



*~ Keith John ~
~ behind the child abuse ~*

© Copyright 2014

Welcome to my world.

Child protection is high on my agenda, as it should be for every parent. But why is it that one in three girls are subject to sexual abuse, and one in five boys. The statistics in Australia alone has shown an alarming increase in reported cases of child sexual abuse, doubling from 2000 to 2008. Although reports did decrease substantially over the following two years, from 2010 they are back on the increase. ^[1]

I grew up in a family where all the children were subjected to verbal abuse of one kind or another, while the older children also became subjected to sexual and physical abuse. When my sisters reached about the age of eight or so, the father daughter relationship changed, since, in the eyes of my drunken father, he believed he had the right to do whatever he wanted to his children.

Sadly, my father got away with incestuous crimes. Even when he died at the age of seventy-two, he had never been convicted for the trauma and damage that he contributed to his children's dysfunction. It was years after the kids had all left home and his wife had divorced him before his deeds became common knowledge throughout the extended family. Even then no-one believed they had the power to persecute him. The only consolation was that he lived a lonely and isolated life. The fact that he got away without a criminal conviction has also influenced the next generation of abusers within my family. I don't believe abuse is hereditary, but the parental influence in my family had bred disrespect towards women, plus children learn more from what they see, rather than what their told. You know the old cliché, 'monkey see, monkey do!'

By the time I was thirty, I had decided to trace my family history, as I wanted to find out who I was and where I had come from. It wasn't long before my research revealed that my father was not the first of his kind.

I found some interesting facts from both sides of the family that played a role in who I am today! On my mother side there was one couple who had twenty-two children, with only one set of twins among them. It was no wonder that a photo of their fiftieth wedding anniversary showed a very hard faced mother. It was sad to see that less than half the children celebrated this special day with their parents, but I can understand it if they're anything like my family. There was also my great-grand father who at thirty married a sixteen year-old girl. They went on to have sixteen children before his wife died of a sexually transmitted disease thirty years later. There is evidence to prove she had the disease all he married life, suggesting she contracted it from her husband and his promiscuous lifestyle before they met. According to acquaintances, he was well known throughout the town in which they lived for flirting with the ladies. With so many observers, it's a wonder she never knew, or did she? If she is like my mother, then I believe she did know, but their culture dictated that they turn a blind eye. But there's more. On my father's side, I met a great-auntie. I caught her at a bad time because her husband had recently died. Nevertheless, she was still quite informative. After she had exhausted her story about receiving a letter from the queen of England to commend them on their wedding anniversary, I asked her a lot of questions about her parents. I first asked her how her mother had died. Probably not the most appropriate of question under the circumstances, but she was willing to tell me. She told me the story as to how her mother had died while my great-auntie and her father were fishing on the beach. Her mother knocked over a candle after falling asleep in their makeshift beach tent. The tent caught fire, but no-

¹ [www.aif.gov.au]

one could get to her in time to save her from the flames. My great-auntie was only fourteen at the time, and although she tried, there was little she could do to save her mother. It was an horrific memory for her to recall, yet, not as horrific as recalling the memories of her father. I was under the assumption that her father was in the fire brigade, but when I asked, she went off on a tangent as to how much she hated her father. She told me how she couldn't wait to leave the family home; she'll go anywhere and marry anyone, to get away from that man. I remember those exact same words used by two of my sisters when they became old enough to marry. My sisters were desperate to leave home and change their name so that they didn't have to associate with my father or his name. To them, getting married was like a second chance at life. Up until then, their life was far from normal.

Our Personality.

I believe everyone has a built in curiosity, a desire to understand how things work and why things happen. It helps us to grow and mature in our minds. Nevertheless our childhood experiences determine how we respond to this natural instinct. Being abused physically or emotionally can alter that instinct, as fear becomes our driving force. Being constantly threatened creates a fear where we become withdrawn and afraid to ask questions, even if our own health is at stake. The last thing we want to do is provoke our abuser.

The truth about mankind is that all people have a curiosity, and as a result we all make assumptions. A healthy person will use their assumptions as a guide towards their request for information. But those who fear asking questions will instead only think and ponder before using their assumptions as the answer.

When I was growing up, that was definitely the case with most of my family, particularly my oldest sister who would harass me even more than all my other siblings. At about seven, my seventeen year-old sister made a comment that shocked me so much, it has stayed with me all my life. She said to me, very angrily, 'you will never turn out like your father'.

