



finding your own voice

Your past can control who you are,
until, you find your own voice.

Finding Your Own Voice

EVETTE ROSE

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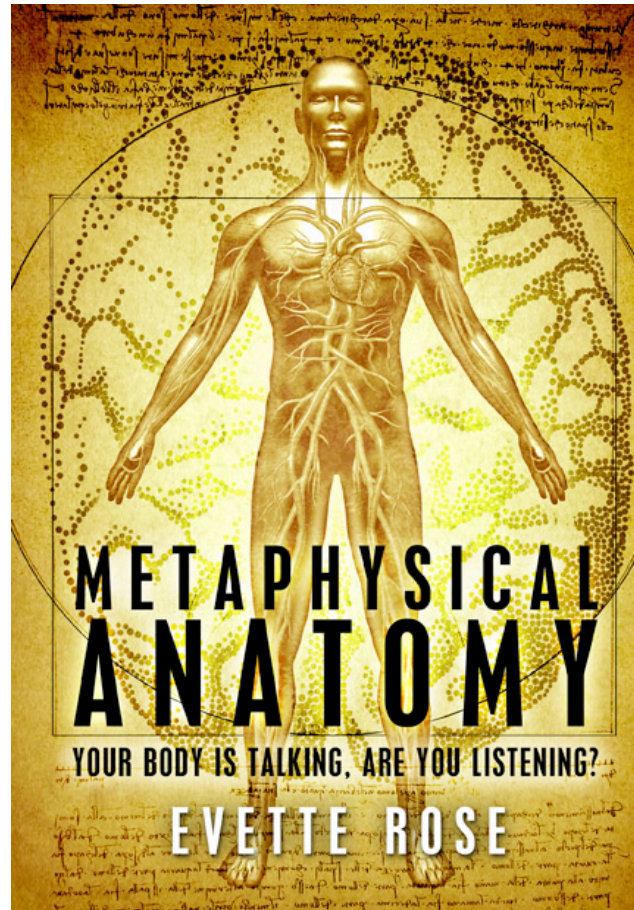
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Evette Rose

Also by Evette Rose

Metaphysical Anatomy



Your Body is Talking, are You Listening?

Metaphysical Anatomy includes step-by-step guide for identifying the psychosomatic pattern related to medical conditions. These conditions can be activated by circumstances in your present life, your ancestry, conception, womb, birth trauma, childhood or adult life. It builds on existing work from many famous authors, making it much more practical, more specific, detailed and ultimately much more effective! This book is equally valuable for experienced alternative practitioners and those interested in self-healing. To find out more visit: www.metaphysicalanatomy.com

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With Love,

Evette Rose

Introduction

My name is Evette Rose and this is my story. In this book, I share in my own words, my thoughts, feelings and experiences with abuse. I am the co-founder of a personal development company and the founder of Metaphysical Anatomy.

In my seminars, I assist and support people who have gone through hardships, as well as people who would like to move forward with their lives. I always see a part of myself in every single person that I encounter and help. Through this work, along with assisting others, I discovered that I was healing myself on a deep level.

Questions, statements and opinions from others have inspired me to help people even more, but I could only ever answer so many questions and give so much advice working with our clients and students.

One of the goals in writing this book is to support you in taking the final step in your healing journey. By the end of this book, you should be just one step away from making a decision to completely heal from your past with the support of suitably qualified practitioner.

I never really fully appreciated how challenging it would be to write a book in my second language. I had to learn a lot about English grammar. The biggest challenge, which took three to four years, was to write the story of my life with the intention to help others. It was just as challenging to translate my thoughts and feelings into words. I am so grateful for all the wonderful people I have met who supported me during this journey.

In writing this book, my first intention is to assist and guide those who are willing to step out of their comfort zone. This book is for people who are willing to make a change in their life. What appears to be a small change at the start of the process can have the most profound effect on your life.

Any change in the right direction is a positive step forward, no matter how big or small the adjustment.

This book is for people who are seeking different perspectives. It provides reassurance that there are others out there who have been through tough times. What you don't always see is the light at the end of the tunnel. Trust me, it is there.

My second intention is to assist you in regaining control and ownership of your life. In choosing to read this book, you are ready to adopt a different,

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more empowering perspective on life. There is nothing more exciting than beginning your transition towards becoming an empowered being.

I began my own personal development journey more than four years ago when I decided to write a book about my life and my experiences with sexual, physical and emotional abuse. I decided early in my life that I would like to assist people in some way, helping others heal from their past and especially from their sexual, physical and emotional abuse trauma. Reaching people around the world on a one-on-one basis is impossible, so writing a book is the best way to fulfill my goal.

This book is in no way a vehicle to vent or to look for sympathy. Its sole purpose is to present you, the reader, with guidance, clarity and a deeper understanding into your own life, patterns and beliefs by using my life as an example. This book will help you take a step back from your life and to see it as an observer, providing you with lessons in the necessary tools to change what you see and don't like. I talk about my successes, failures and my mistakes in order to assist in showing how life can turn full circle.

The idea to write this book came to me in 2009. I called my father and I told him that I was going to write a book about my life. I explained to him that I was also going to write about him and our past together with the intention to help people to understand certain consequences of certain behaviors. To my amazement, he said that he understood my intentions.

I also asked him to write a chapter about alcoholism and he agreed. However, that chapter never came. I did, however, get my chapter about alcoholism from someone that I had not even met at the time I started to write this book.

My life experience is not the most brutal story that you will ever read. I'm aware that my experiences are in the middle range of trauma that a person can experience in life. However, the consequences and pain that comes from experiencing abuse has similar patterns, consequences and traits to those people who experienced it in the most severe forms.

My biggest challenge was that I had to learn how to feel safe again, not only among other people, but within myself.

The important thing is to understand that you can never change other people. You can only change yourself with the intention that it will revolutionize your relationships with others and how you respond to these relationships. You can change how you choose to respond in many different situations on a day-to-day basis or towards the past.

I've used my life experiences in this book to explain the hard lessons that I've learned by living with an alcoholic: my father.

This book will help you realize that those harmful thoughts, the anguish and the pain that you are silently carrying are not unique. You are not alone. There are many other people in the world who feel the same way.

The most important part of this journey of change is to understand what is going on within you. The first part of the book will help you comprehend what is going on in your environment and why you feel the way that you do. It will leave you with a hanging question, "What do I do with this?"

Any abuse inflicted upon a person can create a life long struggle if it's not eventually dealt with. In this book I talk about my abusive history with my father and his family, how it affected me. I also share how I ultimately healed from it.

Writing about my personal life, family life and intimate pain was more emotional than I could ever have imagined, however, it did help me to finally tie up those loose ends, close those chapters in my life and move on. Writing this book has helped me to heal a part of my life that was stagnant and unexplored.

It was especially emotional to write about my father and the negative impact that his family and his personal life had on my mother's life and me. Like many families out there, there tends to be one sane parent and one parent with whom you have difficulties and issues. This creates an enormous imbalance in the family circle. Mostly, it causes utter confusion, anxiety, fear and a need to escape. As a child, who do you believe and who's example do you follow?

My father was and still is an alcoholic. He has acquired many traits of someone that suffers from APD, Antisocial Personality Disorder, as described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, DSM-IV-TR from the alcohol damage in his brain. I don't believe that my father is a psychopath, however his actions have bordered on this behavior over the years. My father may not have been born with APD in the clinical sense; however, the impact of a lifetime of alcohol abuse has severely damaged his capacity for empathy. I have put a lot of emphasis on alcoholism and how my father abused alcohol to avoid taking responsibility for his actions, consequences to his actions and to escape his past and ultimately push all responsibility onto my mother and me.

This topic is mentioned numerous times in order to explain the impact that alcoholism and abusive behavior can have on a family with an already

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fractured foundation. Apart from my father's alcoholism, I also had to deal with the ramifications of the sexual abuse that was present in my life.

Anyone who has experienced the traits of an alcoholic who lacked empathy will know that it's not an easy life. The challenges will be there as long as the abuser is unwilling to change.

You can heal from abuse. Trauma and abuse do not have to control and rule your life. Many people out there don't even realize that they have this option. They have succumbed to the false realization that abuse and unfortunate circumstances are their destiny and that they have to live with it.

Abuse is a reoccurring theme for many. People get stuck in repetitive abusive cycles. They continuously attract abusive partners and they end up living unhealthy life styles. Addiction to drugs, medication and alcohol starts to look like the only option out of their misery and personal pain. This can happen when, as a child, the right to make choices and to have healthy boundaries is severely suppressed. It is one of the most disempowering and tragic acts that can be done to a child.

Without boundaries, you lack a strong foundation within yourself, your life, your environment and your relationships with others. You lose the ability and concept of understanding and recognizing your own boundaries. You numb yourself to other people's boundaries, limits and expectations.

If you take a few seconds and look around yourself, you will see a few exceptions. You will see successful people - the emotionally stable people that are at peace with themselves. They interact with one another with absolute confidence. One thing you will notice is that they have healthy emotional boundaries. They don't need to bully others in order to be heard.

Those boundaries can be disrupted when the person experiences abuse. Abuse is not tied down to a specific culture, country or religion. It happens everywhere and can happen to anyone. Abuse can affect anyone at any age.

Young infants are mainly at risk of being abused by their parents, caretakers or authority figures such as teachers, coaches and even within religious groups. It is often thought that abuse can only take place in childhood or when the person is too young to remember what had happened to them.

Adults can also suffer from physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Maturing into adulthood doesn't mean that you are immune to having such an experience at some point. It can happen at work, the doctor's office and a common place are nursing homes and institutes for the disabled.

What I've learned is that sexual abuse is normally tied in with physical and emotional abuse. It is almost always the case and quite rare to only have experienced sexual abuse without any physical or emotional abuse. The abuse typically includes being threatened, manipulated or physically restricted from moving. You are emotionally and mentally affected by sexual abuse.

Leaving childhood, it's easier to make the distinction between what feels right and what feels wrong. Being abused as an adult or teenager can leave a person feeling resentful, battered, emotionally and physically violated by authority figures which were supposed to be trusted. It is an emotional uphill marathon that might not be so easy to forget. Everything else then starts to build onto this trauma.

The end result is emotional confusion, a lack of trust and resentment towards people who were supposed to look out for you. It also includes feeling unstable and lacking a proper foundation on which to build your future. Suppression and anger become your power tools to survive and inevitably, your passion, joy, freedom, love and personality slowly become suppressed.

Living a life under the pall of past abuse is a meager existence—it's not living. Life becomes a constant battle, fighting to survive, emotionally. Life is less about enjoyment and embracing and has instead become an emotional and mental battlefield.

People who have had abuse afflicted upon them change completely. The joys of innocence and freedom are replaced by feelings of self-loathing, paranoia, insecurities, anxiety, anger, bitterness, distrust, neglect, fear of loneliness and a weakened relationship with God.

This is the in depth pain that abuse can cause in someone's life. I know my journey has taught me how painful it can be if you don't have the support you need. I am fully aware of the complications, pain and anger that accompany you. This pain does not need to last forever. One day you will decide that enough is enough.

I chose to change, I chose to take my power back and I chose to be free and innocent again!

It is important to understand that your freedom and innocence were not robbed from you. It can never be taken away by anyone. You yourself have suppressed that perfect divine part within yourself. It is suppressed because your life changed and you had to adapt to an environment in which there was no place for freedom and innocence.

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If you are in an abusive environment for long enough, you start to think that you deserve to be abused. You think that you are worthless and because the people you look up to think and treat you with the same regard, it validates how you feel about yourself.

Being abused becomes a normal part of your day. You don't recognize at a young age that you have a right to say "no" and that you have a right to be respected. You suppress the fact that you have a right to have your personal boundaries respected. You don't know that you are allowed to set those boundaries because as a child, you would be punished for saying "no." People and children would get beaten up for setting a physical or emotional boundary.

If you can't exercise your boundaries as a child, then how are you supposed to exercise your boundaries as an adult in relationships? The majority of people who have suffered from abuse will end up attracting abusive partners. Abuse has become normal, acceptable and a part of life.

However, one day, the time comes when you wake up with a strange feeling that something is wrong. You have your awakening and with it, a realization that the life you are living is really not what you want anymore. Something bigger and better is out there for you.

You realize, "My life is not what I want it to be. I am unhappy. I want a new career. I want a new life. I would like a new partner and friends. This is not my dream. It is far from it and I want to change that now!"

At this point, you start to look for ways to change your life and to take those big steps.

This is hard for people who are carrying unresolved abuse issues. As most of you realize, it is challenging to move into a new phase of your life. It's even more of a challenge when you are carrying all your pain with you. Your past slows you down, suppresses your enthusiasm and potential. The effect is that your past can sabotage any attempt to create your new life.

My gut instinct always told me that being in control of your own life and being divinely empowered is a natural state of mind. You have given your power away to people who were supposed to be responsible, compassionate and reliable. In most cases, only disappointment followed.

It may seem easier to blame others for your pain, instead of taking control of your life. It's easy to give in to others when leadership is needed as it creates a gateway for you to avoid taking control of the situation at hand. Especially if it means you don't have to take responsibility for the outcome. I know this was the case for me.

I had been told that I couldn't heal myself because my past was my past and it's who I was. I disagree with this. You are a perfect being and you have merely been slowed down by your past trauma. You experience abuse on a biological level, not on a spiritual level.

Often in today's fast-paced world, you are told all too quickly that you need medication because your childhood permanently disabled you. I was given anti-depressants at a young age and quickly realized that I don't need them. I did not need drugs in order to process and heal from my past. There are situations where people have a real chemical imbalances and it's important for them to stick to their necessary medication. In my case, I knew that medicine couldn't fix what was wrong with me. I just felt stuck and overwhelmed with a past that I had no idea how to deal with.

As you progress with the book, make a point of trying to spot similar patterns in this book that might reflect your life. I am not ashamed of what has happened to me, nor am I ashamed to talk about it openly with others. Nor should you be. Chances are that 80% of our population has experienced similar traumas. It is important that you read this at your own pace, as one of the main purposes of this book is to empower you. It's a reminder to you that there is nothing to be ashamed of in your life.

Shame is just an emotion. You are not the origin of shame. Shame is the result of how a situation made you feel.

You are a diamond. You are already valuable, brilliant and unique in your own right. Sometimes you need a buff and polish to bring out that natural brilliance and clarity within yourself. When you start to process your past and move forward with your life, it is important that it is a conscious decision you've made. This decision should never be made on your behalf. Your whole heart and soul should be in it.

You should **want** the change. Once you have started this healing journey, there is no going back. Your life will change forever! You might change so much that you suddenly realize that the amazing people around may not be amazing, after all. You might realize that your employer has been taking advantage of your poor boundaries. You might realize that you don't want to be with your spouse anymore.

The consequences of healing can be extraordinary. The word consequences almost make the healing journey sound scary and perhaps a bit negative.

Nonetheless, you now start the journey of the healing from within. Now you start to realize that you deserve a relationship where you are loved

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unconditionally. Love and acceptance should not be tied to doing chores. You should not allow others to walk all over you or abuse you in any way. You need to make that sincere choice from your heart, not with anger and vengeance.

The goal with healing yourself is to rise above all the negative incidents and be freed from them. Do not create more incidents by becoming resentful and desiring revenge. Yes, there are situations where legal action is needed; I am not dismissing that in any way. When you start to heal your haunting memories, it should merely become a memory and not a debilitating image.

I too have walked this path of trying to heal my sexual, physical and emotional abusive history. I can truly understand how sensitive this journey can be. I know what it takes to heal from abuse. This is why I became so passionate about finding a way that could help anyone heal his or her own past without the need to relive anything.

Don't feel dismayed and defeated by your past; don't give your trauma so much power!

The core essence of who you are is permanent. The worst thing that can happen to your core essence is that it becomes suppressed. You are invalidating your own power by thinking that it has been taken away from you.

Remember to take from this book what you feel you need to take. Sit with it, sleep on the different concepts and ideas, share your thoughts with others and talk about it. It is not my intention to change your beliefs or values. Be open to seeing and experiencing life in a different way. However, most importantly, do not forget to finally make time for that overdue choice to change your life!

In this book I share a technique called the Triple A step that I developed a few years ago. The Triple A technique should not be confused with the Metaphysical Anatomy Process (MAP) technique. The Metaphysical Anatomy Process (MAP) technique is not shared in this book, it is shared in Metaphysical Anatomy.

Part 1: My Journey

Chapter 1 My Story

When I think about all that I have been through, I realize how extraordinarily blessed I am to be where I am today. I'm sharing my life story in the hope that it will help others see that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Being in pain is not your destiny.

My history is sure to resonate with many – it is not the most horrific of histories, nor is it a story without some joy, love and healing. I'm telling my story in its entirety to show you that you can heal, even when the patterns have been set over years and lifetimes.

My story starts in the town of Oudtshoorn, South Africa where I was born in 1984. Known for its enormous ostrich farms, this area attracted many tourists and created jobs for the unemployed. Not long after my birth, we moved to Grootfontein, Namibia.

After two years in Grootfontein, we moved back to South Africa to a town called Kimberley. My father's employer sent him back to Namibia after we lived in Kimberley for only seven months. Our fourth move was to Oranjemund, Namibia, a town of around 4000 inhabitants. It was a place where electricity and water was free until 2009. Even local phone calls were free which made prank phone calls irresistible! The town was established in 1936 and provides services to the diamond industry. After living in Oranjemund for six years, we made our final move back to Kimberley, South Africa when I was eleven years old.

Both my mum and dad worked full time whilst I spent the majority of time at the day care center. The highlight of the day for me was lunchtime when I would trick kids in looking the other way whilst I stole my favorite food from their plates. The staff never said a word, as they seemed to have been quite amused by it. I always got along with people from all walks of life. I was exposed to many cultures and did not project any judgment onto others because they looked or talked differently to me, it was just a part of life. My calm approach to life started to change as I grew older and when my

relationship with my father became more intense. There were other problems also simmering in the background.

I have a great relationship with my mum. She was and still is an amazing friend and mother to me.

My father on the other hand is a man of few words, especially when it concerned me. He hardly had to express himself verbally; his stern looks would reveal exactly how he felt. His eyes and peculiar looks could speak volumes and open up a whirlwind of mixed emotions.

My earliest memory of my dad was his deep, brown, piercing eyes. He has a stare that you will never forget. His glares would stop me cold in my tracks. I quickly learned the protocol for when he would give me one of those terrifying looks. It was simple—run and stay out of sight. Sometimes his stares were for no reason at all. When this occurred, it appeared to be because I stepped too far into his personal space meaning, such as walking into a room where he was sitting or working.

There were those times when I did not notice his stares. Suddenly, the glare would be replaced by a shove as I passed by or a flick to the head.

As a child, I saw my father, his father and his mother as my worst enemies. My father is an alcoholic and so were his parents. He was a difficult individual to live with. His day-to-day interactions with me were that of a domineering father who made it clear that I was not allowed to share the same space as him. He blamed me from a very young age for his marital problems with my mother. Despite the fact that he was cheating on her and drank around the clock long before I was born. He saw me as competition and a threat, not as his one and only child. My mum was told that she would never be able to conceive and 10 years later I made my appearance. Being an only child, I had to accept the blame and finger pointing—there was nobody else to point the finger at. Going up against my dad felt like fighting a war single-handed with only a plastic sword. I had no way of winning. I had no way of being heard.

I escaped from all the drama at home by getting into arguments at kindergarten. Others did not value my opinion. I always thought that if you don't want to know what is on my mind then don't ask. I was taught that if someone asks you a question then you should answer it as honestly as possible. I knew that if I did not answer a question with honesty at home then I was in for a tirade of shouting or worse. Lies were not tolerated. Even telling the truth would often be ignored. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't.

Who would have known though that other kindergarten kids would not welcome honest answers! Kids just being kids right?

I always fought back with children when they would hit me or kick me. It was the only place where I physically could defend myself and blow off some steam. I did not know at that point in time that when I did hurt someone that I was defining my false personality and identity based on my past and continuous trauma at home.

Being violent was not what I was about, I would only swing a fist if one came my way first. I remember clearly feeling awful after punching someone on the arm after they pinched me. The need to rid myself of my inner tension and suppressed anger was greater than my logic. I would feel such conflict. I wanted to hurt the other kids because they hurt me and then the guilt of my behavior sank in. Seeking revenge only served to hurt me more. I now know that we were not designed to be violent or harvest hatred and resentment towards one another. If we were designed to hold onto all these negative emotions then why are so many people sick? It only adds to the chipping away of a once peaceful world and state of mind.

Whilst I was having a bumpy start in kindergarten, I was battling my own demons in other places as well. I did not want to go to day care after kindergarten. I was scared senseless of being on my own or between people that I did not know. At the same time, I did not want to be at home either. My safety foundation had begun to erode.

I had nowhere to go and the anguish and anxiety that my relationship with my dad created left me feeling numb. Looking at it now, I was dissociating from my immediate environment.

From this young age, I never knew that the emotional and sexual abuse that was inflicted on me was wrong, however, I do recall it making me feel awkward, confused and left me with a messed up definition of what love is.

I was close to turning four years old and was physically and sexually abused at my day care center in Grootfontein where my mum left me to go to work. To further add to this experience, my father's mother and father, who were pedophiles, were visiting us at the same time. There was no way out for me, as I could not escape the abuse by trying to stay at home. I also couldn't escape the day care. Other children were also abused at the day care center; I was not the only target. I saw it happening to the other children as well. Things were being done to them that were done to me.

What confused me was that only certain people would violate me. I felt conflicted in how my relationships with others should be. This added to my

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string of uncertainty and confusion as to how to ask for love and attention as my need for safety and comfort was met in many negative and invasive ways.

My father's parents were extremely confident and gutsy pedophiles. They would abuse me in my bedroom at night. My room was right next to my mother and father's bedroom. I never said anything about it because it was a "secret" followed by threat of, "I will kill you if you say anything." I kept it to myself. I saw my father's parents as authority figures in my life and knew very well what type of consequences would follow if I did not adhere to their demands.

I had to share my bedroom with my grandparents. When they were visiting, I would sleep with my parents, hiding from them. Even though I did not understand that what they were doing was wrong, I knew I felt scared and uncomfortable. I had no choice but to trust the perpetrators.

Once I began to refuse to go to the daycare center, my mother hired a babysitter to look after me while my grandparents were drowning themselves in gallons of brandy during their visit. The situation was far from perfect, though. While staying at her home, the new babysitter would leave me on my own for long periods of time while she and her boyfriend made out on the couch.

I decided that I had had enough of her and I packed my daypack and started to walk home. I made the decision that I could stay with our neighbors until my mum got back from work. The babysitter caught me halfway down the street and dragged me back to her house, threatening to call my mother. I replied, "Yes, please call my mother I want to go home right now. I don't want to be here anymore!"

Somehow, I felt safe to be so cheeky to her. She expressed no anger towards me when she caught me walking back home. I thought she was weak and not a proper guardian, she did not yell at me or hit me. In the same situation, the response from my dad would have been disastrous. In my mind, I was prepared for a hiding or at least a few death threats. However, she took my hand and walked with me back to her house.

After that incident, my mother took leave from work to look after me whilst my grandparents were visiting. How my paternal grandparents acted in front of my mother was a different story when they were alone with me.

We went to the Etosha National Park for a few days. I remember sitting next to a deep, dark sinkhole. My grandmother said out of the blue, "I will drown you in there if you misbehave." I made sure that I was within my

mother's sight the whole time so that she could keep an eye on me. It took me many years to overcome my fear of dark water!

One incident stands out during that time. I once walked over to my grandfather whilst he was eating an orange. I took a piece from his plate not realizing the big mistake that I had just made. The next thing I saw was a big fist flying right into my face. He knocked me right off my feet! I hit the back of my head on the concrete floor. I got up feeling confused and dazed until I remembered the flying fist. I bolted to my mother crying and tasting blood in mouth. I discovered that I had blood streaming down my lower lip. My tooth went right through my lower lip. This was a significant moment in my life. A big part of me died that day.

My grandfather said that I fell over and hit my mouth on the floor. I looked at my mother with amazement and saw my grandmother grinning as if it was one big joke. Whilst my mother looked at my grandfather, I saw the same piercing death stare from my grandmother that I normally got from my dad. My grandmother looked at me and said with the most evil tone, "Children always lie." She looked me in the eye and said, "You stupid child."

During my grandparent's visit, my mother ran out of leave and had to find a babysitter quickly. She could not find anyone that was available and the inevitable happened. My mother asked the neighbor to let me play there during the day and to keep an eye on me.

My grandparents opened the hidden brandy bottle as soon as my parents left. I tried my best to stay out of their way by playing at our neighbor's house. I remember coming in about half an hour late and my grandmother went into a fit of rage. She grabbed me by the ear and tore part of my earlobe off. I was hysterical from the pain. The louder I screamed and cried the angrier she became. She pulled my hand up in the air and burned it on a hot electrical stove plate. The stove was on for hours as she was too drunk to turn it off after lighting her first cigarette in the morning on the stove. I felt a trickle of blood running from my ear lobe down my neck. The more I cried the harder my grandmother would hit me over the head. Suppression and silence was the only strategy that was going to stop the punishment.

My mother walked in the door just as my grandmother stopped hitting me and she immediately saw the blood on my neck from my earlobe. I ran into my room to hide. For the first time I heard my mother screaming at my grandmother with uncontrollable rage. My mother snapped out of being submissive towards her mother-in-law. She was throwing plates at my grandmother, cursing her into eternity. My mother called my father and told

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him what had happened. I thought that even more chaos would break out when he got home. I was wrong.

He ignored my mother who was yelling at him when he got home. He pretended like nothing had happened. He would not look his mother and father in the eye that day. He opened up a can of beer, sat outside and stared into the wilderness.

My father was not a strong man. He was ruled and controlled by his parents. He feared his own parents just as much as I feared him. He had no inner strength and power to stand up to them. His parent's truth and words were law to him.

It was easier for my father to believe my grandparent's lies above my truth. It meant that he did not have to take responsibility in his role as a father. It meant that he could avoid confrontation with his parents. It gave him an opportunity to avoid his own brutal past – a past that he did not want to face.

I suspect that my grandparents also sexually abused other members of my family. My grandparents were very clever and would organize to take the kids away on weekends to wild animal game reserves. It was the perfect plan to manipulate and take advantage of a child. They were both alcoholics and smoked around the clock. The little common sense that they had would fade into thin air when they picked up the bottle of brandy.

There were times though when they abused me while they were sober. Unfortunately, a lot of people use alcohol to act out their fantasies and to escape the immediate guilt that would follow when they crossed other's boundaries. I do acknowledge that alcoholism can be caused by many different types of trauma though.

The images of being abused by both of my paternal grandparents has stayed with me all of my life. I sometimes wonder whether my grandmother performed those horrendous acts on me as a way of distracting my grandfather. It would distract him from asking her for any sexual favors or deeds.

I recall being told stories of how my grandfather physically abused her and their children. I think that my grandmother lived in so much fear that she would do almost anything to stay untouched by my grandfather. She also drank a lot of alcohol to numb her own pain and trauma. I am not justifying their behavior in anyway. Both of my grandparent's actions were immoral and unacceptable. I suspect that one of the reasons they did what they did was to release their own pain, injustice and anger. They released the frustrations of their marriage and abusive pasts by hurting innocent people. They may have

felt that someone had to pay for their pain. They may also have been enacting their understanding of love, nurturing and pain in a very twisted way that does not make any sense to me. Someone suggested this to me, though I admit that at the time I struggled to come to terms with it.

If they were reenacting their own trauma, they clearly had abusive childhoods. Love or attention was shown to them in an abusive and inappropriate way, it's how it was anchored into your subconscious mind. It is very common for people to go stir crazy from consistent abuse in their lives. Dissociating from themselves and reality is a way of coping with circumstances that a person cannot control or escape from.

My grandparents' visit finally came to end. My grandfather passed away shortly after returning to their home. My grandmother came back to our house for a second visit shortly after. The abuse did not stop. I became exhausted from all the constant anxiety, uncertainty and unpredictable reactions that could occur at any time.

I never wanted to tell my mother about what was going on, as I was still not clear whether it was right or wrong. I kept this to myself, not wanting to cause more verbal arguments. Speaking out would have caused more waves in our already dysfunctional and unstable family life.

It's now clear to me that my father was scared senseless of his mother and his father while he was still around. He numbed himself with alcohol and did not have the courage to confront them. I sometimes wonder to what extent he must have disconnected from himself and his emotions to ignore what happened that day. For an adult and father to behave in such a disempowered and cowardly way was a clear sign that he had been through similar issues. Both my parents were raised with the understanding that you do not ever challenge your elders. I on the other hand, as I grew older stopped entertaining these old beliefs. I decided that this 'old school' way of thinking would stop with me. I believe that if something is wrong or unjust then you have every right to speak up.

His own childhood must have left my father shattered. I believe that people can go through so much pain that they can't differentiate between what is morally wrong and what is acceptable any more. People who have suffered from such issues appear to lose their inherited sense of common logic. They will stop trying to rationalize things in life and just end up accepting them as they are because they can't come up with any other rationalized explanation. They start to forget along their journey that they have boundaries and human rights, too.

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Even though my grandparents were pretending to be good Christians, sleeping with the Bible next to their bed and going to church every Sunday, they still had their deep dark secret. Their secret was hidden from the church, the Christian community, family and their friends.

My father's parents manipulated my father and his siblings with the Bible. That same pattern was carried into my relationship with my father. My father also used the Bible to manipulate people. He would carry the Bible under his arm, while still slandering people and abusing others. He would hide behind the name of God and the Bible when it suited him. He would only use the Bible and God's name when he threatened others and me by saying that God would severely punish us for our sins. One of many ways of controlling his environment and us. He knew how to use people's weaknesses against them in order to get what he wanted.

I recall one day I was fidgeting in church, moving around a little too much during the service. My suppressed anxiety was, at times, a little bit too overwhelming for me and moving around seemed to ease the stress. Now that I am older, I understand why I was so hyperactive. Back then though, the feeling was merely an emotion or sensation that I did not like and I tried to avoid it as much as I could. I learned that by being active, running around and always playing outside, the bad feelings would temporarily go away.

Unfortunately, this one day in church, my behavior got the best of my dad and he grabbed me by my arm and dragged me outside. He gave me a hiding in front of everyone in the street. He then locked me in the car and went back inside the church. I was four years old. I remember people standing on the street looking at my father in horror. There was a lady that even stood by the car to make sure that I was OK. My mum came out shortly as she noticed that I did not come back into the church with my dad. She found me locked up in the car and stayed with me until the service was over.

My dad came out and started threatening to beat the life out of me when we got home. Unfortunately, this was one of the few times that he kept his word.

The abuse from my grandmother stopped when we moved from Grootfontein to Kimberley in South Africa. By then, my grandfather has already passed away from heart failure.

My grandmother changed a little bit after his passing. She only abused me one more time after his death and then it stopped. I still stayed well away from her when she came down to Kimberley to visit my father. By this time,

my grandmother was suffering from emphysema. I was relieved! She was too weak to do anything to me.

I remember seeing her gasping for air one afternoon. The next thing I saw was an ambulance stopping at our gate. They gave her mask and a tank to breathe from. I remember very clearly standing in the hallway watching her face going pale and not feeling a thing for her. If anything I found myself wishing, that God would save me from this nightmare and take her away. My father shared an interesting yet revealing insight shortly after.

My father's own words to my mother were, "My mother is struggling to die. She has brought too much pain upon others in her life. She can't forgive herself. She has been fighting for her life for so long, yet she cannot find peace within. She read a book called *The Name Jesus*. In that book the words *what you sow, so shall you reap* hit her like a ton of bricks." My father said that she had told him while she lay on her hospital bed, "I know why I am suffering so much." My grandmother knew. She knew the destruction and pain that she inflicted on so many innocent lives.

She knew exactly what she did, and what she did was wrong and unforgivable.

She knew.

With few words, she admitted to her sins. Everyone who had suffered by her hands knew exactly what she was talking about.

The relationship between my father and his mother still hadn't changed. The venomous vibes were still hanging in the air.

One day soon after this, my father played fun games with me. This was the first time that I can remember this happening. I was sitting on his back whilst he would walk on the floor pretending to be a horse. I still don't have words to explain what a profound moment that was for me. He was drunk at the time, but to be honest, I did not care. My father was paying attention to me! I was willing to accept him under any circumstances as long as I was being acknowledged.

The next day after work, my father came home from work on time. This was quite outside of his usual routine. He would normally only come home around midnight. He sat on the couch; smoke swirling around his head from his cigarette. He gave me his usual piercing deadly stern stare. I felt so disheartened and disappointed. My father was not the same man as the day before when we played together for a few minutes.

Head down I silently walked out of the living room and sneakily took his wallet. I thought that if I took his wallet away he couldn't go to the pub and

then he wouldn't be able to drink so much and we could play again. I understood that he needed help and that he was "broken." Addicted to cigarettes, my father smoked 30 – 60 cigarettes a day, which did not really help the situation. I snuck out with his wallet in my hand and hid it behind the curtain. I ran to my room to play, hoping that my plan would work. I had just begun to play when I heard very loud footsteps coming from the hallway.

I knew it was my dad and he was looking for his wallet. He clearly knew that I took it and he did not even give me a chance to explain. He slapped me against the head and yelled at me to find his wallet. I gave him his wallet back and he stormed out of the house, off to the pub. I did not feel any stress or upset after that incident, nor did I cry about the slap to my head.

Already numb from all the incidents that had occurred in the previous months; I did not have enough emotional charge left in me to respond. I was drained beyond my limits.

I tried to understand what my father was going through. I thought that he was being himself and that he did not know any better. He couldn't be a responsible parent. Now I know that he never wanted the responsibility in the first place.

He was drowning in his own childhood pain. I did not specifically know at that time as to what had happened to him. I could see that he did not know how to cope with it.

My life started to evolve around emotional survival. Unconsciously I clung to the numbness that I was feeling, as it kept me safe. It was the buffer between me and my environment.

When I felt numb, I couldn't feel pain. No one could hurt me. My numbness made me invincible. I was not free from the anxiety, it was as if though the anxiety and numbness coexisted.

Fresh Start

Several months later, we moved to a town with endless rows of sand dunes. The house was bordering next to sand dunes. This little piece of paradise was called Oranjemund in Namibia. My time in Oranjemund contains some of my fondest memories of growing up.

Oranjemund was a small town five kilometers inland from the Atlantic Ocean. It's about five kilometers from where the Oranje River meets the ocean. The Oranje River provides the border between Namibia and South Africa. You would always be chasing Oryx out of your garden and see them

walking into the Woolworths shopping center followed by distressed security guards chasing them out.

The desert was my back yard where no rules existed. There was no danger in sight and endless space to run and explore. I was five years old when we moved from South Africa to Namibia.

It was a profound time for me as the abuse that I experienced with my grandparents was over. I was far away from anyone that could ever hurt me, especially my father's mother.

My fraught relationship with my father unfortunately continued. I always played at other children's houses that lived in our area. I was blessed enough to have spent a great deal of my childhood in Namibia during the '80s and early '90s. Children could walk in the street and play without fear of being kidnapped or beaten up by other kids. I was also an only child, which I thought was the best thing since chocolate ice cream!

I had all the independence I wanted as an only child. I was probably one of the few children around who could have their dessert before dinner and run around outside until sunset, after I had finished my homework, of course. On some level, I was just as smart as any youngster I knew. I was able to "train" my mother. My mum would always go along with my desires and agenda for the day.

Even at a young age, if I said I was going to do something, I did it. My mother understood that and we shared the type of trust that enabled both of us to have a full and fun day doing our own thing, then we would then meet up later in the day and do mother and daughter stuff.

I always told her that if I could have my dessert first then I will definitely eat my dinner and I stuck to my word!

I made my own decisions most of the time and would hardly take no for an answer. My days would start by running out of the house after giving my mum a short briefing of my whereabouts. Our neighborhood was so small that my mum could just stick her head over the fence and chances are that she would spot me immediately.

My days consisted of snacking beetles, ants, red clay and fat plants from the deserts, building tree houses, baking mud cakes and aiming eggs hopelessly at other kids that walked past tree house.

When it was not too hot, I would run outside to go play in the desert and sand dunes, running up and down the soft sand without shoes. Shoes were for sissies. I loved feeling the silky soft sand under my feet when I would walk around on my treasure hunts. I always found old pieces of glass, broken

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pottery and old medicine bottles. I loved sliding down the dunes and eating fat desert plants when I felt dehydrated.

There was an old car bonnet lying next to one of the big dunes. It took six of us to pull the bonnet up to the top, and then we would jump onto it and slide down. By the time, we got to the bottom we would have sand everywhere and a burnt bum from the bonnet that had soaked up heat from the sun.

One funny memory I have was that the dunes would normally move over a period of a few days, when the Atlantic winds were blowing. I only learned about this after coming back from a short holiday. When we got back, all the smaller dunes had moved! I was in awe, as I could not figure out what had happened. I ran home to my mother and told her that one of my dunes walked away. She laughed and explained to me that the smaller dunes tend to move because the wind blows the sand to a new destination. If the wind blows in the same direction for long enough it creates a new small sand dune somewhere else. For a brief second I thought that the sand dunes were alive!

It's hard to take note of a small dune moving around when you are in the area every day. Being away for a week though was enough to reveal the evidence of how quickly a small dune can be formed in a different spot.

During my childhood, I always had a couple of friends, but never a best friend. I was not the type of child that liked any type of commitment. The freedom to play where I wanted and with whom I wanted was very important to me. It was one area of my life that I had control over.

I intensely disliked girl fights, where the girls fought over friends. I would hear girls say "No, she is my friend," then another one would interrupt "No, she was my friend first." I was the one that normally laughed at those kids! Clinginess, jealousy and constant betrayal were not my idea of a good time.

Looking back, I associated relationships and friendships with drama, disappointment, betrayal and sadness. I always saw drama and fights in my family circle. My idea of community groups and relationships were that they were meant for people who needed it, people who were weak and too scared to be on their own, people who hated their own company. I did in time learn that I was wrong.

As a child, I felt perfectly fine being without it. I understand now how much fun and support I was missing out on!

The time for school crept up on me. I was dreading going to primary school. I knew that I would be robbed of my freedom and independence. The first day of school I hid inside my cupboard, doing everything I could to not

go. Primary school was awful. I had a hard time adjusting and wouldn't engage in any compulsory group activities.

I was the kid that would put up a fight with the teacher when she told me that I had to be involved with the groups. I stood my ground and would complete the group activities on my own. I was very resistant to follow orders from adults. Instructions from an adult only meant stress and anxiety for me. Adults were merely stupid and incompetent, who only caused emotional turmoil. I made an association with adults that they will only hurt me if I listened to their instructions. Even being told to do a task with a group of children was suspicious to me. I did not trust the teacher's judgment. They were adults – and to me, they cannot be trusted.

I also had a fear of being left behind after school out. I remember being so scared that I was not going to see my mum's car parked in the street. One day it seemed my fears had come true. My mum forgot to pick me up at school during my first year. I stood there and waited and waited for her but could not see her car anywhere.

After almost an hour, I started to feel scared and unsure about what to do. I walked back to the classroom. I knew that my teacher was still in the room marking assignments. I went to my teacher and with a serious and straight face demanded that she call my mother. I said to my teacher, "My mother is late and it's not safe for children to be standing outside on their own." My teacher laughed at me and she was clearly very amused by what I said. At that same moment, my mum showed up at the classroom. She apologized to me for being late and took me to the car. I vented my grievances to her because she forgot to pick me up. It only added to my already paranoid fear of being abandoned. I now realize that it was not because I was a confident little girl. My behavior was motivated by fear, especially a fear of abandonment. I knew my mother would never intentionally abandon me; however, the fear was always in the back of my mind. It was extremely conflicting, I wanted to be alone but I also feared being left behind.

After turning eight years old, I began to notice a cute boy in my class called Tim. My focus started to shift from only focusing on myself to noticing other kids more. We would look at each other and then giggle. He pretended that he did not like me in front of his friends and would smile at me when nobody was looking. Gary, who was Tim's best friend spilled the beans and said that Tim liked me.

I started to feel shy and found the circumstances quite amusing. It was nice to be noticed by someone, even though it made me feel like climbing

into my shell. Going to school now did not seem to be so bad. It was exciting to walk into class and see if I could find Tim at his desk. One morning I walked into class and noticed that Tim wasn't there. I asked his friend Gary where he was. He said that Tim was quite ill and that he was in hospital. I realized that it was serious when I saw Gary's expression. Later that day I learned that Tim was diagnosed with viral meningitis.

Shortly after that, I had my tonsils removed. After the operation, I was taken to the children's ward to recover from the anesthetic. I was pushed into the same ward as Tim. He was in his own private section and I saw him walking with the nurse to the bathroom. He looked pale and exhausted, he hardly recognized me. I was so relieved and happy to see him. I gave him the biggest smile that I could manage however he did not respond.

My nurse was standing next to me at the time and she saw that I was staring at Tim. She said that he was very ill and not doing well, but they were hopeful he would get better. I looked at her, not sure how I should respond. Tim did come back to school for a few weeks and we kept smiling at each other. This time, he recognized me. I thought that he must have been tired or just woken up when he saw me in the hospital.

Everything went back to normal whilst Tim was in school. It was fun to have him in class, as he would distract me from my personal dramas. My father was still juggling his drinking habits and career at the same time and my mum was working full time. Unfortunately, Tim had to go back to the hospital as his condition deteriorated again.

I arrived at class one morning and we all assembled in a line in front of the class as we always would.

This morning was different. My teacher looked distressed and pale. She gathered us to line up and she started an announcement. Her eyes filled up with tears whilst she was rubbing her hands together and she slowly swayed from one leg to the other. She said "I am very sorry to inform you that your class mate Tim passed away peacefully last night in hospital."

Immediately, I looked at Gary who was fighting back tears. I stood there and kept repeating to myself what she had said. The reality of what had happened just could not sink in. How could a child die? Only old people die. I was in disbelief and unconsciously tried to access my numbness again. It was a long quiet day. No one really spoke in class and Gary and I kept looking over at Tim's seat.

Several days later, the whole school attended his memorial. Our class prepared a song to sing at the beginning and end of his memorial. As we

walked into the church, his sister, Clare, was handing out the memorial booklet with a picture of Tim on it. She looked at me and her eyes became teary. She knew that Tim really liked me and she would tease him occasionally about it.

It was hard to stand there in the church. I was never the type of child who would give away my emotions. I felt so inadequate not knowing how to process this event and how to comfort Gary. I stood next to him during the whole memorial. Gary started crying and shaking half way through the memorial. I took his hand firmly held it in mine and said, "Tim's OK now," I did not know what else to say. Gary did not even hear what I said. He needed that moment to process his sadness. I just stood there beside him and stayed in the moment.

After the ceremony, we went back to class and the classroom felt cold and dull. Everyone was still fairly quiet. That day our teacher gave us easy and creative tasks to do to help occupy our minds. Gary was never really the same after that day. He became distant and did not want to socialize with anyone. It took Gary almost a year to process the loss of his best friend. I also felt sad and could sense a void in my surroundings. I tried to forget what had happened with Tim.

