

A recovery from childhood sexual abuse

Unless you have some specific reason for remembering Friday May 3rd 2014, it would have been just another day. It was a lovely spring day in Wales, warm and sunny with an amazing display of bluebells along the Tal-y-llyn railway line. Their heady scent will stay with me for a long time to come.

For me it was something of a red letter day, it's not every day that one stands at the foot of their parent's grave and forgives them. I'm no longer young, not old either but well into middle age so what on earth would I be doing forgiving my parents at this stage in life. Why did I have to travel so far to do it? For me it was important to go back to the source of my abuse, to see their names on a grave stone and direct my words to their names.

My parents were paedophiles. To abuse a child is the worst betrayal of its trust. A tiny helpless baby is totally dependent on mother love for everything. To deny the child all that mother love is one thing but add to it sexual abuse from a very early age, just months old, takes it to another dimension. By the age of 8 I had been sexually abused by 5 adults, all people in positions of trust; parents, family member, family friend and the chapel minister. To live one's formative years in fear, deprived of love, physically, psychologically and sexually abused sees a developing child move into teenage and adult years with some deep seated problems.

Where was God in all this you may be asking – that's OK - I did; many times I questioned how God could allow and continues to allow the ongoing volume of child abuse we know takes place. We are constantly bombarded by the media with stories of child abuse - it's rife. It's nothing new, it has always gone on. I have no answers as to why abusing children in this most vile way gives adults, and sometimes children, such a buzz.

What I can say with certainty is that God is there in recovery. Oh yes, one can recover from the damage of childhood. It takes a long time and is a painful journey but well worth it in the end.

One lives one's life as a 'false self', a damaged child within an adult body; recovery brings together the damaged child and the adult to make a whole person, one's true self. Hindsight is the most wonderful of things and I can see clearly now why I felt and behaved as I did in my teens and adult life. Why life was one of survival and mere existence, not a life lived to the full. Why from a teenager I suffered with depression.

God puts the right people in the right place at the right time; I have learnt that His timing is always perfect. People have come into my life who have been significant in my journey; some have been with me all the way through, others came at the time they would be needed and stayed while others seem to have popped in and out. They have been members of our community, people with other faiths or no faith at all, but all played their part. I have the best of counsellors, an expert in child abuse who has worked with me over many years.

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I was provided with a support network of people around me who held me and carried me through the journey. Someone who was seriously abused herself, who is now a very close friend; this is a lovely example of someone able to come alongside because they have already walked the journey.

All my life I craved love, searched for mother and father figures. I spent my life chasing round constantly 'doing'. I wasn't a human being – I was a 'human doing' Why? One reason is that I was terrified that if I said no that I would no longer be liked; another reason is that somehow it proved I existed. An abused child grows up being valueless, unworthy, of no consequence and therefore doesn't exist, so it finds ways to try and prove it does.

There are some beautiful parts to my story and the one I want to share is of mother love. Sometime before I started dealing with my mother's betrayal someone came into my life who became my surrogate mother. She loved me, held me and comforted me through the darkest part of the journey, never wavering in her message of love. It was genuine unconditional love, love I had never experienced before. As time went on along with her husband they showed me what parental love could have been like. Not only did God put in place people to help me through, he brought people into my life who could give me what I had never had – love.

The transition to one's true self is a period of hard work. A life time of a way of being is not changed overnight, it's a time that can be challenging, exciting and scary – one has to leave one's comfort zone and move to pastures new! It's a time of swinging back and forth between childhood and adulthood until they become truly one person. And so the support network stayed with me and is still there when doubts and fears come, thankfully they are much less often now.

So this is why May 3rd is so significant for me – to have reached a point where I could forgive. With forgiveness comes freedom, There is a version of the song Amazing Grace in which the first line of another verse says:

My chains are gone, I've been set free

And that is how it feels. I thank God that he loved me enough not to leave me where I was, that he provided such a loving and caring support network to bring to where I am today. His grace is truly amazing.

If you are in anyway being abused please get help sooner rather than later,

Don't let your abusers affect the rest of your life, don't let them win.

Jane

2014

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Here are some Contact Details

CSN Helpline: 0845 11 300 72

(All calls in confidence by trained volunteers)

CSN Confidential Email Support: **help@chsn.org.uk**

NAPAC, National Association for People Abused as a Child

Freephone Helplines: 0800 085 3330 for landlines,

Email: support@napac.org.uk

Website: www.napac.org.uk