is a light within you that never goes out...no matter how long you have felt it was gone.

The flaming candle in the wind fears the wind, but can always be lit again if the wind blows the flame out.

PROLOGUE

I have identified that *without really seeing the power of facing the truth and overcoming the shame and guilt of feeling victimized from sexual abuse, a survivor can never really heal from the psychological damage it has done.* In addition, I have come to realize how common sexual abuse is and how damaging it can be to a person. I have been working with many different types of abuse survivors: children suffering from years of incest, an attack from stranger, a violent series of rapes, a onetime severe sexual encounter through a trusted friend/family member or role model. My intention is to help you recognize that regardless of the incident, it happened and it shouldn't have. But most of all, the main focus of this book is guided to help the adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse utilize several effective tools I have encountered that have been "breathtaking and empowering" according to my clientele. I am attempting to collaborate all the useful and effective tools into one book. The stories that have been shared are not fiction and were very hard to share.

Sometimes it scares me to know what I know, especially since I am also a mother myself. Sometimes I understand the saying "Ignorance is bliss". I wish the harmed and abused could know how common it is to be deceived and how it is hard to identify people

that are selfish, needy, lonely, with fetishes, lost, misdiagnosed, or not diagnosed at all. Even worse, there are so many diagnosed with mental illness that are not medication compliant.

When people are faced with trauma, especially with the trauma being absolutely no fault of their own, such as sexual abuse, it usually makes them fearful to let others in. Knowledge is empowering and without knowledge and awareness people that are and have been abused are more likely to feel like a “victim”. The question is are you ready to feel empowered by facing some very hurtful past memories? Or instead live in fear with unresolved or unreparable anxiety and flashbacks regarding the memories of the past?

The common feeling of confusion possessed by sexual abuse victims included a childhood flooded with unanswered questions, shameful thoughts, hatred for not feeling protected by their parents or God, and questionable thoughts of sexual identity that often happens when exposed to inappropriate things and actions at such a young age.

Recovering as an adult from childhood sexual abuse is “bittersweet”. It is a very personal journey for one to finally recover from being an adult that has survived childhood abuse. The “bitter” is that it is difficult to face the true and shameful facts, remembering the past, and admitting what actions actually truly happened. The “sweet” is that after this is all done, one can finally learn to live the rest of their lives with that feeling lifted from their heart, soul, and memories.

You **MUST** break yourself down in order to rebuild yourself up. In the end, you **WILL** feel empowered and strong. You **CAN** and **WILL** be relieved from the emotional consequences of the violations

that were placed upon you, whether it happened one time or for years. The common denominator is that most victims do not seek help because they feel powerless, like their story is no longer worth telling. It is so important to see clearly that there is light at the end of the tunnel and you can gain life-changing power to not only this, but every struggle in life. Just knowing that you took a chance to face the past and studied ways that you may be healed is a brave move forward and you should begin to feel proud of yourself just by taking that initiative, as it is not an easy thing to do. You have a choice on how you want to live your life. I hope that if you are reading this and have not yet sought out professional help, you at least take from this the empowerment that you are not alone. It is brave to come out and speak up, no matter how long ago it was, and that if you have not received help yet, please talk to someone as soon as possible. Only you can make this happen, and I believe once the effort is made, your life will only improve from this point.

As one of the characters in this story “Raye” discovered that her story was going to be published, she wept tears of joy and relief. I asked, “Why do you cry? Do you not want this to happen?” Tearfully and sobbing she replied, “I have always asked ‘Why me, God, why me?’ Now you have given me a reason that God gave me strength to survive that and live on. After years of shame, fear and guilt I finally have a purpose. After 54 surgeries due to years of violent rape and incest by my brother and their friends, starting at age one, I can actually correlate them to something purposeful, as if it were meant for something bigger and for a greater good.”

Up until now, Raye assumed that God was simply punishing her for something she did not understand. She was only a child and the abuse began from age 1 finally “ending” around age 14. She

never did anything to deserve that. No one deserves that. In fact, the contents are so horrifying it is not understood by many why people would do that to others, especially family to their own family. It is confusing and terrifying but it does happen. However, Raye is the kindest and most empathetic person you'd ever meet. How does this happen? How did her soul remain so gentle and kind? My opinion is that it is because her light never burned out, even after years of torture, incest and rape.

***There's a light within you that never goes out...
no matter how long you have felt it was gone. The
flaming candle in the wind fears the wind, but can
always be lit again if the wind blows the flame out.***

CHAPTER 1

ARE YOU A SURVIVOR OF ABUSE OR A VICTIM OF ABUSE? HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF?

It is very common for survivors of abuse to report that their abuse was not as bad as most and many have said, “It could have been worse.” For example, stating appreciation that they were only sodomized repeatedly and not vaginally raped, or stating the predators stopped raping them after they became a woman and they “...got their period”. Most of those abused did not report it at the time of the event and it gets “placed on a mental shelf”, “shoved under the rug”, or it’s “too embarrassing to admit, so it has gone unsaid.” Many have said they “thought just letting it go would make it go away.”

Most of them report reasons including but not limited to the following:

- “I’m too scared to tell.”
- “It was too long ago”
- “No one will believe me.”

- “What’s the point?”
- “Worse happens to others.”
- “At least it was only one time.”
- “It was my fault.”
- “I didn’t scream loud enough or struggle enough.”
- “Maybe I provoked it.”
- “Maybe I liked it.”
- “I let it happen.”
- ...and several other misconceptions such as these.

My intention is to face the issue and guide the abused to realize that *there is a light within you that never goes out and the pain will subside. You will change while healing if you allow the light within you to glow once again.*

It saddens me that several people by nature can be so devious. Many ask me why this is so. Many people, especially children make themselves vulnerable because they try to see the good in people and see past the bad. Children are trusting and can be manipulated easily and this is why many predators target them. It is sometimes sensed as a sick world lately. There are so many internet websites that are too dangerous. There are children that are exposed to pornographic material that is extremely inappropriate yet easily accessible and is often exchanged with friends. I have found that it is common now for teens to engage in “sexting,” which is exchanging nude photos of themselves. They do not understand the ramifications of the photo possibly going public or being exposed through massive social media. This social media has been a curse and a tool for cyber bullying, immature exposure, child pornography, serial killing, and other forms of revenge, hatred, bullying, false sexual advertisement

(including pedophilia and inappropriate dating sites) and painful incidents to others.

I myself try to follow Christ and “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Not all people are this way and when faced with a person like that, it is important to know that that is their problem and not yours. People treat others poorly because they have a problem within themselves and not with you. In regards to how you handle your abuse, it is not what has happened to you in your past that defines who you are. It is how you handle the situation or any difficult situation that shows your true and divine character.

Are all people bad? What makes a person behave as such a sick predator? Some say it is because they are a product of their environment. Some religions say they all are born with “original sin” and need the Sacrament of Baptism in order to be cleansed of sin, but that does not always make someone a good person.

Is it a fact that all people are innately bad? No. Should you always use universal precautions to protect your safety and the safety of your loved ones? Absolutely. Should you be concerned of the safety of your children? Always. Can you recognize a Pedophile? Never. Do you know when you are speaking to a sociopath? No.

Actually, people with the diagnosis of “Antisocial Personality Disorder” (commonly known as Sociopath, Psychopath, etc...) are often characterized as being very charming, often good looking, and extremely manipulative. It is very difficult to identify a person such as this at first, unless you are a trained professional. I have learned this through years of working with the mentally ill.

I generally have each client complete a homework assignment, in which they must answer this question, “Are you a ‘victim’ or

‘survivor’ of sexual abuse or incest...are you a survivor or a victim and why?” The assignment allows them to disclose what happened and how they feel that they have survived years of dealing with all of the aftermath of the abuse, especially years later after their assault/assaults. They have at this time, minimal idea of what they have been dealing with or what has made them such a survivor. After all of the counseling and empowerment I have them rewrite their essay and I find a dramatic difference in their writing and more empowerment than they have ever known in years.

*“All I have left is a broken heart and some scars,
No friends,
No hope,
And when I think that I’m dead,
Someone breaks my heart once again...
But I’m not dead, because when you are dead, you can
no longer see the bright light ahead.”~ Anonymous*

***EXERCISE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: WRITE AN ESSAY:
“AM I A VICTIM OR AM I A SURVIVOR AND WHY”**

CHAPTER 2

***WHY SEEK COUNSELING FOR
SEXUAL ABUSE TRAUMA THAT
HAPPENED YEARS AGO ?***

I am fascinated that survivors of childhood abuse eventually find it within themselves to finally seek professional help after years of keeping the shame and guilt associated with their past abuse a secret. I say that I am “fascinated” because I believe that these people are some of the bravest of my clientele. Rather than ignoring their past and trying to just deal with the memories, they approach therapy with the mindset they will no longer suffer and something has to be done and it is time to heal from the pain.

