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"How Do I Avoid Being A Victim?"

The Question:

"I suffered through years of childhood abuse. I'm now almost 25 and the effects of it are controlling my life. I read on your site how you mentioned that victims of childhood abuse often become revictimized. I have seemed to experience that a lot throughout my life with the people i've met. I also read that victims tend to be subconsciously drawn or attracted to those, who will, betray them again.

I'm wondering if you could help me in the right direction to NOT being a victim anymore and if there are any ways not to be "attracted" to people who will just cause me to be revictimized again. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Thank You very much."

My reply:

Greetings:

Excellent questions.

That you even ask them shows that you are on the right path to no longer being a victim. And that's great.

I'll answer your email as thoughts occur to me. Thus the following is not in any particular order of importance.

The biggest danger in the process of re-victimization is that the men who are potential abusers at first appear to be charming, even loving. They are attentive, appear warm and perhaps "sensitive."

But it's all an act. Sociopaths have no conscience. They can only simulate feelings. [Except for anger at being thwarted]. But they do it very well. That's why it is so easy for a vulnerable woman to be taken in.

So one of the first things to do is to make sure you are thinking straight. A warning sign is that you are experiencing the same excitement as on previous occasions when you thought a guy was Mr Wonderful.

Look for little clues such as his not wanting to spend time with your existing friends. Of course a couple newly in love want to spend time alone but what you're on the alert for is his need to control.

An abuser wants to use his woman. He wants control over her. His insecurities (masked for a while by his superficial charm) cannot allow her to have a life undictated by what *he* wants.

This need for control will leak out before it becomes full-blown. So another thing you do is, allow time to pass.

Observe his behaviour, especially with the other important people in your life.

Look at him as objectively as possible. If he bears a lot of resemblance to other abusers (in character, not looks), dump him.

A decent man will truly listen to you. He'll sometimes do things you want, even though it's not what interests him. He'll want to meet your friends and family -- not just on one fleeting visit, either.

Key question to ask yourself is "Is he *really* considerate of me?" And sending you flowers after he's yelled and screamed at you, or worse, beaten you up or forced sex on you, does NOT qualify.

If you find yourself making excuses for the man in your life, dump him.

If you find yourself unwilling to present him to girlfriends, dump him.

If you find him unwilling to allow you time on your own, dump him.

But by far the best protection from being re-victimised is to build your own self-esteem. Then you'll find yourself attracted to decent guys.

I can guess that over the years you've looked upon decent guys as "boring" and have been attracted to creeps because they seemed to offer excitement.

It's the kind of excitement you can live without. Indeed, your life might in reality depend upon avoiding creeps.

Build your self-esteem by following your dreams, doing things you're proud of, exercising, taking part in activities that really interest you (then, as a by-product you'll likely meet a man who also has self-respect).

People who respect themselves are attracted to others who have self-respect.

An abuser is attracted to a potential abuser precisely because she has low self-esteem. So does he though his bravado at first masks the low self-image. (Swaggering and bragging can also be his symptoms).

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