



From Victim to Victor:  
Overcoming Childhood Sexual Abuse

By

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## Characteristics of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Sexual abuse creates *fear, shame and guilt* in the victimized child.

Physical damage may heal but the emotional and psychological scars remain for a long time.

Perhaps the most severe damage is caused by *betrayal*.

Betrayal by an adult, especially when that adult is supposed to be protecting and caring for you, is devastating.

The *Fear* has several components: anticipation of pain, anticipation of disapproval by the perpetrator and worry about threats to other family members.

*Shame* seems to be built into most of us, especially when the abuse is incestuous. There's also the possibility that the victim absorbs the abuser's shame and guilt.

*Guilt* is often felt by a survivor because she or he has become sexually aroused during the abuse. Guilt is also frequently felt when the survivor does -- or doesn't -- report the abuse. Many survivors feel guilty because "they went back for more", or didn't say "No."

The helplessness and powerlessness of a child assaulted by an adult is real, terrifying and breeds lasting consequences.

Dissociation -- the separation of mind from body -- enables a child to survive the horror by imagining that the abuse is happening to someone else.

## **Symptoms in Adult Survivors**

Among the effects of CSA are the following. Sometimes these symptoms do not appear for decades.

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Distrust
- Sexual hangups
- Physical ailments
- Depression
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger
- Confusion
- Self-mutilation
- Relationship difficulties
- Self-doubt
- Voices
- Hallucinations
- Suicidal thoughts
- Addictions
- Powerlessness
- Helplessness
- Negativity.

### **Nightmares**

These may be direct images, almost recollections, of the abuse or they may be symbolic. While non-abused people also suffer occasional nightmares, survivors experience repetitious, terrifying dreams in which they feel helpless and suffocatingly trapped.

### **Flashbacks**

Sickening sensory images suddenly occur which vividly bring back the sights, sounds, physical and emotional feelings of the abuse.

### **Distrust**

With good cause, survivors are usually distrustful of the opposite sex, authority figures -- and themselves.

### **Sexual hangups**

Inhibitions and fears about sexual activity range from mild to severely disturbed.

### **Physical ailments**

The emotional, psychological and physical stress of abuse often takes its toll in physical illness as the body "remembers" being betrayed.

### **Depression**

Feelings of worthlessness, apathy, self-loathing, can drown a survivor.

### **Guilt**

A mixture of self-blame for the activity, feeling bad about hating the abuser, horror at partial enjoyment, and possibly, absorption of some of the abuser's guilt feelings.

### **Fear**

Childhood sexual abuse teaches the victim that the world is an untrustworthy place. Fear can infiltrate every aspect of the survivor's life.

### **Anger**

Unfortunately often directed inward, anger can be a liberating emotion when the survivor directs it at the appropriate targets.

### **Confusion**

Uncertainty about what the abuse means (how can pain be love? Why is a caretaker betraying me?) overwhelms the child -- and festers in the adult.

### **Self-mutilation**

To avoid the pain and guilt of blaming the perpetrator (especially in cases of incest) the victim may physically hurt herself or himself. Self-mutilation ranges

from tattoos and nipple-rings to cutting, sexual violence and enemas. [HW writes: "tattoos and body piercings are considered a beautiful thing by some individuals. These practices are celebrated, not condemned, by many tribes and cultures around the world."]

### **Relationship difficulties**

Clearly a distrustful, confused, angry survivor is likely to have difficulties relating with other people.

### **Self-doubt**

Childhood sexual abuse is frequently accompanied with verbal abuse. Accusations of being stupid make a deep impression on a helpless, victimized child. This feeling of powerlessness persists into adulthood.

### **Voices**

Frequently the various parts of the survivor, including the derogatory messages about being bad, stupid, unwanted, unlovable, etc., are "heard" as thoughts or even sounds.

### **Hallucinations**

Somewhat like Flashbacks but which the survivor "sees" in front of her, like blood on the bathroom floor. Hallucinations may also be "negative", i.e., not seeing something (like car keys) which are actually there.

### **Suicidal thoughts**

Self-blame to the extreme. When the pain becomes too much to bear, suicide may seem to be the ultimate solution.

### **Addictions**

Slow suicide. Also an attempt to dampen down the pain. May range from the legal (alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, prescription drugs) to the illegal (e.g., street drugs).