Seeking help and admitting that one was violated and abused takes a lot of effort and commitment. It is usually a very shameful thing to talk about, as most survivors of abuse often feel some sort of embarrassment related to the incident (though not their fault). There is often fear of judgment, where they fear that if someone knew, they would look at them differently. There must be a commitment to enter therapy honestly and without withholding any information. Several clients take months to finally admit the truth

which takes the path to healing much longer. The truth is what leads the survivor to emotional healing.

If a person avoids dealing with the abuse and not validating that it was not their fault, understanding the shame and fear involved, understanding the confusion they lived with all of those years, and wondering “why me”, they generally end up with feelings of resentment which then lead to anger. It may lead to feelings of loss of control, the need to have control, inappropriate relationships, self-mutilation, substance abuse for a need to “escape”, eating disorders, and flash backs related to the trauma.

***** EXERCISE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: COMPLETE A LETTER TO YOUR MOTHER, FATHER, OR WHOMEVER YOU FELT KNEW AND DID NOTHING TO HELP YOU. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO GIVE IT TO THEM, JUST GET OUT ALL OF YOUR EMOTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN BOTTLED UP SO THAT YOU MAY HAVE CLOSURE. EVEN IF THE PERSON IS NO LONGER PHYSICALLY LIVING ON THIS EARTH OR ABLE TO BE REACHED, IT WILL STILL PROVIDE CLOSURE.***

CHAPTER 3

WHO ARE THE PREDATORS AND WHEN ARE CHILDREN REALLY SAFE?

****CAN WE EVER REALLY IDENTIFY A PREDATOR?***

When is a child safe from a predator or becoming a victim of sexual abuse? I would like to say there are safe places, such as our homes, with family, with relatives, or trusted friends, but it would not be true in all cases. In fact, predators come in all shapes and sizes.

I received a call requesting an evaluation for an eight year old boy “Josh”, who had been reportedly sexually abused in 1st grade and never received counseling for the incident. His step father called in for the appointment, upfront admitting that this should have been done when it happened, but they thought they talked to him enough and that he would be okay. Josh and his mother reported to the first session of counseling after an incident happened at his Elementary School in 1st grade. Six boys were affected by one that was being abused and it happened in the school bathroom. Although it wouldn’t affect my mandated obligation to report any additional

findings of sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior that I was informed of by this boy, I was ultimately relieved by his mother's cooperation to report any other findings. She wanted to know what was going on with her child and get him all of the help he needed.

My own children were visiting that day. It was coincidental that my husband came by the day of the initial visit with Josh. It seemed to comfort both the mother and Josh that my children were at the office. First of all, Josh found the office environment to be a friendly place, with chocolate chip cookies, sodas and snacks served and he also had other children to play with. His mother seemed comforted as she knew I was obviously a mother myself and could relate to her pain and concern. I spoke to her as a mother, as well as an expert in sexual abuse and incest survivors. Josh and my son were only months apart in age, both in 3rd grade. They were pleasantly entertained by video games on our smart phones as his intake was being completed.

She had informed me that he was very nervous coming into counseling, as he had been questioned by police, HRS, Child Services, and School Personnel, however he was never sent to counseling until this visit. Josh had begun showing signs of abuse and had been acting inappropriately. As we discussed some of Josh's behaviors honestly and she reported what he had been doing, the thought crossed my mind that any other mother at that time would have scooped up her children and kindly left with no intention of ever allowing her children around Josh ever again.

My heart went out to this passionate mother and her beautiful, yet, confused little boy, just months older than my first born. I am well aware that the mother did nothing wrong and was not a bad parent. The incident happened and I reassured her that we could

only change the future, not the past, and I would work diligently to help her and Josh. He was exposed to a violent act that we all warn our children about, but the twisted part of the story was his predator and initial violator was another boy his age. ANOTHER 6 YEAR OLD BOY. We warn our children to say no to drugs, to not talk to strangers, to not pet dogs we don't know, and look both ways before crossing the street. Who warns a 6 year old (Josh was initially violated at age 6 in 1st grade) to beware of another 6 year old asking them to "lick their part" and that it is wrong? No don't say beware of other children. Bullies yes, but not other children that are capable of performing sexual acts.

During the following session, the stepfather and mother were present with Josh and his baby brother. The mother left the room in order to give us some privacy as the baby was actively making noises and being adorably playful, yet a distraction to the serious topic that was awaiting us. The stepfather sat in the session and listened as Josh and I began talking.

I reminded him that the first time he visited me he met my children. He remembered and was pleased to hear that my son asked when he would be able to play with him again. Josh appeared a bit embarrassed and ashamed, as he has been told he was "bad and inappropriate" by others that have been trying to help discipline his behavior, not understanding what they were really dealing with. He spoke and as he told me what his interests were (girls, girlfriends, cable...) he reminded me of other male victims immediately that didn't come for help until adulthood. I spoke to him as I would the adult clients. In a way a child could understand, but a child that understood adult things, sexual feelings, and violation of boundaries, consensual or not. As it is very common,

Josh sat close to me at first, not aware of proper boundaries and in my “bubble,” as he didn’t have his own “bubble” any more. The bubble of personal space usually disappears with any child that is sexually abused.

Josh proceeded to tell of stories of inappropriate contact with his cousins. One was three years old and he had her perform oral stimulation on him. Another that involved having sex with his Aunts that were teenagers. Josh looked at me petrified after he told the stories. He has been disciplined and spoken to about this before, as he stated that “I know she was only three and it was bad of me and inappropriate...”

My response to Josh prompted him to give me a hug. I said, “Look at me, Josh. It was not your fault. I do not see you as a bad boy. I already knew why you were here to see me before I met you. I still allowed you to play with my children.

Do people allow bad kids around their own children?”

Josh shook his head and said, “No.”

“You were shown something that felt good to you and no one really talked to you about it the way they should have. You can’t possibly understand why it is bad. You are a kid.”

“I’m in third grade,” he replied.

“Yes, that’s right. You are a child. You only know bad and good. Truth and lies. Candy verse eating your vegetables.”

“I do eat my vegetables,” he said.

“Well, what that boy did to you didn’t hurt you, did it?”

“No.”

“Right, it didn’t hurt you and it probably actually kind of felt good to you, am I right?”

“Yeah.”

“So why would you think it was so bad?” Josh nodded and dropped his head and looked at the floor.

Josh looked up at me as I tried to explain more.

“Do you play sports, Josh?”

“Yes.”

“Have you ever been hit with a ball where it hurts?”

“Yes”

“That’s why we wear the protective uniform, right?”

“Yes, and one time I was hit in my *spot* during recess and it really hurt, because I didn’t have protection on my spot”.

We discussed how the term spot actually originated from the term “No-No Spot” and the obvious reasons why it is a NO Spot. Not only for private reasons but because it hurts when it gets hit. Things a child understands.

A child that is abused, especially one that doesn’t receive help, grows up confused that they did something bad that felt good, and carries the shame associated with feeling good from something really bad and not clearly understanding why it was bad. They consider themselves to be bad people because of enjoying something that was told was so bad and carried guilt and shame for not thinking it felt bad.

****WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR “CHILD SELF”**

The following letter was written by true and non-fictional survivor of ongoing abuse:

“Dear Innocent Daniel,

I want you to know that I now understand why you were and have been so scared. You are innocent and too young to understand everything that happened as well as the reasons it happened. You were vulnerable to a demon predator. I have a strong, deep desire for you to feel innocent and free, as a 6 year old should. I am grateful that we are both here and able to work through these issues together. I am sorry that we both have had to carry the guilt and shame all these years. You are just a young, innocent child. When it began, you didn't even know what sexual abuse was. How could you? You believe that that sick kid's parents were friends with our mom and dad or at least had come over to visit you and your family on the street you grew up.