I tried my best under the circumstances and I knew that what had happened was now in the past. You can't bring someone back once they have passed over. Tim is now with the angels. I accepted that and began to imagine Tim wearing a white robe with a golden halo around his head and white angel wings. The idea that he was safe and looked like an angel gave me comfort.

Life continued on as normal.

As time progressed, I noticed that my relationship with my father was very different to my friend's relationship with their fathers. He didn't show the same kind of kindness and attention to me as my friends' fathers did. It was something in my life that I just had to accept. The fact that my father was never at home, seemed to confirm my suspicions. I thought he must hate me, he did not care about me and he was trying to avoid us.

My father was never at home during my childhood. This also meant that I never had to worry about him knowing what I would get up to when I was running amok in the neighborhood.

He spent all his free time in the pub. He would go to the bar straight after work and then stay there until the early hours of the morning. He also had his occasional fling and mistress on the side. I sometimes saw him before school

if I was lucky. At this point, my father and mother were sleeping in separate bedrooms.

My father's absences increased after we moved to Oranjemund. I remember leaving notes and letters on his bed asking him to spend more time with my mother and me. My notes always ended up in the bin.

He always gave me the same excuse "It's your mother's fault. I still want to be young, I don't have time."

After those incidents with the letters, my father's behavior towards me became more vindictive. He stopped showing up at my birthday parties and he seldom spent Christmas with us. The pub was always more appealing to him even on Christmas day. Most of the time he managed to find a pub that was open on Christmas Day. If the pub were not an option then he would go to someone else's house.

My mother gave me enough space to make mistakes and to learn from them. She tried her best to make up for his absence. We were also financially dependent on my father and he abused that position.

My father bought me a thoroughbred horse the next year. My father's friends bought their children expensive thoroughbreds from overseas and from breeding farms in Namibia. The idea of having a horse sounded like so much fun. My excitement was short lived when I realized why my father bought me the horse in the first place. It was for professional and competitive reasons. It was a status symbol and I had to fulfill it for him.

My horse-riding career started after I turned nine. I attended a lot of shows over the years across Namibia. It was never my dream to pursue horse riding professionally and ride in suits and hats on hot days. It was my father's. I did enjoy the fun rides and taking the horses out into the wilderness on the riverside and ocean. I loved my horse. What I did not like however, was the agenda behind it. It meant that I had to wear expensive, hot, long-sleeved suits, make-up and hairnets that matched my horse's custom designed bridals – it was all for show.

My horse was well trained and we seemed to have a good understanding of each other. He would be grazing in the field hundreds of meters away from me and out of sight. Every time when I called his name, he would come running to meet me at the gate.

The horse stables were a short distance away from the mouth of the Oranje River. We would go on outings with the horses in groups visiting the riverbanks. We would walk the horses through the water to the island and we would go for a swim in the cooling river. It was great fun.

We were financially very well off at this point. Whatever I asked for, I got. In a way, it was a great lifestyle. Even seeing the most beautiful doll in the shop would not get me excited because I knew that I could have it if I asked for it.

I could not appreciate that I was one of the few nine-year-olds whom had a color TV in their room back in the early nineties – a rarity for Namibia at the time. I also had a popular pink bicycle that was imported from South Africa.

My father would bribe me with money. However, he knew that he couldn't buy my forgiveness. I was not the type that could be bought. My forgiveness is priceless and it will be given on my terms. My dad knew that and it made him incredibly angry. If he did not feel worshipped by me, he would take the gifts back or throw them on the floor in front of me.

Everything was a strain and effort with my father; everything that involved him came with stress, manipulation and fear. Even going to the bathroom at night was a challenge living with my dad. I quickly learned that I always had to switch on the bathroom light when I would go to the toilet at night. I never knew what the condition the bathroom would be in after he came home from the pub.

He never once apologized for his behavior. It was the same old story. He had nothing to apologize for. I, my mother and other people caused his behavior. Everyone was to blame, except him.

My numbness was my “inner strength” and my ability to dissociate was my savior, it got me where I needed to be an unhealthy pattern greatly served me. It kept manipulative and controlling people with an agenda at bay.

Moving On

When I turned eleven in 1995, I received the news that we had to move back to South Africa. My dad started his own business selling equipment that cleaned old and dirty oil. He also decided to end his affair with one of his lover at the time. Moving back to Kimberley was supposed to be a fresh start for us as a family.

Or so we thought. I felt like I hit yet another wall. I was angry because I had to give up my life and friends because he cheated again. My father was a master manipulator, he had a gift to sway and woo almost anyone to his favor. I had to give everything up as he promised a new start and life to my mother. In reality it was a new start for him to pursue his dreams and goals.

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One moment you were convinced that you were standing your ground and the next moment, you'd find yourself obeying all of his instructions. When he talked to my mother and me, it felt like we were under a weak hypnosis. He used his skills to get away with anything he wanted to. We had to move because he could not stay in Oranjemund because of his bad reputation among the community, which he had created for himself. He managed to manifest a business that had great potential. Being a dedicated alcoholic, he had no motivation to manage his new business venture. It was a set up for failure right from the beginning.

Given that my dad hated taking responsibility, he managed to create even more of it. He lacked structure and motivation. I tried to convince my parents to stay in Oranjemund but my father was determined to leave. He needed to get away from the mess he created.

My father's alcoholism did not make things any better. Alcoholics are extremely selfish and will do whatever it takes to get their way. I was devastated when my dad gave my horse away. I did not even have a chance to see him before we left. I had to say goodbye to the few friends that I made there. I remember my legs going numb just before I had to get into the car to start the long two-day trip to Kimberley. I cried throughout the journey. I felt so scattered and could not comprehend how I was going to start a new life in a dangerous city where violence, racism, murder and corruption dominated the place. I've always been very happy with my own company and making friends was never easy for me.

The sun was beginning to set and we were still driving. We drove to Kimberley in two cars. My dad was driving in the front with his pickup, with the two dogs under the back canopy. I was looking at my dad's car about four car lengths in front of us. He was driving over a hill that had a blind spot. Just as he reached the top, another car became visible. Unfortunately, the car was driving on the same side of the road as my dad.

Both cars swung in opposite directions and they merely scraped the side of each other. My dad nearly went off the road and I remember seeing the dogs being thrown about. The other car kept driving swinging from one side of the road to the other. He was clearly drunk. My dad got out of the car and started crying from shock.

The right side of the car was damaged; the front right wheel was deflating with a hiss. I was shocked, but not surprised. I was standing there wondering how many times my dad must have driven people off the road when returning home drunk from the pub? Was this a sign to show him how other

people may have felt in the past, sharing the road with him? He changed the wheel and we continued on our journey.

We finally arrived in Kimberley. I left my life of freedom and my horse behind to move to South Africa where the consequences and pain of apartheid and violence were evident. Everyone had this desperate need to cling and group together within their own culture. It was considered wrong and immoral to be seen talking to someone who did not have the same skin color as you.

During the old apartheid regime, white men were not permitted to be seen with a black woman in their car. They would be arrested immediately and the woman would be beaten. The black people were not allowed to walk in the white suburbs after 9 p.m. at night. They would either be severely beaten or killed. Even though apartheid stopped long before we arrived back in South Africa, it did not necessarily change or resolve anything.

Apartheid had ended, however the emotional rawness and hatred was still evident. The tables had turned and everything that had been done to the black people in South Africa for hundreds of years was coming to a head. Revenge has taken its place.

I had been in an environment where white and black children could happily play together. I was sheltered from racism. It was a real shock to me to experience the divisiveness of South Africa first hand.

I felt this deep sense of loneliness hanging over me when we finally stopped in front of our new house. My dad rented a house in Royaldene, which is probably still one of the most expensive suburbs in Kimberley. His low self-worth always drove him to fit in with the wealthy crowd. He sent me to a very prestigious school for academically gifted children. I was not in the top of the class and I felt like I have been thrown into the deep end. I hated school from the very first day. My love for art and drawing also slowly declined. Settling into the new school did not go well. I did not really make any long-term friends and usually ended up playing between different groups.

South Africa was a far cry from being a safe and friendly place. Within the first week of living there, I already had my first taste of what the country had to offer.

My mother and I were washing up dishes one morning. My mum looked out the window and she saw two men casually walking into our yard. They proceeded to steal one big gas container. My mother immediately ran out of the house yelling at them while she grabbed our little poodle-cross breed that had zero fear. That dog would attack fireworks and he used to chase big wild

Oryx bucks out of our garden in Namibia. I tried my best to keep up with my mum running at top speed after the thieves. She did not even stop to think if they were armed. I was laughing so much at my mum taking it so seriously and running with this small dog under her arm! We found the gas bottle in a close by field and rolled it back home.

That was my first encounter with South African crime. Little did I know how serious that incident could have turned out. Chasing a robber is probably the most stupid thing that you can do! You never know whether they have other friends hiding in the bushes with knives and weapons. My days of walking to school and running around in the streets playing cricket and hide and go seek were over. It was too dangerous.

I had trouble associating and bonding with people. All the different groups and cultures just looked like bad news and the possibility being hurt was always in the back of my mind. I always made sure I was in public spaces and never alone in a classroom or secluded spaces.

After being in the new school for several weeks, I saw someone I never expected to see! The universe gave me a big reason to smile again. The school bell rang and it was finally time to go home. I was walking through the hallway and out the back door with everyone running towards the gate to meet his or her parents. I realized I had forgotten my pencil case in the classroom. I turned around and tried to walk against all the kids trying to run past me. I looked down to watch where I was going and then I looked up again..... and there she was Clare, Tim from my class in kindergarten who passed away, his sister, was standing right in front of me. I looked at her and she looked at me and said "Oh my God, Evette, seriously? What are you doing here?" I looked at her and was just dumbfounded. I could only stare at her with utter disbelief.

I always saw Tim in Clare's face, as they looked so much alike. I gave her a hug and felt a sense of ease settling in. Someone from Namibia that I knew was here, what are the odds of this happening, it only happens in movies, not me! Someone I felt connected to in a special way I talked to her briefly and felt so blessed and amazed at the same time. What were the odds of running into her again, after all these years in a different country? There were eight different primary schools in Kimberley, and yet we ended up at the same one. She was two years older, though and in a different class

My feel good moment only lasted a few days and then things went back to normal.

I had a Mathematics teacher who loved picking on children who struggled with the subject and that included me. She humiliated students who were not able to grasp a concept within a few seconds. One day it was my turn to be verbally bashed by her. I asked her twice to explain to me how to work out a formula. She yelled out, “How stupid do you have to be to not understand what I just said?” I was speechless and did not say a word. She yelled at me again and demanded that I move to the front of the class. I had to sit next to one particular boy who was failing almost all of his subjects. The teacher looked at me and said, “You two belong in the front of the class.”

I decided to work hard so that she would stop bullying me. That same year my marks went up by ten percent. I realized that I couldn’t please everyone. I decided that being who I am at any given moment is good enough, at least to me. I realized that the problem was with her and not me.

She was the only teacher that ever picked on me. All the other teachers hardly noticed me.

I could not find a stable group of friends who wouldn’t pick on me and use me for their entertainment. I did not know that they were only responding to and taking advantage of my low self-worth and inability to set boundaries. They indulged themselves in my self-loathing and lack of self-respect.

People can only respect you as much as you respect yourself—it always starts within.

Crime in South Africa was completely out of control. Everyone did as they pleased and the presence of racism and resentment was overwhelming. One of the first associations that I made with South Africa was of violence, hatred and arrogance. My survival instincts kicked in full force and I had to become aware of my environment and not just my father’s temper. Unfortunately, this caused me to become increasingly judgmental. When I was walking in the street I would look at someone’s character and I would always make a split second judgment whether this person had bad intentions. Based on my own assessments, I would navigate my route when walking in streets and shopping malls. I did not feel safe enough to engage freely with others.

We had safety talks at school. They also taught us to always pick up litter outside our yards. Thieves would use tin cans with the different colors as a code. The color code of the can would be used to communicate with their friends, indicating which house was empty and safe to rob.

My mum taught me all the clever tricks when we went shopping. My first lesson was on a Saturday. Whilst we were walking in the street she said,

“Evette, keep your handbag in the middle between us. It makes it harder for a robber to grab it. Lock arms with me because we are now going into a dangerous area.” It freaked me out to live like that. She also taught me to always use the reflection of the big display windows so you could see who was walking behind you. My mum would memorize the clothing and features of those around us. If someone followed us for too long we would just walk into a shop until we felt comfortable to keep going. We used to stick our house keys between our fingers for self-defense if we felt threatened.

I remember routines when we walked around the car making sure robbers weren’t hiding behind it. The day arrived when our favorite shopping area became too dangerous. The final straw was when gangsters infected with HIV used syringes to prick themselves. They would then quickly walk into a crowd of people and stab someone with the infected needle. That day several teenagers contracted HIV from the needle attacks. Shortly after these attacks, the streets started to crawl with military officers. They walked around with fully loaded automatic weapons.

It took only a few short days before the gangsters started stabbing people with the needles again. One day later, a robber amputated an old lady’s finger publicly as he tried to get her diamond ring. One of the military officers saw him and shot him eight times. I thought that eight times was ridiculous however it also showed evidence of how fed-up the military and police were with the ruthless crime. Even the military felt powerless and did not have enough resources to make a difference.

There were decent officers who did want to make a difference. The corruption within the police department did not make things any easier for the officers who had not succumbed to corruption. You can ask any South African about this. You will find that their response will be more terrifying than you anticipated. I am being polite in the way that I am describing it.

It was hard for me to admit that the once beautiful country in which I was born in has been brought down to her knees by violence, crime and a forever crashing economy.

Not only did we all have to come to terms with a country that was corrupt and unsafe. My father dropped yet another bomb on my mum and me. My father’s words were, “We are going bankrupt.” My mum and I looked at each other. We knew that we would be packing up soon again to move to a more affordable suburb. I don’t know how he thought he was going to run a business from the pub. To us, the end result was obvious, however my dad was completely blind too it. He was convinced that he could pull it off.

Shortly after that, I heard my dad discussing a new plan of action. Instead of excitement at his initiative, I felt only fear about his failed business.

Days later he met a guy called Ivan at the pub. My dad became good friends with Ivan, faster than he could gulp down a glass of beer. My father invited Ivan to a braai (barbeque) at our house. I gave Ivan one glance and said to my mother, "There is something wrong with this man. I don't like him at all!" My mother felt the same and we both quivered and walked away. Before I knew it, Ivan was living with us in our house.

My dad brought a homeless man without a job into our house to stay. I have nothing against helping others, however if it involves my father then you have legitimate reason to be concerned!

In reality, what was happening was that my father's ability to judge situations with reasonable accuracy had completely failed him, as it did in the past. My father was ignoring all the warning signs that could occur by bringing a stranger into our lives.

Meanwhile we had to move to another house that was more affordable. In hindsight, the move was a blessing. We moved to Hillcrest, which was a beautiful suburb, and I felt like I had a lot more freedom there. One of my fondest memories of the house was walking into my bedroom after school in the afternoon and seeing the sunrays shining into my space. It felt like the rays of the sun greeted me with warmth and security. I could sit there on my carpet feeling the sun and its warmth, looking through my window into our lush green garden and feel so at peace.

And yes, Ivan made the move with us. At best, it was an awkward situation. His height was imposing and his sinister glassy blue eyes seemed to follow us everywhere.

The day arrived when my father announced that Ivan was being promoted to his new business partner. This was a disaster waiting to happen. My father began a new business in his own name selling private insurance. Ivan's job was to leave Kimberley in order to meet up with potential customers. Whilst doing so, he faked my father's signature on the insurance documents to earn more commission. To make matters worse, Ivan also crashed and wrote off two new Mazda sedans that my dad bought for the business. He drove one car into a buck that was walking in the road at night. The second sedan was used to hunt rabbits in a field and ultimately drove the car beyond repair.

Ivan was just another alcoholic who did not respect other people, their belongings or their needs. Ivan was living for himself at the expense of others. My dad ignored the signs. He was too drunk to take any notice and his

apathetic approach to his business just added to the disaster that was to come. Ivan took full advantage of my father's weaknesses. My father brought this upon himself and in turn, my mother and me.

My father was so desperate to make money but he did not want to do the hard yards himself. This is yet another example of an alcoholic that did not want to take any type of responsibility. Ivan used and abused my father's trust and money. The financial loss that Ivan created was so damaging, it felt like a bottomless pit. My dad had to use my university investment policy that my mum have been saving for me since the day of my birth to cover the debt and his alcohol bills.

Ivan was a carbon copy of my dad. He felt no shame or remorse for what he had done. He was able to look my father straight in the eyes after everything that he had done. He only disappeared when we called the police and filed a case against him. He packed his bags overnight and left after my father confronted him. The police could not find him and they still have not found him to this day.

Shortly after that, we received a phone call informing us that my father's mother passed away. I remember my father walking into the room in tears and said, "My mother just died." I looked at my dad feeling an enormous relief. I couldn't push out a tear even if I tried.

I knew that a chapter in my life had ended; however, my grandmother's death did not release me from the deep-seated pain that she caused me. It was a journey that I had to complete and process myself. Little did I know how hard I was going to make things for myself by trying to deal with it on my own.

The hardest part was yet to come, resolving my anger, pain, and trauma and coming to terms with my past. It was so ingrained into my character that I did not know who and what I was without the abuse. It dominated my life.

As time went on, I started becoming more aware of the impact and consequences that my past inflicted. I realized that I did not have a lot of friends like most kids. Being the only child was only a small part of it. I was actually unconsciously avoiding friendship and opening up to others. I went out of my way to avoid experiences that I thought would inevitably disappointment me.

I had an empty and lonely life. Of the few friends I had, I felt only used me because I earned five times more pocket money than they did when we were still doing well financially. This changed after my dad lost his second business. The few friends that I had became fewer. I used to be the main

supplier of chips and soft drink at school. The more money I spent, the more friends I had. I felt accepted for all the wrong reasons. To be honest, I did not care; it was great to be a part of something. My father finally officially lost his second business and he declared bankruptcy for the first time.

Coming home one afternoon, I found my mother in tears on the phone. I waited for her to finish her conversation and asked her what is going on. I had a really bad knot in my stomach and I prepared myself for the worst. My mother sat me down and said that we would have to move out of the house because we could not afford the rent and or anything we owned, anymore.

Companies stopped by our house to confiscate our furniture and office equipment whilst my father was in the pub avoiding dealing with the consequences of his actions. My mother decided that she was going to leave my father. She arranged for us to move to a little townhouse. My maternal grandmother came down from Pretoria to help us get settled. She supported us in so many unexpected ways. She made sure we had a car and all the necessities in the house so that we could have a decent life.

I remember the winter months of minus eight degrees Celsius, when our car did not want to start. When the car did start, we would idle the car engine for ten minutes so that it could warm up before heading to school and work. The car was old and on the brink of giving up on us.

One day the car died.

We were crossing a big intersection during morning peak hour and the car's engine cut out as we were driving across. My mum and I had to jump out of the car and push it off the road. People had no compassion or understanding for what had just happened. People yelled and hooted at us to get out of the way. My mother was laughing so much that she could not get the car to start. I stood there feeling quite angry and humiliated. My teenage hormones were not in the mood to see the humor.

My mother's strength and sense of humor in life always cheered me up. No matter how hard I tried though I could not see the humor within poverty.

The day of my year-end exam, the car did not start at all. The engine just gave a clicking sound and that was it. This day could go either way, I could call a friend to pick me up or I could miss my exam. I was actually reluctant to call someone. I did not want to ask for help. I looked at my mum and said, "Don't worry about my exams, I will still make it because my marks were high enough during the year."

Of course, my mother ignored my plea and called my friend's mum to ask for a ride into school. I was mortified. My ego was so attached to my old life where we had an abundance of everything, including a car that worked.

Finally, the school holidays arrived and I was as happy as ever to do my own thing. I loved making gift cards and selling them at stores. I was bored most of the time as most of my friends went away on holiday. My boredom was short lived though when I heard the dogs barking hysterically.

My mum and I were in our townhouse on a Saturday after hanging up the washing. We ran outside to see why the dogs were barking. Just as we ran around the corner, we saw a guy trying to jump over our 6-foot high concrete wall. He was trying to steal our clothes on the washing line. I was shocked to see that he was using a lighter and an aerosol can. The robber would light the lighter and then sprayed the aerosol through the flame, magnifying it. He was trying to burn the dog's faces every time they jumped up the wall to bark at him. He saw my mum running towards him waving her hands and yelling at him. He looked at her like she was a mere nuisance. He turned around and walked away to five houses down the street to do the same thing to someone else. We called the police and reported the incident.

They never showed up.

We started to lock things up more and double secured all the locks on our house. We only went outside when necessary. My mum got a great job shortly after and we bought a lovely little townhouse.

That same year I became a school Prefect Leader. They only chose 10 girls and 10 ten boys that year. I made it into the group. It was such a great moment for me. None of my friends became a Perfect Leader for the school that year. They eventually kicked me out of the group saying that I did not fit in with them anymore. It started to feel like any good times were always accompanied by bad times. I began to wish for a break from all the emotional chaos and strain.

My wish was not going to be answered for a very long time to come.

Meanwhile, my father's life was spiraling downward. He was drinking more and more alcohol raking up a big tab that was easily paid for in the past. Now he had to pay it off on a monthly basis. My dad found a job eventually and moved to Johannesburg. I would only see him twice a month at most. When I was thirteen, I went to the pub with him a few times to see why this haven was so special to him. I could not understand why he dedicated his heart and soul to the place.

I walked behind my dad into the pub and was greeted by swirls of cigarette smoke. The lights were dim and you could hardly see who was sitting in the corners. The floors were sticky and wet from all the drink that has been spilled. There was a musty muffled, moldy smell hanging in the air, almost like a wet cloth that had been left in a dark, humid spot. There was a heavy dense energy that came crashing down on me. The two barmaids wore low cut tops, tons of cheap make up and seemed to love the attention they received from drunken men. The funny part was that half of the men did not even have a full set of teeth, yet they smiled like movie stars.

Everyone in that room was smiling and laughing. The façade of their personalities was quite evident - forced and not real. I watched them have conversations with each other that were very far from the truth. They would boost each other's egos and talk about their loved ones like they were the biggest problem in their lives, yet little did they realize that their loved ones were most likely their biggest support.

Alcoholics always blame the people closest to them for everything that have gone wrong in their life. It was always someone else's behavior that drove them to becoming an alcoholic. Alcoholics can't see that they themselves make the choice to pick up the glass of alcohol. It's a world they create for themselves in order to escape the daily responsibilities of life and suppressing their past pain and issues.

In the pub, the drunken men verbally abused the television as if it had a life of its own. They treated strangers like life-long friends. I saw how shallow and lonely these people really were. They had no sense of self-respect. Most of them had missing teeth, oily hair and bad body odor. There were a few well-dressed men, however they were in the minority. Somehow, these men and some woman acted like they are the greatest things to ever enter your life.

They made you feel as if they were doing you a favor by talking to you on their soil. They could not be around the average person because no one could really understand nor tolerate them and they knew that.

The alcoholic language is very hard to understand for the average, sober human. In the pub though, it seemed effortless for one drunken man to understand another drunken man's blathering. In the pub, the alcoholic's code makes them understand one another's sorrows and problems. They all shared the same belief. They all believed that they were the victims and it's everyone else's fault that they are so stuck in their own addiction.

Everyone was lying to each other about obvious things. They boasted about how abundant they were even though I knew better. Lack of abundance was actually their biggest problem besides being an alcoholic.

My dad had the same trait. His lies were more obvious in the pub. His behavior was very childish. He couldn't stand losing an argument. Saying "no" to him was like saying "no" to a two-year-old. He did not handle confrontation very well and became child like when someone talked to him aggressively, to say that he had a spiteful side is an understatement. He would argue until he was red in the face about topics that are not even worth mentioning. He would speak his truth and still think that he was right. He could never back up what he said; nonetheless, he decided that he was always right. Whilst I had have been observing all this chaos, my dad hadn't even made it through to this second beer. It hit me hard.

I realized that this is what my dad was really like. He hardly had any beer in his system and yet his malicious behavior was already being projected onto others. It normally took at least sixteen beers to get him to slur his words and he drank without a break. I was shocked! I could not believe how one human being could drink so much and still sit upright.

I realized that my father's childlike behavior was due to his abusive past. Some part of him was frozen in time during his childhood and his entire being was stuck in survival mode. There is a big part of him that never matured. Some people tend to revert to a childlike state when they feel under attack. They try to access the same part of them that kept them safe when their childhood trauma was triggered. This type of pattern would normally be resolved if they completed their childhood trauma cycle. My father had that very same pattern when he was verbally confronted. He would sometimes have a silent fit and then take revenge on the person that confronted him and sometimes an innocent bystander would take the verbal blow.

My father's inner child was trying to come out to be healed; however, this was not his priority. He probably did not even realize what was happening. While at the bar, I also discovered my father's habit of slandering my mother and me. When I returned from a trip to the bathroom, I overheard my father talking. He did not realize that I was there. I listened to him say, how stupid my mother was and that she ignored him. He even said that she treated him like garbage! I was so amused when I heard this because it was actually the other way around. My mother was the peacekeeper and he was the abuser.

He seemed to have forgotten that my mother always cooked meals for him, washed his clothes, and even made his bed for him in the morning. My

father was even too lazy to make his own bed. Their marriage was so badly damaged that he slept in his own bedroom for almost 20 years. I confronted him about these lies in front of his friend and I reminded him of everything that he had done in the past. He started to squeeze his glass so hard that you could see the whites of his knuckles. I realized that now would be a good time to go home and I left very quickly. I was really upset by the fact that he had the nerve to say those things about my mother and me - the people who had always supported him.

He'd forgotten how many times he had humiliated us in front of his friends. Behind closed doors, my father was a master manipulator. He was especially good at crying on demand. I, on the other hand saw my father for who he really was. I knew and understood his agendas all too well. When his crying trick did not work, then he would immediately bounce back to being angry within a split second. His tears would disappear. He especially did the crying trick when he needed money for alcohol, needed a favor or to manipulate someone.

After months of making promises to get better, my mum and dad got back together. He moved back in with us, however, he still had his own bedroom. His promise to change and become a better person was merely a set up. He tried to get back into our lives. He needed a roof over his head, food and money. He knew how to manipulate my mother, she never challenged him and as a result he felt powerful and in control. Moving back into the house would mean free rent and free food. Basically, everything was done for him. My mother feared him and as a result, he got away with his immoral tactics.

My dad invited a few of his friends over to our house for a braai to watch the rugby. He became arrogant and unpleasant as soon as his friends arrived. He started giving my mother and me orders, yelling at us if we did not snap to his demands. My father's friends only responded to his behavior by raising their glasses as if to say, "We approve, women should obey us." This kind of controlling behavior is extremely common with abusive people. They gain control by demeaning and belittling others in order to establish their role and dominance.

By this point, my father had already cheated on my mother more than four times by becoming involved in a series of short-lived affairs. He never was, nor had ever been a good husband. He was never supportive of us either. He forgot all the times that we supported him through his hard times and how we had faith that he would get better one day. He had been to three rehabilitation centers with no results.

Finding Your Own Voice

The only thing that he accomplished in rehab was a fling with a drug addict.

He suffered two big anxiety attacks: both times, while at the pub. After his second anxiety attack in two months, he was admitted to hospital. He signed himself out after just three hours.

Where did he go? He went back to the pub. He was already using medication to help his kidneys and liver to function properly. Even though he was living off medication, he still drank beer, smoked sixty cigarettes a day and consumed one meal a day.

My father finally got another stable job in Kimberley and held that job for almost ten years. I knew that letting my dad back into the house was a mistake. My dad had caused us nothing but sadness, abuse, humiliation, anger, abandonment and rejection. This is all that I have known my entire life.

When my father left our lives, I found myself missing all these emotions! My entire life consisted of sadness, abuse, humiliation, anger, abandonment and rejection. Who was I without that? When my dad moved back into the house, it felt familiar—here again were the feelings I had grown up with. Even though it scared me and caused me a lot anxiety, it was familiar. The emotional association and sensations were familiar. These emotional associations and sensations were the only way of living. I only knew how to survive in a destructive environment.

Things went back to normal when my dad moved back in. He completed his trial at the rehab and for a while, he did get better. He came across very sympathetic about his past behavior toward us.

My father was so good at making me feel guilty for everything that went wrong in his life. There were times when I actually fell for it and I felt sorry for him and pitied him. Playing the victim was his specialty. However, he still smiled at me in that same cold stern manner that I remembered so well. After a matter of weeks he started back on his old, destructive behavior, drinking even more. He alienated people and took out his anger on any one who was willing to listen. Luckily, he was never at home so he never really bothered us.

He still arrived home in the early hours when he came back from the pub. My dad was a housemate and nothing more than that.

He continued to blame me more and more for all the problems in his life. He got tired of manipulating me with the Bible and started to shift his resentment, frustration and hatred directly onto me. He was the alcoholic that would lisp due to his drunken state whilst reading the Bible out loud. He would preach to others about how bad their lives were and how God would

punish us all for our sins. I became his excuse for everything that has ever gone wrong in his life.

He took the blame game too far one day. I had a computer tutor over at the house one afternoon that showed me some great tricks. She was one of my mother's colleagues at work and I had known her for quite awhile. My father came home on time from work that afternoon, which was out of character for him.

He started arguing with my mother, which made me uncomfortable because of the presence of my mother's friend. She could hear my father swearing. I told her not to worry my dad is just having a bad day. Several minutes later, I heard glass breaking in the hallway followed by him saying, "This is the reason why our marriage is the way that it is and why I am so messed up."

I immediately knew what had happened. My dad had thrown a photo frame on the floor that I gave him for Father's Day. It was a sterling silver photo frame with a photo of my mother and me when I was just a few hours old. I felt deeply saddened that my own father could hate me so much. I heard the front door slam and he was gone. I quickly excused myself and found the broken frame. I picked up the glass and put it away. I went back to the tutor and apologized. She looked at me in horror. She made an excuse and left early. I walked her to the front door and waved her goodbye feeling deeply ashamed and embarrassed about my dad's behavior.

The worst part is that my father knew the tutor was there. He came home later and pretended like nothing had happened. He believed that he had nothing to apologize for because he was the victim and I was the intruder. Several days had passed after the broken frame incident when I told my father that I would try and find accommodation and move in with a friend.

I realized that I could not live like that anymore. He looked at me and said, "You might as well stay here. You will come to nothing anyway. You will serve beer to people in a bar and wipe up vomit."

"Yes," I said, "I might, because you spent my university tuition on your alcohol and reckless lifestyle." He knew how hard it would be for me to get a student loan in South Africa, especially with his banking records.

His reply? "You slut! You are nothing and you will never achieve anything, you will wipe vomit of floors in pubs."

He was very clever in his actions and would always do things when my mum was not there. Abuse was just part of life, it was normal.

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Several months later, I was adjusting to high school and the stress that it created. I got home from sport practice on a Saturday morning. My dad was lying on the couch with a beer on the table, as always, before heading off to the pub. He swore at me just as I walked past the couch mumbling horrible insults. Right at that moment something in me just clicked. This immense sense of rage came over me. I turned around and swore back at him. I was yelling at the top of lungs and slammed my fists on the couch. I told him exactly how I felt and what I thought of him.

I just had enough. “No more! This is enough!” I screamed.

I stood there for almost 10 minutes telling him exactly what I thought of him. I had been rehearsing this moment for as long as I can remember. The whole neighborhood heard me screaming and yelling. When I was finally finished, I took a deep breath and felt suddenly better.

He was speechless. He did not say a word. After that, he did not speak to me for two weeks. To be honest, it was a relief!

He stopped insulting me and he started to put in more effort in being nice to me. He realized that I was getting older. My fear of being attacked by him disappeared that day. I felt more confident and capable of standing up for myself. I decided that I was not going to be his verbal punching bag anymore.

As the months went by, I became wrapped in anxiety and started to develop very bizarre phobias. I would refuse to walk into the shopping centers because there were too many people allegedly staring at me. I would only eat certain foods because I believed that if I ate something different then bad things will happen to me. I had specific routines on a day-to-day basis and if I altered the routine in any way, it would result in bad luck. Little did I know that I was manifesting and attracting the very things that I was trying to avoid. Luckily, this was just a phase and did not develop into a lifelong, debilitating problem.

The more you resist something, the more you end up attracting it. I became addicted to sleeping tablets and anti-depressants. It was my way of coping and escaping my life. I had heart palpitations that lasted all night, only going away when I woke up in the morning. The palpitations would be back in just a few minutes as all my fears and pain would come crashing into my chest. It felt like a dense wave was hitting me in the solar plexus. The only time I could get away from it was by using these pills.

High school did not get any better. I thought that making the change from primary school to high school would be a fresh start for me. Being in a new environment was great, new people, new buildings and new teachers. I also

recognized a few familiar faces from primary school. The students at the school did not place any value on their education. I just wanted to learn what I could and go home. I was not there to make friends. As the year progressed, I got involved with a group of friends that were seen as the cool group. They all smoked and experimented with alcohol.

I kept my distance from it and tried to stay out of trouble and be a part of the group at the same time. There was one particular girl called Kate who did not like me at all and she had no problem showing it. She would always kick my satchel and make snide comments when she walked past me in the classroom. She even talked other kids into throwing my schoolbag off the balcony of the second floor at our classroom.

There was a boy in class who liked me who Kate also liked. She was very jealous that a guy she fancied was interested in me. I was not the hottest girl in school. I had just gotten braces and had the occasional pimple. Kate looked at me one day and said, "Oh my god, Evette, what do guys see in you? You are so ugly and unattractive. I don't get it."

I felt that silence was the best response. In a way, it was quite flattering to think that this macho girl in my class noticed how much more attention was being paid to me. I had not even notice the boy's interest in me until she mentioned it.

Kate's insult became an awakening for me. I started to focus more on my grooming and appreciated what I had to offer. My feminine side was starting to come out and I loved it! I had a few blonde highlights put in my hair and started to use a little make up and perfume. Though the physical changes I made were small, it made a big difference in how I felt about myself in public. I started to take fewer anti-depressants and sleeping tablets. I started to feel more at ease again.

I was really settling into this new phase of my life when someone at school made a comment about my weight. It was such a small trivial statement; however it kick-started my next phase of self-loathing. I started dieting as if my life depended on it. I was unconsciously trying to take control over my life. Losing weight was the only thing I could control. I started taking diet pills and only ate a banana per day. Sometimes I would treat myself to a cup of tea. I also joined the gym and started to exercise four hours a day after school and over the weekends.

Exercising made me feel very calm and relaxed. After every workout session I was so tired, I had no energy to worry or stress about anything else. I started becoming addicted to the post-exercise euphoria. I gave up the anti-

depressants. I did however; need something else to suppress the growing anxiety within. The anxiety and depression manifested itself in different ways because I did not deal with the issues that caused me to take the anti-depressants in the first place.

Even though I gave up some of my bad habits, I created new ones because the underlying issue was still unprocessed. My stomach started playing up after harsh exercise and not eating enough food. I managed to buy dieting products under my mother's nose and kept them hidden in my cupboards. My intestines started to swell up and feel inflamed.

After a few tests, I was told that I had a stomach infection due to my diet and lifestyle. I was not willing to change anything and kept up my routine like nothing was wrong. Staying stick thin was my goal and an infection was not going to stop that.

I also discovered that a small part of my anxiety was linked to my father's smoking habits. Every time he smoked in the house, I would start to feel calm and relaxed. I realized that I was addicted to cigarettes without even smoking! All those years that my father spent smoking around me had an effect.

Therefore, I started smoking, with the hope that I could experience the same calmness as I did when my dad smoked. I started stealing cigarettes from him. He would still be asleep when I would get up to go to school. Whilst he was snoring away, I would sneak into his bedroom and pinch a few cigarettes.

I got away with this for almost three years! Peer pressure got me to experiment with alcohol and my life took a turn for the worst. I was about to turn sixteen.

One Friday night we decided to go to a friend, Pret's birthday party at his house. I went to school with him in Oranjemund. His parents were transferred from the same company that my dad worked for to the branch in Kimberley where my dad got reinstated. My mother dropped us off unconcerned because she knew the family.

We all planned to have a great evening. I sat down next to one of my school friends and started talking about her break up with her boyfriend. I drank a coke that Pret's best friend, Steve, served me from behind the homemade bar. After the coke was finished, Steve suggested I try brandy and coke. I thought, "Sure why not." I took one sip and then a second sip. I started to feel very queasy. I remember thinking to myself that I was too young and shouldn't be drinking. I also remember thinking that it was cool to be indulging in all of these forbidden substances.

Steve, who served us our drinks, was a friend's boyfriend. I did not think anything of him serving us alcohol. Seconds later my queasiness started to turn into drowsiness. I looked at Steve and my vision started to blur. I realized what had just happened, he had spiked my drink. I remember reading a pamphlet explaining the danger of date rape drugs and the effects that it can have on you. I looked down at my watch and remember seeing that it was only nine p.m. I tried to get up from my chair. I remember looking into a brick wall as I turned around and that was it.

Blank.

I opened my eyes and became aware of a splitting headache. I heard the television blaring in the background. I slowly started opening up my eyes and was blinded by the flashing lights in front of me. I looked over to my side and saw one of my friends, Brad, hanging over me. His eyes were as big as saucers. He looked distressed. "What the hell Evette, are you ok? Can you hear me?"

My head felt like it was split in two. Then it hit me. I remember looking at my watch and it said 9.00 p.m. I looked at my watch again to see what the time was but my watch was missing. Brad told me that it was 4.30 am! He and his mother thought that I drank too much and kept me there to "sober up" just so that I did not get into trouble with my parents. Little did they know at the time that my drink had been spiked.

They drove me home and made sure I was OK. My parents slept through the whole incident and were unaware of what had happened and what time I got home. When I woke up later that day and looked in the mirror I saw that I had blood coming from my hairline. My nose was broken; my lip was full of blood and split. My clothing was covered in blood and vomit. A bra and underwear were tucked into a pocket of a jacket that did not belong to me.

I slowly started to recall vague memories of people fighting and yelling. I felt like someone punched the life out of me, my whole body was bruised. An enormous fear came over me, I felt paralyzed. I couldn't recall what had happened the night before.

I looked for my phone to call my friend Trudes, but I couldn't find it; all my valuables were stolen at Pret's house. It was stolen in a room filled with classmates from school.

My mother was shocked to see my face, I couldn't answer her string of questions, as I myself, was looking for answer. I called Trudes from my

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mother's phone and at the time of the call, I was oblivious to the fact that she was one of the three people who planned to spike my drink as a joke.

Trudes picked up the phone the acting show started immediately. Her voice was filled with more fear than mine. The first question she asked me was, "What do you remember about last night?" The moment I said, "nothing" her tone of voice changed and she started yelling at me, "Everything that happened last night was your fault! It's your fault that Steve was attacked Evette!" I was speechless and in shock, I had no idea what she was talking about. I hung up the phone unable to say anything, my whole world temporarily stopped. I had no idea who to turn to and where to seek comfort.

Later in the day, I called Trudes again, trying to make sense of everything. I asked her to explain to me what had happened. She kept avoiding answering my questions. I was so upset and started to feel angry as I realized that she was not answering my questions. I could hear that she started to feel very uncomfortable and her final words to me were, "Steve's friends are looking for you, if they find you they will beat and kick you to death! Everyone is angry with you Evette, it's all your fault!" It was Saturday and I realized that school would start on Monday. I had a day and half to figure out what to do. No one was talking to me. I couldn't find any answers or explanations. I felt devastated, shattered, alone and isolated. Knowing that so many people were threatening me, everyone is lying to me and thinking that I am the starting point of an attack launched at an "innocent" teenager, Steve, overwhelming!

At the time, little did I realize that it was a well-orchestrated set-up, a set-up that was supported by a group who completely failed to take responsibility for their cruel intentions.

I felt incredibly helpless and robbed of my integrity and self-respect. I felt that my future and safety was in the hands of heartless teenagers who had no concept what they had done and had no remorse for the people and myself who were harmed and greatly affected by this incident.

I started to feel even more fear as the reality of what may have occurred sank in. My thoughts were blank, the more I tried to remember what had happened that night to more panic set in...I can't remember, the memories aren't there.

The simple fact of waking up not knowing what had happened to me was traumatizing in itself. The only evidence that I had of what truly happened was a broken nose, busted lip, head and blood and vomit all over my clothing.

The amount of blood that covered my hair (at the time my hair was blonde) and clothing was alarming!

It took time to appreciate the extent of the physical trauma that I experienced that dreadful night. I felt bursts of anxiety, numbness, stress, fear and annihilation. These intense emotions came in waves.

It was a sick joke that turned out horribly wrong. They needed someone to blame for their bad judgment and mess, that person was I. It was perfect, I didn't remember what had happened that night; I had no way of defending myself. I felt utterly helpless.

I had no evidence to prove what had happened that evening let alone to me. What I said was not taken seriously. I was literally ignored by everyone. My mother was the only one who had faith in my innocence and me.

My mother supported me during the whole process. My father was blissfully unaware of all the chaos even to this day. He was too drunk to notice anything.

My life would never be the same after this ordeal. I begged my mother to take me out of school; I was too scared to even go to the super market!

We already had a hard time paying the school fees and studying at home would be a lot cheaper, so she agreed. I never went back to school after that weekend.

Then just as I thought that I was destined to live my life in fear, isolation and hiding from a past incident that was labeled to my identity. One of the kids who were there that night started to feel guilty about what had happened to me. He called me from a blocked number and asked me to meet him behind the gym one afternoon. He said he would tell me what really happened if I came alone. I was even more scared, what if it was a set-up? What if a group of kids were going to hide behind the gym and ambush me when I arrived? I didn't know the answer. I felt a great deal of conflict, as I was desperate for answers, answers that would help me to make sense of all this chaos and drama. I knew that if I didn't go, I would miss an opportunity that may help me find a starting point to address my trauma and the conflict I felt toward my classmates and people who I trusted...I decided to go.

I was anxious as I arrived at the gym, were things going to get worse or will it get better? Who would want to help me in this way after what had happened? Do I really want to know what happened that night? I saw him hiding behind the gym. I froze, this is it. Do I want to know what happened or should I run away and never look back? My circumstances were already so bad and threatening that I asked myself, "What could possibly be worse than

what I have already seen, remembered and heard?” To be honest, nothing, my life, status and identity has already been ruined and slandered. There was nothing left but a million pieces of emotions that don’t fit together anymore. Life as I knew it, stopped dead in its tracks. Where do you start to rebuild your life and name in such a small town?

I walked around the corner and was so relieved to see only the guy who called me. I felt ice cold on a hot summer day. I couldn’t even greet him, the only words that I mustered was, “What happened that night?”

He told me everything that took place. It was a prank that went terribly wrong. He said that they took my clothing off and threw me into an ice cold bath tub filled with water. Then they dragged me out and started beating me. One of the girls said I fell down the staircase, but it was a lie all along. Someone then half dressed me and left me on the floor in the house. Shortly after, a few people took me to a car and drove me in to town. They dumped me in front of a busy nightclub with my pants unbuttoned, no shoes or underwear and a tank top half pulled on. He said that that’s all he’s aware of. He said, “Evette, I am sorry that this had happen to you” and quickly walked away. In 2015 I tried to reach out to him to thank him again for coming forward, only to learn that he passed away in 2010.