She was not making a prediction about my future, she was threatening me. She planned to mould and shape me so that I would understand women better than my older chauvinistic brothers. To some degree it has worked. Although her intentions were honourable, her methods were not. I did learn to respect women, just not her.

Because of her, and others like her, I grew up drawing my own conclusions since I was too afraid to ask questions. Any question I had, be it to her or my older brothers, was usually met with the same response, to mind my own business! After spending ten or twelve years in the real world, I became more aware that my family was different, and not in a good way. I'm not sure whether I've always been analytical or whether I became it, but I learnt later in life to seek and ask, not just for answers, but for the truth. I learnt that assumptions are healthy when used correctly, such as imagining scenarios to problem solve, and then ask the questions to fill in the gaps in our limited information. Using assumptions for answers, never gave me the best results.

I was about thirty when I realised that I had not only grown up in a family of liars and manipulators, but I had been irresponsible all of my life. I also learnt that being irresponsible was a family tradition. I realised what I was taught to be the truth was nothing more than the deception of older family members, so that they could either get their own way, or seem smarter than they really were. That means that my father, mother, brothers and sisters, all taught me that breaking some rules are acceptable as long as you don't get caught, or that you can justify them.

Prior to turning thirty I had always accepted what I was told. And why not, I was always taught that to challenge what I was told brought conflict and consequence. I can still remember the vivid comments of, 'just shut up and do as your told'.

Just because I can't ask questions doesn't mean I can't observe. I had noticed that my dad had tools in his shed that were marked with an army symbol. In conclusion, it meant that my dad had stolen them from the army, which taught me to believe that stealing is acceptable, providing you keep it small.

As one of the youngest in my family, I did not have much contact with my father growing up as he was away with the Army or at the pub winding down. In fact, I never really got to know him until later in life. It was my brothers and sisters who passed on his legacy. My father's unwritten rules were well imbedded in my mind, thanks to the older children whom he had trained to obey his rules. I can only describe myself as a conformist; I was unmindful to the real world. I use the words 'clueless', 'ignorant' and 'oblivious', to describe how I was then, however it saddens me when I realise I am describing myself. More recently, one of my sisters reminded me of some advice that I had given her when I first found out about the trauma that she had been through at the hands of my father. It was that old useless saying that I had learnt from my brothers; 'just get over it'. I would never say that to anyone now, plus I hate it when people give it as advice to others, let alone me. Even though the comment may work for a few people, it does not fit my personality style, or about eighty percent of personalities.

I liken my upbringing to the blind guidance of a five-year-old. It was my parents who had the mindset of children and the morality of adolescents. These were my role models growing up; and consequently, they were unable to teach me about real life. Somewhere or somehow we are all supposed to mature in our minds, not just our body. I have found that if a child asks you 'why', it is because they have some impression as to what is happening around them. If they don't get answers, then it stunts their growth and child development. I believe my parents were restricted as children, just as much as they were restricting our development.

Thirty was a huge turning point for me, although it would be another six years before I found religion. I feel to share some relevant description that I was taught by the church before I share my thirties.

The Bible, and some clever church people, taught me that people have different personalities, and the different personality types as well as our order of birth in the family will also dictate how we usually behave in certain circumstances.

A general breakdown of the personalities can be put into four categories, Choleric, Melancholy, Sanguine and Phlegmatic.

The Choleric are usually honest, direct and plain, but because they believe they are always right, they are experts at blaming. And like my oldest brother they like control but don't pick up hints or subtlety.

The Melancholy seems to dwell in self-pity, they know their problems and would like to change, but find it overwhelming; it's just too hard. And like my mother, they rely on others to carry their burdens.

The Sanguine live life for fun. They are not analytical and only recognise there is a problem when the fun has stopped. They are the kind of people who don't hold grudges, but will make the same mistakes over and over. And like my oldest sister, will generally mean what they say, but when a different emotion is in control will genuinely mean the opposite to a previous statement.

And finally, the Phlegmatic. Their motto is 'Peace at all cost'. Their comfort and peace are the most important. They don't like to be analysed and prefer to be spectators. They make good liars in the attempt to avoid conflict. Even if they are confronted, they will adequately justify their actions. They are the ultimate procrastinators.