### **Powerlessness**

A feeling of having been stripped of dignity and effectiveness.

## **Helplessness**

A feeling of being held down, of being directed by others.

## **Negativity**

Generally noticing what's wrong, rather than what's right. Expecting the worst.

## **Issues**

### *Revictimizations*

Victims of any kind of trauma are likely to find themselves revictimized. Sometimes the new victimization happens in similar circumstances, sometimes in situations that seem to bear no resemblance to the original incident.

Why does this happen? Because [we all seek -- mostly subconsciously -- to repeat what we've already experienced. \(This applies to good things, too, of course\). So a person betrayed as a child will often feel drawn to a person who ends up betraying her.](#)

The symptoms of shame, guilt and low self-esteem make it easy for a victim to accept the familiar and hard to accept respect and love from a mentally healthy person.

### *Memories*

A survivor's memories of abuse are often challenged or denied by other family members, health professionals and the public at large.

The recovery of "repressed memories" is a major controversy.

My view is that repressed memories can and do surface years after the abuse. They can also be manufactured wittingly or unwittingly by therapists. In which case they are not really memories, but beliefs.

All memory is malleable. Our memories are not like videos. They are not uncontaminated records of exactly what happened. Memories are influenced by

our thoughts, desires, cultures, by the movies we've seen and the conversations we've had.

To rise victorious over CSA, it is not necessary, nor is it possible, to know exactly what happened. That it did happen is horror enough.

### *Denial/Secrecy*

- Closely connected to the fallibility of memory is denial.
- We deny we've been abused.
- Family members deny it.
- Society in general prefers to deny it.
- And for some people this is how they survive and go on with their lives.

For others, [cracking the nut of denial is the major step forward in their healing.](#)

### *Confrontation*

Should the perpetrator be confronted? There is no simple yes or no answer to this question. Confrontation can range from letter writing to in-person to court proceedings. It can be a plain "I know what you did" or an expensive lawsuit. The more "outsiders" are involved, the more you need corroborative evidence to back up your accusations.

## **Solutions**

### *The Key*

[Identity is The Key](#): whether you identify as a victim, a survivor, a victor or ...?

### *Responsibility for self*

To overcome the effects of CSA requires a decision to take responsibility for oneself.

And then to take appropriate actions about taking care of yourself. Some of the specifics towards that are:

- Groups: therapy, self-help, support, 12-step, religious...
- Thought-stopping

- Affirmations
- Gratitude diary
- Love
- Individual psychotherapy
- Individual hypnotherapy
- Individual emotional freedom techniques
- Forgiveness.

*Forgiveness* is touted as the ultimate step toward freedom from the effects of CSA. Like many people, I have difficulty with this concept. How can you forgive a father for raping his little daughter, or a mother for seducing her little son -- especially when the parent shows no remorse?

Certainly to become whole the victor needs to let go of the shame, anger, guilt and hatred.

Perhaps we need a new word in place of forgiveness because to many of us "forgiveness" smacks of condoning; of implying that the abuse was no big deal.

It's interesting that the dictionary definition of forgiveness says nothing about condoning or accepting evil behavior. Only "letting go of resentment."

Hypnotherapy can help you to deal with the difficult topic of forgiveness.

Hypnosis makes it possible for you to safely delve into those parts of you that harbor grief, anger, resentment, hurt, shame and bewilderment.

In using hypnosis to change subconscious beliefs you can free yourself from the devastating effects of non-forgiveness.

**Forgiving does not mean you condone the betrayal**, it means you rise above the harm done to you so you no longer continue the suffering.

One of the members of my Victory Over CSA group wrote the following poem, more than 50 years after her father not only sexually abused her but tried to murder her as well. I have to tell you that she now looks ten years younger. Plus all her physical aches and pains have vanished.

She told us that it was difficult to say these things, that she had to reach deep inside herself, that for more than half a century she had not allowed herself feelings about her father.

## To Forgive

Do I forgive you?  
What can I say.  
You broke my spirit  
My world went away  
You tortured my mind  
'till I wanted to die  
You showed me no mercy  
Not a tear in your eye.  
You abused my body  
You tore it apart.  
You tried to kill me  
with hate in your heart.  
You gave me life but  
You took it away.  
Do I forgive you?  
Yes, Father, I forgive you  
I forgive you today.