To you, this basically defined this boy as a “friend,” he was “friends” with your brother and they traded stamps together, something you desired to be a part of, and therefore; you viewed him as “family.” The smell of that basement, the fresh concrete, the sounds of the basement and the air conditioning system, remain triggers for both of us. His manipulation of you is unconscionable as well as his use of the word “secret” that reminds you of his inappropriate touching, has turned us into somewhat of a cynic where we have trouble trusting people and are not trusting of those who are trying to manipulate you or any situation that we find ourselves in. As we continue this process, I will help you learn to

deal with these triggers. You didn't know what he was doing when he began to fondle you. You could not have comprehended that it was wrong. It felt good. How could something that felt so good, be wrong? He knew you wanted to belong to their group and participate in their Stamp Collecting. He knew you wanted to be accepted and loved and to feel like one of the older kids. As he stroked your penis, he told you this was normal and that it would feel good and offered you a reward [bribe] for your silence that he knew you really wanted. He was "family" and you had been taught to believe family is one of the greatest things in life. In your small world being a child, family and close family friends mean everything to you and he used that against you. He took our innocence as well as our basic understanding of intimacy and our sense of morality, especially when it comes to sex. Although we both have believed for so long that it was our fault, it ABSOLUTELY was NOT your fault. He manipulated you and replaced your voice with his, the voice of a monster, a predator. I have recently learned that it is not too late for you to be heard...so I want you to know that I hear you loud and clear!

Despite the memories that will trouble you, you will be safe. You say the words you couldn't say before, cry the tears that never formed, and allow yourself to trust in those you love once again. I am present now and I will protect you. I will protect you from those things that kept you quiet and hidden in the corner, including the self-destructive part of you, which eventually became "who

we were not meant to be,” but we will heal and become better people for going down this path. As an adult, I am no longer alone in my suffering and neither are you. We have each other, family, and the support I am getting from therapy. I love you, and we both should be proud of what you have become and will continue to be!

*Yours Truly,
Daniel”*

***EXERCISE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR “CHILD SELF”. LOOKING BACK AT A SMALL CHILD WHO IS FEELING SHAMFUL AND AT FAULT FOR THEIR ABUSE, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL THIS CHILD? WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A CHILD, KNOWING WHAT IS REAL AND NOT AND HOW A CHILD IS SO INNOCENT?**

CHAPTER 4

***THE TRAGIC AND HORRIFYING
SURVIVAL STORY OF “RAYE”***

My mother always told me, “Treat everyone with kindness, as there are angels always walking among us. They come in all shapes and sizes so never judge a book by its cover, as you may be judging an angel, possibly even Christ himself.” My mother was very wise when it came to explaining reasons not to be judgmental towards anyone, as everyone has their own problems and hardships to endure. She would say, “It is not what we go through in life that defines us, it is how we handle it that identifies our strength and character”. My mother was loved by all that she came in contact with. I was always amazed as a child of how people were drawn to her and comforted by her presence. She lit up the room, and I am not speaking as a biased child of hers, I was told this all of my life by all the friends that she knew. Her funeral had more guests than the church could fill and people that knew her flew from all over the world to pay their respects. Some knew her for a short time, however, she touched their lives in such a way that the impact on

their lives caused an everlasting connection and many wept that the world no longer had a person such as her in it.

So, my mother was correct. Some people do endure hardships and handle them with grace. I have seen the truth in what she was telling me. I also realized that it is better to get to know someone and be hurt by them, rather than be guarded and not take a chance and miss out on a friend for life. Those people deserve the utmost respect and praise.

Raye was a client who approached and sought out counseling to heal from years of torturous incest and presented as fearful and very nervous to face her past. Most people that endured such pain statistically grow up to be abusive themselves, angered and violent. But, I found that she was fragile and sensitive. Ironically though her abusers were her father and her three brothers, she believes in family values and wondered how “family” could have been her worst enemy. I found her to be absolutely fascinating and a complete pleasure to be around. She reported fear in facing her past and had not sought professional help before.

Raye’s story had been one of the more distinctively painful recollections for her to share. To hear and understand what she went through was inflicted and caused by her own flesh and blood makes it even more difficult to swallow. Moreover, it also showed that she grew up not having anyone to turn to during her painful childhood. She reported events of childhood torture, including being raped, painful use of bondage, including a table with leather straps and devices to cause extreme pain and screams of terror. She talked about several incidents of being tied in the woods naked for the day, fearful of who would return to get her and what they would do with her when they returned. She never knew who, when or how many of

them there would be each time. She has dealt with severe past and current medical issues as a result of traumatic and violent repetitive rape, and terror in ways that one could not imagine.

The memory that Raye considers to be the most painful to recollect was when she was seven years old. She tearfully shared that it was by her predator, her second oldest brother. "He enjoyed torture", she said. "He loved to hear me scream." One game he enjoyed the most was hanging her naked in the barn by a noose around her neck while he tapped the bench she stood on with his foot." She said that at the age of five to eight years old he did these things several times. She tearfully stated, "I would wish that one of those taps was hard enough for that chair to go over. Therefore I would have died, not able to endure any more pain or suffering."

On one individual session with Raye, she went into more detail of the horrific acts that happened to her as child. She described several times her brother had, "tied me up to the tree in the back, naked, which could be sometimes more scary because I never knew what was coming...fear of them coming back to torture, shove a stick up in me, bring friends, humiliate me, disrespect me; however, it was better than the bed or wooden platform where I was tied up and gang raped or tortured".

It is amazing that Raye is one of the kindest people I have ever encountered. She has become empathetic and non-judgmental as a result or despite her years of abuse. When we say "abuse", the word alone does not describe the magnitude of the torture that Raye's father, brothers, family, neighbors, classmates and town put her through. When I asked her how she learned such strong family values, as she had never been exposed to any as a child herself, she said, "From the movies."

Raye is unable to gain closure to the predators (which were mainly her father and her older brothers) as they have all passed away, one from suicide. She is now almost 50 years old, however, she finally found it in herself to face her past and discover a way in her words, “out of her pain”. She has a beautiful soul and wears herself out trying to be a “people pleaser” which I find to be one of the common personality characteristics among victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Initially Raye came for help in order to ease the emotional pain associated with the abuse and come to an understanding of who she is as a person. She said that she “...has never experienced being a child or having a true childhood.” She reports that she has difficulty associating herself as an innocent child that experienced severe and traumatic abuse. She stated that her only “safe” family member was her sister, Jenny. She later tragically discovered that Jenny was tortured and raped, just as she was.

She also reported that Jenny had no idea that Raye had endured the same painful torture and disrespect from her family during her childhood. She said Jenny told her she “...took the extra punishment so they would leave Raye alone.” Raye stated, “I believe that was the hardest thing for Jenny to hear, was when I told her what they did to me.” She said Jenny wept horribly and with anger that they didn’t keep their promise to not hurt little Raye.

After months of therapy Raye handed me a “gift.” Proudly, she told me it was very special to her and she wanted me to have it. This client and I had grown to have a trusting relationship over the years, especially through the process of her healing. Her gift was not wrapped and appeared to be approximately 30-40 years old. It was

an old Chinese pouch and inside were Chinese hair sticks that are commonly used to pull up long hair.

I asked, "Raye, what is this?" As I opened the pouch, she explained, "They were my sister's". I gasped, "Jenny's? These were Jenny's? Why would you want me to have these?"

She smiled and then said, "You're going have to research on Google how to use them because I haven't a clue!" Jenny was Raye's older sister and was the only one that was never harmful and did all she could to protect her. In fact, years later Raye discovered that Jenny unwillingly did whatever was asked of her, as long as the boys promised that Raye was left alone. Jenny was lied to and Raye was tortured, many times even worse than Jenny. Raye reported again that she told her sister years later, as adults, and Jenny never knew that Raye was being abused as well. She said, "You have helped me and protected me now the entire time I have known you, just as Jenny did." I didn't know what to say. I knew that Raye would never mean me any harm and this must be very difficult for her, as her sister was killed in a car accident years ago after suffering years of traumatic and violent sexual incest and abuse.

Raye tearfully reminisced how painful it was for Jenny to learn that Raye was beaten, tortured, and raped, just as Jenny experienced. All the while Jenny was always under the belief that she was protecting her younger sister. The Chinese hair sticks were one of Raye's sentimental remnants of Jenny. I told her that I couldn't take them. They were too special. "You should keep them, Raye", I said. I was speechless on so many levels, but I understood what she meant and I was honored. "Ok, Raye", I said. "Thank you dearly". I understand how much they mean to you and I just didn't understand. I was honored, and to this day I still am honored. It is a

gift with so much good intention, from a person that meant so much to Raye. It is one of those gifts that is so thoughtful and takes a lot to give away or to receive knowing the story attached to them.

In addition to having over 52 reconstructive surgeries due to the scarring tissue and other health concerns because of the abuse, Raye suffers from years of having severe and recurrent eating disorders, which is associated with the need for control, a comfort that Raye has never had the luxury of, even as an adult. She approached therapy very intimidated and fearful of relapse, as she has been an alcoholic for years, but in recovery for almost two years. She reported that she had been sober for fifteen years and then two years ago relapsed due to suicidal ideations and feeling that the past and her memories would never subside. It was during that time that she said, “I decided to shut the door of emotion or association to anything relative to family”. She reported, “My drinking got worse and I finally decided to go into recovery because I didn’t want to die. I wished the pain would go away but not lead to death.”