Believe it or not, the Phlegmatic is my favourite brother, and I believe it's because he has an exception to the rule. He will procrastinate about most things, that is true, but not sports. He has always been my role model in this area, and has always been there for me for over forty-

five years. We have clashed considerably when I analyse him, but I have learnt not to confront him with issues; I just bring things up casually in conversation, but never more than one problem at a time. That way I am non-threatening to his life style, and I can slowly satisfy my need to resolve conflict.

Family background also plays a huge role in who we are because we all have different influences. Our birth order plays a major role in dictating our personality. My oldest sister is a lot more regimental than I am because her role models were adults. She spent all her life trying to be like the adults who were educating her. As for me, my role models were many but also closer to my own age as my brothers and sisters spent more time with me than my parents. It was easier to achieve the goals set by my siblings, than for my oldest sister to achieve the goals set by her parents. For example, she had to learn to read, I did not. As the youngest boy, my life was more fun than my oldest sisters. I have to admit by the time she was thirty, she was better educated than I was at thirty, and financially, she is better off for it. But since then I think the world is our teacher and I have been a more willing participant than her.

I also believe that God designed the family as a learning curve for life, both good and bad. I have noticed that children from one or two child families have poorer negotiation skill than children from larger families. Our family influences our learning and shapes our personality. And although every family is dysfunctional, not every family has the same dysfunction.

No-one is perfect and most parents learn as they go along. Becoming a parent has some natural instinctive qualities such as nurturing; nevertheless the concept of parenting is different in each person, just because each person's personality is different and we apply what our parents did for us.

Responsibility.

A few years before my father died, I asked him about my sisters and his response has always lingered with me. He had the mindset that these were his children and he will do with them whatever he pleased. I'm glad to say that the law disagrees. Every person is valuable and individual, and each person is responsible for their own actions. However, that responsibility has to be learnt, like everything else. As babies we cannot take that responsibility, although we still have a free will, we are too immature to use it. Every one of us will have to eventually take ownership for themselves and their actions, but there is a process that must take place. Responsibility has to be taught and practiced, just like every other task. When children master a deed, say toilet training, they then become responsible for controlling themselves in that area. Sure, there are a few mishaps along the way, but eventually we get to the point where we are completely in control. It's like that with everything; responsibility is learnt one step at a time. I like how my number three sister was very animal orientated. Her children learnt their responsibility by not only caring for their domestic animals, but also a few chickens, budgies and finches. It was a great place to visit.

From the time we are born, we are dependent on others, and we rely heavily on our family. It is from this dependent youth that we learn to submit to their control. Our old age is much the same; nevertheless there is a period of independence where we take life by the reigns and gallop into the big wild world, where we sometimes get to make our own decisions. The transition from living under someone's control, responsibility, teaching and influence, to a self-responsible, self-providing lifestyle, is one met with mixed emotions; daunting at first, yet gratifying. Some make the transition easily, while others can't wait to get away from being controlled, yet still others don't want to leave home at all. The family home means security and comfort for some, and nightmares for others.

The parent's role is to take responsibility for the child and teach it to be the best adult that their potential will allow. We have twenty years to achieve this and I promise you that it will go much better if you get help along the way. The downside is that not all parents make good teachers, many choosing to give up the responsibility for their children and replace it with control. But the reality is, if you brought a child into this world, you are responsible for them for life.

So what changed for me, how did I realise that I had been irresponsible? Well firstly, my life was veering away from my expectation. What I believed to be normal was to go to school to get an education. Leave school and get a job, a car and a girlfriend. Next is to settle down, buy a house and start a family, and live happily ever after. Sounds great, yes! Well sometimes a spanner is thrown into the works to bring us into reality.

I married my first love when I was twenty-one, but when it came to parenting we had two different ideas and lifestyles. The only problem was that we didn't know how to fix our issues, although we tried. When I was married, I would usually agree with my wife's decisions since she always had our best interest at heart, but this time we strongly disagreed. Our wealth was more important than being a parent to her, whereas my priorities were with the child first. Our best compromises only saw us drift apart as we worked opposite shifts. This way we both could care for our son and both work. The consequence was that as husband and wife, we were lucky to see each other one day a week. After a year, we hardly knew each other. We both had a different circle of friends and our marriage was reduced to communication by post-it notes. Neither of us really knew how to solve the conflict properly since we both believed we were powerless to change the others view. The saddest part was

that we had no idea that we could get outside help. When I told my dad my marriage was over, he said to me that he never liked her anyway. I look back now and think to myself, 'what a piece of shit my dad is', there wasn't even a hint of advice. No-one in my family has heard of marriage counselling, let alone any other sort of counselling. To my generation, it was a sign of weakness, an indicator that displayed your inabilities. My generation was all about hiding your shortfalls, not exposing them. If I knew then what I knew now, what a cliché that saying is; realistically though, if I did know how to get help, I would most likely still be married to the same woman thirty years on.