The incident that I survived was in the newspaper as well, it was headline news. What was once a secret was now spread out over the tabloids. The little bit of integrity that I had left was shattered. The truth came out. The headlines read, “Girl soaked in blood” I read only a tenth of what had happened.

My name was not mentioned, as I was under-aged, but everyone knew it was me. My father read the newspaper oblivious to the fact that it was about me. His alcohol addiction at that point was already so bad that I knew he would not have the ability to even begin to understand what I was going through. He was already so emotionally numb to his own life, how was he going to be able to understand?

I called Brad and asked him if he knew anything about it. He was surprised that I didn’t remember what had happened and told me the rest of the story. Brad also realized how serious the situation really was.

He said that someone took me from Pret’s house to a club. Brad was at the same nightclub at the time. He saw that I was walking around with a tank top, no shoes, no bra, and my trousers were only half buttoned and I had blood on my face and clothing. He immediately thought that someone sexually assaulted me. He demanded that the kids take him to the place where

I had been attacked. Brad and at least twenty of his friends took off to the house. I was put in the back seat of a car. He said that they went to the front door and asked where the rest of my clothing and stuff was. Ironically, Steve, who served me the spiked drink, was the one who came out and handed over all my stuff including my bra and underwear.

Brad started becoming suspicious and asked how he knew where all my stuff was, especially my underwear. Steve couldn't answer him and Brad started to figure things out very quickly. He assumed that I was raped; he started to punch and kick Steve to the ground and the rest of Brad's group joined in on the attack. I was mortified to learn what had happened and more embarrassed than anything else.

I completed the rest of Grade Ten in a small private school. The irony was that Pret's mother owned the private school. She felt guilty because of what had happened at her house and offered to help me with schooling until the end of the year. I only had to go to the private school once a week to sit tests and hand in my projects.

Eventually Steve's mother sued Brad a week later. I had to go to court with Brad. I was mentioned as being a witness; I was a witness who couldn't remember what I saw. I had a chat with the prosecutor and when he heard my side of the story, he postponed the court case.

The prosecutor was adamant that I should file a lawsuit against Steve. How could I? I was not sure about all the details of that evening. My whole body was in so much pain after the incident that I could not be sure what happened and what didn't. The prosecutor decided to charge Steve with rape charges.

Steve's mother said that if I dropped the rape charges then she would drop the assault charges against Brad. I knew that Brad wanted to go overseas the following year and would not be able to do so with a criminal record. I dropped the charges and Brad got off as well.

This whole incident started out as a joke. God knows how you can place violence, violation and humor together! I didn't know how to digest this barbaric behavior.

At that point, I can say that I finally truly understood the meaning of blind rage. I reached a point where I was just over it. I was over the sadness, crying, isolation and empty threats. The only symptoms of that night that was left was my anger, hatred and exhaustion.

I was out of the wrong crowd. My sense of freedom started to come back. I could make my own decisions again. My grades were good enough to skip

Grade Eleven and I went straight into Grade Twelve through long distance education. I felt complete with the private school and had enough of seeing Pret's mother. She was a sore reminder of how a parent can enable the bad behavior and judgment of a child.

Leaving the private school, I completed my Grade 12 via distance learning. I also had two jobs whilst completing my schooling so that I could have enough money to go to college. I really wanted to go to university, but my dad had squandered my university savings on alcohol and his company debt. I really wanted to become a lawyer or crime scene investigator. I wanted to bring justice to this country and it almost felt like an obligation to me. In reality, I was seeking justice for my own past.

I had also had a boyfriend, David, during this time; we got along really well for the first two years. He started bodybuilding after two years of us being together and he used a lot of bodybuilding shakes to get in shape. His new diet, however, changed his temperament for the worse.

Out of the blue he started beating and threatening me. He would fly off the handle for no reason. He became very unpredictable. I started seeing him less when I began college. Leaving him was not an option. One time I tried to leave him, he ended up pointing a knife at my face and he said, "I will kill any bastard that comes close to you." I had never seen that side of him and had no intention to provoking him again, ever.

I knew that if I wanted to leave him, I would have to leave town. I needed a job in order to do that and save up money, so I found a temporary job as a project secretary on a new construction site just outside of Kimberley. The company filtered through old mine tailings looking for more diamonds. I was one of four females on an isolated construction site with 2000 male laborers.

It was daunting at first. I never let my guard down and learned how to demand respect from the workers. I had them so well trained that they would take their safety hats off and wait outside my office until I acknowledged them. Only then were they allowed to speak to me. In some way, I felt divinely protected there.

The worst part for me was wintertime. I normally started work at 6 a.m. to make sure that the night shift workers were up to date with their paperwork. I had to walk about 700 meters from the car park through three security checks. Then I had to walk underneath conveyor belts and noisy machines. The cold wind would cut through my clothing no matter what I wore. My contract came to an end and so did my desire to live in Kimberley.

I desperately wanted to start a new life and advance my career. I was ready to move away from David. I needed a clean slate away from all the abuse.

Several days later one of my colleagues told me about another colleague called Tom. Tom was visiting from Johannesburg to attend a business seminar. He was looking for someone with my experience. My colleague immediately put me in touch with him. After the meeting with Tim, I was interviewed. He offered me the job in the Johannesburg headquarters, right on the spot. I accepted the position immediately. The best part of it all was that my salary quadrupled!

Before I left Kimberley, I experienced the most profound sense of freedom. I knew that I was finally moving away from all this chaos. I stopped trying to get my father to love and accept me. I allowed myself to focus solely on my life and my needs. This was the most liberating decision I have ever made.

By this time, I was smoking a lot. My dad went back to rehab for what was the fifth time. He would give my mother false hope every so often by saying that he has decided to quit drinking and smoking all together. He went into rehab for several weeks just to come out and have yet another relapse. He had been to five different rehabs in a period of five years. Having a relapse goes much deeper than just being addicted to alcohol. In my dad's case, I could see how the alcohol was suppressing his abusive childhood. Alcohol made him feel like he had some sense of normality and quietness in his mind. I do acknowledge that the normalcy I mentioned was natural to him, not necessarily to the average person. It was hard for me to fully understand alcoholism first hand.

I was almost going to walk that same path. I am thankful that I recognized how my habits started to mirror my dad's reckless life.

I chose to change my behavior and how I dealt with my deeper problems. Alcoholics deal with their symptoms and not the underlying emotional problem. The trauma causes the emotional symptom to manifest. If we don't understand or know how to deal with trauma then we end up dealing with the symptom instead. In my dad's case he suffered from a lot of anxiety and panic attacks. Alcohol helped to ease these symptoms. However, it did not deal with the issue that got him drinking in the first place.

Just as it's easier to go to the doctor and ask for antidepressants and tablets to help your liver and kidneys recover after a long binge, it can be easier to grab a bottle of whisky, swig away and be in denial of the past.

When you are in denial, you don't have to accept what has happened to you in your childhood. It can just be one big blur and fading memory. It's like the big elephant in the room - a hulking great animal that everybody is going to ignore.

People tend to hide behind the statement, "I don't really remember my childhood." Sometimes it's because they genuinely don't remember their upbringing, where as others just simply suppress it. Some people even go to the extreme of recreating their childhood in a way that is likeable to them.

This can be dangerous as that person is invalidating their experience and trauma as a child. Denial can bring a lot of emotional and physical illness.

When my dad felt anxious and distressed, he would turn to alcohol. When he was happy he would flip the top off a beer can. No matter what emotion he experienced, it would put him in some sort of distress. No emotion was considered safe. Even feeling happy did not make him feel safe.

He never felt safe enough in his childhood to show any emotion. He couldn't express himself in front of his parents.

I remember once running to my mother and giving her a hug in front of my paternal grandmother for no reason. My father's mother leaned towards my mother and said, "You are raising that child for the devil." It was quite obvious that my father never had any kind of affection in his childhood.

My dad learned how to feel safe in a hostile environment. He learned how to feel safe regardless of his living situation and so did I. He thought that the abuse was his parent's way of showing him affection because the only form of attention was shown in an abusive way. Love was shown to him in the form of abuse.

The thing that I regret the most about my father's alcoholism is that I never got to know him. I have never spoken to him whilst he was sober. I don't know what he likes and dislikes. I don't know what makes him laugh. I don't know what his dreams were as a child. The worst part of it all was that I always had to pretend to be the mature person in a conversation. My father would always go off on his rants when he felt blamed or cornered.

Having a conversation with my dad sober is still one of my biggest desires. I still suspect that I might not like the person that he is without alcohol. I have so many questions to ask him. The catch is will he ever be able to give me honest answers? Up until this point in my life, he has only lied to me. I am not sure how well he knows himself after the destructive life he's lived.

He will never take responsibility for his actions and life style. This is a part of my life that I've had to accept and make peace with. I needed to let go of

the desire to try and fulfill the father/daughter relationship gaps in my life. I aimed my focus on my new career and life. I just wanted everything else to be history.

I looked forward to being in a more formal environment and to actually see how these big construction sites are designed.

I had recently turned 19. I packed my mother's little Mazda and drove off to Johannesburg. My new life was just around the corner. I ended my relationship with David and started a new life in Johannesburg.

My mother was, and still is, a big support in my life. If there were anything that I needed, she would make sure that I had it. She loaned me her car for several months until I could afford to buy myself one. I lived in a little granny flat on an acreage and felt quite safe and secure there. The family who owned the property had two big Rottweiler dogs and a ten-foot electrical wired fence strengthened with steel bars. They also had a remote controlled gate. I was always scared to get out of a car to open a gate. In South Africa, people are regularly shot dead in their driveways.

I struggled to fit in at first. To begin with, I had never seen a highway with four lanes! I was driving at sixty kilometers an hour in the right hand lane on the main arterial highway. I was practicing my new route to my new office. After driving for five minutes on the highway sizing up my environment, I heard people honking at me. The next minute I saw someone showing me the middle finger. I could not understand what was happening. I heard one guy yelling at me, "Get off the f**king fast line you idiot!"

I never knew that the right hand side lane was the fast lane! I moved off to the left side and saw people rushing past me. I had to pick up speed and fast. I did not want to cross paths with an angry Johannesburg local! I started driving at the 120 km highway limit and still I had people flying past me! I felt extremely out of control driving at that speed. It brought up all my control issues. I struggled to see the road as I was crying from fear of causing an accident, as the car's steering wheel would sometimes jerk to the side.

After several weeks of settling in and starting my career and life, I had a routine. Living in Johannesburg was not going to be as much fun as I thought. I had even less freedom! In the morning, I left for work at 6 am because the highway was really quiet. I turned my 60 km per hour journeys to 120 – 140 km per hours. I was amazed at how quickly I settled into this rushed and hectic lifestyle. I worked till 4:00 PM and then left the office to go to the gym. After the gym, I would stop at the supermarket, buy everything that I needed, and go straight home just before sunset.

That was my life for several months. It was too dangerous to be out and about once the sun had set. I calculated and scheduled my time so that I did everything during daylight hours.

One of my colleagues had to pack up one of her co-workers desk; he was shot dead by a robber in his driveway in front of his wife. I was horrified! It was horrible to live like that however I knew that I was only there to earn money. My number one goal was to build a better life for myself.

I was once invited out to a club to dance and relax with colleagues. I thought it would be a good idea to get out for a change. I arrived at the club with some of my co-workers waiting for me outside. We walked up into the club to be met by a bodybuilder turned security guard with two guns on either side of him.

They scanned everyone for hidden weapons. I saw the guy in front of me take out his pistol from his trousers and attached his passport to it with a rubber band. He then gave it to the lady behind the counter who then locked it up in a safe. I felt better knowing that people were handing in their weapons. What worried me was the reason why they were wearing the pistols in the first place.

I kept walking and had a drink to take the edge off. We had a great night and at 1.00 AM. I was tired and ready to go home. One of my co-workers offered to walk me out to my car to make sure that I left the club in one piece. I was driving home and remember asking the universe for a safe journey back to my apartment.

All went well until I took my last turn off from the high way. One guy ran from the bushes in front of my car waving his arms and holding a knife. I knew that he wanted me to stop and eventually steal my car. I saw him reaching into his pocket thinking that he might have a pistol. For a split second, I thought that this is not my time to go and I will not stop. Instead, I accelerated and drove towards to him.

He realized that I was not going to stop. He ran back to the side of the street. I missed him by an inch. I skipped two red traffic lights, which is standard practice in South Africa. I drove through the gate at home and rushed into my apartment. I could not sleep that night. I could not believe what had happened. I always thought that these things only happen to other people. I was always so careful. That was my first and last night out in Johannesburg driving on my own.

Several weeks later, the company transferred me to a construction site in Sasolburg. I was so happy to get out of Johannesburg and I took the offer.

My salary increased yet again, as it included danger pay. We had to work on a construction site that converted coal into petrol. I had an amazing apartment on the riverbank overlooking a bridge and the river. The complex had great facilities such as a tennis court, swimming pool and bar on the property.

I also had two cleaning ladies. One was for my apartment in Johannesburg and one in Sasolburg. I worked on the project site during the week and then drove home on weekends. Sasolburg was only an hour and a half outside of Johannesburg. I was 19 years old and I had a lifestyle fit for a queen! I enjoyed my job and worked with great people. I had a blast walking into clothing shops and buying whatever I liked. I never once looked at the price tags.

Several months had passed and I started to feel at home in my new environment. I realized that crime would always follow you wherever you go. It's like an incurable disease that has spread all over the country. The security guards at my complex were in charge of the place. They even threatened the owner of the complex property when he gave them warnings about their inappropriate behavior towards the tenants. They had their automatic weapons and seemed fixated on this idea that they ruled the area. They would yell out sexual comments to me and other woman. They would even go so far as to point a gun at my windscreen every time I drove past them.

I could see why the owner was too scared to fire them. They would have killed him in his sleep if he dared to lay them off. The guards knew exactly where everyone lived and they had access to spare keys to every single apartment.

After several months, I had enough money to finally buy my ideal car, a BMW. I returned my mum's car. I custom designed the car to suit my needs in this dangerous environment. I preferred the BMW. The seats were really low. Only my head would stick out from the window. I also loved the luxury and the fact that it was small which made it so easy to park. I did not want any part of my body to be visible to hijackers.

Bandits would normally lie in bushes next to highways, jump up and shoot you in the face, chest or tires. I had the air taken out of the tires and had it filled up with foam designed for vehicle wheels. Anyone could aim and shoot at my tires and it would not affect my driving. All my windows were shatter proof to avoid the "smash and grab" crimes, which would normally take place at traffic lights. People selling items next to the road and traffic lights would normally distract you on one side and then someone else will break into the other side.

Finding Your Own Voice

After buying my car, I drove it off the BMW dealership floor. The car had only clocked nine kilometers on the odometer. I drove home at 180 km per hour and felt on top of the world!

I felt a bit cheeky and called my dad and said, “You remember how you always told me that I would amount to nothing? Well, guess what? I just bought a brand new BMW and you want to know something else? I earn four times as much as you.”

He hung up the phone.

I couldn’t wipe the smile off my face. Finally, things were working out for me because of my own efforts, dedication and hard work. I was working nearly 85 hours a week at that point, but it was well worth the effort.

I felt that I have already mastered most of the safety tricks needed to survive in the country. I was watching the news one evening whilst they broadcast a warning to everyone driving from Sasolburg area to Johannesburg. They said that we had to avoid taking the Grasmere Toll road.

They reported more than ten people who were hijacked, raped and shot dead afterwards. It was the same highway I used to get back home to Johannesburg. The robbers were blocking off the roads with big stones that would force drivers to stop. Mostly people, including me, would be driving 140 – 160 kilometers per hour on open roads. In some strange way, I felt safer by speeding than driving slowly. I remember when I got home driving from Sasolburg to Johannesburg the palms of my hand would be bleeding – my nails had dug into them. I was holding the steering as tight as I could. I locked my arms by holding it out straight whilst steering at high speeds. I would much rather die due to a car crash than by the hands of a robber. I was hoping that because of the speed that I was driving at they would not see me as an easy target. Thankfully, I was never attacked!

A fresh beginning – but same old patterns

I'm sharing the next chapter from my life for an important reason: you can see how the unresolved childhood issues played out in my adult life. I believe that this is normal—abusive childhood relationships often lead to abusive adult relationships if the pattern is not changed.

At age 19, I started dating a man from work, Alan, who (with hindsight) was exactly like my father. We had two very good months, and then the abuse gradually began. I can see the warning signs with hindsight, but at the time, the abuse felt so normal and familiar to me. At that age, I had no concept of a relationship without all the fighting and abuse.

Over a period of two years, our relationship began to increasingly mirror the patterns I had witnessed between my mother and father. There was lying, alcoholism, cheating and occasionally physical abuse. Why did I put up with it? Partly because Alan made me feel safe (we worked together in such a dangerous, male dominated workplace.) I didn't really know anything different at the time.

Our lives were about to suddenly change. We had shared our CVs (resumes) on the Internet and a company in Australia found them. Our qualifications were exactly what they were looking for. We received a job offer from them and we took it immediately. I was extremely excited to get out of South Africa and to live in another country. I sold all of my belongings, including my beloved BMW. I really believed that my relationship with Alan would be great in Australia and that we would have a fresh start and leave our troubles behind. (With hindsight this was exactly what my mother thought when we left Namibia for South Africa. Amazing how family patterns repeat themselves.)

I was ready to leave South Africa behind. I was so busy wrapping up everything in my life that I did not even have time to celebrate my 21st birthday. My focus was set on Australia. My excitement for this new adventure numbed the real problems that I was having in my personal relationship and life. I only had two suitcases to my name after I sold everything.

I moved to Australia and started a new career. I met new people and lived in a brand new environment. I found it refreshing that I could walk with my handbag over my shoulder to the shopping center. Just walking to the shops was exciting because back home I had to drive everywhere for safety reasons.

My new environment was fantastic.

However, my personal relationship with Alan was still the same. The abuse, alcoholism, infidelity and lies continued. Alan drank a lot, was violent, aggressive and short tempered. There was a part of me that thought that this is what life is all about. I felt that I was destined to walk the same path as my mother did with my father.

Alan and I had Australian work permits, but my name was attached to his residency (as a partner). I don't know whether he planned this or if it was simply cheaper for the company to sponsor us in this way.

Alan quickly showed the enormous power he had over me. If I did not meet his every need, if I dared to complain about his infidelity and abuse, he could pick up the phone to the Immigration Department and have me deported back to South Africa. With just one phone call, he could change my life.

I had sold everything I owned in South Africa. I only had two suitcases and that was it. I had no job or home to go back to. I had a choice to make. I could stay and endure the inevitable abuse, or I could walk away and move back to South Africa. I decided to stay – the abuse was normal after all.

We applied for permanent Australian residency and things between us got better, but only for a little while. Every time we argued, the abuse became more threatening and more violent. His behavior became so out of control that he would even launch physical attacks toward me in public.

I would threaten to leave him but he would quickly remind me that if I did, he would deport me back to South Africa. I felt completely trapped.

It takes four years' work in Australia to qualify for permanent residency. I realized I was facing four years of abuse before I could safely leave him. I cannot even begin to tell you how soul-destroying this feeling was. I faced a choice – certain violence in Australia for four years (and then hope), or return home with no money, no job and live in an extraordinarily hostile environment with a very high risk of rape or murder. I was between a rock and a hard place.

I felt extremely conflicted about this choice. I exhausted all my options to obtain a residency visa of my own. I even called the refugee camp in Australia and begged them to take me and hold me there. I didn't want to go back to South Africa. I was desperate. They were my last hope and unfortunately, they declined my request. In hindsight, I was probably better off with the life I had at the time than to be in a refugee camp. At that point in time, I

couldn't see it as anything but another setback. I was so desperate to escape from Alan.

Alan had become an even worse person when we moved to Australia because of the power and control he had over me. He felt more confident to be bolder with his actions as he knew I was trapped there with him. He knew that I didn't want to go back to South Africa. He took full advantage of the circumstances.

I could see how my relationship was playing out old patterns that I thought I had escaped from in South Africa when I moved from Kimberley to Johannesburg to escape from the previous abusive relationship. Just moving to a new location does not solve your problems, especially if you take the abuser with you.

The lesson here is simple – unresolved patterns repeat themselves. Not only our own patterns but also those patterns of our parents, as well. (We all do this, but most are unconscious of it. There are entire therapies devoted to this specific point.) In my adult life, I recreated my mother's mistakes and the experiences of my own childhood. I believe that almost everyone who has experienced abuse as a child ends up repeating patterns in their adult life.

The good news is that you can break these patterns. The first step is recognition. Simply realizing that I was recreating my childhood patterns gave me more control. The second step is to release trauma. It is the unresolved trauma, which causes the patterns to repeat. You need to address the trauma of your childhood and family history. I'll return to this healing process in later chapters.

Happy endings do exist!

Left with little choice, I stayed in Australia. It was the longest four years of my life. However, it eventually came to an end. I received my permanent residency. I could finally leave Alan!

I decided after that experience that I was going to drastically change my life. This was my intention and I never felt so sure of my decision to change my life around.

I decided to do a personal development seminar to kick-start this new phase and journey in my life. I was so excited!

I arrived early at the venue for the first level seminar to get in before the registration queue became miles long.

I was standing in line juggling my handbag, paperwork and water bottle. I suddenly felt like someone was staring at me. It felt unnerving and strange. I

glanced up to my left and locked eyes with a tall, attractive dark haired man. He looked at me and gave me a polite and shy smile. I couldn't stop staring back at him. There was a bizarre moment of recognition.

We looked at each other and we both knew instantly. I knew that I was looking at my future husband. There was something so familiar about him. I felt like I had known him for years. I know this sounds crazy and believe me, at the time my mind couldn't grasp or translate what my heart was feeling.

My shyness got the better of me. I blended into the crowd of people after registration. Seeing that guy was exciting and the connection stopped me dead in my tracks.

Class started and I made sure that I was sitting in the front of the class so that I could hear everything and learn as much as possible.

As everyone sat down, I saw the same tall, attractive dark haired man standing in front of the classroom. I realized that he was the teacher of the seminar. He introduced himself as Simon.

Throughout the seminar, Simon didn't want to look my way. He avoided eye contact with me for some reason. I thought it was odd, but decided not to worry about it. I was there to heal and change.

As the seminar progressed, I could see that Simon was growing increasingly nervous and still refused to look in my direction. He only focused on the right side of the class, as I was sitting on the left side. It was so funny to observe!

On the final day of the seminar, he finally had the courage to talk to me. Five minutes into our conversation, we both realized that we felt the same way about one another—we instantly clicked.

At this point, I lived in Brisbane and Simon lived in Melbourne. He was only in Brisbane to host the seminar over a weekend and was to fly back home on Monday.

We talked on the phone for three hours every day for two weeks until he returned to host a second level of trainings.

We had dinner the Friday night he arrived in Brisbane and I went back to my hotel while he caught up with old friends afterwards. The Saturday the seminar started, we were excited about seeing each other. However, because of teacher and student boundaries we decided to keep things professional between us until after the seminar. After the seminar ended, we had a wonderful dinner. Simon took my hand and stared deep into my eyes.

I could see that he wanted to say something important. I wasn't sure whether I should have been worried or curious by the expression on his face.

He held my hand tightly, paused for a few seconds, leaned in and said, “Evette, I love you. I loved you from the first moment I saw you. Will you marry me?” I was not even shocked by his question. I didn’t even need time to think about it, it felt so right. Before I knew it, I stuttered a “yes.” Simon asked me to marry him before we even had our first kiss!

After he proposed to me, we kissed. I left him at the restaurant with a big smile on my face. Everything about that evening felt right, it just felt right.

The following Monday I quit my job and shipped all my belongings to Melbourne. Three weeks later Simon and I were living together like an old couple. It was fun, exciting and adventurous. Eight months later, we got married.

I believe to this day, that my willingness to change my life, move away from my past and move forward was so crystal clear that I was able to attract and create circumstances in my life that supported my decision to heal.

My healing journey was still rough and had its ups and downs as a result of my own sabotage, but I got there in the end.

Who said that happy endings only happen in movies?

Chapter 2 Finding Closure

I flew to South Africa with Simon from Australia in 2008 to see my dad for the first time in four years. My main focus was to confront him for the first time about the sexual abuse that took place in my childhood. I wanted the truth. I also wanted answers about his cold behavior towards me. I wanted a confession from him. I reached a point where I felt ready to sit down with him and to lay my cards on the table. In my mind, I was hoping he would apologize to me. I imagined how he would suddenly come to his senses and accept me just as I am and not resent me for robbing him of his partying lifestyle. I was holding out for a real father and daughter conversation and maybe even an honest and sincere relationship with my dad.

In hindsight, a big part of me wanted nothing else but to be accepted. I was on the airplane, looking out of the window. There were rows of buildings and then suddenly open spaces of lush green land. My anxiety and excitement was coming and going in waves. I had a clear idea of what I wanted to say to my father. The only challenge was to catch my father at a time when he was sober.

I felt the plane land in Johannesburg and all of a sudden, my heart started beating faster. Momentarily, I lost confidence and wanted to get onto another plane and go back to Australia. I thought at one point that I would rather live with this disappointment in my father for the rest of my life than confront him. What would I do if he denied everything? What if he reminded me again of what a failure I am? What if he was going to invalidate my all feelings and my truth? My uncertainty and fear started playing games with me.

I realized that I was trying to sabotage the process and find an excuse not to see my dad. Confronting my dad has never been a pleasant experience; his cutting words and lack of remorse were always there when he talked to me.

Before boarding the flight to Kimberley, I called my mother to confirm our arrival time. I asked her where my father was, and of course, she answered he was in the pub. I called my father in the pub - yes, I still had the

pub's landline number saved on my phone. In the past, if I needed to talk to him for some reason, it would be via the pub's telephone.

I had a few hard words with him. I told him that if he was intoxicated when they picked us up at the airport then there would be chaos. I hung up the phone and hoped for the best. The last thing I needed was to be embarrassed by him again.

Kimberley is only an hour's flight from Johannesburg. The flight was much quicker than what I wanted it to be. I had come all this way; there was no turning back now.

To my surprise, my father was sober when we walked into arrivals. I noticed the difference in his posture. I was relieved yet I could see the anger and frustration on his face. I greeted my mum and then my dad half-heartedly hugged me. I could see that he was in a rush to get our bags into the car so that he could drop us off at the hotel. He needed to get back to the pub.

I refused to stay in my parent's house because of my father's smoking habit. There was always a smoke haze hanging about the house and the stench of cigarette smoke always made me gasp for air.

We got into the car and there was dead silence. I knew my father was not particularly happy to see me. He suspected that something was brewing. He complained about being sick and having stomach pain to get out of family commitments, dinners and outings. This was a normal game he played, especially if it clashed with his drinking schedule. He would sneak off to the pub instead. He even had the cheek to say how much he loved me and missed me; yet, he couldn't find time in his drinking schedule to spend time with us during our four-day visit.

He stayed in bed or spent his time in the pub whilst I was there. He would only go out at night to drink his beer and then come home and sleep right through the day.

I wonder whether he suspected something. It was out of character for me to all of a sudden fly down to Kimberley for a few days. My father knew that this trip was definitely not to spend time with him. Besides, he had never called me in the four years whilst living in Australia. I only received the occasional offensive text message in the middle of the night.

He thought that by staying in bed, I would feel sorry for him and validate his victim state. He had not lost his manipulative traits. It was amazing and amusing for me to watch him work his manipulative tactics. It's even easier when you know what to look for in someone that you know so well.

I was not going to play his game. I knew him too well and I could see right through his facade. He tried every tactic in the book, however I stood my ground. This conversation I had planned was going to take place. I was going to talk to my father whether he liked it or not.

Three days had now passed and my father was still avoiding me. When he knew I was going to go to the house he would suddenly feel better, get out of bed and go hide in one of his pubs.

I decided on the third day to call my dad early in the day and I asked him to stay at home, as we needed to have a long and overdue talk. He sounded quite uncomfortable and cornered when I spoke to him. I decided to ignore his little dramas and just go ahead with my plan. After all, I had worked very hard on my own personal growth to finally make it to this day. There was no turning back.

I confirmed with my mother in advance that she would be at work that day, so that it could just be my dad and me at home. My mum knew that I could defend myself against my dad and put him in his place if needed.

My intention for that day was to make peace and not blame anyone. I wanted a resolution and had a sincere need to understand my father's side of the story. Understanding his side would have shed more light on the bigger picture for me. It would have helped me to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

I drove to my parent's house early in the morning. There my father was, sitting in his usual spot on the couch; dragging on a cigarette. His hair was messy and he was sitting down, only wearing his underwear. He looked at me and waited for me to sit down. He was leaning forward on the couch with his elbows resting on his knees and his chin resting on his hands. The smoke of his cigarette rushed up against his cheek, into his hair and then up into the air to join the grey smog hanging above him. He could not look me in the eye and he kept staring at the carpet that had several cigarette burns on it. I could see clearly that there was no guilt or even curiosity as to why I wanted to see him one-on-one.

He saw this meeting today as an inconvenience; it created an imbalance with his routine for the day. It was standing between him and the pub.

There was no emotion in his eyes.

I knew that I shouldn't expect him to even react to me in any specific way. I would only end up disappointing myself. I ignored my need for acceptance and realized right then and there not too expect much from him. If I did,

then it would be like giving him ammunition that he could aim at me when he felt confronted or trapped. I did not even ask him how he was doing.

Instead, I asked him about his childhood. I asked him what he was thinking when he left me alone with his parents whilst he knew all along what kind of monsters they were.

He looked at me with an emotionless face and said, "What are you talking about?"

I knew that I walked into that house prepared; however, I was not expecting such a straight out lie from him. My father saw how bruised my face was the day his father punched me with his fist. My father also knew about the day that my grandmother grabbed me by my earlobe and tore half of it off. He was the one that walked into my room and caught his mother molesting me (and yet did nothing).

I took a deep breath and decided to leave it at that. He would never admit it, playing dumb is a cheap way out of taking responsibility. He was too weak to ever take responsibility for his own actions as a parent, never mind the abuse that he inflicted on me and allowed others to cause me.

I heard my father telling my mother once how his father used to beat his mother and how his parents' frustrations were taken out on him as a child. It was quite obvious to me that he knew what had happened to me. He was in denial in his childhood about what was really going on in his life and that the very same pattern served him during this conversation too.

This is where not having a conscience plays a major role. If you don't have a conscience, then why would you care? How can you even comprehend how the other person feels or could have felt. My father never cared what the consequences would be for his actions, nor did he care who got hurt in the process.

For him, turning a blind eye was easy. The average human being with a conscience would have stopped to think about what the implications of their actions would be. They would have weighed how many people could get hurt and how it would affect their own life. Only then would a sane and average person make a decision.

My father suppressed this ability. I would like to believe that he was born with a conscience and ability to feel remorse and that he did care about others at some point in his life.

All these thoughts were running through my mind. I shifted my focus back to our conversation. I had all these questions to ask him and just as I was about to ask him the next question, I felt this sudden pause. I sat there

staring at my dad whilst he was looking down at his feet in absolute silence and showing signs of irritation. My father was twitching his feet and twisting his heel into the carpet. He clenched his jaw and tried to look as cool and calm as possible. I looked at him and was just about to give him a mouth full. I felt a seething rage.

As I opened my mouth to argue with him my entire mood changed within a split second. Instead of blasting him, I found myself saying,

"Dad, I acknowledge that there are things in your life that you don't want to talk about and that is OK.

I accept the fact that you will never love me, as I have always wanted you to love me.

I accept that you will never take responsibility for your actions and insults.

I have always seen you as someone with an emotional disability and I understand that your own pain has become your foundation in life. You don't know how to let go of it.

I understand that destruction is the only way of life that you understand.

I accept that you have chosen not to understand the complications and turmoil your behavior has caused me in my life.

I now release you from any further need or obligation to harm me with your words and actions.

I accept you just as you are. However, that doesn't mean that you can continue your abusive behavior.

You do not have the right to keep abusing me and if you do, you will be moved further and further away and out of life.

I can't help you anymore; I am tired and depleted by your actions. I am now helping myself and looking after myself.

It is now your responsibility to look after yourself and stop blaming me for the mess that you are in!"

He looked at me and then stared at his feet again with absolute silence. I paused for a few seconds. I was still trying to get my head around what I just said! I felt like I was a third party to the whole conversation. I got up from the couch and walked out the front door. I knew that this was the end of our conversation. I walked out, closed the door, and started walking to the car. I heard him calling out to me, "Evette!"

"Finally," I thought, he's ready to talk. I opened the door with mild enthusiasm. I said, "Yes?"

My father replied, "I am out of cigarettes, can you get me cigarettes?" I closed the door, thinking, yep, that is my dad and he will never change.

My response? I walked to the car and drove away. I did not buy him the cigarettes. I decided to stop funding his destructive lifestyle and I moved my focus on to my own journey.

As I drove back to the hotel, I knew that there was a divine intervention that enabled me to really see my father for who and what he had become at that very moment. I finally accepted the role that he played in my life. I was so caught up in the blame game that I overlooked a lot of things in my life. I was still disappointed though and sad for things that could have been.

In the past, I was stuck in blaming him rather than trying to see how I could improve my own quality of life by taking important steps. I forgot to acknowledge everything that I had accomplished despite his sabotaging behavior and venomous words.

My father will never understand what really happened that day and why I said what I did. He doesn't care whether I forgive him or not. His past actions will not haunt him like it would haunt someone with a conscience. His life will go on as it did that day and the day before.

My conversation with him was merely an inconvenience and a waste of his time. I have come to accept that now.

You can never push someone to change. You can't talk to them from the bottom of your heart and then expect the abuser to have a moment of clarity. We might have woken up from the cycle of abuse; however, it doesn't mean that the person handing out the abuse is ready to resign him or herself from that role. You can't expect an abuser to just wake up from their destructive lifestyle. You are going to walk into a brick wall if you think that you can teach someone how to rediscover his or her divine path.

Abusers want to live the life that they have created for themselves because they are under the impression that this is the only way forward. It's even more likely if the abuser has an agenda that their friend/spouse/children are blissfully unaware of. The worst part of it all is that people like my father don't even know that their behavior is different to that of an average person. If anything, my dad thinks other people are mad and he is normal.

Abusers think that everyone feels and thinks the same way they do. They don't take other people's feelings, lives and vulnerabilities into consideration. I told my mother when I was about four years old that my father was broken. He is not the same as other people. To this day, I still stand by what I said.

When I started writing this book, I told my dad upfront what I am writing about and the purpose of my book. He sounded quite disinterested and said that he doesn't care. I asked him if he would write something about

alcoholism and explain how it influences you. I really took the time to explain to him how important it is for other families to understand what is going on the mind of an alcoholic.

To my surprise he said yes, he will help me with that part. I left it at that and waited almost six months for him to send me a letter. I felt quite stupid thinking that my dad would pull through for me and write that chapter. He did however email me a two-page document where he blamed alcohol.

It was very clear that he was incredibly drunk when he typed the letter. He made countless spelling mistakes and tried to tell me how Christ would save him and that I am a lost soul and on the wrong path.

He tried to make me look bad and anti-Christian despite the fact that I have a personal development company, which is religion friendly. It is not my intention to project my beliefs onto others, it is my intention, however, to help others and he does not understand that.

I was disappointed, but only a little bit.

I deleted his email and started to think about how I was going to finish this chapter. I had to come up with a Plan B for resolution.

A few months later, I were talking to a friend of mine, Richard, who was visiting a seminar that I taught with my now ex-husband. Richard was almost my father's age and used to be an alcoholic.

I talked to Richard about his past and how he managed to go from being an alcoholic to being a very successful, stable businessman.

His story was quite profound. He started to answer all my questions; all the questions that I could never ask my father about alcoholism. Slowly but surely, Richard unraveled the mysteries about alcoholism. I sat there in amazement, realizing what was happening.

My questions were being answered. This was going to be the missing chapter in my book that I could not complete on my own. I could feel the emotions pushing up from my gut into my throat. This enormous release of suppressed grief over my unanswered questions started to bubble out.

He put his hand on my shoulder and he said, "I am so sorry Evette that you had to have the life you did with your father. I can understand as an alcoholic, and also as the father of two daughters, the implications that it can have. I truly understand."

I finally heard what I needed to hear from my father right then and there.

I could feel my emotions running up into my chest and finally the tears flowed. I covered my face with my hands and started crying. I could feel my

stomach and every muscle in my body letting go of tension. Most importantly, I allowed myself to cry. I allowed myself to feel all my emotions and that feeling of relief and resolution seeping into my heart.

This was the one last conversation that I could never have with my dad and it happened here with someone else that I felt very comfortable with. When Richard said he was sorry that I had to experience what I did with my dad, he sincerely meant it. I could hear the honesty in his voice. Richard and I both sat and cried, it was such a profound and unique experience.

Richard really understood how I felt and clearly understood the implications of being an alcoholic within a family dynamic. After twenty minutes, I felt like a mountain has shifted from my shoulders. I looked at him, gave him a hug, and thanked him for being a part of such an important phase of my life. We both wiped off our tears and started talking about the letter that I asked my father to write, explaining alcoholism and how it affected him.

I asked Richard if he would be willing to answer more of my questions. We still had time to talk and I thought this would be a golden opportunity to ask Richard a few questions. Richard agreed to answer my questions, and then he paused, smiled and opened his laptop.

He opened it, scuffled around looking for a folder, turned the computer to me, and said, "Here, read this. It's a letter I wrote this for someone special in my life during the time when I was an alcoholic, explaining what it feels like and how it affected my life." I looked at Richard with disbelief. He urged me to read it.

"Your father never wrote that proper letter for you and I feel that you deserve to have closure."

I felt such conflict reading a personal letter that he wrote for someone else. My curiosity to know what it said was overwhelming. Would it look the same as the letter that my father was supposed to write for me? Would this be it? I started to read the letter and it looked exactly the way that I imagined my father's letter would have looked.

All the unanswered questions have been answered with absolute honesty and genuine sincerity, with the intention to help me with my journey.

As we were sitting there, Richard also shared with me:

"Alcoholism starts as a short cut to relaxing and getting away from your problems without having to work at them. It's like when men go to see a prostitute, it's an attempt to get sex without having a relationship and committing to someone. Getting drunk or taking

drugs is like borrowing money from a moneylender. You get temporary relief and end up paying massive amounts for it for years to come. Sometimes you even pay with your life.

The more you borrow the longer it takes to get out of the debt.

Withdrawal from alcohol is like having the flu, it's no worse or better than having the flu. It's the psychological trap of thinking I am giving up, however instead it's actually not giving up on a jail term - it's escaping jail. We have this coping strategy so if we are in jail we get used to it after a few days because otherwise we would go mad if we had to rattle the bars, if you hit your thumb with a hammer you get used not using that thumb very quickly, if you broke your leg you get used to living without the leg.

Like so many other of the body's systems, it doesn't recognize whether something's good for you or not, it just becomes what you do. After a while, living without alcohol becomes intolerable. What your life was like in the past just fades away. In the same way as if you were in prison for a while, your boundaries shift and that becomes your world and you just cope within that. Alcoholism is like an IMAX cinema, it starts, it takes your full field of view, and it's not like a small screen where you can still see the rest of the world. It consumes you and your perspective and it becomes everything. You can't pick up the corner of the screen of alcoholism and look under and beyond it to see the whole world. Alcoholics see people walking on the streets but they don't see them as part of their reality.

The key to breaking the cycle is for the alcoholic to say that the drug is not my friend; it's my jailer and my abuser and torturer. When you really have that attitude then you will start to lay your escape plans but only when you recognize that you are in jail, can you get out of it.

Instead of running like an escaped prisoner, you bring about a revolution in your own country, in your jail, the jailer — you start a revolution in your life. Then you can walk past as much beer as you want. Alcohol is just yeast shit."

I don't think that I could have said it better than he did. Setting aside that Richard and my father had completely different life experiences; the mere fact that Richard shed light on this subject was enough for me to feel at ease. I was amazed at his clarity and how well he understood himself and also why he did what he did.

After talking for a little while longer he said that he would email that letter he wrote for someone else to me. Richard said to me, "Now you finally have that letter you can publish in your book, you have my blessings, please use it."

I was so excited. I almost did not know what to make of the situation. I sat there thinking that this was unbelievable! I felt that this moment with Richard was a manifestation of my desperate need to close this chapter in my book and life. I have taken out a few paragraphs in the letter that were of a

deeply personal nature and I only used the parts where he talked about alcoholism.

Richard's Letter

Alcohol is not an anesthetic. You don't find sober people crying, screaming, or fighting late at night. All alcohol does is bypass some of the mental and emotional blocks that people have about understanding themselves and feeling their own feelings. It is like a child pulling the lid off a tin of sweets so that they are scattered all over the floor. It gets the sweets out but in a clumsy way that spoils many sweets.

Once you learn to access your real feelings, you don't need the hammer blow of alcohol to open the tin. People use alcohol and emotions to put some drama and excitement in their lives. This is because their lives are essentially without any real point or purpose.

People dancing and drinking cocktails in nightclubs in designer clothes are really just being an upmarket version of the purposeless men sitting in the Railway Pub on a Wednesday afternoon telling themselves and each other what great people they are. The people in the nightclubs are getting away from the jobs that they secretly feel are pointless, escaping in the same way that the men do in the pubs.

Whilst these flapping domestic cockerels are drinking cocktails to escape their reality and weaving transient relationships and sexual affairs, real people are building eco-resorts in Voro Voro, walking the song lines with Aborigines, watching the sun set over the Himalayas and using their knowledge and power to help village girls in Thailand and Indonesia to escape poverty.

These real people are also gaining the experience, power and pleasure that the domestic birds can only dream about or watch on video. We discussed that "a ship in harbor is perfectly safe; however that is not what ships are built for."

However, to sail way out of sight of land and get back alive and happy takes the right attitude and training. Chance will not work for you for long. It only takes one unnoticed rock to sink a ship; the 9999 rocks you missed don't count in your favor.

Stay with the questions. What do I really want?

Each of the several parts of you may want a different thing. Also ask, "What does success mean?"

I read that success is an ongoing process rather than a destination. I think this is right. The person said, "Success is the progressive realization of goals that are important and valuable to you and to other people."

We discussed how people get hopelessly lost inside their problems and how to get outside them. We discussed the process by which people get used to negative states of being and states of mind and forget what was before. This can be a good survival mechanism for people in jail or who have an injury or disability because it can stop them going mad. However, it also

traps previously fit and free people in false places so they find themselves stuck in bad jobs, bad relationships, addictions and self-limiting beliefs.

The problem is that the “get-used-to-it-process” happens when we repeat an experience or a reaction with emotion several times. This then becomes the automatic, “How do I react in this situation?” The positive use of repetition is to make affirmations with emotion to raise oneself up and out of a bad place, the negative effect of not paying attention to what we allow in repetitively is addiction and giving in to mistreatment.

The addict or masochist cannot look round, under, or above the cinema screen that is placed in front of their eyes. They are trapped in the IMAX experience that he sees all round and believes that this is the whole world. Only when the addict is able to get outside to see that the cinema of their life is just one building in one city in one country. Only then, can the addict change.