Through therapy she has been healing and finding empowerment, as she has been able to understand that most of her feelings and confusion regarding the abuse are not abnormal and that she is not to blame. There are so many factors that abuse survivors face and ponder for years that once cleared up through therapy, allow them to live the life that they were always meant to live, without unnecessary feelings of shame guilt and fearful of the truth.

Life is funny, isn’t it? Some people wish for money, some for fame, some to be thin, some to be successful. What is successful? Who defines what actual success in life is anyway? Is it money? It is what we accomplish in hard times? Or is it the situations we endure,

but also how we handle them? It is more common for someone to obtain an education and achieve an occupation of their choice. What about if your dream was to learn to feel what it is like to know love, trust, or family? Some say the best things in life are free. Raye described her life as not having that experience. She explains herself feeling as if she never existed. She never reported herself to be suicidal but simply never understanding "...how to exist and feel existing...important enough to matter."

When no one can come to your rescue, one feels emotionally abandoned and spiritually empty. It was easy for Raye to explain that she was a "bad child." She repetitively states that she did not deserve to live and always felt humiliated, degraded, and out of place. It is so common that when a child is abused or exposed to trauma at an early age, they feel as though somehow it was their fault. They state that there was shame. Most children believe that if they were involved in a situation that they knew was "bad", whether or not it was their fault, they identify the situation as their fault and therefore they must be "bad." Raye always referred to herself as a loving person, yet, a shameful child, with no recollection of a happy childhood. She blames herself for a lot of her behavior, even though she was never taught any other way.

"Before I started counseling," she reported, "I used to have envy and jealousy for those who have a family life. I never understood a family. I have family, but I often wondered what it would have been like to have had a sibling to play with and grow up playful and with that childhood. I get angry when I realize how much was taken from me, not only physically but life wise".

It has been very difficult for some survivors to want to relive the past. Some come from such abusive families and reliving the

memories seems too difficult to think about. Especially when a client knows that the mother was aware of the abuse and denied that she knew, ignored it when she was told, and did nothing to protect her children.

Raye reported, *“My shame came in much later, I’d say probably teenage years when I understood what was going on and other people started finding out. People started making fun of me. I trusted in a ‘friend’ and she told others, and I thought she was my friend. Other people started poking at me and making fun of me... thinking I wanted it to happen...really degrading me about it...I really understood the ‘shame’ about it. My brother was popular and didn’t get much torment about it because he was the drug dealer of the town and they all blamed me, as if I was the one in the wrong about it and she was the cool one. He acted to want to be a ‘big brother and try to stick up for me...when people would beat me up physically and emotionally...when he tried to stick up for me it would make things worse...I would get gang beaten or individual beaten. I remember one time at lunch in the cafeteria I was punched for no reason and all I could do was cry. I could not go to the bathroom or I’d get my ass kicked. The school kids called me the school slut because of my brothers. One day I wanted to stick up for myself and was going to meet the school bully in the woods and she didn’t show up...and even then no one took me seriously and I was still was still bullied after that...she still kicked me and bullied me and beat the shit out of me.”*

CHAPTER 5

***HOW DID YOUR ANGER AFFECT YOUR
LOVED ONES?***

THE STORY OF “TOMMY”

Another example of “why to seek help” is a client that resorted to years of alcoholism. Tommy approached therapy at an employer’s request, as he was “angry” and needed assistance with his anger management. He approached the office with the intention to appease his employer because he was upset that other employees received paid time off for reasons that were in his words, “...easy compared to his life”.

Upon the initial evaluation, Tommy reported for the first time that he was attacked by a stranger in the woods at knife point at age 10, where he was almost sodomized. The predator ejaculated on his back as a knife was to his throat and threatened his life if he ever told. He did not know the predator. He reports that he was not able to report it as he could not identify this man. However, he had not spoken of the incident until asked about it during the initial evaluation. When asked if he had ever been sexually abused, assaulted, raped, or molested, he questioned, “Why is

that important?” He acknowledged that it had crossed his mind on several different occasions that this incident had led him to the bar and caused him to drink in order to “self-pity and want to drink excessively.” He stated, “If I knew where that mother fucker was, I’d go back and kick his ass.”

As time went on, he admitted that the Penn State incident with Sandusky was a severe trigger to him, and as he drank heavily for years, he never understood the root of the anger and in turn took it out on his children and wife.

Tommy reports that he had several negative outcomes that were a result of the attack. He sadly recognized that he never took any of his sons to a baseball game. He reported and explained that he never wanted to drink at a ball game either. He explained that he feared to have to use the restroom at a game and has a significant fear of using a public restroom, as a urinal would have his back open to a predator. He tearfully admits jealousy every time that he witnesses a father and son laughing together, especially at a ball game, as Tommy describes himself as a huge baseball fan. He was burdened with living with resentment. Resentment leads to anger and only when the resentment is dealt with, the anger subsides, even if it is years after the incident.

He wrote a letter to his family, so that they may finally understand why he has had so much anger in him. Until Tommy entered counseling, he had never spoken of the assault or even recognized that his assault may have been the root of his anger. He gave the letter to one of his boys in strict confidence, and it was time for Tommy to allow his son to share the information. One of his other sons does not speak to him. Reasons for this have not been disclosed and it is a painful subject for him to speak about.

Tommy's first letter to his family was powerful. He gave the letter to his oldest son and asked him to only read it after he left. Minutes after he landed back in Florida, he turned his phone back on and there was a text from his son that read "I wish you would have given me this before you left so that I could give you a big hug."

The following letter was his final courageous attempt to give and receive *closure* with his children:

"Dear son,

I need to discuss an unpleasant subject with you that is in regards to a letter that I gave to you that was assigned to me by my therapist. The letter describing the assault that terrified me when I was only 10 years old ...I am ready to share that with the rest of our family. Her recommendation was to inform you all what has happened in my life. My anger and drinking have damaged my relationship with most of you all. I only have a good relationship with two out of three of my children. She also knows that I have minimal contact with your mother.

During my last session, we discussed the recent Boston Bombing and how 'Tomorrow is promised to no one and that it would be a shame if something were to happen to me, you boys would never have the closure or peace with you about things that you may have been upset with me for years about'.

With that being said, I hope you have read the letter and I hope that you will share it with the family. I know that it doesn't excuse my behaviors, drinking, or abrupt and harsh words and actions, however, I hope that it may give some explanation to some of the root-cause of those actions.

I love you guys with all of my heart and hope that my honesty brings some understanding. I don't expect you to forget my actions, but hopefully will be able to forgive some of them.

Love, Dad"

Tommy diligently worked through this program and created reports and faced his fears. He allowed his family to be part of his treatment and recovery. He has also been sober for 17 years.

Tommy reported that he has not felt "anger" in some time and has been able to begin repairing his relationships to all of those he had hurt throughout the years, as he did not quite understand his own misery. He realized that once he learned to forgive himself and not live in shame, he was able to let love in and let anger go.

It is never too late to heal from a traumatic incident. It is a positive way to finally heal emotionally and learn to live in a peaceful place mentally, without the haunting of the past. No matter how severe the abuse was, or how bad the survivor of the abuse interprets their encounter with the predator, the effects of the sexual abuse become a root to the problems that may contribute to the emotional issues faced as an adult.

Most survivors deal with issues such as eating disorders, alcoholism or substance abuse or dependence, inability to trust, relationship issues such as codependency, boundary issues (including the lack of proper boundaries), settling for any feeling of stability through promiscuity or inappropriate relationships, and low self-esteem.

The fear of others hurting you, as you felt as a child, not only was frightening and painful, but left you feeling confused, and in a constant state of the desire to isolate and emotionally disconnect, as it is a way to protect yourself to not get hurt again. However, there is still a continuous need and desire to fill that void and receive relief from the emotional pain and internal emptiness that was stolen from you as a child, and no amount of drugs, alcohol, intimacy (casual), or other forms of self-indulgence can make you feel as if it were “complete.”

Eventually as an adult, you may realize that it is finally time to face the past and heal the emotional wounds. The coping mechanisms were merely “band aids” on an open wound, which only cover up the wound. By facing the past, trusting in therapy, and emotionally dealing with the truth HONESTLY, the flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety revolving around the past will subside and eventually become what it was, the past. You will learn to move on and move forward.