My son wasn't born until I was twenty four, and in my eyes, we were not going to have another child until we sorted out our parenting differences, I made sure of that. Consequently, he is an only child, which was one thing he was never meant to be. We were married for seven years before we finally called it quits. My son suffered the most, but we didn't realise it at the time.

My next dilemma, prior to turning thirty, was because I believed I was not allowed to challenge authority, and also, with the interaction that I did have with my father, I learnt to fear him. I can remember at least two occasions from my youth where I learnt fear. One was where I received the back of his hand that sent me down a four foot drop. The other was when I was seven. I was injured, and dad demanded that I stop crying so that I could tell him what was wrong. I don't remember which was worse, fighting back the tears or the original injury. To be honest, I can't remember the injury but I do remember the fear I was feeling. The fear rose up during my feeble attempt to hold back the tears, so I guess I do know which was worse.

With that in mind, there were two main events that change me. When I was twenty-nine I had a job where most of my lunch breaks I spent on my own. It was the first time in my life that I had read a novel from cover to cover. It took me a couple of months reading a half hour a day, but I felt a little proud of myself for it. I had never been encouraged to read.

It was during this time that I discovered a new kind of authority in my life. For the first time I had someone who was genuinely concerned about doing the right thing. One day at work I had some pay concern and became fearful, since I did not believe I was allowed to negotiate or explain my concerns. After the fifth problem had occurred I knew I had to do something. I started to make some notes regarding my grievances, but before I could finish, my boss had caught me and wanted to know what I was doing. My job did not normally require me to make notes. He took me by surprise and I thought I was in trouble. So when I began to tell him about my pay concerns, I found it very difficult to breath. After about ten seconds I could feel myself choking up. My boss sensed my fear and asked me for the note. He described how two of my grievances were a misunderstanding on my part, but he also said two of these are genuine problems that he will fix. The fifth he will look into, which he did and informed me of the outcome that afternoon.

When I look back at that event, especially when I choked up as I was speaking to my boss, it was reminiscent of the incident with my father when I was seven. When I held my breath in fear of my authority, it was the exact same feeling as holding back the tears in my youth. In contrast, my boss's actions were foreign to me, especially since I never heard any ridicule about a grown man nearly crying. My family would have played on that for years to follow, but not this guy. With his healthy response, I learnt that there were different kinds of authority in the world.

The second main event was when one of my brothers had an affair. Now that was something I could not cope with or justify. As I was growing up, I had idolised this brother. When I got married, I even had the wedding service in the same church that he was married in. He was

confident, decisive and in control, just what I wanted to be like when I grew up. But this, an affair; that I didn't want!

I didn't want to be like him anymore; but if not like him, then who? I was confused.

We are all like sheep, whether consciously or subconsciously we all follow someone. We all mould our lives on someone we can aspire too. Consequently, I became like a lost soul. My marriage had ended two years before and I had been trying to find a new life. Now the one stable part of my life that I could depend on was living a lie. I realised that my whole life had been one long lie. What should I believe, who should I trust?

I remember when I was thirty I really began to look inwardly in an attempt to find who I was and where I fitted in this world. For some reason I didn't like what I found. I began to listen to myself and realised I swore like a trooper. I had no idea why. I also asked my six-year-old son if he was scared of me. His reply was truthful yet given in fear. I didn't realise I was so mean. Every waking day he would wonder if my yelling would turn physical, and what was a six-year-old to do when he upset his dad for just being a kid?

Apparently, what I didn't realise, was that I had become like my father. My father was a yeller. He was a sergeant in the army who was accustomed to belling out orders to his platoon. What I later realised was that it was the perfect rank for my father, someone who gives all the orders but takes none of the responsibility; he only passes on the demands of the officer's.