The addict is also unable to clearly recall the time before he was an addict or abused so loses a reference point to which he can back track and start again.

I never thought that I would have this opportunity to heal in this way or find this closure.

This closure was not a resolution to me, as resolution, would mean that the problem has been resolved. The problem on my dad’s end had not been resolved, however, I felt very close to resolving my part. I can only do so much from my end and things do come to a point where you can’t improve or change things anymore.

Even though I gave it my all with my father and I did not see the results that I wanted to see, my efforts were worth it to me. I won’t go to bed wondering what else I could have done or said.

Closure comes when you choose to move on with your life and once your needs have been met in a way that is fulfilling enough for you.

That was my personal process and journey for closure. You can find peace with or without the person who abused you.

I would not wish my journey upon anyone, but I did learn very powerful lessons from it. As I got older, I started to realize that it’s important for my own sanity and wellbeing to work through my past and move on. I filled my mind with negative thoughts, addictions and co-dependence to try and fill the void I had within.

You might be asking what type of relationship I have with my father now.

Well, to this day my father continues his abusive ways. The majority of his communications to me are always about how hard his life appears to be. He is still blaming me for everything that has gone wrong in his life. My dad’s

current pattern is to quit drinking for a short time, with Church support. This then puts him in the right because he has god on his side. This enables him to shift from alcohol abuse to abusing others – in god's name. He seems to believe that because he has found god, again, that he can avoid responsibility for his past. He has now been “forgiven” for his sins once again. From this lofty position, he sends his abusive emails to me.

Of course, it doesn't last. The emails will stop and we find out that he's back at the pub again. Moreover, the cycle begins again.

When he doesn't know how to defend himself, he brings his religion into the conversation. He turns the conversation sideways so that blame and focus fall onto the other person. It's always easier to come across as a religious man; most people don't want to believe that a man of god could do such malicious things. How could he? He's now a child of God.

My opinion, it's the perfect disguise!

When you don't understand something or are in fear of a situation then aggression tends to be a normal response. This has been my father's approach to my life and what I have chosen to do for a living. He still believes that I am a witch and a child of Satan. If he said that to me 15 years ago, then “yes,” it would have been true, because I was living in hell, sharing a roof with him.

Finally, when my mother left him, he took things as far as sending my mother death threats and the police had to get involved.

Unfortunately, to live with people like this is not easy. Accommodating them in your life is even harder especially if you have exhausted all options to have a stable and sane relationship with them.

I've learned that having minimum contact with my father is the best way forward for both of us. It doesn't matter how polite I am to him, he still lashes out at me. He does contact me occasionally; however, the contact always builds up to reveal another hidden agenda.

I've decided that I am worthy of respect, to be loved for who I am and to be treated with dignity, morality and kindness. My father does not meet those reasonable standards that I have set in my life. One thing that I have learned in life is that no one, not even your parents, has the right to abuse you and mistreat you in any way, shape or form.

I have forgiven my father, but that doesn't mean that I'm going to keep allowing him to abuse me, put me down and insult me.

I will never exclude my father from my life; however, I have chosen to keep our contact to a minimum when he becomes abusive.

He even had the cheek to tell me that I should honor him as my father and then in the same breath tell me what an awful daughter I am. I was stumped. You never have to honor an abuser in any way!

The key here is to honor yourself enough so that you don't get lost in the confusion that an abuser can create with their manipulative behavior. Be absolutely clear within yourself about who and what you are.

Even though the minimum of contact that I have with my father still turns into the form of abuse, it is starting to affect me less in my life because now I feel in control and I chose to be worthy of love and kind words.

My life has now become a place of calmness where I surround myself with people who respect me and whom I respect in return. I have to admit that my father's behavior taught me a lot about life, relationships and what I expect from others and myself.

There is no easy or straightforward answer to the final outcome of my relationship with my father. I can only control my own behavior from this point forward. I have chosen to let go of his actions and reactions, it's not my responsibility or fault anymore. I am only responsible for myself. It is not my or your job to rescue or save anyone who doesn't want to be saved.

It's important for your sake and the abuser's sake that you hand over the power of choice back to them so that they can make that choice for themselves and the decision to change on their own.

Also, unfortunately my happy ending story with Simon didn't have the happy ending I had hoped for. We did end up in divorce after 5-years of marriage. We tried to make the marriage work, but we couldn't make it work. It's not that either of us did anything wrong, it just wasn't meant to be and both realized it. We had different values and goals for our future. In the beginning values and goals for our future were the same, but as time passed by, things changed, we changed and we drifted apart.

I also realized that I jumped into this marriage because I was desperate to be rescued by someone, I needed someone to save me from my turmoil and unhappiness. I was waiting for someone to come along to make it all better. The mistake that I made was giving this amount of power to someone else. Instead, I should have owned and taken responsibility for my own future and happiness, instead I gave that power to someone else. There is no one to blame but me. I made that decision but I also made that decision from a place of weakness and feeling like a victim. I didn't love and respect myself enough to have stronger boundaries, instead I waited for people to define what it

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should be. I still felt somewhat clueless and was always looking for support and guidance in the all the wrong places.

This pattern has come to a gentle end. To say that the lesson was just a passing phase (which it was) is an understatement.

I really excited to be writing another book that will continue from this section, my life as 29 year old after divorce. *Coming soon!*

Chapter 3 The behaviour of a master manipulator

In this chapter, I describe the tactics and behavior of my father, a master manipulator. I am not suggesting that he is unique, or worse than other abusers. Quite the contrary, I think he is typical and an excellent case study. My intention here is to share what I have learned in the hope that everyone can benefit from studying this profile.

The way he communicated

Abuse can be subtle; it does not have to involve violence or a raised voice. It can take place in many ways, ways that are sometimes so subtle that it can be challenging at first to recognize and label the abuse. Subtle abuse is no less damaging, but has a big benefit for the abuser – specifically that it is much easier to deny.

Verbal abuse is common. My father reverted to verbal abuse in order to provoke fear in others who dared to question or disobey his orders. It was also an attempt to dominate or manipulate others to establish his false sense of authority in order to get his way. He had no consideration for how his behavior affected others.

When my father lost control of his temper, talking to him never worked. My words had no power or impact on him. Trying to rationalize with him in a respectable manner only provoked more insults. Threatening to call child services was my way of communicating to him “enough!” It calmed him down for a few days. My father was not afraid of losing me. He was scared of the authority and possibly being sent to jail.

His tantrums were just like a child’s in that they would become progressively more violent and aggressive. This is a very common pattern for abusers. Abusers are not the easiest people to have a mature conversation with. Everything that is said to an abuser will be twisted into something that could be used to the abuser’s benefit. This always leaves the person on the receiving end feeling manipulated, confused and betrayed.

My father was not able to put his complex emotions and needs into words. I believe that out of sheer frustration he reverted to yelling and screaming as a last resort. Screaming and becoming verbally abusive was his way of communicating his pain, anger and feelings of vulnerability.

Empty promises

My father hardly ever followed through on a promise. Everybody and everything outside of the family was always more important to him. I stopped counting how many times I waited at the front gate for him to pick me up to go on an outing with him. He was never good at committing to activities, especially if it involved family members. He continuously failed to take responsibility for his role as a father and husband. I believe that this was just a pattern that my father himself experienced with his own parents during his childhood. Promises made to him were never followed through. He didn't value promises the way most people do.

Sabotaging people's progress

Studying for my exams was a challenge. My father would switch on the television and turn up the volume. It was impossible to say "no" to my father or to ask him to cooperate.

He told me that I would amount to nothing. He said that I would wipe vomit off the floors in pubs. Everything that I did to achieve success in my life was squashed by my father's rude and deliberate attempts to demean my talents and me.

When I ignored his abusive rants, he would quickly change and become even more abusive with the intention to establish his role in the house. During exams, my father would call me from his bedroom at two in the morning. "Evette! Get up and make me a cup coffee."

I would shout back that it was two in the morning and I wasn't going to get up.

He would just scream even louder, "Make me a fucking cup of coffee, now!" His voice was so stern and loud that it sent shivers down my spine and echoed through the house. I would make the coffee, but he would never drink it. It was merely to establish his authority and dominance in the house. He needed to be reassured that he was still in charge.

I can now see that he abused me with the exact same kind of abuse that was given to him during his childhood. Abusers can't recognize that they are projecting and repeating their childhood patterns all over again, just in a different way within different circumstances.

Abusers disassociate from their reality

I can see how my father shut off from the world and disassociated from his feelings. It is this disconnectedness from feelings (their own and other people's) that enable an abuser to trample over others.

What causes this disconnection? It is a survival strategy. When a child is abused or neglected, they are in pain. When the pain is too much to bear, they start to disconnect or numb themselves. This works (they are no longer in pain) and they quickly make an association between this numbness and feeling safe (or safer).

Once a child discovers a reaction (such as freezing) that helps them to survive traumatic circumstances, they hold onto it. Even though the habit or reaction could be unhealthy for them, it has served them once and it may do so again. It is very hard (without therapy) to let go of something that once kept you safe.

These “stuck” childhood survival strategies are the cause of serious psychiatric problems in adults. In my father's case, it explains a great deal, including his addictions. As the pain increases (from his trauma and what he has done to others) it becomes harder to suppress. He needs to drink more and more in order to survive (because in his brain, numbness = survival). Thus, the strategy, which saved him in his childhood, also set him up for a lifetime as an empathy-less abuser and alcoholic.¹ [This realization, that people become stuck in their survival strategy, is a foundation of my personal development technique, MAP. I teach people how to acknowledge and release these instincts. It works, but only when the person wants to change. My father describes healing as the Devil's work, so helping him is not currently an option.]

Love = Abuse

I tried several times to get to know my father better. I started conversations and generally tried to talk to him, only to have him lie to me over and over. His lies were so obvious. He would much rather look for a reason to argue or fight than have a conversation.

My father couldn't see the warmth and love that was around him. He did not have receptors for these loving “signals.” The signals would just pass him by. These loving signals did not match the same destructive signals that he

¹ For an excellent explanation of how humans have lost the ability to release their survival instincts, I recommend reading the introductory chapters of Scaer (2001).

was used to receiving. He did not understand kind and loving gestures from people. Love made him feel weak. He associated love with abuse. His need for love, safety and comfort was met by abuse and abandonment. When your needs are met in this way for long periods of time, it's almost expected that he would behave the way that he did. Love was not a positive emotion for him. Love only caused him pain, sadness and trauma.

Always being on guard was his way of keeping himself safe and pushing away people who love him. Being loved was a risk that he was not willing to take.

My father's language for love was confusing to say the least. He was only communicating and showing the same kind of love that was given and shown to him during his childhood.

Hiding in plain sight

There's a good chance that you know many abusive people, but would never imagine what they are doing at home, behind closed doors. Abusers are sly but, because of their position in society or in the family circle, you never question them. Why would people question the actions of someone who is a doctor, community leader, school principal, a psychologist, or a high-ranking manager of a government department? You either lack the knowledge to discern for yourself what is appropriate and or what is a possible threat to your wellbeing.

As a child, you were taught to never question your parents or authority figures. Children were not allowed to say "no" to adults because they are your superiors and they allegedly know what they are doing. The consequences of this are that people stop questioning people in authority. This includes people who are in roles that give them the power to make decisions on behalf of loved ones, such as a father / mother figure, priest and teacher just to name a few.

It scared me to think that my dad was among many other people on a daily basis. No one ever suspected his lying nature, his dark secrets and his reckless lifestyle.

Abusers have their tactics worked out perfectly and they know how to use them to their advantage. They are like chameleons. They can mimic almost anyone. I have watched my dad talk to people about topics that he never had any interest in. He would manage to sound quite erudite.

Abusers take advantage of the honesty and integrity of innocent people. They are good at saying the right thing at the right time in front of the right person.

The abuser pretending to be the victim

My father always pretended that he was the victim and that we were abusing him. It's a far stretch from reality.

He would gossip about us behind our backs and tell people how horrible we were. He forgot to mention that a cooked meal was always ready for him when got home, drunk as a skunk. His clothing and bed was always made for him.

The stories he told about us would sometimes be so ridiculous that people started realizing that he was not telling the truth. Nevertheless, people stuck by his side. They were captivated by his charm and the fact that he would throw money at them to win their loyalty. His friends were happy to overlook the fact that he might be the one that was in wrong.

Eventually he became more careless with his behavior towards his own friends. Each friendship would run a cycle from denial to realization followed by rejection. Each time my father was rejected by a friend, he found a way to manipulate the story in order to make himself look like the victim.

Abusers target your weaknesses

Abusers tend to find your weaknesses and use it against you. The more they hurt you, the more they disempower you. You fall into a pattern where you start to search for validation from the abuser as your self-esteem. This only results in you playing into their manipulative games with the intention to be validated, loved and accepted. The more you are rejected, the more you are going to search for love and validation.

My father knew that I was always searching for his approval and validation. I was always so surprised to see how nice my father was to all his colleagues and drinking buddies. He would validate people the way that I wanted to be validated. I could not believe that it was my father, the same abuser that I saw at home. This was the same person who would manipulate circumstances just to find an excuse to punish me.

Crocodile tears

Another tactic that abusers revert to is crying. Tears are a good way of convincing a person that their emotions are sincere. Not my father's tears. I

could see right through his crying act all too well. This trick is very common among abusers.

His tears would fool people into thinking that he was a softhearted man who was going through a rough time. His crying tactic got him out of a lot of tough and confrontational situations. He would use the crying method when he felt trapped or confronted. It's always more heart wrenching when you see a man cry.

My father could respond in two ways when he was confronted. He would either become verbally aggressive, insulting and abusive or he would start crying. He knew that his dramatic behavior would and could get him out of threatening circumstances.

The blame game

Alcoholics and abusers are good at making you believe that you are the problem. They convince you that if you stay and work on your issues, then the relationship will improve. First, they blame you. Then they will convince you that they will improve their behavior if you change. The abuser will make it your responsibility to change and to stop provoking them. They will not take responsibility for their short temper. The responsibility of change rests with you. This is just another tactic of an abuser to avoid taking responsibility for their behavior and mistakes. This only leaves you feeling confused, blamed and wronged for something that is not your fault.

When you feel bullied and disrespected, you tend to feel vulnerable. When you feel vulnerable, you are less likely to express your boundaries and respect your own emotional needs. Abusers try to put you in a vulnerable position, as it's easier for them to control and manipulate you.

Children are easier to dominate, manipulate and control with emotional games. Children tend to just go along with what the parents say.

Things kept spiraling out of control with my father. My father suggested that I should arrange an appointment with his psychologist!

All of a sudden, I was the one who desperately needed help and not him. I was having a hard time coping with his erratic and abusive behavior. However, I never saw myself as the source of the problem. How I felt was the end result of his behavior. My mental and emotional state was deteriorating because of my father's inconsistent behavior. I was emotionless, numb and refused to listen to anyone.

Adults, in my opinion were irresponsible, incompetent and not capable of taking care of themselves and raise a child.

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I agreed to see the psychologist. I was wondering what he was going to say. The psychologist couldn't help my father, how was he going to help me?

The time to meet the psychologist finally arrived. I walked into his office, which was part of his house. I heard big footsteps coming down the hallway, they were loud and there was a considerable pause between them. He appeared around the corner with a smile. He had an even bigger beer belly than my father. His smile had no warmth or sincerity behind it. He introduced himself as Paul.

I told Paul everything. I told him how fed up I was with my life and my father's behavior. The more I talked about my dad the more defensive Paul became. Paul started to protect and defend my father's behavior instead of explaining it to me.

I nearly fell off my chair. Either Paul shared the same history as my father, or my father had successfully manipulated Paul into believing that he is innocent.

I went home feeling as if though the last little bit of life force I had was drained out of my soul. I told my mum what had happened. We both decided to see Paul together. I didn't realize that this meeting was going to include my father. The three of us sat there facing Paul. The session started with him explaining that my father was a victim of alcoholism and he was suffering. "He was suffering? Only he was suffering?" This was spinning in the back of my mind.

After he said that I only saw his lips moving with no sound.

I was in shock. I did not know how to process the words that were coming out of Paul's mouth.

I thought that Paul might be defending my father because he resonated with him in one way or another. I looked at my mother who was sitting across from me with her mouth gaping open with disbelief.

Something in the back of my mind told me to be patient, "Hang on, everything will find its place and be revealed."

Several years later, Paul's secret life got spilled over town. Paul was having an affair. By then, he was married to his second wife. No wonder, Paul and my father were on the exact same page. They were two cheating alcoholics confiding in each other.

Two wounded souls bonding with each other as a result of their emotional scars in life. Paul had completely sidestepped his responsibilities as a psychologist. Instead, he recognized a part of himself in my father that he had not healed. Instead of my father being his client, they became friends.

Alcoholics do not have the same core values as non-alcoholics. You can project as many of your values, life lessons and advice toward an alcoholic - they will just ignore you. They won't put in the effort of even pretending to listen. They think that their pain is so unique that it could not possibly be understood. According to alcoholics, no one has experienced pain with the same intensity as they have.

After this incident with Paul, I still felt incredibly confused and conflicted. I began to think that just maybe I was the problem. Perhaps it was my fault that my father was drinking?

There was a part of me that knew I did not do anything wrong. Little did I know that I had stepped into an emotional trap.

"You are nothing, you are worthless, you will amount to nothing, and I hate you." My father's words stayed with me for many years. I second-guessed everything, my plans, my future, my confidence and my talents.

His need to drink and be the center of attention was, and has always been, his priority. Once he's finished spending his money, he would give us the left over change. With the left over money, my mother would buy food and pay half of the bills at home. He even acted like he did us a favor by handing us the left over money. He got angry and upset when we did not look happy and grateful for his thankless left over money. Withholding money (to pay bills and buy food) from a child or partner who is financially dependent on the abuser is known as financial abuse. This form of abuse can be just as devastating as any other form of abuse.

The power game

The abuser knows what kind of hold and power they have over their friend, partner or spouse. Abusers know exactly what their friends, partners or spouses want to hear and as a result, they know how to easily manipulate him or her.

I could see that my father knew my mother was a decent, good-hearted, sincere and easily manipulated woman. The funny thing is that she was never really even interested in going out on a date with him when they first met.

My father's charming ways did eventually change her mind. He was persistent and could create something that looked like a romantic situation. He always had a controlling and manipulative agenda.

Abusers will play games with people until they find a person who is submissive enough for them to dominate. Abusers don't just target their

family. They will even see how far they can get with their friends. Abusers will try to push people into doing almost anything for them.

You sink into a bottomless pit when you allow an abuser to consistently control and manipulate you. Once you have allowed that type of behavior, changing the situation in the future will prove to be very challenging.

Once they have gained the control, the dominance kicks in. When abusers become more in control of others, they become more dangerous. Once they have achieved their goal of power or a favorable position, they will seek out even more. They are seeking a more intense rush and people will get hurt.

The abuser needs to be in control and have power. They have learned that they can only get what they want by emotionally breaking people. Once they feel out of control, they will do anything to regain control of the situation or person.

My father had that same drive; however, his addiction to alcohol diminished his motivation and drive to become more successful. The damage that alcohol caused him mentally and emotionally only turned him into an even more apathetic force.

Abusive people, sociopathic, narcissistic and alcoholic behavior is so foreign to your moral conscience that you end up refusing to see how bad their behavior really is.

You refuse to see that they are capable of being so malicious, with such an evil intent.

Instead, you doubt your own belief system and your moral grounds before even questioning the other person.

Was the problem really lying within you or with the abuser? Who is ultimately responsible for such insidious acts?

Overlooking the signs of abuse

At times, the abuser's behavior can be so appalling that you choose to overlook it rather than confront them. When someone is being abused, they cannot comprehend how someone can behave in such a hurtful manner. Being blind to the abuse in my life was my way of coping. It's easier to suppress the abuse.

You are forever trying to come up with plausible reasons for the abuser's actions and words, instead of seeing the abuse for what it really is. It always boils down to thinking, "It must have been a misunderstanding. I must have interpreted the situation incorrectly."

You are in denial that someone can actually be so mean, aggressive and horrible. In most cases, abusers can harm someone verbally or physically and feel no remorse. There is no hint of compassion for the pain and upset that they have caused. Normally they would only beg for forgiveness when they need something from you, which could include the need for attention, sex, support, your time or money. The abuser often has a goal in mind. Control is the tool used to get as much as they can out of you.

They might change their behavior from being mean to being nice when they realize that nice will get them what they are after. Their charm can also be used to reward you with gifts, attention or their time when you give in to their demands and manipulation. It is a “classic carrot and stick.” They control your behavior because you change yourself to minimize the abuse (doing things that threaten them) and maximize this reward (doing what they want). You start to ignore their controlling and manipulative tactics in order to get what you want from them – love, acknowledgement and attention.

Peacekeeper or enabler?

It is natural to try to minimize or stifle confrontation in your environment. When you try to keep the peace, you allow the abuser to get away with their behavior. You try not to interfere, because after all, what if what you saw or heard was actually acceptable? What if you were wrong? Maybe you just misunderstood what had happened.

In your mind, you are creating peace; however, the abuser sees it as surrendering. When the abuser spots a weakness in you, it indicates to them that they can get away with their behavior again. The abuser now knows what your reaction will be next time. When it happens again, they will blame you for the argument that started or tell you that it’s your fault, or violence could follow. You will feel convinced that it is your fault and that you are the origin of the problem.

You are programmed to obey authority and to not even dare question the authorities’ actions and demands. This same role is played out in family households and even friendships.

My father could have been stopped. The sexual abuse in my childhood could have been prevented. It would have required one person to have the courage to say “no.” My father enabled his parent’s sexual abuse by ignoring it (especially when he walked into the room and witnessed it). My mother in her turn enabled my father – for over thirty years she enabled him because it was safer to validate him than to challenge him.

The key lesson here is that while standing up to abuse is dangerous, not standing up in abusive circumstances can be even more dangerous. By taking a passive role, or by trying to suppress the problem, you enable the abuser to escalate to worse forms of abuse.

A common example of peacekeeping / suppression / enablement occurs in tightknit religious communities. When a pedophile is discovered in the community, it is safer for the community to hide the evidence, and even protect the abuser, rather than attract shame to the community for the abuser's actions.

My husband Simon and I recently learned about a devastating example of enablement at the Jewish school he attended as a young child, which is now in all the Australian newspapers. The authorities learned that a teacher was systematically sexually abusing young boys. Rather than attract publicity, they gave the teacher 24 hours to leave the country. He left for the USA where he abused several more boys before being arrested. We feel that the school authorities in Australia were just as culpable for the abuse in America as the abuser himself. Sometimes the enabler is more dangerous than the abuser.

Simon wants to share a personal example of enablement which I feel helps to illustrate what I was describing above:

My mothers' mother could be extremely difficult if she did not get what she wanted. Nobody ever stood up to her because she was a Holocaust survivor. She would create drama and my mother and her siblings would drop everything and fawn to her needs. It seemed that only I protested (my motives were entirely selfish: my social plans were affected when my mother had to kowtow instead of driving me to a party). My mother would admit that the behavior was abusive but would say, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Fast-forward 20 years and it is no surprise that my mother became her mother. She has an ability to create a "reality distortion field" in which the family is convinced she is the victim of whatever drama she has created. If someone dares to challenge the distortion field, they are rejected.

It took Evette, an outsider to the family, to have the courage to call a spade a spade (or an abuser an abuser). It was Evette's childhood experience that helped me to recognize the abuse for what it was. When challenged, my mother denied the abuse, ostracized us, and manipulated the family into believing that she was the victim! It is heart breaking to see them kowtow to her the exact way that she kowtowed to her mother.

I'm sharing my family story here because it perfectly illustrates Evette's point about the danger of enablement. My mother is not happy and she is not healthy. She is in this state

because no one will stand up to her, just as no one stood up to my grandmother. I wish I could help them to see this irony – death by enablement.

As a teacher of healing courses, I'm sometimes embarrassed by the ongoing abuse in my family. I have tried to help. What I've learned is that it is impossible to heal someone who is being enabled (this is why it is easier to heal the victim than the abuser). There are several reasons.

Firstly, the abuser is getting a huge benefit or secondary gain from their behavior. Secondly, they have no reason to take responsibility for their situation. Most importantly, they cannot admit that they have a problem. As long as they are being enabled (or validated), it is obvious that the one complaining is the one with the problem.

While I forgive my mother, I remain frustrated at the enablement of my family. By keeping the peace and avoiding conflict, they have created a second-generation abuser.

Simon's story illustrates how keeping the peace protects an abuser. The abuser knows they will be protected, so their behavior becomes more reckless and more hurtful (they feel safe to perpetuate their behavior). By being a peacekeeper, you give your power away, and it makes the abuser more powerful. You sacrifice your own emotional freedom and the right to be respected when you keep the peace. A good intention quickly turns into enablement.

Chapter 4 Getting out is easier said than done

It's easy to ask, "Why didn't you do something about your circumstances? Why didn't you and your mother just walk out?" The answer can sometimes be simple. If the abuse becomes normalized then you stop recognizing how bad or dangerous your circumstances are. It begs the question then, "What do you need to walk away from?"

Abusers are master manipulators. They can charm and persuade you into believing anything and everything they say. One minute you think you are leaving them and then the next minute they have convinced you to stay. You are left blindsided wondering, "What just happened, why did I stay in the relationship?"

An abuser will convince you that you are responsible for their actions. This only results in you feeling a great deal of guilt and self-blame. Their bad behavior toward you and others only leaves you thinking and speculating, "This is not happening, it must have been a misunderstanding!" This may result in you feeling vulnerable and unsure of what you observe in your relationship and how certain behaviors make you feel. An abuser's behavior can be so appalling and poor that you block out the severity of your circumstances.

When you feel vulnerable, you let your guard down and as a direct result; it weakens your personal boundaries. Poor personal boundaries and fear of confrontation allows an abuser to get away with their unacceptable behavior.

Abuser can become violent and stalk you if you decide to leave the relationship. Disagreements could escalate into arguments and even violence. There is a freeze instinct that kicks in and you reach a point where you feel safer to just put up with the conditions, even though the conditions are unsafe and unhealthy. Feeling frozen contributes to many self-sabotaging decisions.

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Faced with an important decision such as, “Should I stay or should I go?” the freeze instinct will always leave you stuck in the status quo.

The people on the receiving end of the abuse always think and hope that things will get better. They always hope that a miracle might occur. This is their biggest mistake. They sabotage their personal growth and future by holding onto the idea that the abuser will one day change.

People can fool themselves into thinking that one day the abuser will have their spiritual awakening. They think that the abuser will feel guilty for all the horrible things that they have done in the past. The abuser might express guilt, however how sincere they are when they do, will always be a hanging question... until the abuser strikes again.

Understanding the people who get stuck in these relationships

People who become stuck in abusive relationships normally have experienced abuse earlier in their life. Abuse has become a normal and a familiar pattern and feeling. By contrast, someone who has never experienced abuse is more likely to know something is wrong and will feel a great need to escape. (These are generalizations of course.)

By now you have learned to live, cope and deal with abuse. You know that your lives will get better if you move away from the abuse. Yet, you are pulled back into the abuse just as you want to leave. Why do you do this? Abuse is all you know; anything else is unfamiliar, foreign and even unsafe. You don't know any other way of living. Some people have even said to me that they have no idea how to live and function without all the fighting and being under attack.

You can walk out of abusive circumstances, however if you don't deal with the underlying issues that made you vulnerable to it in the first place then you seem to attract new abusive relationships. You tend to manifest new relationships with new problems and yet the same outcome.

I asked my mother to write a few paragraphs explaining her experience in brief and why she did not walk out of the relationship when she could have.

Here is a preview of my mother's life and her experiences.

Susan's Story

I grew up on a farm in Namibia, Africa.

I was in a boarding school from the age of seven, right through to my graduation. My father, a farmer, was an alcoholic and my mother was a housewife. I received a scholarship

to continue my studies. I received financial support from my father, however he passed away during my first term at college and I could no longer afford to study.

Finding a job wasn't easy. I had to move to Otjivarongo, moving in with my mother in search for a job to pay my bills. This is where I met Evette's father, Barry. He was working in Otjivarongo at the time. I did not know where else to go or what to do with my life. Everything that I worked for just all of a sudden was gone.

When we started dating, he was already drinking excessively. However, being young and daring, I did not think of it too much at the time. I thought it was just a phase; he would grow up and grow out of it. I was convinced that he would calm down once we settle down and had children.

After a year, I decided to move to Pretoria, South Africa and move in with my sister. Barry was also in Pretoria at that time.

Barry was an extrovert and I was an introvert. My new city life did not pan out the way that I thought it would. Growing up in a small town and then moving to a big city was quite a culture shock for me.

The city life changed Barry for the worse. He started cheating and drinking even more. He would go to church every Sunday and ask for his sins to be cleansed and then Monday he would start cheating and drinking again.

I kept thinking that it was a phase that he was going through. I was in a lot of denial, especially about seeing the truth in Barry at that point in my life. My lack of confidence, insecurities and worthiness did not help me either. The fact that my parents had a destructive marriage made me think that this is what all partnerships are like. In the small town where I grew up, abuse and infidelity seemed to be the norm.

It was almost like men had a right to abuse their wives because God gave them a wife to serve them. The community back then took religion to a completely and utterly disgraceful level. I did not realize that Barry's behavior was due to emotional instability. I knew that he had a hard childhood and was constantly rejected and abandoned by his parents. He did hide his childhood abuse very well with alcohol.

I did end up marrying Barry when I turned 23, despite my mother's warning that he would never change. I was still holding onto the idea that he would change and grow up one day. His drinking continued. After being married for a year, he got involved with the church again to cleanse his sins.

In the 1970s, you had to go to church otherwise people would criticize you. The church only kept him in line for a little while until he started drinking again and continued cheating. He started a fishing hobby and would go away for weekends with his friends. I never wanted to go with them, as they would just drown themselves in alcohol. This was not a lifestyle that suited me at all. I have never drunk and smoked and it was not something that I could get used to.

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He enjoyed his lifestyle next to the river fishing all day long and he also decided that we should separate. After being separated for three months we decided to get back together, try again and move to a new city in the Western Cape. He joined another church and started to live life according to the Christian Bible once again. He started becoming very critical of others. He would slander and judge others who did not live their life the same religious way as he did.

Everyone was wrong and he was right. For nine years, things went relatively well with our marriage. We were trying to have children as well. Unfortunately, my doctor told me that we would never be able to conceive a child. I accepted the fact that I might never have the family that I had always wanted and went on with my life.

One day, I found out that I was pregnant. I was beside myself; it was the best news that I had ever heard in a long, long time!

Unfortunately, Barry did not feel the same way; he couldn't accept the changes and responsibilities that came with having a child and being a good parent.

Your freedom is not your own anymore and your routines change completely when you have a child. Barry did not want to be a part of the changes in my life. When Evette was two we got transferred back to Namibia. Barry met a friend there that had the exact same characteristics as he did. They drank and they played golf together. He went to church for a while in the beginning and then dropped out once again because of his reckless lifestyle. Alcohol was his number one priority. Giving attention to Evette was just too much effort, his drinking sprees started becoming more out of control and he started staying out later and later at night.

His routine changed to the point where Evette never saw him. He would come home late when she was already asleep and would leave for work after she was dropped off at day care. The meaningless relationship between Evette and Barry was getting progressively worse. He would always blame me for his bad relationship with Evette and would not take responsibility for his absence in her life. At the same time, he would always blame Evette for our marital problems. I don't ever recall telling him to go to the pub and to disappear from our lives.

He even took the situation so far as to say that it was my fault that he had a drinking problem! He still wanted to be a teenager and not take responsibility for his role as a husband and being a father. Blaming me was just an easy option to avoid his mistakes and it gave him the illusion that he was never in the wrong. He would be invited to golf tours and parties and half-heartedly invite us as well. He always had an excuse to be occupied with other activities during his free time.

The garden was always a mess, the car was never looked after and he never fulfilled his duties as the man of the house. He started to adopt an attitude where he thought that he could tell me, "Do this and do that," "You will do this!"

Evette was about nine years old when she confronted him about his reckless lifestyle and why he never wanted to spend time with her. He outright replied to her, "Because I still want to be young."

A few months later, his employer sent him to a rehab clinic. He was sober for only a little while before he started going to the clubs and bars again. It had crossed my mind to leave him so many times, however it was a sin to leave your husband without a valid reason. Alcoholism was not considered a good enough excuse.

I was torn between my religion, my life and wanting the best for my daughter. We have been separated a few times and every time we decided to try again. I was scared that God would punish me for not trying to work on my marriage. Just as I thought that life could not get any worse, Barry was retrenched from his job.

Barry blew our entire life savings within six months and I did not even see a cent of it! He did not even help me to pay the mortgage, buy food and put petrol in the car. Barry was like a parasite in my life, however he just took "taking" to a whole new level.

He was offered wonderful jobs and had endless opportunities after his retrenchment; however, his conditions for taking the jobs were so laughable that no one took him seriously. He wanted his own housemaid, someone that can cook and clean for him. What he really wanted was another "wife" that he could boss around and abuse when he felt frustrated. Barry made it clear to his potential employers that he did not do his own laundry and he did not cook for himself.

He was without a job and yet he was still trying to call the shots. He also always demanded to have a car (he already had one, but he wanted a better one!) with free petrol and unlimited mileage. If it weren't for me, he would have been living on the street!

However, he was too selfish and self-absorbed to see that. He was the only person that existed in his world and the only person who had needs - nobody existed nor did they matter. He never appreciated my help, not even a thank you. He would still blame me for everything that went wrong in his life right down to his recklessness. He never lifted a finger to help me make my life easier around the house and lift the burden of my financial responsibilities. His usual church routines started again just for a little while and then he would relapse back into the pub. He became more and more manipulative, especially when he would go to church. He would use the word of God to get his way and people would fall for it every time.

He could read people very well and would know exactly how to communicate with them, they would become like clay in his hands and no one could see the real Barry—except Evette and I.

It was a very disempowering time for me to know who and what he was and not be able to speak out about it. I gave my power away to an abuser. My belief system told me that I was not allowed to divorce my husband. I felt crushed between what I had been told and

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what I really wanted. What I wanted was freedom. I needed freedom from all this destruction. I knew that no one would believe me, no one would be able to see the abusive husband that he really was. His charm was convincing and he would come across as a real genuine person.

The marriage just consisted of frustration and uncertainty. Should I leave or should I help him to get better? What will God do to me if I leave him? Will he one day heal from all of this? Will he really love me one day? Is there still a chance of him to get better and being a good father to Evette?

My biggest downfall was my dedication to my religion and my loyalty to our pastors and the advice that they gave me when we lived in Namibia. It was always the same story over and over again that I should stay with Barry and help him to get his life back on track. I had one question stuck in my mind. "How do you help someone who does not want to get better?" How much of me am I supposed to offer so that someone else can snap out of his or her destructive lifestyle?

Unfortunately, I realized too late in my life that I was within my own human rights to leave Barry. I did have the right to create a better life for myself. Instead, I crippled myself with my religion and naivety by believing Barry every time when he said that he was going to stop drinking, stop smoking and stop going to pubs. After booking him into the fifth rehabilitation center, I realized that all my past efforts had been in vain. It had brought me nothing but heartache, pain and a destructive life for my daughter and myself.

He will never get better, because he does not want to. He couldn't see how his actions and behavior was hurting people around him. His loveless childhood played right out in our relationship. His childhood abuse is not an excuse for the way that he treated Evette and me.

I gave all my power away to my religious beliefs and hung onto something that was neither my responsibility nor my fault. I do, however, take responsibility for my lack of activity within my life. I finally had enough after 34 years of destructiveness, blame and emotional abuse.

I changed my perspective about my religion and decided to take charge of my life and to be in control of my future, with or without punishment from God for leaving my husband. Unfortunately, I had to buy my freedom, Barry did not have a cent to his name and I had to come to a financial agreement with him that left me feeling very bitter because I gave up a chunk of my hard-earned money to an alcoholic. I did not have enough money to fight my case against Barry in court and he knew that. I just needed an exit out of this marriage and wash my hands clean from him and my past.

Barry eventually got a temp job working for one of his friends. The job was "no work, no pay." He would get paid every day after work so he could come and go as he pleased. He only went to work when he needed money for alcohol and when people at the pub got tired of

paying for his drinks. He would sometimes wake up in the morning and have ten excuses as to why he did not want to go to work. He would literally moan and groan, like a child that does not want to go to school.

He almost had the power to become sick on demand to avoid going to work. After five PM, he would always miraculously feel better and in good enough shape to go to the pub. He had no shame in behaving the way that he did, not even in front of his employer! One time he had a stroke whilst sitting in the pub, he was admitted to hospital and the same day he signed himself out of hospital and went right back to the pub.

I sometimes wish that I knew what I know now back in my youth so that I could make wiser choices and be more empowered in my life.

If there is one thing that you can take away from this book, then let it be this:

Be empowered enough to make your own decisions in life and not to walk in someone else's shadow.

Love yourself enough to say "no" when you feel that someone is taking too much of your time and energy.

Respect yourself enough to set boundaries with others and to also be clear about your limits and how far you are willing to go in life for the sake of other people's needs.

Have discernment about what is the truth, what is your truth and what is someone else's truth and belief system.

Be in control of your own religious beliefs. If you allow yourself to suffer because of a religious group, then it's clearly not the right path and direction for you. No religion should cause people to suffer!

I trust that Evette's and my history will assist you in some way in your life. It is your birthright to be loved, respected, honored, and nurtured and to be free of pain.

Love, Susan

When my mum explained this to me, I understood what she said. The more you allow and accept other's bad treatment the more you cripple yourself and give your power away.

The fact that she gave her power away to her religion and church groups in an unhealthy way and obeyed an abusive partner was a recipe for disaster.

This was such a good example of how a person can give their power away and fail to value themselves as well their emotional, mental and spiritual needs. By the time, a person realizes that, it is too late and they have already been taken advantage of. Awareness plays a major role.

Chapter 5 Why did this happen to me?

I would like to share my personal observations and opinions as an adult who experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse as a child.

You are not a victim!

Yes, I just said, you are not a victim! First and foremost, I do not see myself as a victim, and I do my best to avoid using that word. A victim is a person who has been harmed as a result of an event or action. No doubt, many people who have experienced abuse would identify themselves as victims – and therein lies the problem. Victimhood, by definition, identifies the sense of self with the harm that has been done. Why is this so destructive? It's because your unconscious mind will fight to protect your identity or sense of self. When a person sees himself or herself as a victim, they overlook the strength and power that they have within. They also overlook the fact that they can heal from their past. In my opinion, a victim is someone who is unable to recover and heal from his or her trauma.

I have had clients refuse to finish their healing process because it suddenly dawned on them that healing the abuse trauma would mean changing their identity, no longer behaving like a victim. This can involve a change of friends and or even career, and many are unwilling to allow these possibilities to take place in their life. When you heal, your personality will be influenced and dominated by your past trauma.

To avoid this self-sabotage, it is so important to avoid identifying with the harm. You are not the victim. Who you are is the inner resource, the love (which was there before the abuse). The role of therapy is to cease the victim identification and to re-identify with the inner resource, the core essence of who you really are.

I am also reluctant to use the word “survivor,” though at times the word is appropriate. Survivors are people who survived a tragic accident. The definition of survive is “to remain alive or in existence.” By that definition, we

are all survivors, just by virtue of being born. The danger I perceive is that when you identify yourself as being the survivor of a particular threat or abuse, then you are identifying your sense of self with the abuse. For sure, it's better to identify yourself with surviving the abuse rather than being a victim of it. However, you are still "anchoring" the abuse into your identity. You are not the abuse. You are not the survival. You are the light that was there before, which is now being rekindled.

It's emotionally crippling to be called a survivor or victim because these obstacles have not marked the end of your happiness and quality of life. They can be the beginning of a new perspective, attitude and newfound sense of empowerment. If you choose, this new attitude can put a stop to these obstacles in your life.

The therapy process, the mechanisms for re-defining your sense of identity so that the abuse leaves no trace, is a central component of the Metaphysical Anatomy (MAP technique). I touch on aspects of it in this book, although the process itself cannot be taught in a book, as it is a hands-on experience.

Abuse can happen to anyone – but it doesn't

That heading is intentionally a little provocative. Abuse could happen to anyone. You have, at some point in your life, walked down a street at night, or as a child, been left in the care of someone who might not have been the upstanding citizen your parents thought them to be. Therefore, in theory, it *could* happen to anyone.

It happened to me, and if you are reading this, it probably happened to you. Why you? In this chapter, I will do my best to shed some light on this difficult question. What I share here is my own personal opinion and observation.

It's true that sometimes, bad things just happen. There is such a thing as an unlucky person in the wrong place at the wrong time. My belief is that "unlucky" is the exception, certainly not the rule. There are other factors, patterns and generalizations, which can explain a great deal.

The histories and habits that makes you who you are

The most important factor is the family history. Most of my clients who have experienced childhood abuse and/or domestic violence have parents or grandparents who have shared the same experience. Just like physical patterns and characteristics, abuse runs in families. I'm talking here particularly about

child abuse, though abuse to adults (especially from a partner) is also a family pattern.

There are several distinct issues here to consider:

- Evidence that abuse runs in families;
- Mechanism for how this might occur; and
- How it impacts your feelings and reactions.

Observations and evidence

My evidence is largely based on personal experience and observations made from hundreds, if not thousands, of clients and students. In almost every single case of childhood sexual abuse, there is a family history of abuse, usually involving the mother or a grandmother but in many cases the father. There might be exceptions, but it's hard to know for sure because you never have perfect knowledge of the grandparents' or indeed great-grandparents' experiences.

The ancestral abuse can take a different form. For instance, a pattern of emotional or physical abuse in the mother might be associated with sexual abuse in the child.

The same observation applies to domestic violence between adults. Almost every single client who was abused by a husband had a mother or grandmother who had been similarly abused. I cannot think of a single exception.

The issue of trans-generational or inter-generational transmission of abuse has been confirmed in psychological studies.² The actual significance is much higher than these studies have been able to prove because they only looked at abuse to parents (ignoring grandparents) and because of a lack of evidence (they rely on self-reporting of abuse by the parents in a survey). In reality, the ancestral pattern can often skip a generation, and it isn't something that people like to write about in a survey, so the academics may never know the true scope of inter-generational trauma.

“But why?” The mechanism for inter-generational abuse

There is no simple explanation for why abuse runs in families. I think that there are many explanations, each accounting for some part of the story. Here are some possibilities.

² See for example, DSM-IV® Sourcebook, Volume 3, pages 772-3.

(a) Heightened vulnerability

A woman, who has experienced abuse as a child, is more likely to have “at risk” children. For example, if a family member abused her, there is a risk that this same family member will abuse her children. No woman is an island, and you must imagine this woman in the context of the environment, which allowed the abuse to occur.. Unless she has taken significant steps to change her life and family pattern, her children are likely to be at risk from the very same factors that placed her at risk.

The same factors apply to adult domestic violence. A woman who grew up in a family, culture or environment (such as ethnicity or religion) that was willing to overlook domestic violence, is much more likely to marry into that same abusive culture. Remember my mother (“Susan’s story”) from the previous chapter. She was unsupported by her environment because her religion dictated that she was my father’s property.