Here is some commentary on the topic from a hypnotherapist:

### **Forgiveness and the Christian Perspective**

Del Hunter Morrill, M.S., C.C.H.

At a convention, after giving a talk on healing past abuse through the use of altered state methods, the Q & A session elicited concerns about the idea of "forgiveness" having religious connotation. There was also concern with the possibility that a therapist might be forcing more guilt upon the victim, by equating the necessity of "forgiving" with their healing.

I have had clients who already had borne enough guilt as a result of the action of others. They ended up feeling more guilty because they couldn't forgive and thought they "should". Or they thought they had forgiven, only to have all those "negative" feelings surface again. Personally, I think there is a real danger in forcing an act of "forgiveness" too soon after some trauma or other issue.

Sometimes I wonder if the word and concept of "forgiveness" goes along with the assumptions so many hypnotherapists make about the religious convictions of others.

For instance, I am continually amazed at how Christianity is assumed by many Hypnotherapy speakers and writers, including "script writers." In the last convention I attended at least one third of the presenters, within the content of their presentations, made this assumption. I could have pointed out to those presenters that in that room of people they addressed sat at least one Buddhist and two Jews, a couple of agnostics, and myself, a weird mixture of heaven-knows-what.

This assumption [of mutual Christian belief] is evident in informal gatherings of colleagues. We sit around meal tables talking together, without knowing the religious preferences of those present. I was baptized a Christian, and yet I am always offended by such assumptions. Imagine what it must be like for a Jew, Buddhist, or agnostic.

My greater concern is, that, if this assumption is made before whole audiences, and among us in informal settings, then what assumptions are being made in relationship to one's clientele.

This is why, in the client's intake, I include questions about the religion in which the client was raised, whether currently practiced, and what the person believes in. This can make quite a difference in how the therapist approaches this person. Also, it can affect how the therapist decides to handle the dynamic of "forgiveness."

Now, I call forgiveness a "dynamic" (or a process, if you prefer). "Forgiveness" is just a word -- like all words are merely words. At some point in history, a word was put on some dynamic, or process, or event, or experience, in order to remember it or to tell someone else about it.

Unfortunately, we sometimes let the "word" itself get in the way, rather than looking underneath the word to figure out what it really is pointing to.

My own approaches to the dynamic I would consider "forgiveness" range from "reframing" the incident or trauma to creating a setting for dialogue among the key figures involved in the trauma. Certainly, there are other methods one can use to assist someone through the process of letting go of the hold of the past.

For instance, when working with healing of past abuse while a client is in an altered state, I feel that confronting the issue may be needed.

One method I use is a dialogue with the abuser, which is staged in a safe environment. The victim of that abuser is helped to understand where the guilt actually lies, and is given power to handle that person, including what should happen to the perpetrator.

I consider this to be a major step in "forgiveness." The client experiences their feelings of new power and confidence. They then decide whether this new memory and attached feelings are what they prefer carrying into the future, agreeing to leave behind the old "stuff."

Someone who has been raised Christian may well respond to the above by wanting his or her abuser to be forgiven. If so, then it comes out from the internal experience they are going through in the altered state, not because a therapist is suggesting that they will be healed only if they do so.

For active Christians, the words "forgiving-forgiveness-forgiven" may be important. But I find that there is a lot less "guilt", and more power, when they are used to explain the experiences of healing that the client has gone through, rather than what the client "needs" or "ought" to go through.

The client may use a different word or phrase to describe the experience of such a process, such as "cleaning the slate," "clearing the garbage," "releasing a ton of bricks," "feeling lighter than air," etc.

A Buddhist might speak of it as experiencing Buddha's mercy. A Hindu might speak of it as fulfilling Karma. There may be many other ways of talking about it. It doesn't matter what it is called -- the question is, did the person get released from the past? Did they recover their power and confidence? Do they feel free to move into the future? (They always were free to do so, but had not experienced it before.)

Regardless of whether the word "forgiveness" is used, I think it is important for any therapist to understand more than one technique and process that can help a client be released from the hold others have had over them.

The therapist's job is to help their client understand that the past is only a set of memories, only thoughts. Those memories or thoughts can have a powerful hold over someone only if allowed to have that hold.

Often they must be dealt with if the client (or the child within them) is to be released to move on.

That's why we use such things as hypnotherapy. Hypnotic tools deal with that powerful hold most effectively.

Perhaps, "forgiveness" is much like "breaking old hypnotic spells."