For me to be like my father, knowing what he did to my brothers and sisters, was very scary for me. I lived in fear of becoming more and more like him. Something had to change and it had to be something within me. I didn't understand why I was so nasty to my son, especially since I was great around other people kids. Then the penny dropped, that word 'responsibility'. I was responsible for my son and I literally harassed him to do the right thing all the time. I had unrealistic expectations and wanted my son to take responsibility for more than he could cope with. Expecting a child to know what an adult means is unrealistic. One example was when he was five and dragging his feet. I told him to pick his feet up when he walked, but he began to walk like every step was over a hurdle that was as high as his knees. He did as he was told but not what I wanted, so I got mad.

When his mother and I split up, my son went with his mum. It was probably the best thing for him at the time; at least it gave me a while to find myself. I still had visiting rights, but I took the time to work on my attitude for a while. It wasn't an overnight success, but eventually I got better. Since I was so good with other peoples kids, I re-thought my responsibly to my son. I pretended he was someone else's kid. Strangely enough, I took more responsibility for him and gave him more freedom to make mistakes. It just took me a few years to work it out. I'm glad to say that I asked him the same question when he was fourteen, 'if he was scared of me,' his reply was the best response possible, "what a dumb question dad, why would I be afraid of you".

How quickly children forget, but I never will.

I say all this to let you know I am not perfect and I am not worthy of accolades. I have stolen money in my youth and lost just as much in business ventures. Even though I never had any savings, I spent most of my life with enough money to get by. Later in life was I managed to live just beyond survival.

When I was twenty-nine I had a bit of money, so I took up dancing lessons. I needed something to focus on now that I was single. Married life had left me overweight, so I took

up squash again, something that I had enjoyed on and off since I was sixteen. I even participated in aerobic classes, all in all to help me loose twenty kilo's.

By the time I was thirty, I was fitter, healthier, still single, but had no future. So I looked to the past. Tracing my family history was a lesson in finding facts, it taught me to play detective. There were some great stories of people whose names seem to fit our family profile, but if I could not verify them, I needed to reject them. This is where I learnt the difference between good and bad detective work. There is nothing wrong with speculation, instinct or an assumption, for it is these three things that tell us where to search. They give us direction and help us ask the right questions. Regardless of that, if we cannot find the truth or discredit our speculation, then we need to dismiss it. Speculation does not become the truth if you can't prove the assumption, it always remains speculation. For me, it is the truth I seek, not assumptions; so proof for me is compulsory. I say all this for good reason and that reason is that our personality is affected by the truth, or by what we think is the truth.

The start of a victim mentality.

When my sisters were old enough to comprehend the legalistic side to their dilemma, they did what they could to try and understand why they had lost a part of their childhood. But when I was an adult, I thought that persecuting their own father either didn't occur to them, or just seemed wrong, I never asked at the time. Now some light on the subject has certainly revealed itself, and quite significantly.

I was born when my oldest sister was ten, two years after my father had begun his unspeakable actions. And that word 'unspeakable' is one reason it remained undetected for so long. I've noticed that every victim has a reason for not speaking up and it's usually that they are being manipulated by their abuser. Either they have been lied to in order to prevent them speaking up, or there is a fear of reprisal from their abuser. Both can be a controlling factor in a victim's life, especially when they are too young to know the law or the truth.

Before I discuss why children keep silent about their attackers, I need to shed some light on a term I call a 'victim mentality'. Most victims do not lose this way of thinking just because they become adults. Part of the brain, or at least the part that controls their thinking, stops growing because of their trauma.

Most people are a victim of crime at some point in their lives, but some crimes are worse than others. Some crimes affect us physically while others upset us mentally. All have different coping mechanisms. However, sexual abuse is the worse crime possible to be inflicted upon a child, because it affects every aspect of their being, their body, soul and spirit.

So who, why and how could someone commit such a horrendous crime and frequently repeat it? My father was such a man and to find the answer to these three questions, we first need to go back to the 1930's where the culture of the day may have been different, the people are still the same.