It took me a long time to break out of this pattern, as I kept attracting men who had the same religion, values and attitude to women as my father. It was only the discovery of personal development and healing work that allowed me to change my pattern of inter-generational abuse. For me personally, I needed to move away (literally) from my circumstances. I relocated across the world to a new country with different values and access to diverse healing resources. If I had stayed in the South African environment, I doubt that I would have been able to escape the cycle of abuse, which captured my mother for over thirty years. I acknowledge that great changes can be achieved even while you are still in the same environment (not necessarily while you are with the same abusive partner).

It is how you respond to your environment that can make or break you. It is important to heal the parts of yourself that feel disempowered by your environment. Finding the emotional triggers are vital.

(b) Perceptions of “normalcy”

As a child, I knew no better. My father beat me and his parents violated me. Didn’t everyone’s parents do this? One of the biggest dangers of growing up in an abusive environment is that you don’t know any different. Your only mental association or reference point for love is abuse. You have never witnessed or experienced love that was not abusive, so how are you to know any better, to demand that you or your children be treated differently?

I was one of the lucky ones. I broke out of that environment because I started learning what I was entitled to. I remember visiting a friend’s house at

about age 7 and not understanding the love and gentleness that my friend's father's had for his wife and child. This was a foreign emotional experience for me. Eventually I realized that this love was normal and my own experience was the exception..

It is often said that women marry a version of their father. I know that I came very close to making that mistake. I think it's true that you attract in a mate someone who will help to bring up your unresolved childhood issues. However, on a deeper level, you are attracted to what feels safe, which in this case means you are attracted to what feels normal. To me, being abused felt normal. In this way, patterns of abuse are carried across generations, from father to daughter and then (via the new husband) from father to her daughter.

(c) Epigenetics or inherited patterns

The emerging science of epigenetics has changed forever our understanding of inter-generational trauma. Put simply, epigenetics means "above genetics" and it means that an entire layer of experience is transmitted from mother and father to child, above and beyond the physical DNA.

Trauma such as sexual abuse doesn't change the DNA (there is no "gene" for abuse). However, any significant trauma can leave epigenetic markers. These markers are transmitted between generations and have the effect of switching specific genes on or off.

Very wide ranges of medical problems, from diabetes to depression to cancer, are caused in part by epigenetic factors. What that means is that the unresolved abuse your grandmother experienced may be the cause of physical and emotional changes in your body.

That much is already well understood by geneticists. What is not clear is whether this epigenetic pattern contributes to trauma recurring in later generations. For example, if your grandmother was sexually abused, does this mean that you inherit a pattern that makes you vulnerable to abuse? I believe the answer is "yes."

Of course, it's not the abuse itself that is inherited. It is a chemical makeup, which affects your emotional state. Just as your precise brain chemistry can create symptoms of depression, other brain chemistry can create strength and confidence. Ask yourself, which child is more likely to be abused – the weak and depressed one or the strong and confident one? Abusers, like any predators, prey on the weak and vulnerable. In this way, the

trauma of your ancestors (not necessarily abuse trauma, but any trauma) can make you more vulnerable to harm.

This knowledge has important considerations in the healing context. The good practitioner knows that you are not merely healing abuse, but preventing the cycle of abuse from recurring in future generations. This means identifying and resolving the emotional state which made the client a target of the abuse in the first place.

(d) Family systems (energetic explanations)

The family system is, in over-simplified terms, the consciousness or awareness of the family unit. It represents the unified wisdom and experience of many generations.

The significance of the system in relation to abuse is that the system creates a certain energetic “pull” in order to resolve trauma within the system. In this way, experiences that happened to your grandparents (and even great-great-grandparents) can recreate itself in your life. We call these “system issues” when there is no other explanation – there is no heightened vulnerability or normalization, nor any clear epigenetic component. What is left is a desire (within the family, not necessarily in the client) to resolve old wounds and to restore the flow of love between the generations – grandparent to parent and parent to child.

Most cases of inter-generational abuse can be understood in their own right, without needing to mention family systems. Family systems are important and they are acknowledged in our work in a way that resolves the systemic issue without needing to spend too much time on it.³

Why did this happen to me?

I return to the question raised earlier in this chapter of the book—why did this abuse happen to me?

If you asked me this question, I would enquire whether anything similar happened to your parent or grandparent. You might not know, but it is always worth asking your family.

The second question I might ask is about normalization. Perhaps you have no idea how abusive your childhood was (especially if it was emotionally but not sexually abusive). Did your parents treat each other with love, compassion and respect? Were you treated with kindness?

³ For more information on the origin and treatment of family systems you might research Hellinger’s Family Systems Therapy (or Family Constellations).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I would ask you whether you were taught about boundaries. What happened to you as a child the first time you dared to say “no” to an adult, or to a man / woman? Were you punished or rewarded? Did any adult ever teach you that you had a right to say “no?” Did they teach you that your body is sacred and nobody can touch it without permission? (Even if your parents said this, did their actions reinforce it or did they contradict themselves by physically punishing you?).

In my experience, asking these questions helps almost every one of my clients and students to see the patterns in their lives and in their families. They start to see where the abuse was normalized, where poor boundaries allowed lazy parenting. They can see how the combination of all these factors created an environment of heightened vulnerability in which the abuse happened to them. In my experience, there is always an explanation, either in the client’s childhood or in their family system.

Chapter 6 My decision to heal

At first, the idea of healing from my past trauma seemed to be a great idea! I thought I was prepared for the journey ahead and that it would be quick, painless and easy. I was wrong! Here I explain my healing journey and in the next chapter, I explain what I learned throughout this journey.

It started with a simple decision

I had to reach breaking point before I made the decision to heal.

No matter how hard I tried to run away from my problems, they always followed me. It was evident in the kind of people I met and the circumstances that I created for myself. I soon ran out of energy and willpower to show my happy face and pretend that everything was OK.

One day, I woke up feeling very emotional. I tried to suppress the feelings as usual. Only this time, I realized I could not go on. I called the office and said that I wasn't coming in that day. I went back to bed and curled up into a fetal position and I cried. I gave myself permission to release my suppressed emotions. For the first time, it was safe and OK to cry. It was liberating.

When I finally got out of bed, I noticed that I felt less rigid and tense. I felt relieved, as if something had shifted. I looked outside my window and noticed that I was looking at everything differently. I finally acknowledged that it was time to move on and to process my past. My days of running away and playing the avoidance game had come to an end.

I finally made the decision to heal.

First steps

With Google as my friend, I started learning about healing. I started reading spiritual and self-help books. I was drawn at first to the angel-healing genre. I loved the idea of being able to talk to someone whenever I needed. It gave me the comfort that I needed at that time. I started to process my childhood dilemmas bit by bit.

With hindsight, I would say that these, like almost all healing and self-help books, while a source of comfort and strength, are not to be confused with healing. Real healing means resolving underlying issues.

I was searching for higher guidance and trying to heal my trauma by using positive affirmations. It helped me, but only to a certain extent.

One of the dangers of trying to heal yourself, without special training and support, is that you can “trigger” or “activate” your traumas without having the full set of tools to resolve them. This creates what is commonly known as a healing crisis – the phenomena of feeling a lot worse before feeling better.

In the end I realized, healing starts with a decision, but requires something else – the right help.

Starting with the cause of my trauma instead the symptoms

I worked with several practitioners to help me resolve the trauma of the abuse. At first, it was hard to find the right person to talk to. By trial and error, I found a few practitioners who were able to give me the support, advice and guidance that I needed. I had to work through the violation, invasion and physical trauma that I had experienced as a child. This was my priority as this trauma affected every area of my life; all my other issues were dealt with when I processed the violation, invasion and physical trauma.

Establishing new boundaries

As I worked through the abuse trauma, my sense of boundaries started to change as well. I realized that I had to define and establish what my boundaries were going to be now that the trauma was finally shifting. My past boundaries were based on how I was treated in the past. With the healing processes taking place, I felt that my old boundaries did not serve me anymore. I found myself asking these questions, “How would I like to be treated by a partner, by friends and family? Can I treat myself in the same way? Can I express my goals, desires and needs to loved ones?” I had to figure out how I would like to be treated by others and what I was going to do if people disrespected me. I had to learn how to express my boundaries in a powerful but graceful way, without feeling guilty or shameful. I also had to resolve all guilt related to saying “no” and prioritizing my own needs. You can only do this when you feel worthy again.

Feeling worthy again

I had to define what love meant to me. How should it make me feel? How do I want to be loved and treated by a partner? Do I feel worthy of being

treated in a loving way by a partner? What I realized when I looked at my goal list is that I didn't feel worthy to have and experience any of it. I was sabotaging my own happiness and I needed to get to the bottom of it.

Why did I sabotage my happiness? It stemmed from my needs as a child always being put last. Adults who were abusive met my need for love and comfort.

As an adult I still had that pattern, putting my needs last and feeling very undeserving of prioritizing my desires above anyone else's. This pattern needed to change drastically.

Learning how to communicate

I had a fear of communicating my needs. How was I going to ask for my needs to be met? How was I going to express my boundaries if I couldn't communicate them? Firstly, I had to resolve the trauma related to communicating my needs and myself. In the past, every time I communicated my needs and truth, I was punished. I had to process and resolve the trauma that I associated with expressing myself.

Trust with discernment

I had to learn that not everyone was going to take advantage of me. Pushing people away only resulted in isolation. Even though I was happy being on my own, I was on my own for all the wrong reasons. I pushed people away because it made me feel safe, not because I preferred to be alone. I had to learn for the first time to trust myself. I realized that if I couldn't trust myself then how was I going to trust others? I had to resolve the trauma that resulted in my avoidance of trusting others.

Finding a balance between my needs and others' needs

Instead of always looking after others' needs, I had to learn how to feel worthy enough to place my needs first. I learned how to compromise without feeling taken advantage of. I felt taken advantage of by others because I failed to express my needs, limits and boundaries.

Life is about give and take, not just about giving. I realized that I only supported others because I felt that my value and importance was connected to how much I gave of myself to others.

When I started to restore my low self-esteem, I realized that I had more time to myself. I no longer needed to do things for others with the unconscious need to be rewarded with love, affection and acknowledgement.

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I started to support people for all the right reasons not because I felt manipulated or obligated to anyone

When you heal, you start to feel stronger

I found this to be true during my own personal healing journey. You start to reclaim your power. You rediscover aspects of yourself that you abandoned as most of your energy was focused on ignoring and fighting against your emotions.

You won't need to ask others what they think, because you will always have the answer.

You won't feel alone any more as you will start to enjoy your own company. Feelings of self-loathing and disgust dissipate. Making decisions and choices on your own becomes easier and more comfortable because you start to trust your own judgment and intuition.

When you start respecting yourself, others will automatically start to show you even more respect. When you start to love yourself, others will love you even more. Your inner beauty becomes evident to the outer world and everyone will want a bit of that inner strength!

This can only be achieved by making a simple choice, without fear and without pressure from the outside.

While you heal, your physical body will never fail you. It will always try to help you heal.

If you suppress your trauma, then your mind and body will find a way to address it by means of anxiety, stress and depression.

The way the body tries to support you might not be pleasant, and may manifest itself as emotional and physical problems. It can be hard to see the connection between the unresolved trauma and subsequent disease, except for the clear fact that healing earlier trauma results in a rapid improvement in these physical and emotional symptoms. However, the body tries to communicate with you by getting your attention and also by trying to complete the incomplete trauma cycles as efficiently as possible.

As you emotionally heal, you will find new comfort within yourself. You will no longer seek safety in unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations anymore. You don't have to act out any guilt or feel shame again, because you have nothing to be ashamed of. You start to make decisions that are not motivated and driven by trauma.

Different healing phases

I found myself going through different phases. This is a personal summary that I made and it could be different for others.

1. I felt disgusted, dirty, violated and in shock.
2. I started to blame everyone whilst I was searching for my own innocence.
3. I was angry, raging, needing revenge and I pushed people out of my life.
4. I felt unable to forgive the people that caused me pain.
5. I had a fear of releasing my trauma, not knowing who I was without the abuse and trauma.
6. I realized that the people who abused me were acting out on their own childhood abuse and patterns. The abuser is also usually a victim.
7. By reclaiming my power and innocence, I learned that my innocence and power was never taken away from me, it was only suppressed by my trauma.

You are born with the gift of healing. It is not something you can learn. You are that gift. The only thing you can learn is how to access what is already inside of you

Chapter 7 Hurdles to healing and Lessons learned while overcoming the hurdles in my healing journey

There were many blocks and hurdles throughout my healing journey, from the day I chose to heal, until the day I felt free from this trauma. In this chapter, I would like to share some of the useful lessons gained from the hurdles that arose during my journey.

I didn't reach out for support when I needed it

I made the mistake of thinking that I could walk this path alone. I had come so far and achieved many goals on my own. I figured that healing myself would be something I could do alone.

Reaching out for support, in my opinion, was a sign of weakness. In the past, showing weakness would only attract more abuse and punishment.

My second great fear was losing control. Asking for help meant inviting someone else into my healing process, thus losing control of the intended outcome I had in mind. With all the abuse I had experienced (causing, and being caused by, a loss of control), there was no way I was going to ask for help! Until my trauma overwhelmed me to the point where it nearly drove me to lose control of my life. In my case, things had to become really bad before I reached out for support. I could have avoided this healing crisis if I had just asked for the appropriate support.

Finding a practitioner that was right for me

After several months of failed attempts to heal myself, I realized that I needed support. The healing crisis and desperation eventually overrode my fear and pride.

I went to a life coach and healer who tried to assist me in my healing process. Unfortunately, the experience only activated all of the old traumas I

had been successfully suppressing. She did not deal with the deep-seated trauma simply because she lacked the tools or techniques to do so.

These sessions left me in emotional turmoil. Instead of healing the trauma, the coach only dealt with the symptoms. Instead of getting better, I felt that I was getting worse. You often manifest your fears to come true and in this case, asking for help really did mean losing control.

I went through a pattern of asking for help, losing control, losing faith in the process and giving up. Then I would reach the breaking point and face again the choice between committing suicide and asking for help.

I kept finding new practitioners and then moving on when I didn't see or feel any results in my life.

I only truly started to feel big changes in my life when I developed my personal development technique called MAP. What I learned with personal development modalities in the past is that they only deal with the symptoms of abuse and trauma. Most modalities did not find and heal the core traumas in my life. This only meant that I kept triggering old issues, which I thought I had laid to rest.

Anger serves to strengthen and weaken you

I was a martyr. From a young age, my anger became my best defense. Everything I had achieved and accomplished in my life was accompanied and driven by my anger. My anger was my motivation and strength. It drove me to become successful and independent. I drew my power from anger, it enabled me to set boundaries and have a false sense of safety and security.

Of course, anger also had a downside. I was very lonely.

The problem, as I see it now, was a vicious circle. The trauma resulted in me feeling powerless, my powerless changed into anger and the anger created a level of independence, success and the illusion of safety. It is not possible to heal the trauma without confronting the fear of possibly losing or changing everything, the way I had known it. I had a fear of losing my strength and independence—It was all I had.⁴

Drawing your power from a place of anger and resentment only leaves you feeling bitter, resentful, enraged and ultimately feeling alone. Though this illusion makes you feel safe, it sabotages everything that is good and positive in your life.

⁴ I return to this challenging issue the chapter on secondary gain.

The solution in the end was to heal the trauma that caused me to feel powerless, disrespected and angry. I had to learn to express my personal power in a graceful way and to feel safe without needing to be angry. I only felt confident to express myself when I was angry, which meant that in reality I was not confident at all. My confidence was a false illusion stemming from my fear of losing control and being taken advantage of.

No goal = no direction

When you look at the world from a wounded and angry perspective, everyone is a threat. You live in fear. Your perception filters are focused on threats and not the positive side of life. You don't see the possibilities that are out there for you, as you are too focused on the pain that you are in. This prevented me from setting goals or having something to work toward.

When you start your healing journey, you need to have a goal. What end results are you working toward? What do you want to see change in your life? How do you want to feel after you've healed your past?

I never asked myself these questions. I didn't have a clear goal, which made my healing journey even more challenging. I never asked myself what I needed to change and do in my life in order to live a life that was no longer haunted by my past.

I only started to make progress when I began setting goals for myself. It gave me new hope as I finally had something to work toward. I needed to have a goal to look forward to achieving.

Dealing with the symptoms of trauma and avoiding the cause

I thought that I was dealing with my trauma, however I was taking a short cut. I suppressed my trauma and I only dealt with the symptoms of it, such as the anxiety. The inevitable consequences of suppressing my problems were that they kept resurfacing again and again.

You cannot heal symptoms like depression, sadness, anxiety, stress, etc., without exploring the underlying causes. Yes, it is possible to create a short-term fix (known technically as a "bypass"). Many therapies can create a bypass that keeps you feeling better for a day or a week (or, in rare cases as long as a year). However, this is not a healing, it's just a way of bypassing the symptom. When you suppress your past and try to bypass the symptoms, there will be consequences. For starters, you will experience feelings such as anxiety, which you cannot explain. You will attract experiences into your life (such as abuse), which do not make sense – until you realize that you are attracting experiences from the place you have been suppressing.

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In the end what matters is that you stop taking short cuts and come to peace with your past. It doesn't matter whether you remember what has happened or not, what is important is that you acknowledge how you are feeling.

For a long time I tried to deal with my symptoms by self-medication. I drank too much alcohol and exercised excessively with the intention of suppressing my anxiety. I worked long hours, pretending that everything was going well in my life. I set boundaries with people by using my anger, instead of dealing with the reason why I needed to use my anger in the first place. I stayed in unhealthy relationships, instead of exploring why I was afraid of being alone.

It was easier for me to deal with the symptoms of my trauma, rather than face reality and admit what had happened in my childhood.

Even if you have a good life now and a perfect partner, the bad memories and unresolved trauma will eventually resurface and haunt you. Your unresolved past will greatly challenge you, your partner and any personal relationships. The lesson for me was that working only on my symptoms – whether in therapy or through suppression or self-medication – is not effective. Sure, you can feel better for a short time, but nothing really changes. Denial is never the solution; it is not going to help you to move forward with your life.

Lack of trust in myself and people in my life

I didn't trust anyone. This was also one of the reasons why I didn't reach out for support, as I felt no one could be trusted. In cases where a man has abused someone, it may be easier to confide in women (and vice versa). I was abused by a man and woman, which resulted in me feeling unsafe with men and women. A lack of trust also results in a great deal of anxiety as you find yourself constantly questioning people's intentions, as well as your own judgment. It leaves very little rest to the unconscious and conscious mind.

The wounded healer: trying to heal by easing others' pain

There was a point where I was trying to help myself by offering support to others. I unconsciously got myself involved in friendships with people who also needed comfort, love and support. I gave to people what I needed myself. This was my way of trying to heal my own anxiety, depression, loneliness and trauma.

There is nothing wrong with giving to others that, which you most want to receive, especially love. However, it must never be a substitute for dealing with your issues.

I disassociated from my life and my emotions. It was easier to listen to someone else's problems. If their problems were similar to mine, it meant that I didn't have to voice my own. I related with people who suffered a similar fate to mine.. It helped to not feel so alone and isolated.

I escaped from my past by occupying my life with other people's problems.

Ultimately, I focused on people's pain and not the origin of my own pain and trauma. Many of my friendships were based and formed around shared pain instead of shared hobbies or shared passions.. In one way, this was comforting to me. It was also sabotage. I had friends who were only talking about their trauma. They had no real intention of healing from it. This only pulled me deeper in to a state of feeling like I would never heal. I realized that I needed to surround myself with more positive people.

Recognizing the origin of my guilt and shame

Sometimes you get stuck in thoughts and feelings that are not your own. In moments of intense trauma, you take on other people's feelings. This happens in response to a threat, when you are reaching out for security.

I had guilt and shame that I could not shake. No amount of processing my own trauma could get to its origin. That's because it was not my own.

I learned a vital lesson—it is important to look at the abuser's issues. This is especially true when the abuser is a parent or family member. Along with healing your own hurt, it is also important to heal the underling trauma in the family system, which caused the abuser to become abusive. You become so focused on just healing yourself and dealing with your pain that you sometimes miss a few important steps leading up to the abuse taking place, as well as the pattern of abuse and trauma.

One of the final keys to healing my abuse trauma was to release the emotions that my paternal grandparents were feeling at the time when they abused me.

When I pretended to be my grandmother or grandfather, I felt overwhelmed with emotions such as guilt, self-loathing, hatred, violation, invasion and disgust. I recognized these emotions, as they were familiar to me. Yet they were not my own.

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I worked on it and when I released those emotions, I felt so much better. It was such a big breakthrough for me that I started doing it with all my clients and had wonderful results from this technique.

Finding comfort in feeling unsafe

When a parent or caregiver is abusive and the child feels threatened, the child will try to reach out for security. The child will reach out for comfort to the only person in their immediate environment. Unfortunately, this will often be the abuser because nobody else is there.

Your brain learns by association. You start to associate the abuser's intentions and emotional state with your own search for safety and comfort. From what I have learned, it is repetitive abuse that causes a lot more conflict in the associations that I formed with love and safety. My need for love and safety was met by abuse. In my language of love and safety, searching for what is known and secure brings abuse. I failed to see and recognize this pattern until well into my healing journey.

This is one reason why many people get stuck in abusive relationships and can't get out of them. You feel safe in the relationship because the abuse feels familiar. You know how to survive within destructive and chaotic circumstances. You have learned how to feel safe in a violating, threatening and abusive household. You have learned how to cope with the abuse, to the point where you might not know how to function without destruction and abuse.

The fact that people learn how to feel safe in these situations makes it more difficult for them to move away from this repetitive cycle. It becomes a familiar feeling. It then becomes harder to recognize the abuse for what it is. It becomes part of your identity.

Why I kept attracting unhealthy partners and friendships

Unconsciously, your brain searches for the familiarity and (real or false) security of childhood. Without realizing it, I was searching for someone that would treat me the same way as my father and grandparents treated me.

Your conscious mind might tell you that this is wrong, that you are in unhealthy relationships and that you need to get out. Your instinctive needs will normally override that. You keep looking for others that will make you feel shameful, guilty, and worthless and you will end up obeying the abusers just as you did in the past during your childhood. This can be a challenging cycle to break if you can't recognize it. This pattern can only stop once you

have realized what you are doing. Then you can understand what is going on in your relationships and choose to stop it.

This was a very deep realization for me. When I understood why I had attracted certain people and relationships, I felt more in control of my future. Once I knew why, what and how, I felt more confident in moving forward. Knowledge became my new sense of personal power.

Abuse and religion

My mother was married to my father for more than thirty years. Her religion told her all those years ago that it was a sin to divorce your husband. She was taught that she had to obey her husband and her religion; otherwise, an eternity of punishment was to follow.

She gave her power away to a religion and allowed herself to be abused. It was her “duty” to be his wife and to stick by her husband’s side, supporting him through good and bad times. My question is, “Do the bad times include the husband being an abuser?”

Religion can be a wonderful thing. However, giving your power away to a religion can be dangerous. It can be harmful not just to you, but also to your children who will be dragged into the dysfunctional circumstances.

Abuse also brings forward the question: “When are you taking your belief system too far?” No religion or collective belief should ever cause you or your children to think and feel that you have no right to feel safe in your life.

The fact that you might feel unjustly robbed of a vital part of your emotional and physical life should be enough of a warning sign that something is wrong. Whose belief system and rules are you following?

You were born free and you will move from the physical world with your freedom intact.

I can’t emphasize how important it is that you look after your safety first and respect belief systems second. Anything else might end up being a dangerous sabotage.

Lack of boundaries and overcorrection

Healthy boundaries are a happy medium – a balance between weak boundaries on one side and rigid or over-corrected boundaries on the other. There are pitfalls to both extremes, and most people trying to heal from abuse will vary between extremes before achieving a healthy balance.

As a child, my boundaries were never respected. I grew up with very poor boundaries. Saying “no” was challenging, as in the past it always provoked confrontation and rejection.

As I matured, I over-corrected my poor boundaries and became explosively angry and resentful. I realized that this happened as a result of skipping an important step, loving myself enough to say “no.” I didn’t respect my own boundaries, so why would other people respect them? I didn’t even know what my boundaries should be. There was no guideline to follow.

I had to start clearing the abuse trauma first, before I really had the strength and self-love to say “no.” Then I started to establish my boundaries based on circumstances and how they made me feel. There were times when my boundaries provoked conflict, however I quickly learned that the conflict was a result of the abusers’ frustration. Suddenly the abusers in my life were not able to manipulate and control me anymore.

You should not have to over-correct your boundaries. If you do, then it means you are still in fear of not being heard and respected. When you over-correct your boundaries, it causes only more problems, because the people that you are setting boundaries with can sense that you are not coming from a place of power. When someone is being firm, you can feel whether that person is confident, or fearful, angry or insecure.

An abuser recognizes the difference between when you are coming from a place of power and when you are scared and fearful. It is also important that you recognize the difference between when you are fearful or confident.

I failed to take responsibility for my future and my emotional state

Taking personal responsibility is another important step. When I use the word “responsibility,” I mean⁵, “Being answerable or accountable, as for something within one's power, control or management.”

Just to be clear, I do not mean being responsible for the abuser’s behavior.

Responsibility in this context means that when I began my healing journey, I chose to take responsibility for how I was going to move forward in my new life. I took responsibility by choosing how I was going to deal with my past. This could include taking legal action, confronting the abuser or reaching out for support.

When I took appropriate responsibility for my life and my future, I consciously took my power back. This has a domino effect. When you take responsibility for your future and how you feel, you automatically start to feel stronger. It also means that you take control of your own life and it is not controlled and ruled by your past trauma and fear of your abuser.

⁵ I am using the definition found here: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/responsible>

Taking responsibility for yourself doesn't mean that you have to forgive the abuser. It is important that you forgive the circumstances and what had happened to you. When you do, you forgive yourself and any unnecessary self-blame. By taking personal responsibility, I ended this invisible grip that my past and abusers had over me. By blaming my past and abusers for my emotional state and anger, I kept reinforcing the fact that they had won and still have complete control over my emotions and my future.

I stopped being a victim of circumstance.

Taking responsibility was just a step that was part of my healing process. It's a step that can't be skipped as the majority of self-empowerment comes from your ability to take responsibility for your future, career and your ability to be the best that you can be.

I also learned that taking responsibility for myself didn't mean that the abuser or past will be forgotten, or that an abuser will get away with their actions. It only meant that I was consciously taking my power back, standing strong within myself by being empowered throughout my daily life.

This is exactly what I wanted. Finally taking responsibility for myself was a life changing moment for me. It was one of the most empowering steps I ever took.

Fear of loneliness

In the past, my fear of loneliness was greater than my need for freedom and self-empowerment. I was willing to endure challenging and abusive circumstances (especially relationships) as a result of my fear of being alone. I had to resolve my fear of loneliness. I was holding onto people and relationships for all the wrong reasons.

My trauma was my identity

I had no idea who I was without my past and the abuse that took place. Every decision and goal that I set was driven by fear, pain and trauma. I was very set in my ways and everything I did was unconsciously driven and motivated by trauma. If I healed my trauma, I realized that I would have to find a whole new way of living my life. Healing the abuse would change the entire foundation that my childhood was built on.

I started asking myself, "Who am I without my abuse? Will I cease to exist if I let it go? Will there still be any meaning left in my life if I heal the abuse? If I did heal what would happen?" I had a fear that part of me would "die" if I healed my trauma. I was scared that I would be taken advantage of if I didn't have my trauma to remind me how horrible people and their agendas

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could be. I felt that my trauma kept me safe from experiencing further pain and trauma.

Eventually I learned that by holding onto the trauma I was not any safer than I would be without it. If anything, holding onto your trauma can cause you to experience more traumas because you are constantly attracting that energy. That is to say, people who feel like a victim and act like one will be treated as one. People who feel empowered are treated empowered and continue to become empowered. What you feel and hold on creates your day-to-day experiences.

Here are some hard questions that I asked both past clients and myself:

- Do you really know who you are without the abuse?
- Who are you without your pain?
- Who are you without your anger and resentment to protect you?
- Who are you when you are not being a victim?
- Who will you be if you allow people into your life without needing to push them away?
- Are you expressing your own trauma or is ancestral trauma also playing a role? Who and what will you become without the guilt and shame?
- Will you feel safe being seen and acknowledged by others?
- Can you feel safe and free without always needing to be on guard?
- Can you live without judgment and judging yourself for one hour?
- Do you feel that if you let go of your trauma, it will happen again, so you hold on to it to help to protect yourself from future circumstances?

The purpose of these questions is to help you to become aware of where you are identifying with your painful emotions. The answers to these questions are normally the issues that are holding you back from making progress.

Important realizations that I made along the way

You can only get respect from others when you can treat yourself with respect. You have to believe that you deserve it.

How can you ask for respect from others if you don't even respect yourself? It's challenging to fully love someone until you have learned how to love yourself.

You can't support someone fully when you can't even help and support yourself. It always starts within; it can't ever start from the outside. What you need in order to change your life is already within you, you will not find it anywhere else.

When you've decided to heal from your past then I recommend that you work with someone you do not already know. I have seen many wonderful friendships become co-dependent and draining. The line between friend and practitioner fades and can cause friction and irreparable damage to the friendship.

You cannot run from your past and you cannot fight it

The more you try to run from it, the worse things are going to become. You cannot fight the past with anger and resentment.

The only way to heal is to acknowledge what happened or even just how it made you feel. You do not have to make it a part of your reality by reliving anything. Bringing consciousness to a traumatic event is enough to start the healing process.

The abuse is in your past and it does not exist anymore. It is over and done with. There is nothing unsafe or threatening about your trauma. The worst is most likely in the past. The only thing left now is to heal. Every day is a new day that leaves the abuse in the past. It is up to you to keep it that way.

Heal the trauma, what actually happened is not real anymore, it's in the past. I learned that nothing is going to get better or change until I make that one big final choice.

The weakness that you perceive within yourself is not real. Piled up and stagnant trauma that has not been completed in the body contributes to your lack of motivation and feeling overwhelmed.

You might realize that you are not living your life to its fullest potential because of what someone else did to you. However, it's not an excuse to take the backseat in your life and to stop trying to improve your quality of life. It is your life after all.

Part 2 Forms and Consequences of Abuse

Chapter 8 Different Types of Abuse

Abuse can come in different forms, the major categories being:

- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Abuse is not limited to these categories. Financial dependence is a form of abuse as well.

In this chapter, we will look at these major types of abuse.

Emotional Abuse

This kind of abuse can be blatantly obvious or very hard to spot. It does not always leave a physical mark on the person. The consequences of being abused can only become apparent after several months, or even years.

The more you become consciously aware of the abuse that is taking place or took place, the more you will be able to identify the abusive patterns and put a stop to it. It may be challenging to recognize abuse that took place early in your childhood.

Your childhood experience marks your emotional, spiritual and mental foundation. When abuse trauma is part of this foundation, then it can be very challenging to recognize a destructive environment. Your frame of reference is that abuse is normal.

The abuse is all that you have come to learn. Recognizing that something is wrong with your life and the way people are behaving can be a rude awakening at first. Familiar patterns that you once thought was normal, are now nothing but destructive and unhealthy for your emotional well-being.

It's not always easy to recognize an unhealthy life-long pattern when you have not experienced anything else.

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Little did I realize in my own life that my father was manipulating my mother and me through fear, humiliation, intimidation and constant criticism.

As an example, I acknowledged at a young age that my father was rather “broken.” I realized the full impact of how different he really was compared to my friend’s father. I was in kindergarten, playing at my new friend’s house, when I realized how nice their father was. Their father would talk to them in a calm manner and the father would show a lot of respect to their mother. I was amazed to see this side of a father figure. This is when I had my rude awakening realizing how different my life was compared to that of my friend’s.

I confronted my father when I was about nine years old. I asked him why his behavior was so different to my friend’s father’s behavior. He said that he still wanted to be young and he did not like being a father. I didn’t know how to respond other than just stare at his piercing eyes. I was amazed at his brutally honest answer.

Recognizing the abuse that could possibly take place in your daily life might be challenging. Especially if you don’t have a clear reference point for what a healthy relationship or friendship, should be and feel like.

Here are some points to think about. You might recognize some signs that you are being emotionally abused if:

- You are being treated like you are worthless or undeserving;
- People deliberately try to humiliate you and make fun of you;
- Your values are not respected;
- You are put down by people;
- Co-workers spread lies about you at the office and take credit for your work;
- People deliberately break your belongings; and
- People insult you.⁶

Emotional abuse can include the following behaviors from family members, friends or partners when they:

- Continuously criticize you;
- Insult you;
- Refuse to share money where it is due (financial abuse);
- Threaten to leave you if you do not obey their rules;
- When they abuse your pets in order to hurt you;

⁶ People who insult you are also projecting outwards how they actually feel about themselves inwards. They suffer from their own self-loathing and experienced trauma by the hands of their caretakers.

- Constantly call you inappropriate names and tell you how stupid, dumb, fat and ugly you are; and
- When they talk to you like a child

Emotional abuse can also be disguised as criticism, manipulating your expressed needs to suit their needs. Emotional abuse takes place when an abuser belittles you with the intention of disempowering and controlling you.

An abuser refuses to acknowledge how their behavior is harming you, when they are confronted. This only creates more arguments. They leave you feeling as if you are always fighting for your truth to be heard and respected.

Abusers are addicted to arguments. It creates a rush of excitement.

Peace only follows once you have changed your beliefs and values to be the same as theirs. It assures peace in the house. However, you think you have restored peace in the house; you have actually enabled the abuser to behave in the same inappropriate way in the future.

Abusers may also:

- Threaten to abandon and reject you;
- Humiliate you when you express yourself;
- Create debt that you have to pay for;
- Be close to you one day and distant and cold the next day;
- Give you the silent treatment to punish you;
- Be inconsistent with what they want or need; and
- Demand your time immediately or give unnecessary and demeaning orders

All of these behaviors are forms of emotional blackmail.

Being excessively controlled by means of anger, possessiveness, threats or jealousy by a parent, sibling, co-worker, friend and teacher is emotional abuse.

There is a difference between passionate love and aggressive love. It can be very easy to mistake these two concepts. You should never feel emotionally trapped in a relationship. Your freedom should be your own. Your freedom and emotional space are not supposed to become less over time due to a partner who wants to control you.

Partners, family or friends are also not supposed to make you feel guilty for making other arrangements with your friends.

It is very important that your partner, friends and co-workers respect you and your time.

Your self-respect is diminished when you are abused. It leaves a person feeling as if they are not worthy of being respected. You think that if you

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deserved being respected then you would never have been disrespected in the first place. This is unfortunately an unconscious thought that starts to surface without you even realizing it. What you emotionally want from others should always start within yourself before you can start searching for love or friendship. What you want is to create and build your relationships for all the right reasons and not to fill a void in your life.

It's important to learn how to love yourself first and how to be your own friend before you can be a friend or lover to someone else. Friendships and relationships should never be sought after as a result of neediness.

- I need attention;
- I need love;
- I need acceptance;
- I need to be validated;
- I need to be and feel more important than my partner or friends activities;
- I need to be with someone else before I can feel safe; and
- I need a partner that can make me feel complete

The moment you say you need something you create lack in your lives.

People sometimes have such a desperate need to be a part of a friendship circle or in a relationship that they put up with abuse and clashing values just to fit in. Any relationship can be successful if there is a fair and healthy energy exchange; if you don't recognize this in your relationships then it is perhaps time to explore your boundaries and what you really want from a friendship or partnership.

Be clear with what you expect and want from a relationship – whether that's a friendship, love relationship or working relationship. The clearer you are of your own needs the more you can address them and choose the right people to become a part of your life.

Neglect Abuse

Neglect is a very common form of abuse among society. It's not always intentional. One of the main areas where neglect occurs is when parents work long hours and they spend too much time away from their children. This may occur because the family is financially challenged. It can also be because the parent or parents are unconsciously trying to escape their own inner turmoil in life by keeping busy.

Children are typically neglected, as the parents are too preoccupied with their own challenges in life. They might even unconsciously resent the child

for being there and making matters harder for them. This normally comes into play when a parent fails to take responsibility for their role as a parent.

The parent may ignore the child for long periods of time and disregard their basic needs as a form of punishment. There are cases where a parent does not want to or is not capable of being or taking responsibility for their role as a parent.

Children who are sent off to boarding school can also suffer from neglect, though it usually never the intention of the parents to cause them to feel this way. There are many circumstances under which a child needs to be sent to board at school; clear and thorough communication from the parent to the child can create a big shift in the child's perspective and how they feel. If there are circumstances that could make the child feel rejected or abandoned, it's important for the parents to communicate to the child that they are not being punished, nor did they do anything wrong.

Most of the time, neglect abuse occurs without parents even realizing it. The parent can be physically close to the child, however the parent can be emotionally absent and fail to fulfill the child's basic needs. Even lack of regular acknowledgment towards the child can have an adverse effect on the child as they mature.

Ignoring a child's emotional needs and request for comfort is also a form of neglect abuse.

Neglect abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Not providing proper nutrition;
- Lack of shelter;
- Lack of supervision;
- Lack of attention and love;
- Not proper clothing and education;
- Spousal abuse in the child's presence;
- Dental neglect;
- Hygiene neglect; and
- Nutritional neglect

Neglect can also take place in the form of financial abuse where a parent withholds money. Withholding the funds from the spouse and children, which prevents them from buying nutritious food, is neglect. So is failure to meet a child's need for a hygienic environment.

Supporting the child when they are distressed, giving the child attention and love when they need it is important for fostering a child's self-esteem and

self-worth. Leaving a child unsupervised or in an unsafe place is also considered being neglectful.

The key here is that a child's basic needs are met. This enables a child to mature into an adult that can look after themselves properly, and one day apply what they have learned as a child to their own children's growth.

People tend to ask me, "So how do you know that you are raising your child the right way?" My answer is always, "How would you feel if you were responsible for raising yourself?" If you feel the onset of a negative reaction then I am sure it is obvious where adjustment is needed.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when physical force is used with a child or adult in order to control them. Physical abuse can also cause physical injuries, as well as emotional and mental trauma. This kind of trauma can even be stored in your skin and cellular memory.

It's stored in the skin and unconscious mind just as sexual abuse is normally stored in the genital area. For example, when someone is regularly (aggressively) grabbed by the arm during their childhood they could develop a defensive reaction when someone grabs them by the arm as an adult.

I have even seen people who were abused develop bizarre rashes on the exact area where they were regularly grabbed or beaten as a child. If a physical blow activates a physical trauma, it can trigger old hurtful memories, causing them to resurface. The person can possibly overact due to suppressed stress, anger and fear that were suppressed.

People who physically hurt others feel very challenged when they need to express themselves verbally. These people may have been robbed of the opportunity to express themselves as a child. They don't necessarily come from an abusive family. They tend to be desperate to be heard, acknowledged and seen.

Abusers have an obsessive need to control people, especially those close to them. They lack the verbal tools to communicate their needs and in many cases, as a result they use violence and force to express unspoken words and emotions.

The abuser normally fails to recognize that the person on the receiving end of their actions is traumatized by their behavior. They struggle with the concept that other people also have weaknesses and they allow no room for any mistakes to be made by others. This tends to be a direct result of the abuser not being given any room to make mistakes, either.

They are also expressing the lack of control they suffered in their childhood. It's very common for them to feel like the whole world owes them something and that they have the right to get away with their bad behavior. Abusers can even come from good homes. Not all abusers suffered a traumatic childhood.

The recipient of the abuse tends to suffer in silence because he or she feels either too ashamed to ask for help or often due to blackmail from the abuser. The abuser will threaten to leave the partner if they expose the abuser. The abuser ignores the partner's needs, rejecting them and making them feel that they are not worthy of being believed or listened to.

The abuser will use physical abuse and violence as a way of controlling their partner by creating an atmosphere of fear.

I've noticed how when people finally begin to move into their power may become even more abused by their partners. The abuser is trying to bully the recipient of the abuse back into a victim state. The less powerful the abuser's partner is, the more power the abuser is able to exercise.

Physical Abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Being punched or shoved for no reason during a disagreement;
- Physically and intentionally blocking you from leaving a room or environment;
- Throwing an object at you;
- Locking you in a room, car or any type of space where you cannot get out on your own;
- Deliberately leaving you alone in dangerous places; and
- Refusing to assist you when injured

In my case, physical abuse was something I saw as ordinary and it never occurred to me how serious it actually was until I got older and started learning more about abuse.

A person who suffers by the hand of an abuser tends to over-correct their boundaries at one point in their life and they can even find themselves becoming the abuser as a result.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when your physical and private space is physically violated and deliberately disrespected by another person.

Sexual abuse includes but is not limited to:

- Having intercourse with a child or a person against their will;
- Penetration or using the tongue or finger in inappropriate places;

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- Having sex in front of a child;
- Showing children or non-consenting adults pornographic material;
- Having oral sex with a child or non-consenting adult;
- When a child or non-consenting adult is made to touch another person's genital areas;
- Masturbating in front of a child or non-consenting adult;
- Using a child or non-consenting adults in pornographic films and material;
- A doctor "examining" you in an unwarranted and unprofessional manner;
- Feeling obligated to have sex with your partner because they threaten to leave or cheat on you if you do not meet their needs; and
- Giving a partner sex in order to avoid confrontation or arguments

Any sexual act with a child is a criminal offence and is considered sexual abuse. It can also be defined as performing a sexual act on someone by means of force or by threatening a person. This would include touching someone's breast, molestation and rape.

The most common act of sexual abuse is molestation. This tends to happen to children as well disabled people. Old age homes are also targets. Any one that is less likely to speak up or who is perceived as being emotionally and physically weak can be a target for sex offenders.

Sexual abuse often occurs within friendships, communities and family circles. It can be a friend of your parents, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather, day care staff, teachers, coach, priest, friends, siblings and the list goes on. It can happen by being lured into playing a game with someone or can be projected by force and threats.

Children don't always recognize when they are actually being abused as they accept orders from familiar authority figures without question and do not recognize sexual acts as a violation. It is only in later stages of the child's life that they are educated about sex and molestation that they begin to put the pieces together in terms of what really happened in their past.

The more force that is used during a sexual act with the child, the more traumatized the child will be as they mature.

The majority of people who suffered sexual abuse as a child (whether by force or game) or an adult tend to block the incident with the intention of keeping themselves safe, in order to mentally and emotionally survive.

When you deny the reality of your past, it only makes the problem worse. The more you suppress your past, the more you will see the consequences of it surface in your present life and relationships. I cannot emphasize how

important it is to talk with someone about these issues. You should never push yourself to be ready to deal with the sexual abuse either. Talking about it is already a way of processing what had happened, however it is not a solution.

How the sexual abuse makes you feel is one of the challenging issues that needs to be dealt with. Feeling dirty, disgusting and ashamed partly stems from your own confusion as to what had happened, as well as how and why you allowed it to take place.

The offender will try their best to shame you and blame you for provoking them. They make it seem like your fault with the hopes that you will not tell anyone about the abuse.