Here's another view on forgiveness:

G.S. writes:

"As you invited comments on the subject of forgiveness - here is how it feels on my victim end to likely more people than just me.

Forgiveness toward my childhood abuser (father) would be very counterproductive to therapy in my case and as I suspect in many other people's cases. The abuse consisted of intense verbal, emotional, physical and to a lesser extent sexual but with great emphasis of the other abuse forms to extremes, lasting from birth until adulthood with a great deal of repressed memory and more blanks than events/memories accounted for in the entire childhood years (only a few complete memories present with much of 2 first life decades mostly blank memory and mostly only intense body memories/emotions remembered as total fund of childhood memories), severe difficulty functioning even now 4 decades later although healing is progressing with my own efforts in the last years, but a history of life-long social isolation to the point of never having had a close personal relationship or meaningful friend in my life, to this day constant nightmares, flashbacks, and spending so much time in dissociation that I have struggled to hold a job all my life or perform minimal functioning at times while at other

times producing incredible personal successes (virtually by myself building a humanitarian organization the success of which landed in the mass media in several countries.)

- I worked with orphans and rape camp refugee victims in Bosnia and became one of the most successful individuals in the humanitarian scene doing so.

Much such compulsive overachievement to prove my worthlessness-whispering demons wrong, often alternating great success with inability to function on Adult level for prolonged periods.

While father was active abuser, mother was passively enabling it and spent exhaustive efforts placing guilt on me for everything, which occurred by my father and minimizing/denial/guilt by my mother and assigning guilt to me for everything INCLUDING NOT FORGIVING, FORGETTING AND DENYING.

It was extreme to the point that not only was the abuse not to ever, ever be discussed but even a frown on my face was reprimanded. Tears and stress reactions post abuse were severely prohibited - no signs of showing abuse and were met with demands to not make a big deal out of it, forgive for the sake of my father's health - my mother constantly manipulated that my forgiveness of father's abuse was a must as my father would otherwise physically die of grief - "he has chest pains and if you give him any grief, he may die of heart attack, you MUST go in there and forgive and make peace" was a reaction to my panting after a tonic/clonic seizure after a beating and much verbal/emotional abuse and such comments and forgiveness being enlisted as part of the abuse were very common.

My only defense in adulthood is distance from my parents as they are still alive in Europe and I have to deal with them somehow.

Forgiving - visibly and allowing them closer in my life than the great distance at which I insist they must stay from me or even quietly forgiving for my own therapeutic sake without discussing it with them directly or showing change in my carefully controlled very distant relationship toward them - any form of such forgiveness would not only invite more abuse if I relaxed the vigil and imposed distance but confirm the denial they instilled into me that nothing actually happened or the "little bit of difficulty" my mother occasionally admits to which may have happened in two unspeakable decades of growing up with them was not such a big thing as to hold a grudge over and I would partner with them in my renewed abuse and recycle a great deal of old pain by participating in renewal of the abuse by "forgiving" which I was programmed since early childhood to do under pressure and such a forgiving process would be met not with therapeutic gain but grave setbacks.

My upbringing was not religious but many others have religious guilt.

I wonder how many other survivors relive the terror if "forgiving" - in ANY way - is suggested. I think therapists must be very cautious with this term or concept and thoroughly research history/nature of abuse before suggesting it.

There is therapy in NOT forgiving and indulging in guilt-free rage against my parents.

The intensity of the rage of course is counterproductive to healing but it's a phase I find I must go through before letting go gradually.

Rather than "forgiving" which implies very upsetting ideas such as minimizing, letting an abuser get away with it, giving up a well-earned rage before its time to let it go, coupled with guilt, is very counterproductive.

Thinking of it instead as letting go allows at least some degree of retaining what feels as deserved outrage, guilt and rage while working on releasing and diminishing that without the pressure of "forgiving" which seems impossible and too much to ask for.

Letting go allows rage to diminish in its own time.

Forgiveness is an outrageous concept of being robbed of the only emotion I have to this day of answering the abuse with.

Coping strategies slowly replace the rage but it cannot be taken away by a deliberate process of forgiving.