When my father was five, he was like every ordinary first born child. He had a younger brother that he bossed around and a little sister who was just learning to ride a tricycle. His parents owned a bakery in the heart of the city. Their days began very early and there was always a lot to do. One day my dad's mother had forgotten to remove the yeast from the oven on time. When she removed the big pot from the oven it was too hot, so she placed it on the back porch to cool. The other problem was that the children were out the back yard playing. The youngest, Ruth, wanted to ride a bike, so she borrowed her five-year-old big brother's. When he discovered his sister on his bike, he responded as any five year-old would, he grabbed his bike with one hand and pushed his sister off with the other. Ruth lost her balance as she was pushed and accidentally fell into the vat of boiling yeast. It would be nine days before she finally died of third degree burns.

Even though my father blamed himself, his guilt was reinforced when his father yelled, "What have you done?" as he extracted his daughter from the yeast.

Because no one explained the truth, that his actions were normal behaviour for a five-year-old, my father continued to believe his own feelings. So for a five year-old, it is an understandable response to feel guilt. I believe this to be a contributing factor towards my father's victim mentality.

Without the correct guidance, the trauma can keep a part of the brain at the age of the event. The problem with a victim mentality is that it is the part of the brain that determines reasoning.

My dad told me this event when he was sixty years old and as he was telling me this, he was talking as if it was still his fault.

Since the event was never spoken of when he was a youth, he spent years believing his speculation of the event. Someone should have told him it was not his fault, or at least his actions were that of a normal child. The real problem was that the yeast should have never been there in the first place. On the other hand, and this is the biggest problem for many, is that at an age of understanding, he should have been able to determine the difference for himself. In other words, when he became a teenager or early twenties, he would have been old enough to know the difference between an accident and something deliberate. But it is as if that part of the brain stops growing. Unless their assumptions are challenged, there is no reason for him to change his beliefs, even if they are wrong. Hence the victim mentality in this case is due to the wrong perspective. The blame was someone else's, not his.

When my son was growing up, he blamed himself for us splitting up, since the problems started when he was born. About once a year during his teenage life, he would mention the he was to blame for our divorce, and every year I would sit him down and explain what really went wrong. I never stopped trying to reassure him that he was loved by both parents and that our splitting up was never his fault. I was happy to reaffirm his innocence year after year for as long as it took. Once was not enough for him, but never speaking of a tragedy is damaging and irresponsible.

Another dilemma occurred when my dad was nineteen; his father was killed when a drunk driver hit a spoon drain. It was Christmas Eve and the man had too much to drink at his break up party. After he drove over the spoon drain, he lost control of his vehicle and it veered into the oncoming traffic, killing my grandfather on his motorbike. My dad never liked Christmas after that. So I think it was safe to say that in a way, my dad was a little bitter about life. He still followed in his father's footsteps and joined the army as his father had done before him. Forty-one-years of service between the two of them, that's something to be proud of.

My dad was twenty-two when he married a sixteen-year old woman who had had a child out of wedlock. Being a single mother was a big deal in those days for woman, especially since there was no financial support from the government.

This is the part of my father that I am still curious about. Why did he pick this woman? I know she is my mum and I know my dad has his own insecurities, but why pick her personality type and her submissive behaviour? It is these traits in particular that played a major role in our future, so why did my father seek those attributes? I sometime think he needed a woman who was submissive so that he could seem self-confident around her. That's an assumption on my part, because I sometimes think that self-confidence means that no-one is game enough to tell you how big a fool you really are. Just a personal insight of my own, I transgress, let me tell you about my mother.

Mum was nearly sixteen when she became pregnant, and not by choice. She lived in a small country town where work was hard to find. There was a man in his thirties that offered to have the young girl work in his café at the nearby railway station. He would taxi her to and from work, a necessary stipulation in order to appease her mother. It was not safe for a young girl to walk the streets at night. A job meant the fifteen-year-old could gain some independence and earn a wage. My grandmother's instructions were clear, "he is your boss, do whatever he tells you".

Although my grandmother had her daughter's best interest at heart, her boss soon found out that her daughter had miss understood the context in which the instructions are to be applied. Apparently, she believed she had to do exactly what she was told in every aspect of life, not just employment. One night on the way home, he took advantage of the naïve young girl. To

be honest, I don't know if it was once or more, she never said, but we do know she became pregnant to him. Grandma thought she got pregnant to some boy she liked and never told her who. Even though my mum was too scared to question her mother, she always blamed her for saying that she had to do whatever her boss said.

Right up to the time of my grandmother's funeral, my mother still held a grudge against her. She believed that Gran must have known what happened, yet my mother was still too scared to say something to her. Even at the open coffin, she still couldn't say what she felt, although she wanted too.