When the person who suffered from sexual abuse starts to have vague memories of what happened, they can develop physical and psychological side effects. These include shock, trembling, nausea, headaches, pain, anger, irritability, depression, social withdrawal, lack of concentration, humiliation, shame, guilt, abusing food or substances, anxiety attacks, heart palpitations and sleeping disorders, just to name a few.

Sexual abuse can be stored in the genital area and in the breasts or in the area affected. When a person was exposed to sexual abuse, they tend to find it challenging to have sexual intercourse with partners. The stimulation of their genital area triggers the shame and guilt that they associated with those areas. It also triggers disgust and feeling violated. Sexual abuse can have lifelong side effects if it is not dealt with when the symptoms begin to surface.

Pedophiles

Pedophiles have an abnormal interest in children and will engage in sexual acts with them. The sexual acts can range from masturbating in front of a child, manipulating the child into having oral sex with them, digit stimulation, fondling or undressing the child to full sexual penetration of the child.

A pedophile can be a man, woman, businessperson, bus driver, gardener, teacher, family friend, family member, sibling, young, old, coach or even a counselor. Pedophiles can be married or single.

Pedophiles tend to offer their time and support for free to children's sports organizations, scout troops, day care centers or to baby sit at someone's house. Pedophiles tend to target single parents who desperately need some type of support with their children.

They seek out children that they are acquainted with, as it is easier to engage with them and gain their trust. It's also easier to find time to be alone with them where the sex acts will take place.

When a family member sexually abuses a child, the child is less likely to speak up. The child trusts the source and thinks that what has happened is normal and simply a part of life. Children are also very willing to please their parents/authority figures and will accept what is happening to them just to keep the peace and balance in the home.

It is only when that child grows up that they realize what has happened to them was wrong. They start to feel guilt, disgust, and shame and humiliation. Children who were abused by people outside of their family circle are more likely to speak up. Those abused by a family member or friend tend to keep the secret to themselves, especially if the household is already destructive. The child only wants to please a parent and avoid causing ripples within family circles and jeopardize the peace.

Pedophiles are aware of what they are doing and their intentions are typically premeditated. However, when they are caught, pedophiles will try and push the blame onto the child by saying that the child was being sexually provocative. Other excuses include that they were teaching the child facts of life. At times, the pedophile could even say that he was showing the child love and affection.

Sexual acts performed by the pedophile can take place in the child's home, at school, during sport practice, in changing rooms, at church, a friend's house and day care centers. The pedophile is adept at gaining a parent's trust, which enables them to spend time alone with the child.

Pedophiles often had a sexually abusive childhood. It might not be the case for all pedophiles. For some, they may have had a perfectly normal childhood, however, they could have been sexually assaulted and abused by someone outside of the family circle on just one occasion.

Recognizing a pedophile's traits, patterns and warning signs is often challenging. This is especially true if you trust or were programmed from childhood to trust certain figures within a family or community. It can easily cause a person to overlook warning signs.

Your denial and fear of seeing the truth can sometimes be so great that you choose to unconsciously avoid what is happening or has happened.

Some people believe that pedophiles never sexually matured. Others believe that it is because children possess no threat to the pedophile and this gives the pedophile a chance to take a sexually dominant role. This still does not justify their behavior in any way, however these are all possibilities.

Chapter 9 Abusive people – The warning sings

If you are reading this book, there is a good chance that you, or someone you care about, is or was in an abusive relationship. Sometimes you can feel that something is wrong, but it's not clear that you should use the "abusive" label. In this chapter, I help to describe the subtle signs of abuse and define boundaries for healthy relationships.

It is easy to overlook abusive traits and patterns, especially if you have grown accustomed to them. Once you become aware of the fact that something is wrong with the way you are treated, it may be too late, you've already experienced the abuse.

Abuse becomes normalized

People who are abusive get what they want through dominance and creating fear in the target.

They know what they are looking for in a partner. They target people who have a low self-esteem, as it's easier to cross their boundaries and get away with appalling behavior.

It's also easy for the abuser to convince someone with a low self-esteem that nobody will ever love him or her as much as the abuser does. This makes the partner emotionally dependent on the abuser as they feel the abuser is their only source of love. The abuser can easily convince his or her partner that they would be nothing without them. Before the target even realizes what is happening, the abuser has already manipulated the target into thinking that the abuser is the authority figure. They have convinced the target to obey them without question. Ignoring a request or order from an abuser can cause verbal confrontations, violence or in extreme cases, death.

Abusers don't necessarily have to be violent in order to be abusive. They can be emotionally manipulative. The abuser can control your freedom and restrict access to money that is rightfully yours

Sometimes our students would discuss incidents that happened to them and it would be quite clear that they didn't even recognize the abuse that was taking place. They didn't recognize the abusive patterns of their family members because it was normal to them.

I also could not recognize the abuse that was taking place in my life. I grew up with hostility, violation, and violence around me. It was nothing out of the ordinary for me when I was confronted by abusive behavior - it felt familiar to me.

If abuse has been a part of your life's foundation then it can be challenging to form a picture of your life without it. It feels as though it is a part of who you are. People who have suffered abuse become numb to the harsh reality that surrounds them.

You convince yourself that because the abuse was normal in your past then surely it is normal now. You tend to learn from an early age to sit tight, fight against the odds and wait and see how your life will pan out. Just as in childhood, it seems like your options are limited.

If you recognize some of the signs that I describe in this chapter, then you should ask yourself whether you are witnessing or even experiencing abusive behavior.

Try to step aside from what has become normal to you in your life. Just because people have always behaved in an abusive manner does not make it appropriate or "OK."

Abusers make it your fault

The abuser always shifts the blame onto those around them. Nothing is ever their fault.

The more you give in to an abuser, the more they are going to feel that their behavior is acceptable. They find a way to escalate their demands, to get away with more. Abusers have no patience to try and communicate calmly and there is no benefit in encouraging them to do so either.

They deflect when they argue with the intention to confuse the other person and get the upper hand during an argument. They will use an argument as one of many excuses to justify their abusive behavior. For example, they might say, "I was angry," or "You asked for it and it's your fault."

Once the argument has settled down, they will blame you. They will say that it was your fault that they behaved the way that they did. You provoked them.

Abusers never take responsibility for their actions. No matter how well you state your case; they will be in denial and blame you for their behavior. If you accept their rationale that everything is your fault, you slide deeper into the cycle of abuse and being controlled.

If you are with an abusive partner then it is important to explore why you attracted them. Do you have poor personal boundaries? Do you suffer from low self-esteem? Do you feel insecure within yourself? Are you attracted to the stereotypical bad boy or bad girl? Do you struggle with self-acceptance? Do you need people to define who you are? All of these issues can result in a person accepting an abusers bad behavior, which allows them to get away with it.

Targeting vulnerable people

Abusers are on the lookout for potential partners who have a low self-esteem, poor boundaries and insecurities. They deliberately choose weak partners, as it is easier to manipulate them. Abusers have an incredible urge to control their environment and the people close to them.

They could potentially become more violent when they feel that they have lost control of their partner or environment. Abusers know that when they lose their temper, their partner will obey and listen to them.

The recipient of the abuse never fights back and the abuser knows that. They will make you feel that you have no right to say “no” or even have boundaries. The only boundaries that you are allowed to have are the boundaries that they allow you to have. If you move outside the boundaries that have been set by the abuser, then an argument is sure to follow.

It’s easier to manipulate vulnerable people, especially if they have poor personal boundaries. It’s much harder to control and manipulate someone who is self-confident and has strong personal boundaries.

Abusers can lose their temper anywhere at any time

Abusers don’t necessarily live out their abusive traits behind closed doors at home. They can lose their temper anywhere. They can start yelling at you in the street whilst people are watching. Their intention is to intimidate can confuse you, giving them the upper hand during an argument. They will and can become abusive whenever and wherever they see fit.

Abuse disguised as “love”

Abusers can work in extremely subtle ways to demean you and make you feel small and worthless in their presence, while at the same time telling you how much they love you.

They will shower you with gifts. They will do nice things for you to convince you that they have your best interests at heart. They will twist the truth, leaving you feeling that you wrongfully accused the abuser and that you don't understand them. It is only a disguised plan to make sure that you stay in the relationship.

Even pet names that they have given you can have a belittling meaning behind it without you even realizing it.

Their manipulations cause you to question your own sane judgment. They reward you with the attention that you are searching for only when you obey them. Their love always comes at a price. Love should be unconditional, not conditional and filled with fear. An abuser will put you under the false pretense that they love you eternally.

They claim to be misunderstood

Abusers tend to claim that they are just misunderstood. It's the perfect, “Please feel sorry for me,” tactic. When you hear someone express this passing comment after behaving in a strange or alarming way, it should be a red flag. Why did they need to say that in the first place?

Normally it is so that you would dismiss any odd or out of character behavior they might display. That statement could cause you to ignore warning signs because the thought was planted in the back of your mind, “He's just misunderstood, it's alright I will just ignore that aggressive and odd behavior.” These incidents, fights and mishaps only leave you feeling very confused and unsure of your judgment toward this person. It leaves you feeling as if you are the one to be blamed and that you have to fix something within yourself. You feel obligated to mend the relationship because the abuser now has you convinced that you are the one who is ruining the relationship. When you feel stuck in this dilemma, then it is quite clear that the abuser has successfully stepped into the dominant role in the relationship.

You have now become an object or asset to the abuser.

Identifying abuse – a checklist

See if you can identify any of the points below in your life. This will also help you become more aware of yourself and how you feel.

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See if you can recognize any of these in your life. Check any that apply:

- ☐ Do you become a different person when you are with your partner?
- ☐ Do you blame yourself for the “punishments” that are taken out on you?
- ☐ Do you feel isolated and distrustful of people who are normally trustworthy e.g. doctors, psychologists, community workers, new friends, teachers and police?
- ☐ Are you financially and emotionally dependent on someone and they are abusing that dependence?
- ☐ Do you use your own sense of judgment or do you have to obey someone else’s will?
- ☐ Do you feel ashamed of yourself and your life?
- ☐ Do you feel obligated to protect someone who is causing you harm?
- ☐ Do you feel reluctant to ask for help, even if you know that you can’t live in a certain way anymore?
- ☐ Do you use anger as a shield to protect yourself?
- ☐ Do you feel disempowered in your everyday life?
- ☐ Do you feel consistent resentment towards your partner?
- ☐ Do kind gestures such as a hug from people close to you feel disrespectful?
- ☐ Do you feel scared, unsafe, depressed, anxious and unhappy in your relationship/friendship?
- ☐ Are you scared to speak up to your partner in case they might get angry with you?
- ☐ Does your partner/friend deliberately humiliate you in front of others for entertainment?
- ☐ Do you hide physical bruises and marks that were inflicted during a physical argument?
- ☐ Do you always make excuses for your friend or partner’s behavior and try to protect them when they have done wrong?

How many of these points did you tick? This list is here to give you an idea of the unconscious patterns that you might have developed. It is important to learn and understand your own behavior, to know what feels right and what feels wrong. It’s important to be able to recognize whether or not a situation feels safe and healthy to you.

The better you know yourself and what your needs are, the more you will become aware of a relationship that is growing in an unhealthy way.

The Warning Signs

Let's explore some warning signs of an abuser.

- ☐ Do they show unhealthy signs of jealousy?
- ☐ Do they prevent you from socializing with your friends or try to manipulate your schedule so that you don't have time for friends anymore?
- ☐ Do you feel limited in your sense of freedom when you are with them?
- ☐ Do they have a short temper and blame you when they can't control their emotions?
- ☐ Do they have poor self-worth and lack responsibility?
- ☐ Do they have excessive mood swings?
- ☐ Are they abusive towards their parents? (If they are able to be abusive toward a guardian then that is a clear sign that you could receive the same treatment)
- ☐ Do their parents have a history of drug and alcoholic abuse? (This can cause aggression.)
- ☐ Do they constantly call you, text message, email, etc. to check up on you?
- ☐ Do they show extreme jealousy when you talk to or spend time with other people? Do they throw a tantrum or say negative things about the people that you socialize with?
- ☐ Do they call you insulting names in front of others or in private?
- ☐ Are you always making excuses for their behavior?
- ☐ Do they make over-dramatic statements such as, "I will kill myself if you leave me. I can't live without you. I have to see you every minute!"
- ☐ Do they deliberately humiliate people and talk down to them?

Recognition

There comes a point when you start to notice that something is wrong in your life. There is that little something in your life that feels out of place and wrong. You start to look around, to examine your environment and your relationships with others.

Sometimes, the breakthrough occurs when you compare your life to someone else's. You ask yourself why? Why is my life so different? Why doesn't everyone get verbally abused or beaten? You look at other people's lives and then realize how utterly unhappy you are with yours. Something is wrong.

It then begs the question, "Why is my life so different?"

Someone once asked me, "If you are so unhappy with someone then why don't you just leave?" It hit me. I was too scared. I had spent a big part of my life giving my power away to others. I realized that I had given up all my goals

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and dreams for my future in order to keep the peace in my life and relationships. I could feel how the veil over my eyes was starting to lift.

Chapter 10 The absence of a conscience

What is a conscience?

Having a conscience means you feel compassion or remorse for your actions. Without a conscience, a person lacks empathy towards others and becomes apathetic. A person without a conscience doesn't care about you, your needs, your safety or wellbeing.

In the past, someone without a conscience may have been labeled a psychopath. The term used for sociopath and psychopaths has been changed to Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD) in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual DSM-IV-TR.

Antisocial Personality Disorder is described as "a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood."

Why do people become apathetic?

APD is the extreme end of the apathy (or no empathy) spectrum. Many people suffer from this condition without a diagnosis of APD. People become apathetic as a result of continuous abuse and suppressed emotions. I have also found that people who are apathetic toward others often have a family history filled with abuse trauma. This person's parents or ancestors may have experienced long term abuse to such an extent that they have successfully suppressed their emotions and ability to feel and process their reality. It is too painful to feel and, as a result, they suppress or disconnect from their emotions. Essentially, they are overcompensating in order to numb themselves from the trauma they experienced or witnessed.

A person who is apathetic as a result of trauma can emerge from the apathetic state when this trauma is resolved. People who are born in to this apathetic state would need to explore their family history issues and generally require a higher level of specialist therapy.

Living with someone that suffers from APD

My father has an empathy / apathy disorder although I am not aware of any formal clinical diagnosis. After describing my father to psychologists, I believe that the term APD best describes him.

He may have been born with feelings or empathy, however, the impact of his own childhood and a lifetime of alcohol abuse severely damaged him. He is completely without remorse and has an overwhelming apathy towards the needs and feelings of other people.

My father behaves in an erratic manner, not caring what his actions or words will mean to others. His ability to feel remorse or guilt for another is still absent even when he is completely sober. This was especially true when it concerned my mother and I. We experienced the full brunt of his behavior, which was a complete secret to those outside the family. Normally, only loved ones are aware of this person's weaknesses, the rest of the world is oblivious to it.

It's important that you have an awareness of APD because it helps to understand the common patterns of the abuser, who is charming in public and incredibly frightening and manipulative in private. It is common for the real symptoms of APD to surface only behind closed doors.

Signs that someone suffers from lack of empathy

People who lack empathy fail to feel any remorse or guilt. They ignore rules; laws and they have no moral standards of their own. They also tend to act on impulse. You can have the other extreme where they are master planners and manipulators.

They can, with focused or unfocused intent, cause harm to people and not even think twice about it. They don't ask themselves, "How will my behavior make the other person feel? What emotional stress will that my actions inflict on the other person because of my actions?"

Everything they do is focused on their own sole benefit and they don't care what they have to do to get it. Lying to a lifelong best friend or spouse is effortless.

Their focus is to win the attention of others, which makes them feel good about themselves. It validates their importance. They believe they are the beginning and end. They can cry at the drop of a hat if they need to, in order to manipulate a situation into their favor. They are masters at charming people and fooling them with a warm smile. They have the ability to make you feel like you are the most important person to them.

They are experts at observing people, summing them up and copying their behavior down to the tiniest detail. They know exactly what to say in order to get what they want. They don't experience emotions the same way that an average person does.

The ranges of human emotions are not available to people with APD. They are like robots programmed to only have their needs met.

They are addicted to situations that will give them an adrenaline rush, no matter who gets hurt. They can manipulate people into doing things that are abnormal and out character.

They can commit crimes and convince their co-workers to cover up and lie on their behalf. They learn from an early age that charm or ruthlessness is going to be their gateway to their goals.

Their personality is based on what people generally like to see in them. They often adapt to certain characteristics that are popular with the majority of people.

Nothing that they say has any meaning or value to them. Words are empty vessels. They have just learned how to use these words and manipulate the content and tone to get what they want.

This doesn't mean that people with APD are outside of society—quite the contrary. According to Stout's *The Sociopath Next Door*, many of the most successful political and business leaders are sociopaths (have extreme APD) precisely because the lack of empathy frees them to do what's needed to get to the top. This also indicates why APD is difficult to treat – the secondary gain of APD is the ability to effectively manipulate others. From the sociopath's perspective, any form of healing would require relinquishing the tool that differentiates them from the masses. No wonder they are so resistant to healing!

It appears that they can get away with almost anything and they know it. They will only take action when there is some kind of benefit in it for them. Even if only for the sake of an adrenaline rush.

I once had to go to a public hospital in South Africa because my friend was in a car accident. As I walked through the open doors of the hospital there were at least 100 people sitting lined up against the wall. Everyone was covered in blood. They had all been involved in some kind of domestic violence or gang fight. When I say covered in blood I don't mean little scratches! They had gaping wounds and broken limbs.

While I was walking through the crowd of people struggling not to step in a pool of blood, I saw a child of about five-years of age sitting next to his mother. They were sitting

outside of the room where they had taken my friend. I leaned forward and looked at the child's head, which was covered in blood. I could see his cracked skull. I looked at the mother with horror and asked what had happened to him? She replied calmly, saying that her husband had a bad day at work. I looked at her baffled and I asked her where he was? The answer I was hoping for was that he was in prison I was hoping that she might have called the police to report him for child abuse.

She replied that he was sleeping because he was tired. I struggled for a few seconds to regain my calmness and sense of sanity before just walking away. The mother looked numb and incredibly disconnected from her environment.

It made me wonder, "What has this man done to you for you to be so emotionally suppressed, scared and blind to his brutality?" I remember thinking, "What needs to be absent in someone's mind for them to be able to do something so inhumane?" It all boils down to needing a conscience in order to understand how your behavior can cause others harm. You should be able to understand that there are and will be consequences as a result of your unjust behavior.

What had happened to that child could only be the work of someone suffering from APD, or worse. . I acknowledge that you can do silly things when you are tired and pushed too far by stressful circumstances. However, it was obvious from the mother's reaction that the abuse that the child had experienced was not his first encounter.

That father did not care about anything or anyone but him. That father was physically violent towards his son and nearly beat him to death. One more blow to the head and that child would not have made it.

The father took action and punished the child with no thought of how his behavior might cause a great deal of physical and psychological harm to the child.

Tremendous anger and irritability are additional traits of people who lack remorse. Their irritable nature can quickly and unexpectedly turn into violent fits of rage if they can't control their environment. It doesn't take a lot to set them off because they tend to be in a place of lingering anger.

That same night at the hospital, a guy was wheeled in by two big police officers. He was sitting in the wheelchair in his underwear, half-conscious with only a small trickle of blood running out of a small hole in his throat. His girlfriend was standing in the hallway next to another police officer. This was a case of domestic violence. She stood in the doorway looking half-irritated and not even upset that her friend was injured and losing consciousness.

I heard the one officer speaking to the other one saying that he should write down notes from the suspect before they leave. I then overheard the other officer saying that the man in the wheelchair was sleeping when his girlfriend attacked him. I gathered that the lady was

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the injured man's partner. She stabbed him with a bicycle spoke in the neck and ruptured the main artery and he was bleeding internally.

She was standing a few feet from me when everything started to play itself out. I was watching her every move and reaction. There was no emotion present. The next minute the man in the wheelchair was pushed over to the side of the room, which happened to be right in front of me. The injured man in the wheelchair opened his eyes, looked at me, his eyes rolled back into his head and his head fell backwards.

He was declared dead in the minutes that followed. His girlfriend who saw everything happen in the room just rolled her eyes, sighed and looked angry and irritated.

She knew what was waiting for her and clearly understood the legal implications that were to follow. The only thing that was missing was remorse; there was no hint of sadness. There was no sign of guilt, shame or loss. I would describe her reaction as being almost irritated, "How dare he die? Now I have to go to court and jail because he decided to croak." She was only thinking of how this situation was going to inconvenience her.

She did not care about the fact that she just took someone's life; there was no sign of shock. There were no tears. It was just a mere inconvenience to her. The police arrested her in the hallway and took her to the police car. My friend asked how they knew she was guilty and apparently, there were a few witnesses who reported the same story.

The behavior of someone suffering from APD can vary. I am sharing this to give you a broader view of how the level of severity in certain situations and circumstances can vary. Abuse can be subtle or severe and can cause you to lose perspective and common sense, especially when the trauma that results from severe abuse is left untreated.

People who suffer from a lack of apathy can work and live everywhere

They can easily climb the ladder in business and social circles. They tend to make it to authority levels either in a business, community or friendship circles. They think it's a game to fool people and take advantage of them. They play a power game with the people that they are in charge of or look up to them for guidance and advice. They like to surround themselves with vulnerable people as they are easier to manipulate and it makes them feel superior and powerful.

Some of them lead double lives and their family members are oblivious to their dark, secret double life. In other cases, they reveal their true nature to their family.

They will abuse the people that work for them or sway them in every way possible and throw money at them.

It's all about power. Once they have had a taste of it, they will do anything to get more of it.

People with APD tend to be more aware of and intelligent about their plans. They also get off on other people's misfortunes and pain; after all, it's all part of the game that they play so well.

Helping someone who suffers from APD is easier said than done

Trying to help an abuser to improve and change their life will in most cases only hurt you. People with APD are capable of leading a "normal" personal life, but this life is only a smokescreen and they may have no desire to change or stop it.

If you ever discover that a partner or friend is suffering from a severe personality disorder, then don't try to change them or intervene. Chances are that they have grown fond of their lifestyle. It's like changing the spots on a leopard. They can either behave in a way that satisfies you or that will dominate you into doing tasks or favors for them.

They will try to disempower you if you become a nuisance to them or jeopardize their goals.

They can even pretend to be "Children of God" whilst they are abusing and deceiving loved ones.

In most cases, these people don't want to be respected. They want to be feared. They are not searching for love; they only want to be obeyed. They don't care about teamwork; they only want power. They don't care about people; they believe they are the only person of value that exists in their world. Your support of them might be seen as an opportunity to take advantage of you.

Apathy leads to bad decisions

Apathetic people do not consider possible consequences of their actions when they make decisions. My father provides the perfect illustration of this.

My dad met Ivan in a pub. Ivan was homeless so my dad invited him to live in our house and appointed Ivan to work for him. The next thing we knew, Ivan and my father were business partners. Who was this man to whom my father gave such power and authority? We didn't know, and neither did my father.

My father's agenda in all this was that Ivan could live in our house for free whilst doing all the business work. It meant that he could sit in the pub longer and have a wealthy life, a lifestyle that he has been endlessly chasing.

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What my dad did not take into consideration was the possible consequences of his decision. Where is Ivan from? Who is he? What is his background? Does he have a criminal record?

The results were that we lost everything! Ivan committed fraud in my father's name. We lost the business, cars, house, furniture...everything. Did my father care?

No.

Did he care about the fact that he used the fund for my university fees to pay for his debt and bar tabs? There was no sign of stress, regret, remorse or guilt.

He sat on a plastic stool with a beer in his hand watching us packing up the last bits and pieces of our belongings that were left after the bank confiscated the rest. I asked him what I am going to do when I am finished with high school. He looked at me and said, "You will figure it out."

He was sitting in the pub whilst my mother and I had to pick up the pieces of his careless lifestyle.

At no point in time did my father do or say anything about the situation. Forget about getting an apology! He hired a cheap lawyer to finalize the court paperwork and he filed for bankruptcy.

While all this chaos was taking place, my father was sitting in the pub every day continuing to charm other drunken pub goers into buying alcohol for him.

People with APD can bulldoze through other people's needs, feelings and objections. This can lead to great success in business if they prioritize business success above all else. Alternatively, it can lead to abject failure if they prioritize laziness, or time at the pub, as in my father's case.

Chapter 11 The relationship between abuse and boundaries

There is a “chicken and egg” relationship that exists between abuse and boundaries. Abuse can destroy your boundaries. Poor boundaries make you much more vulnerable to abuse. Does abuse cause poor boundaries or do poor boundaries lead to abuse?

Abuse affects your personal boundaries. Boundaries define your personal space. They define where your territory starts and ends. A physical boundary defines your physical space or property. An emotional boundary defines your emotional space and how you would like to be treated.

Children start to explore their boundaries when they build tree houses or a house under the dinner table. They are exploring their physical sense of boundaries. They can decide who is allowed to enter their space and who is not and this is a great way for them to explore their boundaries.

Emotional boundaries allow you to express what is acceptable to you and what is not. When that boundary is crossed you will either feel angry, disrespected, taken advantage of or disempowered because your limits were not valued by others.

Boundary issues play a major role in abuse. Abuse can cause poor boundaries, and poor boundaries lead to abuse (because of an inability to say “no”). Many forms of abuse can be prevented with strong boundaries.

Abuse can affect people’s boundaries in different ways. Some people will “give in” internally and may lack boundaries altogether – they stop saying “no.”

Other people have almost the opposite reaction. To keep themselves safe they overcorrect their boundaries, saying “no” aggressively, even if the answer should sometimes be “yes.” When people overcompensate their boundaries,

they can become bullies in their family, at school, in society or at work. The victim can become the abuser.

You may be wondering why people react to abuse in such different ways. I believe it has to do with their survival instincts. People who survived the abuse by freezing (the most common response) are more likely to have little to no boundaries. People who survived the abuse by fighting are more likely to overcorrect their boundaries by becoming aggressive and angry.

The origin of boundaries in early childhood

Poor boundaries start in a person's childhood. Parents don't give children enough emotional space and freedom to exercise saying "no." If you were not allowed to say "no" during your childhood then you might have found it challenging to set boundaries as an adult.

What happened to you when you exercised saying "no" to your parents as a child? I remember getting a smack followed by an intimidating voice bellowing, "What did you just say? You have no right to say that to me!"

Many parents think that they own their children. In my opinion, this isn't true. In my opinion, no one owns anyone. Parents are responsible for their children; they are their guardians and teachers. It is the parent's responsibility to help their child understand what boundaries are in a healthy way. Parents should also create opportunities for the child to say "no." The parents are also there to instill in the child that they are worthy of saying "no." It is safe to say "no." They need to understand that saying "no" does not always mean that they are going to be punished or attacked.

Children need to experience their own boundaries by learning to make decisions, provided it's not going to put their life in danger.

I know some parents are shocked by the suggestion that they should encourage and reward their child for saying "no." This comes at a cost or inconvenience to the parent. The same parents who refuse to accept a child's boundaries are also asking "Why is my child (in this case an adult) in unhealthy relationships or being abused by others?" It seems that parents expect that after years of punishing the child for saying "no" to them, that the child failed to develop healthy boundaries in order to say "no" to others.

Boundaries start at home, with the parents. The child needs to have discernment to know when they are allowed to say "no." In other words, they need boundaries to their boundaries. Consistency here is very important.

I have had a father (a client) say to me once that he couldn't understand why his daughter was dating such a "bad boy" who did not treat her well. I

thought that I would point out the obvious by asking him, “Did you ever allow your daughter to say “no” to you?” His answer was “no.” I asked him why he expected her to exercise boundaries and say “no” to this new male figure in her life. I told him, “Your daughter was never able to exercise and establish her boundaries toward a man.” He looked stumped and also understood the message that I was trying to get across.

Setting boundaries

In order to set an effective boundary you need to be able to say “no” with conviction. It’s no good saying “no” if you don’t mean it or if you come across so weak it lacks credibility. That is not a boundary.

People often feel ashamed and guilty when they say “no.” The guilt is formed because, as children, you were made to feel bad when you said “no.” Saying “no” also brings up a fear in people that their family and friends will reject them. No one likes being rejected and as a result, they suppress their boundaries with the intention of being accepted by their peers or authority figures.

The way that you project your boundaries immediately defines a big part of who you are to the receiver. It sets the standard of how you would like to be treated by someone. If you don’t set boundaries, you leave it to the other person to decide what your boundaries are.

If you say “no” in a calm and confident manner, your boundaries will most likely be respected. If you are going to say “no” with fear and aggression then the abuser will probably not take you as seriously as they might if they sense that you are coming from a place of fear.

When your boundaries are crossed

You know that your boundaries are being crossed when you start to feel uncomfortable, uneasy, taken advantage of and resentful as a result of someone’s action or decisions that affects you.

It’s important to discern what is privately and socially acceptable for you. When you are sensitive to people’s presence in your space and in big crowds, it is an indication that you lack strong personal boundaries. The clearer your boundaries are, the easier it is for you to adapt to social circumstances without feeling overwhelmed and invaded.

Abusers take advantage of poor boundaries. They know how to make their problems your problems. For example, my father always created fake disasters to take advantage of people’s sympathy. There was a time when he lied and said he was robbed at an ATM after withdrawing all his money to

repay my mother. It was a great scam though he hadn't prepared well enough to have a bank statement to support the story.

He is a master manipulator and liar. I have come to learn how he operates with people to get what he wants. I can now say "no" without feeling any guilt towards him.

It is my right – it is everybody's right – to be respected and treated with respect by others.

You have every right to move away from people that don't treat you the way you feel you deserve to be treated. Saying "no" is the first and most important sign that you have learned to stand your ground when needed. It is also important to recognize when someone else crosses your boundaries.

As an adult, you have every right to say "no" to a parent when they are being unreasonable or abusive. People are under the illusion that they are not allowed to set boundaries with their parents, regardless of their age. This collective consciousness has been proven to be very unhealthy in a family dynamic.

I have a good example of this. I was visiting my parents in South Africa in 2008. My mum and I were sitting in the living room talking about my latest adventures when my dad came home from the pub. He drove into the driveway and walked in from the side door where he parked his car. He said that the car's distributor broke and that he needed to get it replaced. He subtly hinted to me that he needed money to fix it. However, knowing my dad, I immediately knew that something was a little bit off. I opened Google on my phone and searched the words "broken distributor in a vehicle" and it said that if a vehicle has a broken distributor that you could push the vehicle to the nearest service station if that was a safe option for you.

I paused and looked up at my dad and said, "You drove the car back, right?"

"Yes," he replied.

I asked him, "So you just drove the car into the driveway?"

"Yes, I just came back from the mechanic and he said the distributor is completely broken and I need to replace it."

"Oh, interesting, well there is good news and then there is bad news." I told him. "The good news is that you don't have a broken distributor because you just drove the car into the driveway. The bad news is that your scam did not work on me."

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My dad had that same look on his face, as a five-year-old would if you caught him out eating biscuits in the kitchen! I could only laugh because that is exactly what my dad is like.

I've worked a lot on my boundaries and find it so much easier to recognize people who are outright lying to me with the intention of abusing my boundaries and goodwill.

It was my right to say "no," I stood my ground and listened to my intuition.

In my experience, having no boundaries made me feel like I had no life purpose at all because everyone else was making decisions for me. How do you live a life with no boundaries? How do you become successful or start your own successful business without healthy boundaries? How can you be happy in a relationship without healthy boundaries? How can you be happy if you don't even know what your boundaries are?

Your boundaries give others a guideline of what is acceptable to you and what is not. It allows you to feel respected, empowered and be able to make your own decisions.

Knowing the difference between trauma and boundaries

People sometimes unconsciously hold onto their trauma to keep them safe. The trauma becomes a substitute for boundaries. There are a few ways that people might confuse trauma and boundaries. Broadly, they could be passive or aggressive. The passive approach is to retreat inwards (to hide) and not take any risks. People who stay inside their house because the outside is dangerous are creating a type of boundary – but really, they are just using their trauma (related to abuse that affected their ability to express and have boundaries) in order to try to feel safe.

The aggressive approach is to use the emotional suppressed charge or tension of the trauma (such as anger, horror, fear and terror) and convert this tension to create boundaries and keep people away.

For example, it is not uncommon for women who have been abused by a man to become quite aggressive and confrontational with men in general.

A common symptom of confusing trauma and boundaries is excessive weight gain. Because of a lack or failure of real boundaries, the person uses their trauma to create a shield. The body responds by adding weight as a "spare tire" to shield the person from unwanted sexual attraction, touch or intimate relationships. Setting boundaries this way is extremely unhealthy.

Instead of working on letting go of trauma, people utilize their trauma in order to keep them safe. This pattern always has a negative outcome.

Learning to say “no”

If you have trouble with boundaries, it's important to start working on it. It is important to begin recognizing when a situation is making you feel resentful and uncomfortable.

Fear of rejection and abandonment is another reason why you might be apprehensive about expressing your boundaries.

Sometimes you are scared of saying “no” because it might hurt the other person. If that's the case then there are compassionate and tactful ways of saying “no.” You can say “no” with the utmost compassion and love without provoking an argument or confrontation. If the person responds in a negative manner after you said “no,” then it's more than likely their issues have been triggered. It's not your responsibility to own their problems. Their behavior and reaction toward your reasonable boundaries is their responsibility.

You are responsible for your own behavior, actions and reactions when you set boundaries towards an uncomfortable or offensive situation.

Learning to set boundaries is part of the treatment process in healing the trauma of abuse. If you decide to book a session with a MAP practitioner, you will first clear the trauma of the abuse and then clear any fear related to saying “no.” It's important to resolve the abuse trauma so that you are setting healthy boundaries, not channeling the abuse energy into boundaries.

Examples of boundary issues to explore

Here are some examples of poor boundaries:

- Someone asks you a favor and you feel too guilty to say “no” and instead you say “yes,” even though you don't want to do it;
- Not giving people your honest opinion; you would much rather tell them what they want to hear;
- Allowing people to make decisions for you without consulting you first;
- Having an arrogant person in your life walk over you when they feel like it—having your boundaries laughed at;
- Feeling like you have to carry other people's problems for them;
- Finding yourself feeling trapped between your dreams and what someone else wants – and you end up giving up your dreams so that your partner can pursue theirs;
- Not wanting to ask for support, with a hidden fear that it might create an obligation or commit you to something unfair or inappropriate;
- Having trouble receiving assistance from others;

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- Not feeling worthy of receiving assistance from others;
- Feeling like people are trying to manipulate your thoughts and reactions;
or
- Being told what to do and not asked if you would do it

Boundaries should be a natural state. You should not be fighting for your boundaries in order to be respected. If you are fighting for your boundaries then situations will manifest in your life that will make you feel that you need to fight even harder for those boundaries.

Remind yourself of the points below when you are faced with a situation where you need to set boundaries:

- I am worthy of having my own boundaries;
- I am a powerful being with my own unique boundaries;
- I am my own creator and creator of my boundaries;
- I choose to have my own opinions and boundaries;
- I am worthy of respect;
- I respect and love myself enough to say “no;”
- I value my time enough to say “no”; and
- I am capable of making my own decisions

My own experiences with learning boundaries

Most of my life I have either lacked boundaries altogether or over-corrected boundaries by using my trauma (and fight instinct) as a boundary, depending on the circumstances. I did this my entire life until I was able to process the abuse trauma.

My poor boundaries made me feel like I was carrying the side effects of my past with me everywhere I went. I always felt violated, dirty, disgusted, humiliated, self-loathing and defensive. I indirectly expressed those emotions in my everyday life. It was an illusion that I created for myself that made me feel weak.

I wrapped my whole life around my trauma and it created this illusion that I had no rights.

As an adult, entering a very male-dominated workplace, I found that my trauma could keep me safe. I moved into the category of over-corrected boundaries, in which my fight instinct kept me safe. Of course, trauma is not a real boundary, but under the circumstances, it worked.

I have had co-workers become physically violent in my office on a construction site because one employee tried to control the other employee's area. I had to break up the fight with a chair, as their swinging fists were

coming too close to me and I feared that I might get hurt. I had such a big fright that I grabbed both of them by their collars and threw them out of my office. They both lost their jobs due to the violent outburst.

My fight instinct also helped me to manage abusive supervisors. For instance, I had a boss who was verbally abusive. I once left a 500-page document on his desk with a note on it indicating where he needed to sign the cover page. He walked into his office, picked up the document and came into my office. He threw the document with force on my desk and he said, "What the fuck am I suppose to do with this?" He turned around and walked back to his office. I looked at the document and realized that he hadn't signed it. I picked up the document and walked into his office. I slammed the document on his desk as hard as I could, pointed to the note and said, "Read it? You're supposed to fucking sign it!" He looked so embarrassed and shocked by my response. He signed it and from that day on, I had the utmost respect from him. He abused everyone in the office except me. Now it begs the question, "Would I have attracted a boss that was so verbally abusive if I was never abused and exposed to verbal abuse in my childhood?" The answer can be complicated, but in this instance, I am going to make it simple. I believe that I would have been able to attract a much calmer and in control boss if I myself was able to be calm and in control within myself. I believe that you tend to attract people into your life who reflect how you feel about yourself.

Given that abuse was so much a part of my life, I was not scared to stand up for myself in challenging situations. I was desensitized to it, and familiar with how to respond.

To demonstrate just how desensitized I was by the trauma, I once physically controlled a laborer many times my size and perhaps twice my age.

He had walked into my office, sat down and placed his dirty muddy boots resting on my desk. He looked at me and asked, "So when will you and I get together?" I have seen and experienced a lot in my life, but this was something else. I told him to get out of my office. He became aggressive and said that he would leave when he was ready. It almost felt like a vein popped in my head when I heard him say that. I got up from my chair; I grabbed him by the ear and literally pulled him out of my office by his ear.

My behavior might seem aggressive, but that is how I survived on construction sites where men outnumbered women, 200 to 1. . It was in my nature to defend myself when I felt unsafe. I relied on my fight instinct, and hence my trauma, to protect me.

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Sure the trauma protected me, but at a great risk. As I learned growing up in such a harsh and hostile country, standing up for oneself is not always the safest option.

What's the correct response? It's the one that doesn't come from fear or trauma. When you are in a place of clarity you know how to defend yourself and you know the difference between setting a boundary and over-correcting a boundary. It means that you set your boundaries from self-love and the feeling that you deserve to have boundaries.

Your boundaries are a reflection of your inner strength; conflict is a reflection of your inner weakness

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to work on your boundaries. Learn to say “no” when you feel resentful towards a situation. You are polluting yourself by just giving into others demands and needs. You will find that people will begin to respect you more when you say “no.”

An important point I've learned is that healthy boundaries and inner strength allow you to facilitate a confrontation with much less drama. It's a sign of your inner wisdom and growth. The more you listen to yourself and your own inner guidance, the stronger you become.

Chapter 12 Self-sabotage and Hidden benefits

Let's start off by distinguishing between self-sabotage and hidden benefits.

Self-Sabotage

Self-sabotage occurs when you undermine your own progress whether consciously or unconsciously. This can be in any aspect of your life. For example, you may do something knowing very well it's not a healthy thing to do, such as drink, smoke or overeat.

Another example is that you might unconsciously do something to destroy a relationship in its early stages so that there's no chance of intimacy and getting hurt.

Popular examples of self-sabotage are fear of success, or fear of getting what you want. Some people who are in relationships have a fear of commitment, which creates tension and arguments. They may even go as far as to unconsciously provoke fights and arguments so that the other partner can't tolerate the strain in the relationship anymore. Eventually, the other person ends the relationship.

When this happens, the person with the fear of commitment blames their partner for leaving, instead of taking responsibility for their own behavior and contribution to the end of the relationship.

Another example is when someone is single and has a fear of commitment, or being hurt. They find fault with people that they meet. Nobody is good enough for them. The person may say or do something silly in order to put the other person off from dating them. They can be nervous about meeting a new partner or blind date. They can sabotage the meeting by creating a separate problem in their environment that may delay meeting the person or cancel the date altogether.

Self-sabotage also comes forward when someone wins the lottery, especially if they previously had an average income. These people will often

lose all the money that they won in a relatively short period of time. This only puts them back where they started financially.

I believe that self-sabotage is based in the back of the mind, in the subconscious. Your conscious mind (where you live in the here and now) is willing to achieve the goals that you have in mind. The subconscious mind (which is greatly influenced by trauma) may have a different agenda and does not cooperate with the conscious mind's desires and goals.

Self-sabotage is also the end result of your lack of self worth and low self-esteem, which is a result of trauma.

I've learned that the best way to break this cycle is to ask the question, "What is the benefit of sabotaging _ _ _ in your life?" Will something happen that you have been trying to avoid, if you succeed in your goal?

This brings me to the topic of hidden benefits.

Hidden Benefits

Hidden benefits provide another obstacle to your progress. Hidden benefits are unconscious motivators that reward you for holding on to your problems. A well-known example of hidden benefits is secondary gain, a recognized psychological term. I am using the term-hidden benefits because it's broader than the psychological definition.

Hidden benefits can block you from letting go of old habits and patterns. In one way or another you think that the emotional or even physical block you have is serving you in a positive way.

You may have addressed certain issues in your life on many different occasions, but the problem hasn't gone away. When you find yourself in this dilemma then there may be a hidden benefit that you have not yet identified.

Let's return to the fear of commitment example. Unconsciously, you might do something to destroy a relationship in its early stages so that there's no chance of getting hurt. This is a type of self-sabotage. A relationship fails because of your unconscious fear of getting hurt. The cycle continues and all your relationships fail. The hidden benefit is that your fear of being hurt keeps you safe. Feeling safe is your main priority.

Hidden benefits are normally the reason why people don't heal completely from their past and current hardships. Sometimes, in playing the role of victim, you get more love and attention from those around you. If you appear weak then you do not pose a threat to others and won't be attacked.

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Another hidden benefit of being a victim is that people always come to your rescue, which makes you feel safe, secure and cared for. This was the case for me for a long period.

A significant hidden benefit is avoiding taking responsibility for yourself, your emotions and your actions. Instead, you want to blame your outbursts on your abusive past and not take responsibility for yourself, your future actions and reactions.

When people have experienced abuse, they don't have to take responsibility for the abuser's actions. Instead, it's up to the recipient of the abuse to take responsibility for their own reactions, both to the abuse and for how they live their life going forward. Instead of wasting away in pain and despair, it is the recipient's responsibility to decide how they are going to move forward, rather than automatically choosing to be a victim.

An example: I had a client once with genital warts. Her condition did not respond to modern medicine or alternative healing. I learned that she worked in the sex industry. She worked as a stripper but she was prevented from earning more money because she was unable to have sex with her clients due to the embarrassment of her genital warts. Because of her conservative background, there was also some cultural shame about prostitution and I imagined that the most immediate hidden benefit of the warts was that her condition prevented her from crossing that line between stripping and prostitution.

This was not the real hidden benefit at all. It was discovered that her main fear had to do with having sex with her boyfriend. She had a fear of penetration that was much more pronounced in the context of an intimate relationship than it would be with paying clients. Through the sessions, we learned that a family member had sexually abused her as a child. It is not uncommon for survivors of child sexual abuse to feel safer having sex with strangers than in intimate relationships. This is because there are no feelings involved with the stranger, so there is little risk of being hurt, abandoned or rejected.