The negative thoughts that were once intrusive become a reflection of what you survived and lived through and will continue to live on from. The damage will no longer be there as it once was and you can move on with life. You can identify yourself as a survivor and the question of “why me” will be no more. You will live shame free and you will be able to love and forgive yourself.

You will be able to identify yourself as someone that deserves respect and is a valuable person. You deserve to feel free from the pain, the memories and the anger that has built up from years of resentment.

Questions can be answered because you are given the courage to ask. It is your time to heal and you should be proud of yourself. You are braver than you know. Empowerment begins with seeking help and this takes courage. It is courageous to face the trauma that you have been trying to forget for years. That is why there is a ***light within you that never goes out***. That “light” is the spirit within you that no one can take from you, no matter how much they have done or how much they have tried. It is your spirit, your true light, your inner flame that you always knew was there. You may feel it dims at times, but it never quite burns out. And if it does, it can be ignited again, by your courage and perseverance.

*****EXERCISE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: DESCRIBE WAYS THAT YOU PUNISHED YOURSELF AND OR LOVED ONES BECAUSE OF UNRESOLVED GUILT OR SHAME. THEN WRITE AN APOLOGY TO EACH PERSON THAT WAS AFFECTED BY IT.***

CHAPTER 6

THE STORY OF MAYA THE SURVIVOR HERO

In the beginning of the classic novel, “The Great Gatsby”, The Narrator summarizes that he received advice from his grandfather that has stayed with him in his mind for years. He reports that “Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all of the people have not had the advantages that you have had.” He summarizes, “...look for the good in all people, but for this it will also make you vulnerable.”

As I had mentioned before, I generally have each client complete a homework assignment, in which they must answer this question, “Are you a ‘victim’ or ‘survivor’ of sexual abuse...are you a survivor or a victim and why”?

This assignment allows them to disclose what happened and how they feel they have survived years of dealing with all of the aftermath of the abuse, especially years later after their assault/assaults. They have at this time, minimal idea of what they have been dealing with or what has made them such a survivor. It is then after all of the counseling and empowerment that they rewrite

their essay, finding a dramatic difference in their writing and more empowerment than they have ever known in years.

The following is a copy of Maya's powerful essay, after months of treatment and skills of learning to be a survivor:

She wrote: "A survivor is someone who experiences a great trauma but carries through and moves on. That is not to say that the Survivor comes through unscarred. There will be scars and sometimes the deepest scars are those that no one sees. Trauma can leave a body battered and bruised and not quite whole. It can leave a body scarred so badly that the person inside might never be the same again. A survivor can take that body and soul and pick it up and move on with their life. I am such a survivor.

My scars are of the variety that aren't immediately apparent, but those who know me well can see their pattern. I have tended to shut people out and rarely show emotion. I have tended to keep to myself and have doubted my worthiness to have close relationships. I make lists and have to be in control to a point that it interferes with my relationships with others. These are the scars that have been left on my soul after years of childhood sexual abuse.

I am a survivor because I have decided to no longer let the abuse govern my life. I have taken the abuse, acknowledged the changes and scars it has left and chosen to set it free. No longer am I keeping it hidden on some shelf like a burden I must bear on my own. I have found the value of letting others in, letting them see what I had thought was the ugliness inside and realized that it is not a shameful albatross that must be hidden at all costs. It is rather dirty laundry that must be aired out for all to see, but it can be shared with those closest to me. I have found that sharing what

causes me pain with others allows me to heal and doesn't make me any less in other people's eyes. I have found that being a survivor doesn't mean being stoic and putting on a brave face. I have found that leaning on others is ok and can make the survivor stronger without stealing the strength of others. It's ok to use their strength to pull me through and that process can make us stronger together. That trust makes us stronger together.

I once thought that putting on that brave face and moving on was surviving but that was only a mask and that was simply existing. I was in protection mode, determined to never be hurt again. But not sharing myself with others was hurting me in different ways, adding to the scars.

Thirty years is a long time to wear a mask and taking it off and throwing it away has not been a pain free experience, but it has been experience that was necessary and has lightened the load I have been carrying. I can now go on being that wife, mother, sister, daughter, Girl Scout Leader, and nurse without the scars restricting me. I have cut through them and allowed myself to truly be a functioning person. I can acknowledge the abuse for what it was, acknowledge the changes I make in me and choose to not let it cripple me as it had been. I have removed the pain from the shelf, dusted it off and set it free so now I can truly be a survivor."

The little things in life that we don't appreciate:

I am constantly amazed by each interaction I have with a "hero" (so I think of them) and don't realize it at first. I am a strong believer that tomorrow is not promised to anyone. Some wish that tomorrow would never come. Some are petrified that tomorrow was

not promised to them by a doctor. There are those that are under the impression they are guaranteed tomorrow, as if it is granted to them since no one told them they were going to die.

*****EXERCISE FOR SELF EMPOWERMENT: REWRITE THE ESSAY “AM I VICTIM OR AM I A SURVIVOR”. COMPARE THE FIRST ESSAY TO THE LAST ONE. ARE THEY DIFFERENT? THEY USUALLY ARE MUCH DIFFERENT. DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS A SURVIVOR NOW?***

CHAPTER 7

LIVING WITH THE “SHAME OF PLEASURE”

“Maybe I liked it. Maybe I enjoyed the attention. Why did I orgasm or find pleasure during an assault?”

One survivor initially presented to counseling with a ‘mask’ on. He almost presented as a bit pretentious and ‘better than everyone else’. This appeared to annoy many others around him, as he acted somewhat inconsiderate, arrogant, self-absorbed, and indifferent towards others feelings. However, it was obviously a front to those who really know him, as I always have seen through that and see him as the person he really is. He is kind, loving to his family, concerned for his family, and sad/hurt from his past.

Initially, he was very hesitant entering counseling and it took him a long time to present the entire truth. He would come in periodically hung over, intoxicated, nervous, had to take breaks often, and nauseous (sometimes vomiting in my office trash can). The reason for this was evident. If it was not, I may have

discontinued services, however, I knew he was better than that and was handling his emotional turmoil in many self-destructive ways because this was all very difficult for him. He flew from a different part of the country to seek therapy in order to not be seen entering counseling. This was a very important choice he had made - needing counseling but not ready to feel exposed.

Out of the many survivors I have had the pleasure of working with, he came into counseling with many more years of hidden and buried shame and guilt than most of the survivors I have worked with. This is very common with male sexual abuse survivors. It is often very difficult to admit that it even happened to them, but as a male, they appear to have difficulty that they were not strong enough and were weak and manipulated. Most women come forward because it was vaginal and more commonly reported (statistically, but there are too many that are not reported for several reasons). He presented as a very kind man, although he is quick to try to say he is a "...narcissistic person and vein." I found the his exterior presentation to be eventually very kind and warm hearted, especially pertaining to his wife, daughters, grandchildren and family, and even his little dog. He presents with a kind heart but a definite inability to trust others easily and has a wall of emotional protection up and shows himself with it down very rarely.

CHAPTER 8

IS YOUR INNOCENCE LOST?

The following is a letter written by an actual survivor of abuse. He wanted to share his story in order to show others the empowerment of the work through therapeutic assignments and the strength it takes to work on one's self. He also wanted to express that there is emotional relief that follows it. In fact, I sent this letter back to him months after he wrote it. After he reread this letter he had written months earlier, he remembered how much pain that he had endured for years. Ultimately, it gave him the strength to call the police when he second guessed himself. This ultimately led to the process of seeking justice, which ultimately imprisoned his predator over 20 years later.

“Dear Teen-age survivor,

It's true I should have written to you a long time ago, but as they say, 'better late than never.' Thinking about what I am about to write has already made me feel that a weight is being lifted off our chest...forgiving ourselves is an opportunity to free both of us from the pain and anger

that has built up over time from the atrocities that were born upon us by our predator. Forgiveness of each other will move us from focusing on the past, thrusting us into the present.

I do not expect you to forget the hurtful events or even how you (we) felt by willingly participating in them, but together, we can move on with our life. I am learning to accept what happened to us as well as understanding that it wasn't your fault. He was and is a scoundrel, a predator. A predator who sought you out and manipulated you. He took advantage of your innocents and your desire to be loved, accepted, and most of all, to feel like you were special to someone.

I know in my heart, because of the way he treated you, that he sought you out, looked for certain traits, issues at home, emotional stress of beginning puberty, in short, he preyed on you. He was a classic, textbook description of a predator, an abuser of the worst kind, especially considering his tactics as well as his actions. If you took the time to read stories from other abusers, you would quickly see that HE perfected the tactics that were used on them, and he took advantage of you at every opportunity, mind-fucking you.