What my mother didn't realise was her boss was a manipulator. Gran never knew the truth about mum and mum didn't know that her boss just took advantage of the situation. Seize the moment, some would call it, however that doesn't make it right.

My mum was sent to the city to have the baby. She stayed with her Auntie so she could still be with family as well as near a decent hospital. My dad soon found himself living across the street from a sixteen year-old single mum and does everything he possibly can to help. He goes out of his way to buy her the necessities, knowing full well that she does not have the money to pay him back. As for my mum, here is a twenty-one year-old man with a car, soon to be twenty-two and with a helpful nature that she is now indebted to. After several proposals of marriage, the young mum finally concedes, especially since the debt is getting way out of hand and since she has no resources to repay the man.

My dad adopted the little girl when they married. There were another eight children that followed.

I'm sure there is more to their stories, but I want to highlight their weaknesses. Or at least the things I believe are relevant to their future abusive existence.

Abuse can take two forms, aggressive and passive. Most people would look at my mum, as I did, and see a woman who was kind and considerate. Although she is not as helpless and frail as some of her choices would lead you to believe, she does lack confidence. It is by her own choice that she remains passive. There is an old saying, 'the devil thrives where good people do nothing'. If nothing else I can say that my mother was a good person overall, but her passivity was the attribute that my father required to conceal his behaviour.

My father's ability to manipulate my mother had begun from day one. My mother's victim mentality had already been well established long before she had met my dad. She was easy prey for him. When my mother was sent away to the city, she believed she was being punished for getting pregnant, even though, in her own eyes, she had done what was instructed of her.

I'm probably repeating myself here, but I remember my mother is so caught up in blaming her own mother, that she can't see the truth about her boss. He's a lying manipulating bastard who took advantage of the situation. Just because he could, doesn't mean he should. So why doesn't my mum blame him?

My mother is another case of a victim mentality, brought about by having the wrong perspective, her scenario justifies living a lie by blaming someone else, not necessarily their abuser, but someone they though should have protected them.

Both victims believe it is acceptable to remain a victim in their own mind, but because neither searched for the truth, they believe their own assumptions. Unless they talk with someone who knows the truth, then the truth will never be discovered.

These two examples have shown us how people can get a victim mentality, but the issue is that unless they deal with it, they'll keep it. The real question that needs to be asked is, 'does everyone with a victim mentality become abusive?'

Well, no, thank God.

But everyone who is abusive has a victim mentality. So it is something to look for.

Continuing a victim mentality.

A truth about life is that you can only treat people the way you have been taught to. If you have been treated with compassion when you were growing up, it is more likely that you will be compassionate towards others. However, if you are abused, you are certainly qualified to give abuse. Although we are naturally selfish, we are not naturally violent. Therefore we need to be conditioned to do so before we will hurt others. An extreme example is the child soldiers in Africa. When they are asked to kill another human being, they won't. That changes when a family member is threatened or their own need for self-preservation becomes kill or be killed, then hesitantly, they will shoot. Over time, they will shoot innocent people without a second thought.

People with victim mentalities are generally selfish, although in saying that, we are born selfish, but because their development is traumatised, victims generally stay selfish. Even though there are always exceptions to the rule, I find unless there is some kind of intervention, their selfish attitude will remain. It is what I have learnt to call, the 'why me' syndrome. Our natural existence has given us tools to use to help us develop, which is why we should always have brothers and sisters. Family teaches us to negotiate, compromise, resolve conflict and generally, how to get on with others.

Marriage, in its true form, is also a great teacher, as it teaches us to be other-people centred.

To be caring is something we learn and marriage is the best place to practice this gift.

Marriage has a lot of give and take, compromise and selflessness, and above all the reward of companionship. We all know men and women are different and it is these differences that stop us becoming complacent. When both parties are working together, even if one member is subservient to a leader, you will have a great relationship when that leader considers all the people within their family before themselves. However, if one person in the marriage is subservient to a selfish bully, then the marriage will never work as it was intended.

Generally, and again I say that there are exceptions to the rule, but generally it is the women who are givers and the men who are the takers, however, if one participant in the marriage is constantly giving without getting anything in return, there will be a consequence. Usually the giver will burn out if they don't get what they need, such as romance, so both parties need to be givers from time to time of their partner's needs.