"Forgiving" implies a frightening sanctioning of responsibility; releasing or letting go in its own time without releasing accountability of abuser's responsibility or guilt does not. The intensity of the outrage eases a little with time on its own as incremental "letting go" is a productive process which does not involve forgiving which bears the risk of "letting the abuser get away with it". "

And here's what M.S. wrote:

"As an abuse survivor of a ritualistic cult back in the early 70's and the continued denial, minimization, invalidation, and at times outright abusive manipulations of my family over three decades, the lack of forgiveness, the anger, hatred, and even rage have kept me alive so as to not remain in the black hole of shame, despair and all encompassing wallowing victimhood.

Forgiveness may help me in the future, but without righteous anger I risk dropping my own personal boundaries to the many narcissistically selfish individuals we encounter more often in our good character-less society. At least I have kept my empathy, love, care and concern and at times taken them to the extreme. Because I choose to care.

Forgiveness, however, because of past unconscious damage may not be as easy for any of us to attain if abuse has shamed us so brutally that we have been cut off from our sense of selves. Even the mature mind and heart for self protection holds on to anger and yes sometimes even rage, but still loves to the extreme. You cannot love unless you can also hate. Our world is missing far too many with a necessary mix of human compassion and righteous anger.

Because some people in our lives are very dangerous triggers we as humans have developed very primitive defense mechanisms to deal with threats to our own self-preservation.

The lack of forgiveness has actually assisted me in both the help and healing of others as well as sustaining and honing my own realizations and awareness. Sometimes it takes more anger than just assertiveness to look back at the wall of assertiveness we need to back us up when situations call for it.

Not letting go is also an act of maintaining sanity, as it helps us who have suffered through terrible trauma take a more black and white stance on life's issues, especially when sitting on the fence can cause much vagueness and confusion. For trauma survivor's betrayal of the self is by far the worst betrayal of all. Thus living with at times an unhealthy dose of anger provides many of us with a sense of direction to make better decisions in world strewn with a multitude of immature manipulators. Life used to be much harder for a greater percentage of the population, thus it used to be character building. Now lack of character pervades every aspect of our society, but the true survivors know who they are, and if forgiveness helps them, all the power to them."

P.A. writes:

"I am responding to the section in which you discuss forgiveness. When thinking about my situation, which I will explain later on, I have mixed feelings about forgiveness. I was sexually abused by my brother; he's only four years older than me. I suppose since it happened I never got angry at him.

I'm now realizing that is protecting the abuser and owning the guilt, shame and everything else that comes along with it. That being said, I had forgiven him from almost the time that the abuse was ongoing.

Now it is said in the discussion that forgiveness (or letting go etc...) is a very important step, a final step if you will. In my case the forgiveness came too early and trumped all my "rights" to any other feelings I may have had. I thought that because I forgave him I wasn't mad at him and always felt a sense of protecting him (by not letting anyone know what was going on).

I'm realizing now that it is a huge block to my healing and "letting go." Now all these feelings are under the surface waiting to bubble up. Only I'm not sure how to set them free.

You see my brother had a sexual OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and has and is being treated for it. Now how do you get angry at someone who is doing something about their issue and correcting the problem so as not to let it become something much worse? So I suppose in my case because it was my brother and I loved him, I didn't want him to get in trouble. The abuse was not malicious (I'm not condoning it nor am I saying it wasn't a horrible thing to do) as it is in a lot of other situations. There was no verbal abuse, no physical abuse, just sexual and not even that extreme.

I would probably be considered one of the less serious problems (not to diminish what happened). And because of all this it was hard for me to be angry and still is today but I do have a lot of anger in me and I don't know how to release it. Today it affects me in ways that I wish it didn't.

My biggest issue is my relationship; I don't know how to have one. I still have major trust issues, when I know that my boyfriend is very trustworthy. That leads to a problem with fear: of being abandoned, fear of not being good enough for him, fear of never getting better (I'm also suffering from a Major Depression, I am in and out of the hospital), fear of never living up to my potential and I could go on and on.

I am very disconnected from my body and still very numb. I have no sexual desire and know that I love my boyfriend but can't feel the love I have for him. I used to have a stomach ulcer and now I still get all the symptoms of it, only it's not there anymore (psychosomatic).

All this to say, sometimes forgiveness is not what is needed, sometimes what is needed is expression....get angry, yell, scream. Be sad, cry, sob uncontrollably and let yourself go and allow yourself to grieve as if losing a family member because if it is incest, you have and if it is someone that you knew the same it true. The moment that the person touches you is the moment that person dies and someone else takes over. Only when all the feelings are expressed can they be overcome. Don't trap yourself like I did. Now I don't know how to be mad, for the person that abused me dies twice, once when the abuse started and then again when he got help. Sometimes  $2 + 2 = 5$  or 6 or 7.