I learned this because I asked her, "What would happen if the medication did heal the warts?" She looked at me with a distressed face and said, "I would have to have sex with my boyfriend again." I asked her what was so bad about sleeping with her boyfriend. She replied that she would have to be intimate with him, which has been a lifelong fear for her.

In this example, it is very clear how the abuse created a fear of intimacy, which sabotaged her relationships. She developed genital warts, and the

condition served her, providing a hidden benefit. The benefit of the warts was to avoid confronting her fear of intimacy. The fear of intimacy did not cause the genital warts. Rather, she contracted the virus, and the fear of intimacy was the hidden benefit, which sabotaged the healing process.

Hidden benefit behind blame

Blaming people for your problems, illness and emotional state becomes a hidden benefit if you use it to avoid taking responsibility for your own healing or moving on with your life. Don't forget about your own healing journey.

You are responsible for yourself and how you are going to handle your journey after the abuse. You are in control of your life and your emotions. Only you can take charge of yourself and choose how to respond and react to your environment. I acknowledge that you might experience your past as a traumatic time, but that is not an excuse for getting on with your life.

Is there a hidden benefit to holding onto anger?

Another example of hidden benefits is the benefit of anger. People hold on to their anger, because it makes them feel heard or powerful. In this case, they are using anger to compensate for poor personal boundaries. The hidden benefit of the anger is that it helps them to feel safe. It is very unlikely that this anger will dissipate until they work on their boundary issues. They need to feel safe before they are willing to release the anger.

We all have hidden benefits. The most challenging step is to identify these patterns in your own life. Hidden benefits sometimes serve you to such an extent that you don't want to uncover them.

The hidden benefit of avoiding taking responsibility

Avoiding taking responsibility for yourself means that you keep blaming others for your problems. You can blame others for the choices you have made and are still making. The first step when dealing with hidden benefits is to become aware of them. The hidden benefits become so much a part of your identity that you may feel disempowered without them, even though logically they are disempowering. It is important to learn to trust and rely on yourself and not on the hidden benefits in order to get through the little speed bumps that life can throw at you.

Taking responsibility for yourself and the choices that you have made in your present life can be one of the biggest opportunities to finally heal from abuse. It may also be difficult if it is too painful to see what is there. For this

reason, it is best to ask someone to assist you in exploring your patterns. See it as an opportunity to get to know yourself better.

How do you identify a hidden benefit?

Now you are probably wondering how you can identify these situations. I suggest you look at your life and see where you feel stagnant and stuck. Maybe you want a new career or to heal from old hurt, etc.

Ask yourself, if you healed from the old pain, what would change in your life that you don't want to change. The answer might be that you can't blame or hold others responsible for your pain anymore. In many cases, there is a powerful fear, such as fear of failure, abandonment, rejection or success. Avoiding the fear is the hidden benefit.

Where there is a hidden benefit to the symptoms of abuse, it is necessary to clear the hidden benefit before the hurt and abuse are resolved.

Many people try to heal the trauma directly without working through the hidden benefits. This is almost always unsuccessful because the hidden benefits will sabotage the healing process.

When the hidden benefit is fear, as in the above examples, you can clear the benefit by using powerful transformational techniques to clear the fear.

After the fear is cleared, you often find that the underlying trauma or abuse has largely dissipated and is therefore much easier to heal.

Chapter 13 Avoiding responsibility

You are not responsible for the abuse that happened to you (it's not your fault). You are responsible for how you feel, how you live your everyday life. The abuser can only abuse you; they cannot define who you are. That is your responsibility.

When I started my healing journey, I was so focused on the anger that I had within, that I failed to take responsibility for the life that I created for myself. Instead, I felt angry that circumstances influenced and affected my quality of life and how this made me feel. . One of the reasons for this is that I didn't quite understand what taking responsibility in this context really means.

Taking personal responsibility for how you feel means that you take control of your emotions and stop punishing people for how you feel as a result of the abuse. I had to take personal responsibility for my future and how I was going to move away from my trauma and "broken" identity.

It is crucial for people who've suffered from abuse to regain control and take responsibility for their own life again. This doesn't mean you forgive the abuser or condone their behavior in any way. When you take personal responsibility, you do it for yourself and no one else.

Bringing the abuser to justice is not going to help you to heal. (It is worth doing for other reasons such as to protect the innocent, but don't let the progress of your own healing depend on it). Blaming the abuser is not going to deal with the consequences of the abuse and how it affects you. Even though the abuse was not your fault, you still have to get back on your feet and regain control of your life. The longer you leave it, the more it can and probably will control your future.

Under no circumstances am I saying that you have to take responsibility for the abuse that was inflicted upon you. The key here is to take

responsibility for your future, your sense of power and how you are going to move forward and away from the past. This can take place by starting a new life, healing from the abuse, finding yourself again and working on improving your quality of life and being successful

Taking personal responsibility is an essential part of the foundation of healing. It's very empowering to take responsibility for your life instead of being a victim and waiting for someone to fix you. Instead, you take your power back and you heal your own blocks.

One aspect of taking responsibility and not being a victim is to ensure that you don't turn into an abuser yourself. This can occur in a subtle (non-violent) way when you overcorrect your boundaries and in how you express them.

The role of a practitioner and taking responsibility

Practitioners, doctors and psychologists can't magically fix their clients. A practitioner can assist and support clients with strategies and techniques to heal.

The client, however, is the only one that can actually make the necessary changes in their life. Failure to take responsibility occurs when the client expects the practitioner to bear the burden of the healing. Some clients and students expect me to have a magic wand—to have the ability to do tricks that will instantly make their problems go away.

I wish I could fix people's problems and pain that easily, because I personally understand how agonizing abuse trauma can be. However, I am only a facilitator of the healing process.

I too had to take responsibility for my own healing journey and not leave it in the hands of others. I had to take action and turn my past into an opportunity to heal and grow from. It was a challenge to alter my perspective—from a helpless victim to an individual who took control and charge of my life again.

Some psychologists and New Age healers cultivate a guru mentality, expecting their followers, clients or patients to follow their advice without question. They expect their clients to keep coming back long term.

This doesn't help in educating the person on how to accept personal responsibility. This common model of therapy is good for the practitioner's ego and wallet, but it's hardly ever in the client's best interests.

An example of taking responsibility is when a client sees a practitioner, takes their advice, perhaps does some independent research, and makes

changes in their life. An ineffective illustration is when a client who seeks advice, receives a healing and feels better afterwards, takes no action to actually change their routine or bad habits. Instead, they sit back and wait for the changes to magically occur.

Clients and students often fail to take responsibility when they:

- Expect practitioners to have a quick-fix to their problems which involves no work on their part;
- Want to blame other people for their problems or feelings;
- Prefer to make excuses and blame others for their problems rather than try to eliminate the problem; and
- Believe that their emotions or feelings are someone else's fault.

For instance, imagine that someone has done something that makes you angry. The anger belongs to you—it is your anger. You can disagree with what the other person did, but you can't blame them for the anger that you are feeling. You chose to react in anger.

It is fine to be angry because someone hurt or upset you. You shouldn't suppress it or feel that you are in the wrong for feeling angry. Experience the anger and set up a boundary, if need be. However, don't dwell on it and don't give the anger so much power that it causes you to lose control of your behavior.

You are responsible for your anger. This means being accountable for how you behave and what you do when you're angry. The same goes for the abuser who might be angry because someone did something wrong. They need to have ownership of their anger and the actions they take in anger. Failing to take personal responsibility can cause a lot of pain to innocent people.

As a therapist, it is important to guide your clients to an understanding of responsibility that it is not the same as blame. When the client cannot take responsibility for their journey, there is often some hidden benefit. For example, the benefit of not taking responsibility for the therapy might be that failure is not your fault; you don't need to confront your fear of failure. You can keep yourself small in society and not be susceptible to attacks, judgment and or rejection.

Sometimes a successful healing might mean ending a relationship or beginning a new one, leaving a job or finding a new one, changing habits or routines that make you feel safe, etc.

By not taking responsibility, you avoid confronting your fear of success. In this case, the benefit is that there's no need for you to acknowledge your own accountability such as the impact of your own behavior or the hurt you have caused others.

By not taking responsibility, a person can avoid their guilt. There's always someone, such as the therapist, to blame for a healing session that did not work. It's much easier to avoid taking responsibility. There's no need for the person to make changes in their life. It's relatively easy to passively receive a healing and much more difficult to return home and make big changes.

Taking personal responsibility does not excuse the abuser. The intention is to take your power, your future and your life back into your own hands. When you have entered this stage of your life, you begin to see your true potential that has been suppressed by abuse.

Chapter 14 Abuse causes long-term suffering

Unresolved abuse trauma has consequences. In this chapter, I describe several forms of physical and emotional suffering, which stem from abuse trauma.

If you (or someone you care about) identify with any of these conditions, I highly recommend speaking to a qualified practitioner. All of these conditions can be treated with the right help. You can find a list of practitioners on my website.

Depression and Common Illnesses

I too have suffered from depression. I cut myself off from my environment and the people around me. Depression can become a tool to help you escape from your environment. Recognizing depression within you can be challenging, especially if it has been present from an early age.

Some people have suffered from depression their entire lives. They think that their emotional state is normal because they have not experienced their life without depression.

Depression is a condition where the person is experiencing one or more of the following symptoms; depressed moods, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disrupted sleeping or appetite patterns, low energy, and poor concentration.

Left untreated, depression can escalate into more damaging conditions. These can include chronic illnesses, weight gain, anorexia, isolation, disinterest in interacting with people, feeling easily overwhelmed, loss of self-expression, crying, feeling irritable, feeling suicidal, feeling empty and alone, insomnia or sleeping too much, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, self-loathing, and over-negativity. The list is vast.

Depression has many causes. For the purposes of this book, I will focus on the impact of unresolved abuse trauma. What this means is simple (and

fundamentally important): depression cannot be healed without dealing with the underlying abuse trauma.

Many people go to therapists for years, talking about their depression, without any improvement. Some end up with a lifetime of medications, which don't do anything to help the underlying issues. In other words, most treatments for depression are a step backwards in the healing journey. Because of a lack of understanding of the underlying emotional causes of depression and how to treat them, a relatively simple condition can become a lifetime of suffering.

If you or someone you care about suffers from depression, and if there is a possibility of abuse (including abuse to your parents rather than to you personally), I urge you to seek the support of a therapist who is capable of resolving the underlying causes, rather than focusing on the symptoms and becoming permanently dependent on medication.

Anorexia

Anorexia is an eating disorder, which is related to an emotional state of self-loathing and feeling out of control. These are of course common emotional states among people who have been abused.

The underlying cause of anorexia could be a trauma which caused the person to feel completely helpless and out of control. It is usually a childhood trauma but can be found in the recent family history (such as Holocaust, famine trauma just to name a few).

The strict diet and exercise regime common to anorexics feels like the only way they can regain control of their life. They are lacking the support and tools to gain control in a healthy and successful way. Anorexics have decided to take matters into their own hands. What often begins as an attempt to regain control quickly turns into a dangerous life-threatening illness.

Similar to depression, anorexia can be treated by dealing with the underlying causes, including abuse issues and instability within the family. If a therapist only addresses the symptoms, there is a very high risk of the condition recurring.

Bulimia

Bulimia is an eating disorder which relates to an emotional state in which the person cannot stomach their past abuse (or current relationships which may trigger past trauma). They feel out of control in their environment, which has become toxic.

Vomiting enables the bulimic to rid themselves of toxic emotions, such as guilt, disgust and shame. They do this because they lack the tools and support to make changes in their lives. They feel powerless or unable to change how they are perceived or judged in their environment.

Treatment for bulimia requires a therapist to explore and resolve any underlying abuse issues. If the problem relates to a current relationship, the client will need careful support to make the necessary changes. There is no benefit in treating a patient for conditions such as bulimia and anorexia only to send them back to the same emotionally toxic environment. Failure to address the broader structural issues (working on the client's mental state but not their environment) is one of the reasons why so many therapies fail to make a permanent impact.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)

CFS is also a common illness that is related to abuse and severe depression. People who have been through a great deal of trauma and stress are at risk of CFS.

There are a few factors, which might help to understand how CFS develops (out of the many with stress and trauma). One simple factor is physical exhaustion and depletion. People suffering from CFS spend a great deal of their life feeling as if they have to be on guard. It is almost as if there is an ever present danger in their lives that they cannot identify.

The overall effect is that their adrenals work over-time, holding them in a constant state of fight or flight. The body can only withstand this behavior for a certain amount of time. In this case, CFS is a symptom of the body's depleted ability to respond to a constant sense of threat. The body is stuck in survival mode, without the resources needed to maintain this state. Any energy that the body creates is immediately used by the body's survival system; therefore, any benefit from rest is very short-lived.

The only treatment for this type of CFS is to resolve the underlying threat, which causes the body to be stuck in survival mode.

There are thought to be other contributing factors in CFS, including viruses. These factors should be explored because they are not inconsistent with what I said above. Viruses can deplete the immune system and a depleted immune system (from the fight or flight response) makes the body more vulnerable to viruses.

For more information about the causes of, and treatment for, CFS, I highly recommend reading the relevant section of my second book *Metaphysical Anatomy*.

Adjustment Disorder

In the past, I had a really hard time changing environments and routines. Every time we moved to a different house, I would feel distraught and emotionally scattered for months. This reaction was due to my lack of environmental and emotional stability as a child. My sense of safety and stability constantly changed and at times, it felt like it was ripped right from under me.

Just as I would get settled into my new environment and begin to feel safe, things would change. The changes usually turned out to be for the worse.

These kinds of changes can bring about anxiety and separation anxiety very early in a child's life.

As an adult with an adjustment disorder, you may feel ill equipped to deal with change. Change can trigger a variety of the other problems described in this chapter.

Psychologists refer to these symptoms as an Adjustment Disorder. Treatment requires an acknowledgement of the underlying trauma, which caused the lack of emotional and physical stability in childhood.

Emotional associations that become lifelong patterns

What is an association? It is a mental connection between two events or feelings. For example, if talking to your father regularly results in your being hurt, then you begin to make an association between your father (or men) and hurt. An association can be caused by a single intense incident, or repeated stressors can reinforce it gradually.

A child's brain is programed to make associations quickly. For example, the first time you put your hand on a hot stove you get burned. You very quickly make an association and learn not to do that again. Your brain begins making associations at a very young age, well before you can walk and talk. These associations form your basic neural network or hard-wired patterns of thinking and behaviors that form your personality.

As important as associations are for your survival, they can also become destructive and detrimental to your health. That's because an association that is valid at one time (e.g. during abuse) is not necessarily helpful as an adult. A simplistic example would be an association of men with pain might be helpful to a vulnerable five year old girl, but not so much to a lonely, single adult.

You make associations to avoid danger (as in the hot stove example) or to get your basic needs met. Think of a cat that is fed at a specific place and time of day – they will keep returning because they associate that person, place and time with getting their needs met.

A child is seeking love and attention (a basic human need), and receives a beating instead, they may begin to develop an association between the need for love and the abuse they receive. They may also begin to associate bad behavior with getting attention. The child subconsciously adjusts their behavior to get more attention by misbehaving. Why? Because bad behavior gets attention, attention gets punishment and punishment is what they receive when they were seeking love. All of these concepts have become associated in the child's mind.

I am going to use my childhood as an example. When I needed love from my father, I experienced rejection and abandonment. I started to associate my need for love with abandonment. Whenever I needed love, I was rejected and abandoned. I attracted partners that would constantly reject me and abandon me when I sought love and acceptance. This pattern only came to a halt when I dealt with the underlying abuse issues. Now, when I want to be loved and accepted that is exactly what I get.

Although these negative associations are well understood by therapists, the most common treatments are inappropriate. The biggest problem is that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these associations made for each trauma. These are unconscious triggers relating to sights, smells, colors, etc. It is impossible to clear them all and for that reason its in appropriate to work with changing associations (or negative beliefs, which are associations expressed as words). The only safe and effective therapy is to clear the underlying trauma.

When you truly resolve the abuse trauma (truly resolve means you can no longer picture it in your mind and the charge has completely gone), the associations disappear. Yes, you can clear all negative associations or beliefs at once simply by resolving trauma. This is why I place such emphasis on resolving trauma in my workshops and guard people against working with symptoms alone, bypassing a trauma only causes it to resurface.

Environmental Triggers

Environmental triggers are a type of emotional association. In this case, the association is with something in your environment rather than another person. Everyday objects in your life can remind you of your abuse or

negative experiences. This includes smells, sounds or textures found in your living environment.

Phobias may stem from some level of abuse because the person may have made a negative association with the object that he or she has a fear of. I will give you some examples from clients.

Example One:

As a child, Anne was abused by her Uncle. He would always bug and kiss her in an inappropriate way that would make her feel shameful and disgusted. As an adult, she experienced the same emotions of shame and disgust whenever her partner would bug and kiss her.

Example Two:

Betty was running home from school one day, laughing because her friend told her a joke. She was excited to share the joke with her father, who was mowing the lawn in front of the house. Betty ran into the yard and accidentally kicked a small pile of loose grass over the lawn that her father had just raked up. She started telling the joke to her dad with so much joy. Her father however, was more frustrated about the mess that Betty made by kicking the pile of grass. He yelled and smacked her. Betty started crying and felt very upset, invalidated and traumatized by her father's unexpected reaction. Betty made an unconscious association with the smell of freshly cut grass and feeling insignificant. As an adult, every time she smells cut grass, her unconscious mind remembers the association she made. She begins to subtly feel upset, invalidated and uncomfortable.

Sometimes the trigger can make you feel unsettled with no clear reason why, especially if you cannot remember the association that you made.

Example 3:

John has a cat phobia. When John was a kindergartner, his teacher sexually abused him. There happened to be a cat in the room whilst he was being physically violated. His phobia of cats stemmed from this incident because of an environmental association between the cat and John's feelings of being scared, violated and disrespected. On some level, it was easier to hold onto the negative feelings about cats than it was to remember the abuse. Every time John sees a cat in his environment, it triggers feeling of being scared, violated and vulnerable. John had no conscious memory of the abuse until it came up in therapy. Resolving the abuse trauma cleared the phobia and subsequent allergy.

I used to feel very angry whenever I smelled alcohol, especially beer and brandy. I would start to feel angry, resentful and stressed as a result of the associations that I made with these substances during my childhood. There was always alcohol present when I was abused by my grandparents and by my father. This created a very strong negative association.

When these types of associations are triggered, it can cause a great deal of anxiety. The anxiety is a result of not being able to identify why a person feels upset or bad when they smell/see/feel or hear something that may have unconsciously reminded them of a traumatic time in their life.

The only solution is to clear the underlying trauma. This raises the question “To what extent do you need to know about the abuse (especially suppressed or forgotten trauma) in order to clear it?” The answer is that it is possible to clear trauma without remembering it, provided the intention is to feel and process it. This important question is covered in more detail in our workshops and in my second book, *Metaphysical Anatomy*.

Anxiety

Anxiety can take the form of excessive worrying, feeling a sense of urgency, panic and mild paranoia. A person’s thoughts race from one concern to the next. Further symptoms could include feeling restless, edgy, tense and having difficulty sleeping. Anxiety can be an extreme form of worry.

People worry about everyday things, such as their work, finances and family. Feeling sad and being lonely can result in a great deal of anxiety, as the person may have experienced trauma and abuse when they were alone. Loneliness compounds the problem of anxiety because the person who is alone lacks the support systems that could resolve their problems.

People who have social anxiety are afraid of social gatherings and often feel that people are staring or sizing them up. Being the center of attention is their worst nightmare. They often dislike eating, drinking, or other activities such as writing, in the presence of other people. Some commonly feared social situations include: attending parties, public speaking, job interviews and exams.

Anxiety is common among people who have been abused. The trauma of abuse is destabilizing and can cause many phobias, which can create anxiety. Therefore, anxiety is another symptom of trauma.

Anxiety is also a product of poor boundaries. If the person has a history of having their boundaries violated, then they are likely to feel unsafe. The patterns become reinforced over time (poor boundaries leads to more violations), resulting in a pattern of anxiety. Since abuse trauma is a major cause of poor boundaries, it is also a major cause of anxiety. See the Chapter related to “The relationship between abuse and boundaries.”

Fear of abandonment

Anxiety is tied in with fear of abandonment. Fear of abandonment and rejection is common among people who have experienced abuse. Fear of abandonment may result from intentional abandonment, which has been used to punish a child.

People with this fear will often sabotage perfect relationships in their life. They expect to be abandoned and rejected by a loved one at some point. They unconsciously sabotage their relationships by expecting to be abandoned and rejected. While this may begin merely as a fear, it eventually manifests itself and becomes reality after their fear drives people away.

People with this fear will jump from one relationship to another fearing commitment, because as a child they never experienced loyalty or commitment from, or between, their parents. Extreme patterns of jealousy can result.

The person has been so emotionally deprived during their childhood that the moment they find a friend or partner who shows them true friendship, they will most likely end up sabotaging the friendship due to neediness and possessiveness.

When you examine the fear of abandonment, you reach a deeper level in which people who have been abused unconsciously want to be alone. They feel safest being alone, as the odds of being hurt are less. It becomes safer to surround yourself with people you don't care about because losing them doesn't matter and maintaining contact is far less emotionally taxing.

As with all other conditions discussed in this chapter, it is not possible to resolve the fear without first resolving the underlying abuse issues.

Holding onto unhealthy relations

Consequences of fear of abandonment may be that people put up with unhealthy relationships and circumstances. They would much rather be abused or tolerate circumstances that are unhealthy for them than be alone.

I ended up holding onto relationships and people in my life that were unhealthy for me. My fear of being alone sabotaged my personal progress in so many ways, as I held onto circumstances and people for all the wrong reasons.

Lack of self-respect

Have you ever wondered why others don't respect you? I've wondered about it myself. My understanding changed when someone once asked me a very important question, "Do you respect yourself?"

I thought I did, however, when I really thought about it, I realized that I actually had no idea what self-respect was.

Feeling respected is an important aspect of a person's upbringing. If your personal space and belongings are disrespected, it will affect your self-esteem and how you treat yourself and allow others to treat you.

Lack of respect can take place in a variety of ways. This can include your body, your emotions and your property. When you have suffered from abuse and have been constantly disrespected, it leaves you without a concept of how to feel respect towards yourself.

Feeling and showing respect towards someone else is always easy because you treat people the way you would like to be treated. It's easier to give respect than to receive especially if receiving only brought you pain and confusion in the past.

How can you expect others to respect you if you don't even respect yourself?

No one can give you something that is missing inside of yourself. The emptiness inside must be filled first (this is a common mistake people make). You will never find love, respect, or acceptance outside of yourself until you are able to give it to yourself. This can be achieved using tools like MAP.

Self-expression

The ability to express your feelings and needs is critical to being a happy and successful individual. At the most basic level, you cannot expect to get your needs met if you cannot communicate them to others.

Do you blame people for disappointing you when in truth you haven't even shared your needs? This is a common problem for people who have experienced abuse

If you are not able to communicate and express yourself then you may feel stuck, frustrated and angry. You feel robbed of your right to share your truth and ask for your needs to be met in a healthy way.

When a child's ability to express him or herself is suppressed, it can result in either becoming overly introverted or extroverted. Introversion occurs when expression feels too dangerous.

Extroversion may occur when the child over-compensates for the unmet need to be heard. Perhaps they discover that it's only through performance and over-reaction that they can express their needs.

Blame and self-blame

It is normal to feel that someone has to take the blame for unethical and abusive behavior.

There were moments during my teenage years when I needed to blame someone for the things that went wrong in my childhood. I never blamed myself and knew that what had happened was not my fault, just as I realized later in my life that I was not responsible for my alcoholic father's behavior.

I blamed my grandparents and my father for my behavioral issues and depression. When I reached my early twenties, I realized that I couldn't play this blame game anymore. I had to own my problems. I could no longer blame anyone else for my mistakes. I struggled to take responsibility for my actions and behavior because it was just too easy to blame an outside source.

That's the danger with blame – it's a way of avoiding taking responsibility for yourself and your future. Blame creates a "victim trap" which stops people from moving on.

A perfect example: A potential client phoned me to talk about her abuse issues and enquire about a session. All I heard was a story of blame. I told her, "If you want to heal, you will need to learn to take responsibility and let go of the blame." She said to me "No, my therapist told me what happened to me is not my fault." She was deaf to anything about releasing blame because the blame was what created a (artificial) separation between her and the abusers. Blame kept her safe. She did not book a session and she is unlikely to ever move on because the blame is serving her too greatly.

The other end of the blame spectrum is self-blame. Just as blaming others is a natural way of dealing with abuse, so is self-blame. The two are not mutually exclusive. Blaming others creates an artificial barrier (there are "bad people" and it's their fault). Self-blame is a way of finding meaning in the world ("I must have done something to attract this"). I find that most people who have been abused carry elements of both blaming others and self-blame.

Violation is extremely confusing, especially if someone has been abused by an authority figure. This confusion leads to a sense that it must have been their fault in the first place. How can someone that is giving you guidance (or who is in charge of clothing and feeding you) cause so much harm? When all

these questions can't be answered, the abused person will begin to look within and blame him or herself for the abuse.

Self-blame is destructive and must be released. By clearing the trauma, you can restore a person's own sense of innocence.

Guilt

Guilt is another destructive emotion experienced by those who have been abused. It is a special type of guilt because, of course, the person has not done anything wrong. A victim's guilt is not the same thing as an abuser's guilt (not that all abusers feel guilt).

Guilt may stem from self-blame ("it's my fault he did this to me"). This is dangerous as it can lead to self-punishment or other self-destructive behavior.

Guilt may also arise from any pleasure or positive association that occurred during the abuse. For example, the mere fact of receiving attention can create a positive association, and this can lead to guilt later on. A child who is sexually abused might experience some form of physical pleasure (even at the same time as pain and disgust).

Male rape victims may have an orgasm even at the same time as being frightened and traumatized. Any pleasure or positive association can cause a great deal of guilt and shame later on.

It is extremely important that the person who has been abused learns and understands that there is nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about. A purely physical reaction to a physical stimulation is a normal biological response. It occurs because the parts of the brain governing sexual stimulation can operate quite independently of other parts of the brain governing emotions and survival instincts. It is not their fault and it does not lessen or excuse the trauma in any way.

Another form of guilt sets in when the perpetrator tells the recipient that it was their fault that they behaved and acted the way they did. The perpetrator will push the blame and guilt onto their victim. The recipient will most likely believe the perpetrator in order to try and make sense of the act or incident that took place.

I feel that guilt stems from a wide range of emotions and not just one sole emotion. Guilt is a symptom of many accumulated and suppressed emotions. It is the same with anger. Anger is an end result of many suppressed emotions.

A turning point comes when the blame game does not cut it anymore. The recipient will either stop the blame or someone else will bring it to his or her

attention. One way or the other, I have noticed that this pattern does finally come to a halt. At this point, the recipient of the abuse has reached a vital stage in their life. When this realization starts to kick in, the healing journey has begun.

I believe that everyone can reach this point, although not everyone does. The critical factor for me lies in the support they receive, and the difference between support and enablement. In my example above of the potential client, she was being enabled by those around her to continue being a victim. Therefore, she is unlikely to let go of the blame game. However, those who receive loving support will naturally outgrow the blame and seek healing.

Self-harm

Self-harm is a desperate cry for help and attention. It can be challenging for people to ask for help as because in their minds, expressing themselves could be more traumatic than cutting themselves. Although it sounds counterintuitive, self-harm can be a form of self-medication as it helps to quiet the mind. It calms down or drowns out all of the arguments, unfair punishment, abuse and emotional torment.

Self-harm can occur where someone has suffered from abuse and they don't remember it. In this case, the subconscious pain and trauma can be so confusing that the person does not know how to find an outlet. At times, they don't understand what they need an outlet for. The person is left with a feeling that they deserve to be hurt, beaten or abused; yet, they are trying to escape the feeling at the same time.

When people cut themselves, all their stresses and anxiety are suppressed for a short period of time. They are more focused on the pain than on their thoughts. The adrenaline rush of cutting yourself and seeing the blood also releases endorphins that give you a quick high.

Self-loathing, disgust, self-punishment and hatred tend to be the main core issues here. Self-harm tends to give people the emotional and mental escape that they so desperately need.

Ultimately, self-harm only physically harms the body. It doesn't take any emotional pain away. At best, it provides a temporary respite.

When you find yourself in this destructive self-punishing pattern, it's best to look for other ways to process your emotions. Seek support, find new interests and get active in physical sports. This can help the body to release pent-up tension and stress.

Most importantly, someone who is self-harming needs to seek immediate attention from a therapist who is qualified to find and release the underlying trauma.

Betrayal

Betrayal occurs when someone violates another person's trust. It creates a mental and emotional conflict within the relationship. It leaves a person feeling confused, abandoned and rejected. A breach of trust can hurt just as much as a physical violation.

Being betrayed by someone, especially someone you trust, is hard to come to terms with. It makes you feel as if your judgment and intuition failed you. You feel like you have failed yourself.

Betrayal is a very powerful and intense emotion to experience. I am sure that anyone who has experienced this never forgets the incident or person that caused him or her to feel and experience the betrayal. It is an action that leaves a deep scar.

From the age of 13, I have not believed people who say, "I promise you..." Promise was my dad's favorite word. He never stuck to it. I always believed him as a child when he would say he promised to be home early or he promised to be at my netball game. There were countless days when I waited for hours at the front gate for him because he promised to take me roller-skating or to the swimming pool. He never did. Nonetheless, I always believed him. His promises always sounded so sincere. As I grew older, I realized that his promises were just one of his ways of telling a lie.

Out-of-control alcoholics betrayed my trust as a child. To me, trust equaled violation, emotional turmoil, pain, instability and abandonment. My adult life confronted me with the same betrayal patterns and pitfalls.

Newly manifested situations of betrayal can cause you to feel as if you are reliving your past in some way. The cycle of betrayal normally only comes to a head when you stand your ground with others who are betraying you. People tend to avoid taking this step, as they fear rejection and abandonment from others.

It is important to come to terms with the betrayal. As much as you would like to suppress the consequences and emotional pain, it is important to explore how the betrayal really makes you feel. The next best step would be to make a decision on to how to move forward from the betrayal.

You can trust again. There are people out there who are worthy of your trust. Loyal people do exist and they can be found in your everyday life. It can

be challenging to recognize trustworthy people if your life consisted of betrayal, as you expect betrayal and deceit around every corner.

It's not always easy to recognize something if you have not been introduced to it properly.

If the betrayal came from a parent then trusting others could be somewhat of a challenge. If the source of love and nurturing in your life, such as your mother, father, guardian or caretaker could betray you, then what is the average person going to do?

These tend to be the questions that are always being asked in the back of your mind. It's a negative cycle and that make you question everyone's integrity and wonder what harm or betrayal he or she is capable of. People who have experienced a lot of betrayal tend to overlook peoples' positive qualities. Instead, they look for signs of how much damage they might inflict.

You end up looking for any sign that can validate your judgment. My intention was to keep myself safe from potential harm. Fearing betrayal made it hard to form friendships and partnerships. I often chose to be alone because it made me feel safe and protected from people who might potentially harm me.

The funny thing is that the people I suspected would betray me never did. My fear of betrayal had the upper hand. It clouded my judgment and my ability to communicate with others at the best of times. In other words, the fear of being betrayed did not protect me from betrayal. If anything, I pushed away the "safe" people (who would not have betrayed me) and kept attracting betrayal into my life. This is the irony of all bad boundaries (boundaries set in trauma instead of self-love). They always backfire in this way.

Fear of betrayal can be overcome. It does take patience and a willingness to see the better side of others.

From a therapists' perspective, there are two distinct steps. One is to resolve the underlying abuse trauma and betrayal. You cannot be expected to trust until the betrayal is resolved. The other step is to work on the fear of trust. This raises the question of secondary gain – how is refusal to trust keeping you safe? Once the trauma and the fear are resolved, you will access a natural wisdom or discernment about who to trust. You will make much better decisions. I believe that this discernment is an inner resource – that means it's something that is inside of you, but clouded by trauma. Clear enough traumas and the wisdom shines through.

When you start to trust others, again you will see people in a different light. You can even see through smoke screens that people create. The façade

that others are displaying becomes transparent. It was worth it, for me, to process my pain and fear of betrayal.

Physical side effects of sexual abuse

In this section, I discuss the side effects of sexual abuse, especially physical manifestations of the psychological trauma. This topic is taboo because people feel too embarrassed or ashamed to seek appropriate help. In some cases, they may resort to drastic surgical intervention to resolve a psychological trauma. Needless to say, surgery can never resolve psychological trauma, only postpone dealing with it.

The memory or trauma of the abuse can be stored in the places where the abuse occurred – skin, genitals, etc. Any touch to these areas, however loving, can trigger memories of the abuse.

Because the abuse may be associated with sexual stimulation, any future stimulation (during consenting intercourse) triggers the traumatic feelings that were associated with the abuse. These include feelings of violation, mistrust, betrayal, horror, fear or terror. Even the thought of sex can trigger feelings of disgust and revulsion.

These associations between the physical touch and emotional pain lead in time to a fear and even rejection of the associated body parts. It can lead to extreme discomfort and disgust with your skin, arms, back, breasts and genitals. The more physical or violent the abuse, the worse the possible side effects are.

For some people, the unpleasant sensations go away when the touch or sexual stimulation is stopped. For others, it can be a lingering feeling that never stops. It can feel as if though the affected area is being stimulated continuously in an abusive manner.

People who were physically or sexually abused might experience discomfort or rashes around the body part that was affected. The rash can manifest on other areas of the body.

The physical side effects might stop for no reason (normally this happens when there is a change of environment such as moving away from home, or an abusive person leaving). They can return when someone or something triggers the suppressed trauma.

Because of the traumatic association with sex, the person is likely to suppress their natural sexual instincts, resulting in tension. Unmet sexual needs can cause added confusion, pain, frustration, fear and a sense of feeling

out of control of your own body. This can intensify the existing problem, causing you to disconnect even more from your body.

Traditional counseling techniques may help the person mentally cope with the abuse, but do little to clear the physical associations or “anchors.” As a result, even after receiving counseling, survivors of abuse have gone so far as to request a surgeon to remove their clitoris and / or breasts. They hope that this de-sexualization will remove the stimulation, which triggers the abuse trauma. Any good surgeon will refer the patient for psychiatric assessment, which compounds the trauma because the client will be repeating, retelling, reliving but never resolving the abuse.

I have had clients who proceeded with the surgery. In each case, the physical side effects returned. *What you resist persists*. The symptoms moved to other areas, for example from clitoris to labia. Alternatively, if the labia were removed, the sensations might move to the vagina.

The unwanted physical side effects or unwanted sexual sensation could even move beyond the groin area to the legs, thighs and so on. This is the same for men and women. You can’t escape the side effects without addressing the underlying trauma.

In some cases, I have found that clients, who did not have these physical sensations prior to starting therapy, began to have these symptoms afterwards. This is because they had successfully suppressed the trauma to the point that they did not feel the symptoms. The suppression causes other symptoms, and it is often these symptoms, such as digestive issues or constipation, rather than abuse, that cause the person to start therapy.

In this case, the biggest risk is that the client cancels their therapy to return to their pattern of suppression. This is surprisingly common as many people find that therapy can unlock suppressed feelings and memories (including these physical sensations). The only way to deal with this is to (a) use a technique such as MAP that can actually clear the trauma; and (b) ensure that the abuse is cleared as quickly as possible. For my clients we would suggest doing several hours work on one day or in close succession in order to clear as much as possible of the suppression, the trauma and the physical associations.

The traditional therapy structure of an hour per week is not appropriate in this situation as it drags the process of releasing suppression out over a period of months.

Physical abuse and its ramifications

Physical abuse also has many side effects, which go beyond the immediate physical harm. Just as with sexual abuse, the physical impact on the body can cause the affected area to be more sensitive to future trauma and impacts. The emotions that a person felt when they experienced the physical abuse can also be stored and anchored into the physical area.

Let me give you an example: My father used to grab me by the back of my neck, squeeze me incredibly hard and physically jerk me around and then push me to the side. He did this often, both in public and at home.

As a teenager, a friend of mine once grabbed me by the neck whilst playing touch rugby. Intense anger and horror surfaced quite unexpectedly. As a reflex, I turned around and punched him. I always felt very powerless and angry when my father grabbed me behind my neck. As a result of this repetitive pattern, I associated being grabbed behind my neck with the emotions of violation and being under attack. When my friend grabbed me behind my neck, the same emotions were triggered as when my father grabbed me. Only this time my reaction was different, as I felt safer to defend myself from someone my own size than with someone the size of my father.

It is helpful to understand that the anger and the violence I projected at my friend are just tools. Like any tool or skill, I used it because I learned to. I was repeating what I had learned from my father, to use these tools in any situation where I felt threatened or disempowered. The reason why this is important is because, from a therapy perspective, it's not the anger or the violence, which is the issue (the tools are just symptoms). It's the underlying trauma that must be addressed. Ideally, with a tool like MAP, you want to go right back to the creation of the "tool," in this case to acknowledge several generations of ancestors using anger and violence to cope with their disempowerment. I punched the other kid using force as a tool to express myself. This is because my most powerful experiences had been that of violence; I used this tool in extreme circumstances.

The consequences of physical abuse include rage, irritation, extreme fear or being submissive.

Sometimes the side effects can take physical form years after the actual abuse.

For example, a student had a physically abusive mother who would shake her very hard by her left upper arm. The student later in life developed a cyst on her arm, exactly where her mother used to grab her. After healing the

physical abuse trauma, the cyst disappeared! These types of patterns are discussed in more detail in my second book, *Metaphysical Anatomy*.

Alcoholism

Alcohol is a drug that provides short term relief to people when the haunting memories of their past have gotten the best of them. People also abuse alcohol to suppress daily stress and cope with feeling overwhelmed with life.

Abuse is one (but clearly not the only) reason that people turn to alcohol and drugs to suppress their feelings and memories.

You have probably all had a glass of wine or beer when things became a little too intense in your life, just to take the edge off. The problem starts when (a) it becomes emotionally necessary, i.e. you cannot survive without it; or (b) you start to drink larger quantities and more often than is medically or socially acceptable.

Alcohol affects the cerebral cortex. This cerebral cortex enables you to process information and thoughts. You also use this area of the brain to make accurate judgments. When this area is suppressed, it causes the individual to become more verbal, while at the same time, get an artificial boost in confidence.

Another part of the brain that is influenced by alcohol consumption is the limbic system. This area controls the individual's memory and emotions. When alcohol affects the area of the brain that controls emotion, the emotions can magnify. Another way of explaining it is that alcohol bypasses the frontal lobe of the brain, bypassing judgment and consequences of actions.

Someone who is intoxicated will not see or judge him or herself in the same way. They will also struggle to judge others and their environment with accuracy. They lose the ability to judge with the accuracy they would have, if they were sober.

Alcoholics respond differently to alcohol, experiencing different impairments. Different physical symptoms and long term side effects in individuals occur from alcohol abuse.

Alcohol helps people to feel more confident or it allows them to withdraw from the chaos. It sedates the drinker, emotionally and mentally causing them to relax.

The body can develop a tolerance for the alcohol, which means that the drinker will need more alcohol to achieve the same state of relaxation.

Alcohol allows the drinker to avoid taking responsibility for their life and their past. It allows them to remain a victim of circumstance.

Alcohol provides a convenient excuse for mistakes that were made. It wasn't their fault something happened—it was the alcohol! Although I accept that alcoholism is a disease, you can see that I do not accept the argument of diminished responsibility. That's because I've seen how alcoholics manipulate this argument very consciously to their own advantage.

Alcoholism is a symptom of the problem; it's not the actual problem or cause of the problem. Alcohol only adds more drama, anxiety and pain to an already existing issue. The trauma came first. Peer pressure, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression etc., can all lead to someone grasping for alcohol. Each of these problems and disorders is, in turn, a symptom of a deeper problem. There is more than likely an earlier trauma or incident that caused the person to feel under pressure by their peers – something happened that caused the person to feel anxious or suffer from an anxiety disorder or to manifest depression.

When working with alcoholics, the first step is to explore why the person is drinking in the first place. What are they getting from alcohol that they can't get or feel on their own, without alcohol? It may be something "positive" like "an ability to express myself." This may be an emotion that they are longing for and was it absent in their childhood. Alternatively, they are searching for something "negative," by which I mean they are hiding or avoiding something by drinking to feel safe.

Alcohol helps people to become apathetic towards their environment and people around them. It helps them to stop feeling the long-standing side effects of their past. It gives them an excuse to avoid their past. They can blame the alcohol for their abusive and humiliating behavior.

Alcohol is used as an excuse to cheat, abuse and even become violent towards partners because they allegedly couldn't control their actions. Alcoholics already see themselves as a victim and drinking too much recreates that same victim pattern in a whole new and different way.

Abuse does not have to be present in the person's life or history for them to become alcoholics. It is only one common risk factor. However, it is possible that there are ancestral abuse issues, even when the alcoholic didn't have a personal experience of abuse. Ancestral trauma can cause nightmares and other psychological symptoms (proved in epigenetic research). Alcohol may be a way of suppressing trans-generational trauma.

I have positive results using MAP to treat alcohol and other addictions in their relatively early stages. Severe addicts and alcoholics may need the support of qualified institutes and as a complimentary therapy use MAP. The first step is that the person needs to want to change. My approach is vastly different from the famous 12-step programs. Those programs seem to reinforce the idea of the alcoholic as a powerless victim. For as long as the alcoholic is giving away their power, it will be true to say “once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.”

I don't believe that at all. I believe that the source of healing and responsibility lies within, not “upstairs.” If the alcoholic genuinely wants to heal and take responsibility in their lives, then they can. It is necessary to identify why they are drinking (what was missing in their childhood or what are they trying to suppress in their life). Once that trauma is resolved, along with the secondary gains of the addiction, they can lead a normal life. They move from being a recovering alcoholic to being a normal person, who can have a casual drink without it having some power over them.

To emphasize again – the results we've had with alcoholics and addicts are only possible with someone who has a genuine desire to change. Someone like my father cannot be healed because it's the last thing he wants. Although he can stop drinking for a month or more at a time, he will always be an alcoholic. The secondary gain of diminished responsibility is far too great.

Chapter 15 Moving forward and forgiveness

“Just let it go,” is often repeated phrase. This is easier said than done. How do you really move forward from old hurt, grudges and resentment? How do you move forward and away from an incident that tipped your life upside down?

The first step is to identify the issue or issues that you’re holding onto. Sometimes you feel a great deal of anger and resentment without really understanding why. It’s easier to convince yourself that you can’t let go of the problem because that would mean the person who hurt you would get away with their actions.

Moving forward in life does not mean the same as forgiveness. Moving forward does mean that you won’t desperately hold onto grudges or trauma anymore.

Forgiving also includes moving forward and away from the past. Forgiveness is accompanied by a sense of peace and understanding.