He was extremely manipulative and could make you feel great by giving you special treatment during school or practice. He would "act" as though he was protecting you from our family, especially our father, and sometimes, he would subtly threaten us. He had this down to a science. You NEED TO UNDERSTAND that he was

very sophisticated and had reached a level of mastery in all of his techniques to manipulate, scare, persuade, reward, etc.

The first time that he abused you, he had asked if you would be able to assist him with some coaching of younger kids. This was real, it actually happened; however, afterwards, he asked if he could stop real quickly at his parent's house. You were excited and felt privileged to be there at the house of someone you idolized. Once inside the house, you were overwhelmed as it was an enormous, beautiful house...with a pool in the back. He was not aggressive at all and gave you a new pair of shoes, money, ice cream and a pair of blue underwear that he asked you to put on and model for him. This was the only time that he performed oral sex on you although never asked or forced you to perform on him, he was gentle and seemed to enjoy fondling you. Again, while you felt this was wrong, it was going to be your "little secret." And you were happy that you were able to keep him happy and you would continue to feel special.

The second time you went over to his parent's house, he took you out back to show you the pool and then "accidentally" pushed you in. He began to undress, quickly and completely. He then dove into the pool and eventually began swimming over to you. Once he reached me, he began to remove your clothes quickly, telling you that they will dry sooner if we get them out of the pool. Then, without warning, he grabbed you from behind, and began to insert himself into you. This time, you were

terrified and knew that what he was doing was wrong and you were strong and fought and struggled. Again, he used threats of how much trouble he would get you into and that he might have to hurt a member of our family. As your screams began to get louder moving from panic to hysteria, he stopped short of sodomizing you.

As the feeling of his “protection” became more of a threat you did what comes natural, you tried to approach our father, seeking help. When you reached out to him, he completely misinterpreted our cries for help and became distant and even resentful, thinking that coach had become a replacement father figure. You have always felt that you should have tried harder to get him to understand; instead, you turned inward and remained silent. When you felt no one was there to help, you became scared and angry and you turned to “coach” for comfort and to revel in the “specialness” he was providing for you.

He didn’t miss a beat and took advantage of the fact that you were distanced from our family. While you were scared and ashamed, his manipulations were being perfected, as you also had feelings of importance that he had chosen you and you knew others viewed you as his “teacher’s pet”; however, there was also that part of you who felt the pleasure in being masturbated. All of the emotions mentioned above, coupled with emotions not yet described or defined, coupled with someone stroking the nerve-endings of your genitals, felt good.

He manipulated you and fondled you repeatedly over the years. He always had a cool car; usually the Indianapolis 500 pace car for the previous year, that he would use to reward and entice you into a close, intimate setting with him where he could place his hand on your leg, or begin to rub gently on your genitals without anyone outside of the car being able to see through the window tinting to know what was going on.

The third and final time at his parent's house was a re-enactment of the first and it was several years later. You were only a few days from turning 14. This time, he said, "let's go for a swim, you can help you clean the tiles." As you were cleaning the tiles, he swam up behind you, grabbed your hands and pinned them against the top of the pool. He then tried to sodomize you in the pool, trying to yank down our shorts and then he began to ejaculate early. He became very angry and forcefully tried to insert multiple fingers into your bottom. His fondling of your penis became more aggressive too and you began to scream as he continued "racking" our genitals time after time until you was almost unconscious. Your screams eventually caught the ear of the neighbor, who came over and yelled "is everything ok?"

At times, you felt that you were somehow responsible for, and contributed to, the abuse itself. He made you feel that you had somehow betrayed him, not only when you stopped the assault, but also when you were hoping that our mom or dad were going to do something about it. He completely mind-fucked you, not only during his sexual

abuse, but afterwards, he was able to make you feel guilty for stopping him because you screamed loud enough to get the neighbors attention, and even worse, he made you feel as though you were the one who was “leading him on” and that “You were the one who was gay” and that he would embarrass and blame you at school, with family and even our parents.

Just as I know now, you knew then that you were not gay and that you did not lead him on; however, these thoughts directed you to question “who” you were, as well as what you would become and how others might view you. You felt that you always “prove” to yourself and others that you were not gay. You developed into a homophobe; used girls and women constantly, and have always had a problem with relationships in general.

While you were angry with him, you still felt punished that you were not “special” anymore and did not get special treatment from him as teachers aid, out of class passes, etc. He continually manipulated you into wanting to be back in his life, and you found yourself trying to apologize to him to regain status as one of his favorite students. He rejected the apology, and for years it affected you. Several years after grade school, you ran into him and actually forgave him in your mind. He invited you and your girlfriend to his house, with whom you were hyper-sexually active, and provided you beer. His master plan enabled he and his friends to watch having sex in his bedroom.

After the 3rd or 4th time being there, you realized what was happening; however, you continued to go over

there, playing dumb and not letting on that you were aware of their presence in the “Jack and Jill” closet. Once your girlfriend noticed them after the 7th or 8th time, the shows abruptly ended, as your girlfriend was completely weird-ed out. No more beer, bourbon, and no more “special” treatment from the predator. You have finally realized that you continued to have sex with your girlfriend, with him and his friends watching, in an effort to “please” him and stay in his good graces to feel special.

Let's make a pact and a conscious choice to not “ever” forget, as well as an opportunity and choice to forgive. This may not be a one-time event and may take time to do, but over time we will find ourselves living without the familiar pain we have become so accustomed to. Forgiving is never easy, but the alternative is choosing to live with the pain of bitterness and resentment which is not acceptable to either of us. We owe it to ourselves to move on, together.

In the past, failure to forgive ourselves has resulted in us continually being hurt by unresolved pain, suffering and ways of acting out that harm ourselves as well as those we love and care about. We need to end the feelings of low self-worth and our being overly defensive or distant in relationships; or even worse, distancing ourselves when relationships get “too close.” The unnecessary guilt and remorse that wears us down and has led to self-destructive behavior will become a thing of the past as we learn to cope and deal with our “triggers” as well as emotions.

I am learning to love myself, including you, in healthy ways and no longer wish to beat us up for our mistakes. While we don't need to forget, we both will need to let go of the hurtful memories and painful events. We will work together to open up and be intimate and loving to family and friends in new ways, while at the same time, demanding respect for ourselves. Never again, will we be a punching bag for someone else's emotional baggage.

Remember: IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT!!! HE IS A MONSTER, A PREDATOR, A MANIPULATOR, A DEMON!!!

You are a great young man, destined for great things.

A famous Chinese proverb says: "Even a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step." Since I am investing in this with you, we have already started our journey by taking the first step(s)...

Your Loving Self

CHAPTER 9

***FACING HONESTY. THE DARKEST
SECRET: FACING THE TRUTH
WHEN IT IS SO HARD TO ADMIT***

****Where were Mom and Dad? Did they know?**

I have listened to several amazing people discuss in confidence stories that you just can't make up. Stories that if I was able to create in my own imagination, I would wonder where it came from and seek my own professional help and consultation. However, these stories are not fictional or made up. They are stories that led several people towards recovery and a lifestyle they deserved. One survivor blamed his father. His therapeutic letter went as follows:

“Dear Dad,

I have been dragging around a lot of “old baggage” for years, and now I am ready to release it all and make room for transformations in my life.

I regret that for most of my life, especially my adult life, I blamed you for not protecting me from both of the men that abused me. I hope that you will accept my apology and forgive me for this. I know you were a loving and supportive father and I am so grateful to have you for my dad.

As each passing day goes by, I notice more and more about myself, good and bad, that reminds me of you. I know that if you were in my life, you would be cheering me on in my process of clearing out the old to make room for the transformations that I am going through at this point. I miss you and I can see that by letting go of this old inaccurate interpretation I'm getting in touch with my love for you.

I want you to know I treasure my memories of growing up with you as my protector and guide and continue to let go of the bitterness that I have carried all of these years. My family defines me better than any other thing in my life. My wife and kids ARE the most important things in my rational life. My repressed emotions and anger has continually been expressed by depression, physical symptoms, aggressive fantasies as well as behavior. This destructive, sometimes unconscious, behavior seems to find ways to seek out weaknesses, exploit them, and leave me to deal directly with my DEMONS, alone, confused, angry, and abandoned..."

"Daniel".

Daniels father's response was as to be expected. I did not include the entire letter, as it is irrelevant and he oddly speaks about business in the midst of a letter acknowledging his son's childhood abuse. The letter is as follows:

"Daniel,

I never knew you felt ill will towards me or even hated me at any time. Your mother did not want me to get too involved with you kids because it usually ended up causing trouble between us. I knew it made it hard for all of you but did not know any of you felt like that.