I do hope that my story brings a little insight to another school of thought and that it was helpful in even the smallest way. Thank you for your site."

H.M writes:

"After reading the information and other poems on your website, I wrote my own. I have a good gestalt therapist that is helping me through my own trauma. Perhaps my poem can help others too.

You ripped my heart away  
You stole my innocence too  
How can I trust anyone  
When I was supposed to trust you  
You taught me to hide  
You taught me to deny  
Not wanting to face the truth  
Easier to believe the lie  
Even as I write now  
I struggle to face all of this  
But it's affected me so much  
That ignorance can no longer be bliss  
I struggle to hate you  
Cos u seemed to be the only one that cared  
I can't remember too much  
Of my childhood we so incessantly shared  
All I know is that I'm not healthy  
With all my tendencies to recreate  
That final eventual feeling

Where I am in a betrayed state  
My hopes smashed once again  
Where all I want is someone to care  
Then I realize all I am to them  
Is a body, an object lying there  
And here I am now  
Stuck in all this grief  
Looking for someone to love me  
Looking for relief  
I've abused myself in so many ways  
Over so many years  
Can't run from this any more  
Can't fight back the tears  
I want so much more for myself  
Can't hide in the symptoms of my pain  
Am willing to go through this grief  
To find my rainbow after the rain  
My awareness level has reached a peak  
Where I cannot disassociate anymore  
I want to take charge of my life  
And stop picking myself up off the floor  
I am lovable for the person I am  
For my mind, intellect and soul  
Not just for my body  
Or my sexual role  
I deserve care and love  
Dignity, honor and respect  
And I wish that what happened  
Will eventually lose its effect  
No more shame no more guilt  
No more internalization of what I feel  
Just me, my innocence,  
It wasn't yours to steal  
So I give back this shame  
I give it all back to you  
It wasn't mine to begin with  
I have some self- healing to do."

W.S. writes:

"As a 64 yr old victor over abandonment, sexual, physical and psychological abuses as a child I believe that using the word forgiveness is counter productive in the healing process. As several have mentioned, although forgiveness in its true meaning, has nothing to do with condoning or approval most people associate it so. I do not believe that forgiveness is an act itself, as it is an end result of a change in the person's perspective; a change in how they see themselves.

When a person is filled with anger, shame, fear, self-loathing and all the other negative emotions that goes along with abuse and being a victim, it is impossible to forgive the person(s) who made you feel that way. You would have to be a bit masochistic to do that and I would question ones veracity. It would be so nice to be able to just say I forgive you and all that would go away.

I believe the key to door to recovery and letting go (forgiveness) is not in trying to let go as an act but in changing how you see yourself. For years I worked on all the emotions and read all the books and gained quite an education which has served me well (all things are a two edged sword) but did not walk through the door until a meeting lead by with a simple, uneducated woman who stood before a group of rape crisis victims and volunteers and told us her story, the details of which are the same as many others but the conclusion is what is different. She said it hit her one day that she was still thinking of herself as “the victim” even though 30+ years had passed. She always thought of herself as “the victim” in her life. Not as in I was once a victim of an unfortunate situation or time in her life, but as an “I am a victim” ; an on going victim.

I left the meeting a changed person for I knew that is what I had been doing all my life and I chose to be a survivor at that moment. Twenty five years have passed since that meeting, I do not even know the women name, but I am very grateful to her, and I don't even think of myself as a survivor any more as none of that is important to me now. It was what it was. I let go of the past and it just was.

Once done, I found that my father was a victim of child abuse by his father and his father's friends. My mother was the adopted child of the town whore and her adopted father abused her as did the nun in the Catholic school, she attended, who told her she would grow up to be like her mother (probably because she was such a beautiful child) a whore.

We are all victims of abuse of some sort, everyone has some story they can tell. I am sure the 4ft 8in 90 lb elevator operator in the hotel I grew up in who molested my sister and I had been terribly taunted by peers for his size and weight and probably only felt strong when in the presences of little girls. This does not mean I condone in any fashion what he did or the others but I would come to see he was a victim too. When I realized we are all victims, then the anger, which I had turned inward and often outward just sort of slowly, melted away.