Therefore, if we have a man and a woman who are both victims, both selfish and both trying to get what they want from their marriage, it is doomed to self-destruct and expected to go horribly wrong.

Men, generally want sex from their wives while women want romance, 'generally'. If the wife gets romance, she then enjoys sex and is willing to partake. The opposite can be said if a woman is not getting romance, she usually doesn't enjoy sex, preferring not to participate. In the case of my parents, when dad wanted sex, and according to my mother, since he was so bad at it, he used whatever means he could to get it. Romance was a foreign concept to my father and because he was selfish, he was not about to learn it. As for my mother, she was naïve. She didn't even know what she wanted since her introduction to sex was non-consensual and her education of sex was something the boys at school only joked about. Even if she did know, my mum's passive attribute meant she was too afraid to ask for what she needed in the bedroom. My dad is what we call, 'a two minute man' and consequently mum was not interested in sex. But my older brother tells me of a time when he was held for ransom. If mum didn't agree to sex, dad would harm the boy, using physical violence to manipulate my mother. The time had come when my mother's naïvety and ignorance were

now becoming problematic. At least two of my brothers have told me their ransom stories; what I now tell my mum is these are sure warning signs that there is a problem.

I can understand mums plight to some degree. In my second marriage, I stayed married to a woman who was violent towards me, hence the reason why we didn't have any children. I think it's true that love covers a multitude of sins,^[2] but I also believed our conflict could be fixed over time. With my belief that our love was stronger than the problem, plus I 'wanted' to believe it could be fixed, I put up with the abuse, hoping that someday she would change. It didn't work.

² [Proverbs 10:12]

Concealing the behaviour.

Using the boys became a tool in my father's armoury. Since one day the boys would become old enough to tell the police what he had been doing, Dad needed a backup plan. The best way to cover his crime was to implement the boys in his activities. In other words, he got the boys to participate in having sex with their sisters. He also convinced them that if they told anyone, that they were just as guilty as he was.

As I said before, I did not know why my sisters kept silent, but learning about my brothers gave me the insight to why so many children remain quiet about their suffering. In a word, 'blackmail'.

The truth of the matter was that the boys were forced into the act, it was non-consensual. It was only the oldest girl who was put through this duress but the three oldest boys were made to participate. All the while my mother had no idea this was going on.

Even though one night she caught my father in one of the girl's beds, he claimed he thought she was her and only touched her boobs. Since he was drunk at the time, mum believed him. One thousand warning bells were rung right there!!!

With the family rule of 'don't ask and don't tell', many secrets were transpiring and everyone was afraid to tell anyone what was going on.

I am also sure mum would have noticed some changes in the girls and I'm sure it's appropriate to put some of it down to puberty, but not when it co-insides with many other signals. As for the boys, I don't think mum understood boys at any time in their life, let alone when something was wrong. But I do know this about mum, she doesn't cope with conflict, because she gets over emotional. Besides, she would not have known who to talk to even if she wanted too. The concept of welfare or police intervention was unheard of unless there was more than sufficient evidence.

By my mother's own admission, she claims she had no idea what dad was doing. But my guess is that because of her victim mentality, she failed to notice any warning signs because, one, it was not happening to her and two, if she did notice, she felt she was powerless to stop it, and three, there was no one who would help, so what was she to do with the information?

When my oldest sister was in her fifties she challenged my mother that she must have known something was going on between dad and the girls. My mother still replied that she really didn't know. The irony is that my mother also believed that gran must have known something was going on between her and her boss, but in the case of my mother she never challenged Gran to find out. Both generations believed that their parents ignored any warning signs. Maybe so, but both generations still blamed the people who were supposed to protect them more than their abusers.

I said earlier that the word 'unspeakable' is one reason abuse remains undetected. I've noticed that every victim has a reason for not speaking up and it's usually that they are being manipulated by their abuser. Another reason is passivity, or neglect from the people who are supposed to protect them. The fault with these crimes lay squarely on the men, however both criminals thrived due to the neglect of the child's protector.

Eventually the victims of these sex offenders have grown up and sort to find healing. In both circumstances both women knew their abusers and both of these men admitted their guilt to the girls when they were challenged later in life. Both girls have dealt with that part of the abuse. However both women never received the acknowledgement from their protector for failing to protect. Their mother's denial has haunted both these women all their lives and

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