I knew you had problems at school but not like you are now telling me. With something like that I would have killed someone for abusing you. It was like when they wanted to sweat you down every week to make weight to play football. That was not good for your health and even the priest ask me to reconsider my position and I gave the old bastard a real piece of my mind. I told him he would be out of the priesthood if he ever tried to do that to you. I would have fought for you to the wire and won that battle if I knew you were being "abused" by anyone at school. That old bastard is the main reason I have not been inside a Catholic Church except if one of you kids were getting married or a child was being baptized.

If we meet it will have to be in Florida... I do not have but a few of years to go no matter what the doctors do. My body cannot take any more and it starting break down big time...

Dad"

It appears very common for the abused to protect the honor of their parents. How is it that those that were neglected seem to want to protect their parent's honor (especially girls regarding their mother), when they knew that the abuse was happening? It is so common for the abused survivors to really hold on to the very minuscule efforts or spats of attention or kindness that was shown to them at times, whereas the average child will commonly search for the negative to complain about, like saying their parents are annoying or controlling.

CHAPTER 10

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST REGRET AND WHY?

*“I gave my past too much power...and I am not willing
to give it that much power anymore.”- Raye*

Survivors have reported that the one of several complications associated with the abuse as well as a major consequences of the abuse have been years of actions that followed the incident, which led to not only shame, but regret.

I have been privileged to be able to be present in a group of survivors, all discussing their own history and circumstances revolved with the aftermath of the abuse. The group presented as very eclectic with their individual and unique outlook on their “biggest regret” that they deal with. Most of the group chuckled when they thought they had to choose “only one regret”. They said they needed time to choose which one to address or feel may be the largest regret.

Sadly, it is evident that there are several regrets that each survivor has not dealt with, and in most cases something they regret that was not their fault, or something that they could have controlled

or changed, especially as a child. Some discussion has been made regarding “regrets” that were associated with the incidents each survivor endured.

Maya reported regret not having a relationship with her sister, as she played the “protector” role in order to prevent her sister from enduring what she went through. She described how her younger sister (10 years younger) looks at her as a mother figure, as her mother was always gone and not actively there as a mother. Maya reports that the constant need to protect her sister, not only robbed her of her childhood, forced her to grow up too fast, but also took away a relationship and a bond that sisters develop when they grow up as sisters.

Another survivor mentioned his regret was several indiscretions that affected everyone in his life. He discussed, “...having to prove my heterosexuality to the point of harming others and chasing women, which were rooted from what happened to me when I was a kid.” He explained a story where his life and family almost ended when an affair/mistress knocked on the front door of his house while his family was all there, including his children and wife, in order to tell about the affair. He said, “I love my wife and family... that was not me and I would never do that now, after I have faced my past through therapy.”

Raye stated, “I feel regret because I have not lived in my life, I have just existed...I don’t know how to live...was not really there as a mother for my kids” She reported that she has, “...simply existed and is scared to actually learn what a good life is like...will I be able to survive if I am actually free from my past?”

Tommy reported his regret was being in the wrong place in the wrong time, and was assaulted because I went the wrong way and

put myself in the place of danger. He said, "I blame myself for being a fast runner...if I was slow, I wouldn't have been racing in the first place." Tommy later reported that was "...not the real way I should have seen it and my biggest regret was not being a better father or being there for my kids. "I am unable to attend a baseball game because I am unable to use a public restroom...have never been able to since the assault".

Raye acknowledged, "I regret sometimes even being born... from the time someone touched me as a young child...my life has been altered and no one besides a survivor would understand..."

All of the survivors have mentioned they each had concerns from their partner that when they "recover and heal from this, they won't need them anymore." Why are they so concerned of someone's spouse learning to heal from the past?

Maya said, "The group has been powerful in so many ways...I have been able to relate to others and understand when they speak that I am not alone and others actually think like me."

CHAPTER 11

DID THE ABUSE MAKE YOU STAND OUT OR “AWKWARD?” HOW WERE YOU TREATED BY OTHERS? HOW DID THIS AFFECT YOU?

“Letter to my 12 year-old self”

“Hi Patrick,

I’m you from the future. I’m not telling you at what time in the future or how I got this letter to you, though! I’ve come here to tell you a few things. First of all, it does get better. I know you have it hard right now, but you eventually end up married to a beautiful woman who is crazy about you. You do find happiness. Things are basically okay for you here in the future. Plus after middle school, people in general gradually behave less and less like assholes, and don’t go out of their way to hurt others as much. And when you’re an adult, people don’t fuck too much with you, unless they’re your boss.

I know things are tough for you, and you spend a lot of time wondering why you have a hard time making friends, and why you get treated the way you do. You're wondering if it's your looks, or your lack of skill at sports or whatever else. Well, the answer is actually pretty simple - it's your social skills. I know that means next to nothing to you right now... but what it is is, your words, your body language, your appearance, the way you carry yourself, they often leave a bad impression on people. It's not that they think you're a jerk and worry that you might be mean to them - it's more like they think you're awkward and worry that you're not fun to be around, that you will make them uncomfortable. Having low social skills means you don't know the rules of the game, and the only instructions you have are in Chinese, so you're stuck looking at the Monopoly board and pieces and dollar bills and trying to infer from those how you're supposed to play... so you do your best with the information you have... and every time you get something wrong, someone walks away from the game, until there's no one left to play with.

Now, before I go any further... none of this means that it's okay for people to hurt you and treat you like garbage. It is NOT okay. People can choose who they want to hang out with and who they want to be friends with and that's fine, but treating others like shit because they're awkward or funny-looking is never okay. Those people are assholes, never forget that. In the part of the future that I'm from, it's pretty much universally accepted in the culture that teenagers are shitheads and that middle

school is a flaming pit of cruelty and despair - people write songs and books and movies about that. In your time and place, middle school is often presented as the best years of your life... but that was a lie, even back then, and trust me, it gets so much better.

So... social skills... what do we do about those? They say that when you travel in time, you shouldn't change anything about the past, because you can end up accidentally triggering events with horrible consequences. Like you forget to feed the goldfish today, and I wake up tomorrow in the future with only one leg as a result. And some say that trying to change the past never works... that no matter what you do, things will pretty much end up the same. But fuck it, I want to help you. I don't have enough time to go into it right now, but you pretty much need to find an adult you can trust and tell them ""look, I have a real hard time with social skills and I need help". Improving your social skills is not easy... you'll need to work hard and be open-minded. It'll be like learning to walk at age 12 when everyone else has been doing it since they were 1. There'll be a lot of falling on your face and you'll need to get back up every time. But once you start getting results, and some people you like are drawn to you, and come to you of their own free will, it'll feel unbelievable.

In the meantime, I'd say tread very lightly. Avoid making yourself into an easy target. Avoid being cute or smart-ass - stuff like staring contests in class, you seriously need to cut that shit out, even others who engage in them

think it makes you look like a clown. Avoid any gimmicks... when you're about to interact with others, ask yourself if what you have in mind is something a regular kid your age would do. If the answer is no, then don't do it. When you speak, do so in an open, straightforward, friendly (but not too friendly) way. Don't be ironic, even if other people are. If you feel that other people are mocking you, walk away if possible. If not, avoid saying anything. Just about anything you say in that kind of situation can and will make things worse. This is all just temporary - you'll be able to trust your gut better once your social skills have improved, and once you have people around you who you can trust.

The reason I'm telling you all this is, you're a good guy. You don't deserve to be treated like shit, you deserve to be happy, and I want to help you with that. Plus okay, yes, I want to have better memories of my teenage years in the future, fine, guilty as charged. I never said I wasn't selfish.

Oh, one more thing. Once in a while, you might run into someone even lower on the totem pole, someone more awkward and funny-looking than you, someone who has an even harder time grasping the rules... They will make an easy target, but do not under any circumstances be an asshole to them - it will make you just as bad as the people who are mistreating you now. No difference whatsoever.

All right, see you round, take good care of yourself"

****EXERCISE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO YOUR TEENAGE SELF NOW?**

CHAPTER 12

SEEKING JUSTICE?

I can't do anything about it now I'm "...too scared to tell". I'm living with the fear of no one believing the incident. What is the point of seeking justice on a crime that happened so long ago?

I have witnessed two people recently justified after 30 years of having to live with a secret. After having to live with years of pain and suffering. However, I will have to write a second book to tell the story of Daniel. It is phenomenal and he is one of the people that not only sought justice but also succeeded. He had his predator arrested and it made the news.