We all make poor choices, it would be wonderful if all of us were so far advanced spiritually that we could survive these horrors and not repeat any of them. When you begin to understand we are all victims you can stop judging others and you stop judging yourself. It takes time. You open the door to learning from your mistakes and allow yourself to heal and grow.

Life is hard; life is hard for everyone we just don't always see it because we do not walk in their shoes. This does not mean that you have to put up with a father that molested you, or a mother who abandoned you, or a uncle who abused you. You have choices and you can chose to let them lie in the bed they made for themselves, their acts were acts of alienation and you reap what you sow and so shall they. That old saying about you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear is applicable. How many victims keep trying to make mom or dad into some loving caring person, make them pay for the dastardly deeds they did, and what do

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they gain? Nothing but the continuation of being a victim by living in the past and not dealing with the reality of the now. As long as you chose to be a victim instead of being a survivor you are making the choice to live in the past and the past will continue to repeat itself.

Forgiving is not something we do for some one else....forgiving is letting go so we are no longer the victim and can move on.

But again, it is natural consequence of our change in attitude/perspective of ourselves and our world and not a grace we give to our tormentors."

Here's more on forgiveness from hypnotherapist and nurse, Seth-Deborah Roth:

### Learning To Forgive May Improve Well-Being

Forgiveness may be good for your health, according to the Mayo Clinic. Holding a grudge appears to affect the cardiovascular and nervous systems. In one study, people who focused on a personal grudge had elevated blood pressure and heart rates, as well as increased muscle tension and feelings of being less in control. When asked to imagine forgiving the person who had hurt them, the participants said they felt more positive and relaxed and thus, the changes dissipated. Other studies have shown that forgiveness has positive effects on psychological health, too.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting, condoning or excusing whatever happened. It's acknowledging hurt and then letting it go, along with the burden of anger and resentment.

There's no single approach to learning how to forgive. Talking with a friend, therapist or adviser (spiritual or otherwise) may be helpful during the process, to sort through feelings and stay on track. The January issue of Mayo Clinic Women's Health Source covers four steps that are included in most approaches to learning forgiveness.

Acknowledge the pain and anger felt as a result of someone else's actions. For forgiveness to occur, the situation needs to be looked at honestly.

Recognize that healing requires change.

Find a new way to think about the person who caused the pain. What was happening in that person's life when the hurt occurred? Sometimes, the motivation or causes for the incident have little to do with those most affected. For some people, this step includes saying, "I forgive you."

Begin to experience the emotional relief that comes with forgiveness. It may include increased compassion for others who have experienced similar hurt.

Adapted from materials provided by Mayo Clinic. Mayo Clinic (2008, January 4). Learning To Forgive May Improve Well-Being. ScienceDaily. Retrieved January 6, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080104122807.htm>

[Cybertip](#) is Canada's National Tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. It is a centralized web portal for receiving and addressing reports from the public regarding child pornography, luring, child sex tourism, and children who are exploited through prostitution.

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### "True healing of the heart and mind"

"Before I saw Dr. Knight, I had many unresolved issues. I had tried counseling and psychotherapy since suffering sexual abuse and toxic family environment but nothing seemed to get me the closure I needed.

Hypnosis is the best investment I have ever made in my life. It allowed me to truly let go of my past. After completion of my treatment with Dr. Knight, I felt an immense relief and peace of mind that I had not felt since I was a young child.

I have found Dr. Knight to be highly skilled and passionate about his work. After only one session of hypnosis with him, I already felt better. It took only three sessions to resolve years of issues.

Hypnosis allowed me to regain my self-confidence and to let go of the sexual abuse I had suffered in the past.

I highly recommend Dr. Knight. He is Montreal's best-kept secret! Many therapists can get the patient to speak of the problems and then they do not know what to do afterward when all is out in the open. Not Dr. Knight. He offers guidance and support in every step of the way, until true healing of the heart and mind occurs.

Thank you Dr. Knight I will never forget what you did for me!"

Jessica Dupré

For more testimonials and to make an appointment in Montreal or over the Internet with Dr Knight (with or without hypnosis) go to [Testimonials and Appointments](#). Or email me at [drknight@therapy-insights.com](mailto:drknight@therapy-insights.com) or see <http://www.therapy-insights.com/>