You don’t have to forgive the actual person; even forgiving the situation is enough to help you to move forward in your life. Once you have done this, you will find a new sense of empowerment because now you are in control of how you feel. The person that you were angry with does not have free rent in your mind anymore.

Most of people are in so much denial that they can’t recognize that there is an issue or block waiting to be released and forgiven.

You may find that to keep yourself safe you ignoring all the obvious signs. Eventually, you will be confronted with something in your life that is going to force you to deal with the very thing that you have been running away from.

What is forgiveness?

People always seem to think that by forgiving an abuser that allows the person to get away with their unacceptable behavior. This is not the case, as

forgiveness means that you forgive the circumstances and you forgive yourself for any part that you may have played in it.

A client once said, “How can I forgive and let go of something so painful? I suffered so much and now I have to give up my pain?” I asked the client, “Is this pain a trophy that you are showing to others? Do you think it’s an achievement to have suffered so much and made it so far? You might have endurance but it’s not who and what you are. Your past is merely a story now. It is not real anymore. You are keeping it alive by holding onto the pain as a survival story to tell others, it is not your identity.”

The client had an amazing breakthrough when I said that.

This happens when the person who suffered the abuse has already processed their trauma. They are now merely holding onto the story. The story gives them an identity and meaning in life. They will feel insignificant without their survival story.

These are all examples of the diverse levels on which you can experience pain and abuse. You hold onto issues and pain for different reasons, which sabotage the opportunity to forgive and move on.

Steps, blocks and hurdles that sabotage forgiveness

Forgiveness comes in two steps

In practice, forgiveness can be achieved using the MAP process in two steps. The first is (always) to address secondary gain. What is the benefit gained in refusing to forgive? In the above examples, it was a misguided sense of purpose and strength that forgiveness would mean releasing the abuser from responsibility.

Once the secondary gain has been cleared, it’s still necessary to clear the underlying abuse trauma. The client needs to know that they are whole again and to take responsibility for their lives. Having done this, there really is nothing left to forgive.

Vengeance

Needing vengeance is another debilitating factor. Vengeance is only going to let you spiral into an anxiety-riddled bottomless pit. The idea of getting vengeance will develop into thoughts that are more negative; your whole life could start to revolve around negativity and in some cases, suicidal thoughts can frequently occur.

If you want the abuser to be brought to justice, then take action. Don't just talk about it, seek professional support. There are groups and teams that are trained to bring perpetrators to justice.

Fear of losing ones identity

Another hidden factor that holds people back, is the fear of losing their identity once they have let go of holding onto their past.

This was true for me. I had no idea who I was without my history and trauma. I thought that my trauma defined my character and everything that I stood for. I was so caught up in the story of my life that I could not afford to let it go. If I did let go of my story then what would become of me? What would I do without my emotional baggage? I would not have anything to complain about. I wouldn't have anyone to blame. I wouldn't have a reason to be angry anymore.

This is when you get to the point of exploring self-discovery. You start to see who you really are without all the projections, abuse and negative thoughts that you grew up with.

Forgiveness is easier when you can see the bright future ahead of you

I also did not have a goal in life. I never asked myself the question, "What would I like to become without the abuse? What would I like to become once I have moved away from the hurt and pain? What would happen to me if I forgave my grandparents and father?"

Once you have answered those questions, you will find yourself working your way through your life journey much easier and clearer. You will now have a starting point.

A wise friend once said to me, "People are like the tides and waves of the ocean. Some are gentle and some are destructive, however they never stay on the beach, they always move away, they change and never come back in the same way, shape or form."

People in your life are like that too. It's a part of life that you need to accept. You can't always change the laws of nature, just as you can't change the past, or what has happened. You can however, change how you perceive the events.

Chapter 16 The meaning of Acceptance and how it transforms into awareness

Acceptance to most of us means that we have failed, somehow. We feel that we have failed to successfully change or resist circumstances that challenged us. We are often told during our adolescent years that there are things in life that we just have to accept, whether we like it or not. It's not a great feeling when you have to accept something that clashes with your beliefs and values. When this happens, you will eventually form a negative association with acceptance over time. However, what if you can learn how to accept circumstances in such a way that it does not affect your freewill?

What if you can accept unpleasant circumstances just as they are in your life? What if you can learn how to accept what you cannot resist or change, in such a way that it empowers you, instead of discouraging you?

This happens when you can create an opportunity to observe an unpleasant situation from a completely different perspective and angle. A perspective that is not "contaminated" (influenced) by old trauma that stemmed from circumstances that you had to accept. This acceptance either traumatized you or left you feeling very resentful.

When you start to process and untangle negative associations (experiences) related to acceptance, the acceptance process becomes easier. Acceptance will no longer be associated with failure, humiliation or a sense that you have had to cave in to something that you may have been fighting against your entire life. You can accept your past circumstances or changes that are taking place with more ease, grace all while feeling in control and even empowered. You may even start to observe your life path with a deeper level of awareness, instead of seeing things from a "contaminated" perspective. You have more energy and willingness to focus on what you need to learn from your life experience in order to move on. Instead of

blocking your experiences and teachings in life or relationships, you can accept them, learn from them and move on with no regrets and resentment.

Acceptance does not mean that you are weak or have poor boundaries. Acceptance means that you understand what really happened to you without needing to hold onto your anger and resentment as a protective shield. You tap into a sense of deeper meaning, finding out why things are the way they are.

Acceptance is similar to surrender. Surrender is not “giving in” to anyone or anything by any means. It definitely does not mean surrendering to an abuser in any way! Surrendering means that you have mastered a level of awareness that allows you to see what is worth your while and what is not. It allows you to let go of any unhealthy investment you made in your past circumstances or a relationship that has run its course.

Healing and personal progress requires the kind of acceptance that makes you feel empowered instead of subdued and defeated. When this acceptance sets in, your awareness of your reality, friendships and even relationship with yourself starts to change. It begins to change for the better because your perception “filters” (which cause you to see what you want to see) start to change. Instead of seeing the negative side of acceptance, you start to see opportunities and new ways to rewrite and reinvent your future. It changes what you focus on within your circumstances. Your trauma and past blocks related to acceptance do not “contaminate” the way you learn and grow from your circumstances and relationships.

Some might say that you can only find acceptance when you finally see the real truth. To be honest, I don’t think that “the real truth” exists. If it did, who would be the one to judge? Wouldn’t the person who is judging the truth have an opinion that is “contaminated” by their own life experiences, trauma and blocks? Who is trauma free? Forget about the truth, it is just a tangent and a deflection from something much more important. It’s not your truth that will get you somewhere that is meaningful; it’s acceptance. A healthy understanding what acceptance really means.

It is so important and vital that you resolve the issues that you have been running from, because those issues and blocks are “contaminating” your ability to accept yourself, your flaws, your emotional and spiritual growth and your willingness to move on. The more you resist something in your life, the more you attract it. You sabotage your personal progress and you fight against a very important acceptance process and journey.

Finding Your Own Voice

You can achieve this level of awareness, but like any other progress and change, you need to be pro-active and decide to make this adjustment in your life. When you achieve this level of awareness, you no longer participate in the “sleepwalking coma” that most people suffer from. You will not just accept everything that is given, shown and projected at you. You will no longer be a follower; you will become your own leader. It is during this time that you reclaim your power, energy, thoughts and motivation in a graceful and empowering way that is good and healthy for your future.

Part 3 Healing yourself

Chapter 17 Leaving an abusive relationship

Leaving an abusive relationship isn't easy.

When you have become stuck in a repetitive cycle of abuse and insults, it can begin to feel normal instead of being a problem. Stopping constant rants, bullying and abuse can be challenging, especially if you don't have experience or personal development "tools" to change your circumstances. When I say, "tools," I mean understanding and knowledge of how to safely stand up for yourself. It also entails self-confidence, feeling respected and understating proper boundaries.

If you don't have those "tools" and self-awareness then you are in danger of just accepting your life as it is.

It is important to investigate your life and look within yourself to find out why you ended up with an abusive partner in the first place. One thing is clear; it is not your fault that someone else behaved in an inappropriate and unacceptable manner. You are not responsible for another person's actions, behavior and choice of language.

When you decide to move on

Attend to your own needs first before leaving an abusive relationship. Seek counseling if need be. Get involved with community groups that empower and support people who are in vulnerable positions. There are numerous free help lines that you can call for more advice and emotional support. The Internet has become an amazing source of information where you can seek the appropriate support and guidance, twenty-four hours a day.

You might make things worse if you do not look after yourself. Be clear about the steps you are about to take.

My situation was challenging and unfortunately, I had to move to another city and cut off communication with all of my friends out of fear that my ex-partner might find me. I trusted no one except my mother.

While working in Kimberley, one of my colleagues told me about a position that opened up in Johannesburg that I should apply for. I thought it was a great idea because it would allow me to financially support myself and not financially support my ex-partner anymore. It was also, at that point in my life, the best and safest option to leave and start a new life.

The first step was to create a life where I had freedom. I needed to have a goal to work toward. What I wanted was freedom, to be able to make my own decisions and to feel safe.

It was not easy to make the decision, however I knew that I made the right choice. I went through quite a few emotional stages after the break up.

Walking out of any relationship can be challenging and it's not always a straightforward process. You may find yourself going through emotional stages, which may cause you to doubt your own strength and ability to move on. I have summarized a few important phases of the transition.

Emotional stages before and after leaving an abusive relationship

Phase 1

Two situations can occur. A person becomes aware that they are in an abusive relationship once it has been pointed out to them. Or a person may begin to have an undeniable urge nudging them to seek something greater in life. They begin to realize that there is more to the world than just pain, sadness and feeling trapped.

In this case, a person worked out on their own that they no longer want the life that they have. The emotions and fear related to leaving an abusive partner might feel quite intimidating. You may feel that it is more than you can handle and fear that you might even feel numb and disempowered by it. You might feel as if you lack the ability to be in control of your own life if you make such a drastic change. Suppressed trauma and grief start to bubble to the surface, so you know that you need to move on. There is no future with an abuser.

The more aware you become of your actual circumstances, the more emotions will start to surface. You finally consciously realize the implications of your past decisions, your bad boundaries and how stagnant you have become in your life.

Phase 2

You will begin to understand that you are not the abuser's parent—you do not need to look after them. You don't have to make excuses for them anymore. You don't have to take responsibility for and make excuses for their bad behavior anymore.

You suddenly realize that you are no longer obliged to be in the abuser's life. You start to recognize that you have free will and you don't have to put up with any abuse whatsoever. You have come to recognize your own destiny in life and your awareness allows you to reprioritize your own needs, to put them first.

Phase 3

Now, you start to think, "Should I or shouldn't I leave? Will they be OK without me? Maybe I can make it work just one last time before I decide to leave? Maybe I can change them this time. Maybe they will love me enough to change. We have something special."

It is normal for all types of questions to run through your mind:

Will they find me when I move to a new place and hurt me again?

Can I do this on my own?

Where will my support come from?

Will I ever find someone else to be with me?

Can I financially afford to leave?

Don't feel discouraged if you have children, worried that it might be harder to leave. The fact is that if you have children, they should be more than enough motivation for you to get out of your circumstances.

It is important that you have at least three plans of action in case the first and second options do not work out.

A friend that can help you with accommodations until you get on your feet might be a good option, however, consider that moving in with a friend could potentially put your friend and their family at risk if your partner is violent.

If your partner is violent then I suggest you start by going to a police station or a community center that supports abused women in order to discuss your options. The key is to make plans to physically remove yourself from your abuser's environment.

Phase 4

Once there is a plan of action in place, you will feel more prepared to go. This can take a few days, a few weeks or longer.

Normally it takes one final emotional blow or violent argument to get someone to finally move out and make his or her safety a priority.

Once you physically move out of the environment that you've known for so long, it can be tempting to go right back where you started. It can be easy to forget how bad your circumstances really were. The reasons that compelled you to leave begin to fade away. In addition, your new life can feel daunting while at the same time you experience the excitement of the unknown and newfound freedom.

You still feel raw after the break up and more insecurity may arise. The insecurities do subside when you recognize that you are doing just fine on your own.

Standing your ground and sticking to your plan is the most important part of starting a new life. The occasional "I miss him/her, maybe we should try again," might pop up. This is where you stand your ground. You have now set new boundaries for yourself.

You have created a new life. You have experienced phases of anger, sadness, grief and resentment.

Do you really want to go back and revisit the past? Think long and hard!

Will the abuser ever change?

This is a decision that can only be made by the abuser. They have to take action in order to correct their abusive behavior. Abusers will seek help or professional assistance once you have left them to try and prove to you that they want to change. Unfortunately, this type of change is normally short-lived. Abusers tend to pretend to change only to get you back into their power web.

While there are some situations that have a positive and happy outcome these are few and far between.

An abuser can and sometimes will seek professional help to convince you that they have changed. It could also be another smokescreen to show you how much they care about you.

Their true nature will most likely reveal itself again. The abuser might even end up punishing you. They could blame you for causing their psychological problems. They can turn the situation around by accusing you of being the root of the problem that drove them to seek help. The abuser will rarely take

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responsibility for his or her own actions and reactions - everybody else is to blame.

Chapter 18 What if my friend is the one being abused?

You may have friends who are in abusive relationships. Perhaps that's the reason why you are reading this book. Helping a friend raises a number of issues quite distinct from helping yourself. For example:

- Should you get involved at all, and if so, at what point?
- What type of support should you offer, should you just be there as a listener, or take a more active role; and
- What should you do if your friend is being abused but does not want to be helped?

It is not pleasant to hear your friend talk about how they are physically abused. How their house or car keys were taken away from them so that they could not get out of the house and leave. It's hard not to get angry when you hear these types of confessions. It can stir an inner need within you to help protect a friend. It may compel you to take without actually asking them if they want your help.

Is your friend asking for help?

Does your friend just want to talk or are they asking for help? If you try to help a friend that is stuck in an abusive relationship and they did not ask for intervention, this may create more problems.. It is important to know what type of support your friend is asking for.

When support is given without being asked for it, it is unlikely to be welcomed, and will typically be rejected. If someone does not directly ask for help then it means that they may not be ready to take the first step in helping themselves.

It's challenging to help someone that feels stuck and discouraged by his or her circumstances, especially if they do not recognize the abuse. They might feel that your support is merely interfering with their life. They might feel that you are being judgmental about their life style choices.

Your friend may feel that you are projecting your values and your will onto them. They may feel controlled by your suggestions or advice.

Where to begin

The best place to begin is to be a receptive audience—listen without judgment. If you have witnessed abuse (such as their partner screaming at them) you can talk about it. If you witness signs such as bruises, you can ask them – but don’t be surprised if they lie and make excuses.

The best thing you can do is to demonstrate your ability to listen. It is important that you don’t go in with an agenda to “save” them, because they may feel quite threatened by it. If your friend is staying in an abusive relationship, it means that on some level, they have weighed the options for themselves and it’s safer to stay in the relationship than to leave it. If you get involved, you threaten that delicate balance and your offer of support might feel very unsafe to them. That’s why it’s important that you just listen.

Ask them what they intend to do about their circumstances. Talking about it isn’t going to make things better for your friend. However, talking to them can help them feel that someone understands their situation and they are supported. That way, when they want help, they know that they can turn to you.

It’s important for you to be honest with your friend. Be honest in an encouraging and tactful manner. Speak to them in a way that you know they will listen to you and take in what you are saying.

Keep your own issues separate

Beware of getting emotionally involved in your friend’s personal life. This can happen if you yourself have unresolved pain or hurt, possibly from past abuse issues. This could be in response to your own experiences and is a subconscious cry for help. I have seen people become overwhelmed and utterly stressed by their friend’s circumstances because they also need to be saved in one way or another.

The reaction you have to your friend’s situation might be an indication that you have unresolved issues that you need to deal with in your life. You are identifying with your friend’s pain. It can be easier to help others rather than help yourself.

When you reach out to someone in need then it’s important that you are clear about whether there is something in you that needs to be healed first, especially, if you have become overly involved in your friend’s life. You will only do your friend a favor by helping yourself first, before supporting them.

This will allow you to be completely present and objective in your friend's circumstances.

Creating a supportive environment

If you decide to go beyond merely listening and want to offer support, the key is to show your friend all of the support that is available to them. Essentially, you are helping to create a safety net.

Make sure that you can live up to the kind of support you've offered. It can have devastating effects if a person leaves an abusive relationship only to discover that the support they were promised is no longer available.

Decide ahead of time what type of help you want to offer, such as accommodations, money, food, transport etc. Be very clear within yourself what you are able to offer and be careful not to overextend yourself in the process. Giving too much of yourself could cause you to resent your friend when you realize that you have taken on too much.

Make sure that you keep communication open with your friend. Choose a day and time to contact each other and touch base. Make sure your friend is coping under the circumstances. Even have code words that you can use with each other in case your friend can't express their need for help over the phone.

Make sure that you have an assembly point. It is very important to have a meeting place if it is not safe to meet at their house. If you are physically far away from each other,, such as living in different cities, then you can support your friend by suggesting or even paying for a few counseling sessions when they need to talk to someone face-to-face.

These counseling sessions can help them put an action plan in place, in case they need to leave the house very quickly one day. Just knowing that there is a plan in place will help make your friend feel safer, supported and more motivated to leave a relationship. When matters come to a head, they will have a plan and be equipped to carry it out. They will have a plan of action.

Your aim should be to assist and facilitate the process *with* them and not *for* them. Don't become controlling. The last thing they need is to leave a controlling partner only to be controlled by a friend. They have to learn how to be independent—if not, they will quickly find themselves in another controlling relationship.

Do not pity your friend, don't say, "Oh, you poor thing. I feel so sorry for you. Your life must be so hard." If you patronize them in this way, you are

implying that they are weak and they lack the inner strength to do something about it. Your friend does possess the strength to make a miraculous change in their life. They may not have made that final decision yet or they might lack the necessary support.

Remind them how important their freedom is. How amazing they are. How they may have forgotten that they were once strong, independent and powerful. Remind them that they are just as important as anyone else and are worthy of respect, love and support.

If you approach someone in a difficult situation, one of the most effective things you can do is to remind him or her of their brilliance. They have only temporarily forgotten about that aspect of themselves. If your friend is in a dangerous and violent situation, always obtain professional assistance if your friend decides to leave the relationship.

Always consider approaching a community worker, trusted friend, lawyer, or trained professional that specializes in abusive relationships.

Be a friend, not a counselor. Be a source of support, not an imposer.

Know where your own emotional baggage stops and your friend's begins. Do not impose your personal will onto someone, even if you have strong feelings. Everyone has the right to choose for themselves.

Taking action and making appropriate decisions can be made easier with your support. Ultimately, your friend has to be the one to take the first step. Be patient and continue to stand by them, even if you feel that time is running out for them to make a change. Once they have made the decision to leave, be ready.

*Chapter 19 Healing yourself - The Triple A Step: Acknowledge,
Accept, Allow*

Before you begin, please note that the Triple A Step was designed to give you a starting point to start your healing journey and is not a substitute for a qualified personal development practitioner or a healing session.

Understanding and accepting a past negative situation or circumstance is easier said than done.

I have come to understand that it was not an option to seek revenge through violence or by becoming the abuser. I used the same tools – abuse, aggression, insults and rage – that my father used towards me as a child. I can now see how it caused more harm than good, not just to others, but also to me.

It's been a long road for me, as I am sure it has been for you if you have shared similar experiences. I have had to move away from and move forward to a lot of things in my life. Along that healing path, I learned the value of acknowledging, accepting and allowing the problem.

When you acknowledge something has caused you difficulty, you bring conscious awareness to it instead of suppressing it. When you suppress trauma and unpleasant situations, at some point it will come back to bite you. Sometimes when you least expect it.

In this chapter I share a simple and powerful tool for self-healing. It's a way of bringing consciousness into suppressed pain.

I want to emphasize that this AAA technique is not the MAP technique, which I recommend. It is not possible to teach the MAP technique from a book (best results would require a practitioner with the right experience).

When you heal, focus on your emotions and not the story of what happened to you

Rather than talk about the abuse itself, focus on the feelings or emotions you are experiencing. The emotional suffering is due to your reaction or response, rather than the physical acts themselves. The focus of the healing must be on how it makes you feel.

Ask yourself, “How did the abuse or incident make me feel?” When you ask this question, do not go back in time and relive this incident. What is important here is how it makes you feel *now*.

This is the starting point of where the trauma is stuck in the present.

The most common answers are anger, rage, disgust, guilt, shame, horror, terror, fight or flight, freezing or numbness. If the emotions you are feeling now aren’t in this mentioned list, go with what you feel.

Take note of where you feel these emotions in your body and put your hand on the area where you feel the emotion.

Keep asking the question, “When I feel _ _ _ then how does that make me feel?” The answer to the first question becomes the basis of the next question, “How does (answer to first question) _ _ _ emotion make me feel?” Keep asking these questions until you can’t go any further and you don’t have any more emotions that come up.

Remember that you are looking for emotions and not a story. Your answer is only allowed to be one word and it has to be an emotion.

If you can’t put a word to what you are feeling then just go with the feeling. When you feel that you have reached the end point—the end point will be when you start going in circles—and you can’t feel any new emotions come up, you may proceed with the AAA steps.

Close your eyes. Be quiet for a few seconds and just be present with yourself and your feelings. If you don’t feel settled, try giving all the emotions and voices in your head, heart and gut a voice. Let them speak to you and let them say what they need to say. When you reach a calm state, follow the steps below when you are ready.

Example:

I Acknowledge that I feel (emotion / trauma, e.g. *anger*) and I acknowledge that it made me feel out of control or needing to hide (this would be your final answer from the healing).

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*I **Allow** myself to feel (e.g. *anger*)* I, do not have to suppress it anymore. I give myself permission to feel this.

*I **Accept** that I am feeling (e.g. *anger*) and that I have suppressed it.* It is now safe to move away from it. I acknowledge how anger served me. I have paid a high enough price for this (e.g. *anger*). I now choose to move away from it.

As an example, if you feel anxious and angry after an argument then simply follow the AAA Steps, regardless of your environment. You can silently **acknowledge** that you are anxious and angry. **Allow** yourself to be anxious and angry and give yourself permission to feel the anger and anxiety. **Accept** that what has happened did happen and that you accept the fact that you are anxious and angry. Then say to yourself, “I have paid a high enough price for this already.”

Bringing your awareness to an issue creates an opportunity for it to be released instead of being suppressed and fought against. You don’t always even need to know *why* you feel the way that you do. Becoming aware of your emotions tends to be enough. This should not turn into an opportunity for an internal war. Do not fight and argue with yourself because you are feeling upset or angry. Rationalizing the situation may make things seem worse than they actually are.

At this point, you have merely reached the stage where you are ready to let go of the string of emotions. Stay aware and take advantage of any opportunities you have during the day to release those burdens. When you shift your consciousness to a problem that you normally would have suppressed, you are allowing it to expand and the stagnant energy will begin move again so that it can resolve itself.

Give yourself permission to explore your emotions in a way that makes you feel safe and in control.

When you bring more consciousness and acknowledgement to a suppressed problem, you begin to lessen the burden of holding onto it. It takes a lot of energy to hold on to your problems. Holding onto your problems will emotionally, physically and spiritually deplete you over time. It requires a lot of your energy to sustain feelings of anger, negative and revengeful thoughts.

Redirect all of that energy you’ve been spending on your past and holding onto pain and instead, use it to reach your highest potential.

Also read the hidden benefits section again and see if you can spot any hidden benefits in areas, you feel stagnant or stuck in your life. When you find any areas, you can repeat the AAA Steps.

The pain of abuse cannot last forever. Anything that is part of your biological experience cannot last forever.

Chapter 20 The Start of Metaphysical Anatomy Process (MAP)

In this chapter, I touch on a few ideas and concepts to explain what MAP is and what makes it such a wonderful and effective technique.

No affirmations or visualizations, no mantras or magic is involved when working with the MAP technique. I offer simple science-based tools, which are unique in two ways – they really work and the results are permanent. Whether you are dealing with deep trauma or even just small fears, you will see results.

MAP is a gentle conversational therapy. The technique is specially designed so that those who have sensitive topics to work on will not need to talk about their trauma. This technique is based on new breakthrough principles of psychology and epigenetics. Life coaches, therapists and hypnotherapists to just name a few use it for their clients, and people can use it to achieve their goals in their private life. Athletes and business leaders who strive to achieve their best – to get that last 1% that separates the leaders from the rest, use it. If there is any area of your life where you are being held back by suppressed trauma (including fears, negative beliefs, low self-worth, etc.), then MAP will transform you.

I developed this second healing modality 2013, when I realized that the technique I was using at the time, was bypassing trauma (as with many other modalities) and not actually healing at the origin of the trauma. I realized that most techniques skip vital trauma points, secondary gains and patterns that recreate trauma, causing clients to still attract unhealthy relationships and circumstances. Sound familiar?

In the language of Metaphysical Anatomy, when a trauma is bypassed you work with the symptoms of the trauma and work around the actual trauma, instead of directly on it. I have found an extremely effective way to resolve this problem.

The best way to describe MAP is to say that it is 50% science and 50% art. Miraculous results occur when the science and the art come together as one, as they do in any good practitioner.

Xxxxxxxx

Coherent acknowledgment

The MAP technique involves what I call coherent acknowledgment. It's way of switching a survival instinct (like flight or fight mode) on or off in yourself or another person – instantly. What normally takes hours of regression or psychotherapy can be achieved in about five seconds. This is the key tool that created MAP.

When you work with the triune brain model to find the instinct holding the trauma in place, and then apply coherent acknowledgment, you can instantly clear trauma and all of the negative emotions, beliefs and symptoms that trauma was holding in place. It's so simple; you have to see it to believe it!

How was MAP developed?

MAP is an original technique, which was developed after many years' research into the world's leading personal development and healing techniques. You can think of it as a master-technique that will save you years of research and tens of thousands of dollars of study. I had the pleasure to work with a team of highly qualified researchers who have studied many of the world's leading personal development techniques. I learned something vital from each one, and I integrated the best parts of each to create MAP.

Chapter 21 When is my healing journey complete?

Defining “the end” of the healing process

They say healing is a journey, not a destination. But healing is a journey that has an ending –the destination can be defined. I think that this is important news for people who have been trying to heal themselves for years and have lost sight of what the end looks like. Our hearts go out to these people and in many ways this book was written for them.

Lack of a clear ending point has another, more damaging effect. It leads some people to believe they have been healed when in fact their journey may have just begun. This is especially dangerous when they become healing practitioners without first healing themselves. This can lead to the risk of having practitioners who project their own issues onto their clients

What’s missing for these people is a clear, unambiguous definition of the end point of the healing process. I will define the end in two ways – from a technical and from a philosophical perspective.

Technical viewpoint: when is the healing complete?

A useful test for determining if the healing is complete is whether or not the brain can still visualise the trauma. It’s not enough just to reduce the stress levels to zero. It’s not enough that you see or visualise the trauma from the outside looking in (as if you watching a movie). Both of these concepts are taught in some modalities. This test is simple—if you can close your eyes and see the trauma happening, then you still have the seeds of the abuse inside of you.

To put it plainly, if you can visualise it, then it’s not possible to guarantee that it won’t happen again. When you have access to the full resources required to prevent the trauma happening again, then in that state it’s not even possible to visualise the trauma. Abuse becomes inconceivable (literally – you cannot conceive of this happening to you).

The way to completely heal the trauma and prevent it from recurring is to access our “Inner Resources.” Inner Resources are our inner gifts, our sense of awareness or instincts, which are often blocked by trauma. For instance, we are meant to have a clear sense of boundaries, self-love and abundance, but these gifts are often blocked. But if you *did* have a strong sense of boundaries, self-love and abundance then most abuse trauma would be inconceivable to you.

When the client has access to their Inner Resources, they cannot visualise the trauma. Try as they might to re-create an image of the abuse in their minds, they cannot. From a place of boundaries, self-love and abundance, they cannot be a victim. The trauma does not occur.

I work with my clients until they can access their Inner Resources. It’s extremely important to note that you cannot “teach” or “instil” these resources. That can never work. They are our natural state. Real healing is actually a process of subtraction (peeling layers to find the perfecting within), not a process of learning or instilling skills. You must keep clearing trauma until the Resource emerges naturally. Inevitably this extends the healing process – if it needs 2 hours to clear the abuse trauma then it might need another 2 – 4 hours to access each resource. (Note that we are talking hours, not weeks or years.) The end result is a *real* healing. Clearing abuse trauma is not enough. It’s only when the client has accessed their true natural inner state, when the trauma is inconceivable, that a healing is complete.

This means that you have a simple test to determine whether your journey is complete. Picture yourself back in the time and place of the abuse. Can you see it or imagine it happening to you?

Many of you may feel challenged, perhaps even angered by this statement. Why does this simple idea feel so challenging? It can only be because, as a society, we embrace duality. We love “right” and “wrong.” The victim is “good” and the abuser is “bad.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. “Victims” and “abusers” are not two different types of people. There is no “evil,” there is only damage and consequences. Some people who have been hurt and emotionally / physically damaged by abuse may perpetuate a cycle of abuse by acting this damage out upon others in direct and indirect ways.

The healing is not complete until this cycle is broken. When the person who experienced the abuse can feel at peace with themselves and their life and not act out their pain through addictive behavior would signal a complete cycle.

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This provides another self-test, although a harder one (most people will say they can give and receive unconditional love, it's hard to test how they would react if they faced the person in question).

How do you access this place of inner peace? As I described, deep healing comes from a process of the subtraction layers. You must clear the trauma deeply, and keep doing so until the natural flow of love has been restored.

In the next chapter I describe an approach to healing trauma, which is highly effective for accessing Inner Resources and restoring the natural flow of love.

Chapter 22 Finding the Abuser's innocence

In the previous chapter I described the end point of the healing process – a return to love. It can be described as a point in which the trauma is inconceivable. The way to access this highest level of healing is through a return to innocence. Not just your innocence, but the abuser's, as well.

Trauma runs in cycles. *Violence begets violence* (Matthew, 26:52). The victim can at times become the abuser as the victim overcompensates for the lack of control and loss of power they experienced in their past. This pattern flows through generations until someone is brave enough to stop it. We may know that the cycle has been broken when the victim's love and acceptance for the abuser has been restored. It does not mean that you have to love the abuser; it means that you need to find peace within yourself and no longer fear and feel disempowered by the abuser.

How do we restore this love and break the cycle of abuse?

The very best way to heal a victim's trauma is to heal the abuser. If you could restore the abuser's sense of love and compassion, such that they could not have committed abuse, then it's easy for the victim to express love and forgiveness. However, it's rare that there's just one victim and one abuser to heal. The abuser is most likely a victim of an earlier abuse – part of a chain of inter-generational trauma. The original abuser has probably been dead for many generations - yet he holds the key to breaking this cycle.

How can you heal someone who is dead (or someone who is alive but not talking to you)? You heal them within yourself.

There are many ways to explain how and why this works.

I imagine that inside of our psyche is an "inner mother," an "inner father," and so on for every ancestor and significant person in our life (teacher, abuser, etc.). For example, my inner mother is my conceptualization of my

mother, loaded with all of the baggage, which I (consciously or unconsciously) believe her to have.

If I want to heal my mother (in her absence), the very best way to do that is to heal that part of myself – my “inner mother.” Doing this achieves two things: it heals what I believe is wrong with her and it heals the part of me that perceives there is something wrong with her. (These two are subtly different.)

If, in trying to heal my mother, I feel that she was a victim of some abuse by her father, then I must heal my “inner” maternal grandfather, as well. If he was a victim too, I would need to keep going back, with the intention of finding the beginning of the cycle of violence. (It is easier than it sounds, simply enter an intuitive state and say, “I pretend to see the origin of this cycle.”)

I believe that it’s quite easy to understand that each ancestor is a voice that plays its story out inside of us. Perhaps because of the concept of DNA and heredity, we can accept that we embody our ancestors’ voices. This makes it very easy to heal them.

However, what about others? Do we have an “inner abuser” where there is no heredity? The answer is “yes, of course.” We are all connected (on a society or humanity level if not the family level). When someone leaves an impression upon us (e.g. through love or abuse) we carry a mental image of him or her inside of us. It is this inner voice that we are healing.

The process is quite simple. Explain to your client the need to understand and process the trauma in the environment (or family system) that made the abuse possible. Then ask the client (when he/she is ready and calm) to relax and “Pretend to be the person who abused them.” This might take some adjustment as they imagine what the abuser’s thoughts, feelings and instincts are like. Then ask the client to pretend that they can feel the trauma that damaged this person and prompted them to become abusive. Almost certainly, they will feel something in the person’s childhood. It might be specifics (like “the priest did it”) or just a vague feeling of unease. Then say “Pretend to go back to feel the very earliest trauma in this cycle or pattern.”

All the client has to do is imagine that they are the original victim (that is, the original abuser, at the point where they were damaged). Feel the original trauma; try to imagine that you can see/feel it. Then use your technique (such as MAP) to clear this trauma. If you do it right, it will instantly clear the pattern of abuse. The abuser is no longer a victim, and hence does not abuse others.

When you have finished this process (healing the earliest abuser) you come back to the client's own experience of their abuser. Ask the client to describe their feelings towards the abuser. In most cases, they will feel love, compassion, understanding and forgiveness. If they cannot feel this, you may need to repeat the process (there may be more than one trauma to clear), or it might be necessary to work on the client's own issues, such as a fear of what will happen to them if they let go. (See the chapter in this book on Secondary Gain.)

Example

I'd like to share a recent client example so you can see the power of this technique. My client had a very long list of symptoms. She was going through a divorce, stuck in her career, and had many problems. We measured many symptoms used a process called the Identity Technique to find the one trauma that was holding all her symptoms in place. It related to her mother's way of projecting guilt and shame toward my client (when she was a child). My client told me that her mother had been raped as a teenager, and her way of dealing with it was to project onto her daughter a great deal of disgust and shame about her body. The only way to heal my client's issues was to clear the mother's abuse trauma.

Rather than work on the mother, I asked my client to pretend to be the rapist. She was able to imagine his psyche. I asked her "What was the rapist's trauma, what made him so damaged that he could do this to your mother?" She immediately felt a strong connection with his childhood. The rapist had been emotionally abused by his mother as a child. His mother had a strong hatred of men. Why? It felt that she had also been raped. So we pretended to be the rapist's mother's rapist (that is to say the abuser's abuser's abuser). And we imagined following this cycle to its origin, some 20 generations earlier. Finally she said "This is the earliest trauma in this cycle." I used the MAP process to help her to resolve the original trauma. And when we looked at the cycle of abuse – it had vanished. My client's mother (that is, her image of her mother) was completely different.

I returned my client to her long list of symptoms – starting with guilt and shame and progressing through her marriage and business problems. Every single one of them had gone. Without working on my client's own issues at all, we had traced a cycle of violence through 20 generations to its source. By healing the abuser – generations of them – we had restored the natural flow of love and allowed my client access to her Inner Resources. The change was instant, dramatic, and permanent.

The point from this chapter is not the technique itself (I have described just one of many approaches). Rather, the key point is to provide a method by which one can truly complete the healing process. Regardless of how much work you think you have done, if the healing is not 100% complete (as I described in the previous chapter) then you need to restore the flow of love (or Inner Resources) between the generations.

The philosophy here is that the love between victim and abuser is meant to be restored. It is only then that the words “victim” and “abuser” lose their dualistic meaning. My method allows a powerful transformation in the client. It is this transformation, which makes it possible for the client to express compassion to the abuser and reclaim their innocence.

Remember that an expression of compassion and forgiveness does not condone what the abuser did. It is possible to love and forgive someone and yet still testify against them in court, and to allow the Justice process to take place.

Chapter 23 Manifesting

The art of manifesting your desires into reality starts to become more appealing the more you resolve your trauma. You start looking for ways to create a new life and even begin new relationships. Here I share a few simple ways you can set in motion your manifestations by exploring a few pit falls that people tend to overlook when they try manifest their desired goals.

Before I even describe manifesting, I have to emphasize something important: it is extremely difficult to manifest love whilst carrying the trauma of abuse. Similarly, it is extremely hard to manifest for abundance while carrying the trauma of poverty or financial loss. According to the principle called the Law of Attraction, we attract in our outer lives according to what we feel in our inner self. If we have abuse trauma in our body, that is precisely what we will attract.

I hope you'll agree that this statement is logical – even obvious. However, you would be amazed how many people spend thousands of dollars on manifesting courses that can never hope to help them. Manifesting isn't a magic trick. There is no technique that can help you to attract love if you don't feel love inside of yourself. There's a reason why I leave this chapter until the end of the book – you have to clear everything else first. The more traumas you have cleared, the more powerfully you will attract love and abundance into your life.

Clear intention

Having a clear intention is very important. Intention is the same as having a goal. What do you want and what are you going to do in order to achieve that goal?

Your goal could be to manifest a new partner, abundance, more love in your life ... the list is endless.

When you want to attract something into your life, the first question to always ask is, “Do I feel worthy of being abundant/loved/successful?” If you don’t feel worthy of what you want, then how are you going to attract it?

The second question is, do you really want what you think you need? Is your desire for x/y/z stemming from a place of lack or need? Do you want x/y/z for all the right reasons? For example, searching for a partner because you feel lonely. Instead, it’s healthier to look for a partner because you feel worthy of being loved and because you feel worthy of having a partner that can share common goals and a life path with you.

Manifesting steps

First of all, what do you want? What is your goal? Who or what would you like to manifest? Start with one goal.

Then ask yourself, “Do I feel worthy of having it right now?” It will be more challenging to attract something or someone if you feel unworthy of attracting it. Your fear of a partner or money will sabotage your manifestations.

How would you feel if you had x/y/z in your life right now?” What emotions do you feel? Do you feel happy? Do you feel stressed? Do you feel a fear surfacing somewhere in your body?

It is important to resolve any trauma, fear and stress that arise related to manifestations. If you are seeking a partner and you have had traumatic or stressful experiences in the past with a past partner, then you will face obstacles attracting the right person. You may have had a negative experience with a partner (he / she was abusive) that you didn’t resolve. It’s then possible that you might attract a new but similar partner. It is important to tie-up loose ends as you manifest new experiences.

Another block related to manifesting is if you don’t know what x/y/z feels like. Say you are manifesting love but your association with love has been abusive, distressing or negative. Did this result in a negative association with love? How are you going to attract calm, gentle and peaceful love if your association with love is negative?

Firstly, you should be able to recognize the difference between aggressive love and calm / gentle love. If you had the desired outcome (love) in your life right now, would you feel safe having it? Was there an earlier incident in your life when you experienced love or x/y/z and were not able to maintain it? If so, why? What happened? If there is trauma associated with it then it is important that it is resolved.

It can be challenging to manifest emotional freedom or gentle love if you don't know what it feels like. How are you going to recognize it? What will your reference point for gentle love be? We all have different definitions of love. Gentle love to me might mean something completely different to you. Therefore, it's important that you find what your definition is for the person, emotion or object that you are manifesting.

Explore self-sabotaging patterns that are related to your manifestations. Did your mother or father have the same pattern? Is your fear related to an incident that you observed during your childhood or adult life that didn't directly affect you? If so, then you might be expressing someone else's fear, resulting in you sabotaging your personal progress.

Here is a simple way to kick-start your manifestation process

When you have worked through the fear or stress related to what you are manifesting, you could move on to the next step. Ask yourself, "How would I feel if I had x/y/z right now?" (By now, it should be a positive feeling.) Ask, "What is the best thing about that?" When you feel the next emotion, ask again, "What is the best thing about that?" Keep asking yourself this question until you can't go any deeper. Let's say the final answer is, "I feel free, freedom."

The next question is, "What makes me feel free?" This could include walking in parks, swimming, spending time with someone special etc. Let's say walking in the park helps you to feel free. Then set the intention while you are walking and feeling "free" that you would like more circumstances in your life that will make you feel this way. Set the intention that your desires will be met in a healthy and positive way. The freer you feel in your life, the more you are able to attract x/y/z. You manifest from a mental and emotional state where you feel great, you manifest while you feel empowered. You are not manifesting from a place of lack and neediness. It's much easier to attract the desired outcome!

Let go of attachment

The more attached you are to the outcome, the more you unconsciously sabotage and control how your desires manifest. Yes, be proactive, however not overly controlling.

What is your pre-conceived idea?

Sometimes what you are searching for is right in front of you – but because you are so focused on specific details and looking for signs, you

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overlook the possibility that you might already have x/y/z. As a result of your pre-conceived idea of x/y/z, you don't recognize a different form of x/y/z. You are too focused on specific details. As a result, you filter out similar positive experiences and possibilities.

Your manifestation "radar" might be set to search for something that resonates with your pre-conceived idea. Instead, you could have been more open to new possibilities that might be emotionally, spiritually and mentally healthier for you.

I have seen many examples of this. For instance, someone becomes so attached to manifesting a certain job that they ignore a career opportunity that was much better for them. A student was so attached to attracting a partner taller than she was, that she ignored a really amazing man in her life that was a little shorter than she was. In my MAP seminars, I call these "rigidities" and it is amazing how your rigidity can block you from getting what you want.

The moral of the story: always keep an open mind!

Chapter 24 You can heal

It is possible to heal from abuse and lead a normal life. You have a choice about whether you want to stay where you are or if you want to move forward from a stagnant relationship, career, partnership, friendship or unhealthy family circle.

It all comes down to making a choice and knowing what you want from yourself, life and others. Clear intentions are very important when you want to bring profound changes into your life. The best thing to start with is to ask yourself, “What do you want to achieve in your life?” You need something to work toward. If there is no goal, there is no motivation to change and be proactive.

What patterns, habits and emotions do you need to let go of in order to achieve your goal? Just having the answers to those questions already sets an intention for your future and what you would like to achieve.

What I have learned from my own healing journey is that when you are ready to make step-by-step changes, the right people and circumstances start to manifest. Your intention and what you ask for is very important, because normally that is exactly what you get. That is why it's so important to be clear what you want to achieve during your healing journey. It's easier to attract that which you know you want.

My journey was not an easy one and I would be lying if I said it was. The hardest part for me was finding something to work towards.

It is important that you find the right practitioner, healthy friendships and company that can bring out the best in you.

That's why it is so important to have clear intentions and to know what you are working towards in every aspect of your life, including your career, personal development, healing yourself, friendships, spouses and so forth.

Having experienced abuse has changed my life, yet it did not alter it for the worse. The healing journey was challenging, yet I made it. Sometimes the pain feels endless, yet there is an ending to the pain.

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The pain does stop. The anxiety, fear, disgust, self-loathing, hatred, vengeance and avoiding the forgiveness journey does cease. You can lead a happy, healthy and normal life. It is something that you are entitled to.

You can make a success of your life on all levels, if you really want to. Sometimes things take time. Nothing is out of your reach. I feel so much stronger and focused on my life and what I want. I don't have my past blocks and trauma holding me back and sabotaging my success anymore. A big break through for me was to realize that I am worthy of being loved in a way that is healthy and empowering to me. My circumstances and partner should compliment me, not fulfill me. You and I are complete and whole on our own.

Surround yourself with positive people and spend more time doing what you love and know that you deserve it!

I can only wish you an abundance of courage and love to heal from your experiences and finally move forward into the life you truly deserve!

With Love

Evette Rose

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