Because of his courage, he saved foster children who were living at the pedophile's house. In addition, after the pedophile was arrested, over seven other victims came forward. They found secret cameras in the boy's locker room of the team he coached. If my client had not come forward, there would have been continued abuse by this man.

Daniel wrote a letter to this man as an assignment. It was this letter that I sent back to him the day he was having second thoughts of having him arrested. After reading it, he was given back the courage to go forward with the arrest. You see, Daniel

had worked through therapy on forgiving this man. He was healing but he wanted to make sure that this man was not abusing any other children. We found later, that he indeed was and had been for years. Because of Daniel, this pedophile would not be able to harm any more kids. His abuse may actually come back to haunt him in prison.

The letter is as follows:

“To My Sexual Predator,

I will start by saying that you are the worst kind of perverted predator that one can come across. What kind of a man are you? Have you looked at yourself in the mirror or ever tried to assess yourself as a person? The full impact of your abusive behavior on me is coming to the forefront now as I have grown older and wiser and have begun to realize the root of most of my demons. You were, and probably still are, a selfish SOB and did not give a damn about my welfare then or now. You made me feel so dirty, guilty and ashamed that I choked on my own feelings. You traumatized me at the beginning of my puberty and evoked such shame that I have always had trouble acknowledging that this happened to me, especially by a trusted Teacher, Coach and mentor.

I was just a kid who looked up to you and admired you as my mentor, teacher and coach. I will never forget how you manipulated me—How could you be sexually aroused by a kid? The lust and longing in your eyes, are

still very vivid in my memory and it gives me the creeps! My skin crawls when I think of what you did to me all those years ago.

The blatant disregard for my feelings, emotions, self-respect, pride and dignity caused irreparable psychological damage. You violated my innermost space, my essence and my soul. You brutally took away my purity and innocence. Who else in my school did you do this to? I plan to take an educated guess... and yes, I will be calling them to ask them to join my cause....to take you down for the sick perverted, predator fuck that you really are. You can lie to your wife, others, and me but you cannot run from yourself. Does your wife know about all your sick desires? Do you perceive all your students and athletes—as sexual objects? Words cannot fully explain the pain and trauma that you have caused me. How anyone could do such things is beyond my imagination. I have had a hard time accepting that this really happened. I feel so cheated and let down. The fact that you made me a part of your perverted acts completely freaks me out. You inflicted such dirty behavior on me that I am struggling to overcome the shame and guilt associated with that. I am still working on the shame related issues and trying to come to terms with why I feel that way. I understand that what happened was shameful but the shame belongs to you, the perpetrator... not me, previously a victim and now a survivor. I have been carrying this self-assumed shame with me for years and I have not been able to easily shake it off. The thought of coming after you from a

criminal perspective does help me in this process, and if you have followed my life (or do some research), you will see that once I set my sights on a goal, I will work myself to death to achieve it....so get ready....HELL is coming your way! I plan to make sure that at every turn, you are looking over your shoulder with thoughts of me coming after you, the shame, the fear...are yours to bear and I plan to deliver them to you as often as possible.

The shame is so deeply entrenched that I cannot separate it from my being. You played around with my feelings and emotions. I was a gullible kid and I feel ashamed that I fell prey to your overtures. I feel ashamed that I let you play with my feelings, and my innermost self. You damaged a part of my soul. I am not alluding to the physical aspect of the acts, vile as they were-I am referring to the fact that you touched the very essence of my being and my spirit. I feel violated, invaded and robbed of my privacy. You disrespected the privacy of my body and spirit. I am hurt that you took undue advantage of my feelings and emotions. Even before I realized what was happening it was too late and much damage had been done. From that day onwards, I saw the world as a different place. I always wondered about "others" and how they perceived me. You were the one that inflicted such deep-seated wounds in my heart that I felt this way about myself. You were the one that took advantage of my innocence to inflate your stupid ego that was even bigger than yourself! When you do this in a callous and meaningless fashion, you are inflicting such hurt and pain

that it kills a part of the soul. It damages one's perception of oneself and makes one feel terribly used, alone and let down. The feeling of being violated, both emotionally and physically is so overpowering that it has caused excruciating pain to the soul. I feel such pain and hurt in the deepest part of my being. The aftermath of such an experience has been devastating, to say the least, and I have almost lost my kids, my wife, as well as my life. But what difference does any of this make to you? Pay attention, because I will have my day in court as I plan to prosecute you in every manner available. There are no excuses or justification for what you did. You are a sorry excuse for a human being and I not only hope that you will rot in the Hell that you have created for yourself, and if you haven't felt what Hell is like, I plan to send you there. I feel no hatred toward you—just pity.

While it would be nice to say that I want you out of my life, my thoughts and my head, I now know that I must spend the rest of my life ensuring that you cannot inflict your perverted behavior on anyone else. You have destroyed my peace of mind and wreaked havoc on my life---even 30+ years after the horrendous ways in which you violated me. I survived through the abuse and I will survive through this too. Slowly, but surely, I will destroy you and the shadow of abuse that is hanging over my soul and with that I will destroy your hold over me.”

EPILOGUE

Facing the truth is difficult enough, let alone carrying resentment that your only childhood was stolen from you. You are a survivor of something awful, insane, criminal, unfair, twisted, embarrassing, shameful, and unforgettable. You may wonder how to get your childhood back. You may question how you can live with yourself knowing that you will never know what it is like to have a “normal and happy” childhood?

Someone once described trauma in a way that helped me identify the magnitude of not seeking help. It was described as holding a glass of water, weighing about half a pound. At first, you are simply told to continue to hold the glass and not put it down or ask anyone to hold it for you. Then you are told, and even by this time feel obligated, to continue carrying this glass. As time passes, the glass becomes heavier, possibly causing pain to your arm and making you unable to complete tasks as you did once before. As you continue to persistently hold this glass on your own, it becomes a health issue. Your shoulder aches and you feel a bit overwhelmed or upset that no one else has taken this weight off of you and wonder why no one else has to hold the same glass. Time causes all things to become heavier and can lead to resentment, shame, guilt, anger and other emotions that can be avoided or resolved if only you had

allowed someone to help you with your burden. It is never easy to carry something for so long without it causing both physical stress and pain, as well as emotional pain and exhaustion. Seeking help will help you to “place the glass down and move forward”.

If you choose to try to carry the weight yourself, over time you may feel robbed, deceived, and left with no memories of anything happy or positive, and if you are lucky scattered memories of the true incident.

It is possible to learn to confront and forgive those that have caused you so much harm. Once you are able to achieve the fulfillment of whatever void or emptiness your pain has caused, you can see past the damage inflicted upon you and try to move on. The process of coming out of denial or avoidance and entering into a light of awareness is when you understand that they knew what they were doing and premeditated each move with only their intentions as a priority. This awareness allows you to understand that you no longer are alone and you can be heard. There is help out there and the only thing stopping you from achieving that help is the ingrained belief that you would be judged by others if they knew the truth or knew what you went through. It is called shame in a glass. It is time to place that glass down, hand it to a professional that can help you with it, and bear the burden of the trauma no more. Eventually, you will feel as if you smashed the glass against the wall, swept it up and dumped it in the trash. You will always remember that there was a glass, but you know that you aren't standing there holding it by yourself any longer. It is time to feel relief. If you have read this and have endured any trauma that you have not reported, please seek help. There has never been a reported incident that led to anything but a positive result. In fact, it has led

to preventing other innocent children from having to carry the same glass as you did, because you stopped a predator, encouraged them to report the crime, inspired them to seek help, or relieved them. Because of your courage they know they need to not be afraid or carry shame of the incident any longer.

IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT.

LOVE YOURSELF. SEEK HELP. YOU CAN GET THROUGH THIS. THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU HAS NOT BURNED OUT. IT CAN BE RELIT AND YOUR SPIRIT IS NOT SHATTERED. USE YOUR TIME TO HEAL YOURSELF. FIND THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU. IT IS STILL THERE.

I hope that this book will inspire the readers that have been “*silenced*” by abuse to build the courage to speak out and seek help. You are not alone. You do not need to feel any shame any longer.

The Florida Abuse Hotline accepts reports 24 hours a day and 7 days a week of known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment and reports of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. To make a report you can –

- report online at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>
- call 1-800-962-2873 FREE
- use 711 for Florida Relay Services
- fax your report to 1-800-914-0004 FREE

If you suspect or know of a child or vulnerable adult in immediate danger, call 911.

Search the web for the abuse hotline in your area. Help is out there.

My thoughts and prayers are with you all. You are courageous. You are beautiful. You are loved. Now it is your turn to learn to forgive yourself and learn to love yourself unconditionally.

Sincerely,

Tiffany

