

Lost Innocence

Exception

I've heard it said that it's not the actual event of the abuse that causes the damage to a child. That abuse of any kind can do the same thing to a child's mind and soul. For the most part I agree. With perhaps one exception:

I have never been a virgin. I have never had the curiosity and exploration of my sexuality. Sex was always part of my life. In one form or another. We can call it molestation, rape, sexual abuse, or incest. But it is still sex.

There is uniqueness to the violation of a child's sexuality. There is a subtle difference in the way that violation changes a child that is like nothing else.

I hear girlfriends laugh and talk about their "first time". I don't recall my first time. It happened as a child young enough to not recall the memory. I can't share my "first time". I am a lonely, isolated outsider when these conversations take place.

I sit outside the circle of women recalling with laughter and amazement who their "first time" was with, where it took place and what it was like. I don't have that life experience. One of the most life changing milestones in a young woman's history is absent from my life.

The "first time". Which one? I can go back and back and back even farther into my childhood and there is no memory of my "first time". It is not there. It didn't happen for me. I was sexualized from early childhood. I had no "coming of age". No "special person". No awkward, fumbling moments of uncertainty with a first love.

To make matters worse because of my history of abuse I chose sexual partners that were far less than gentle and patient. The few boyfriends that I did have sexual experiences with were pushy and over bearing. Intimidating and presumptuous. I didn't know how to pick any one other than that.

So even if I can sift through my complicated sexual history and pick out something close enough to a "first time" it is not a good experience.

It is a life long struggle to have sex be anything close to lovemaking. Even as a grown woman with a respectful and gentle husband I still struggle with it.

I suppose I cannot speak for those who were abused in other ways. Beaten, starved, physically neglected. Perhaps they struggle with the same issues I do. I don't know. But I do believe that there is a uniqueness of damage for those of us that suffered sexual abuse.

For me it took away a right of passage. A transformation into womanhood. A fond memory of an awkward moment with a young lover. An age at which I lost my virginity. An understanding of what my children might experience as they reach the ages of sexual curiosity and the loss of their virginity.

My childhood abuse took away a connection to have with my children. An understanding of a life altering experience that they will have. I can only relay things I have read and researched and guide them by that. I have no sexual history that gives me knowledge to educate my children with. I simply must learn from others, through books, therapy or questions and recite the education to my children

We can say that my sexual abuse does not count in the area of sexual exploration and the transforming time of losing your virginity. We can say that they are completely separate issues. We can say that the loss of my virginity is a time that I chose.

I can try and make it better. I can try and find some sort of place in my history where I made that transition with a young love.

I can try. I have tried. It doesn't work.

I cannot separate the molestation from my sexuality in the past or even now.

It blends together. Not all of the time, but most of the time. It is always there. This knowledge that my body has never been untouched.

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Leaving

I never thought it odd that I could leave a room while still sitting in it. I thought everyone did that. The sounds would all blend together and the smells would fade into soft, barely there sensations. My body would become frozen, almost paralyzed. Then it would become numb as if it was not even there. Only then could I Leave.

Sometimes my mind was simply empty; sometimes it was in a fantasy world that I was so good at creating in seconds flat. Sometimes I simply turned and watched the activity in the room from another spot. I would be on the ceiling looking down or up in a corner watching from a safe distance. Some times I didn't watch at all. Sometimes I simply Left.

I've learned over the years that there is a name for what I did. "Dissociation". There is a clinical diagnosis and neurological function that explains my Leaving.

It doesn't really matter to me what all the clinical definitions of dissociation are.

I only know that my ability to Leave is what kept me alive.

I can't tell you when I first Left. I can remember when I realized I could do it on purpose. The time when I wrapped my mind around the sensations and necessary conditions I needed to be able to Leave. But I've always been able to Leave when the going got rough.

At first it was just when the abuse was actually happening. When my father was inside of me and the pain was so intense I literally couldn't stay there. Then there were the times when my father took me to other men. Other places and other traumas. Pretty soon my Leaving became so normal to me that to this day there are large segments of time that I cannot remember.

The timeline of my life and the circumstances surrounding certain ages tell me that those gaps in my childhood coincide with some of the worst of the abuse. My elementary school years are spotty. There are years I remember completely and there are years I struggle to even remember the smallest detail of my life. Like who my teacher was.

I hate those gaps. I hate that as I look back into my history there are pieces that I can't place. Times that I can't recall. Years that I am missing. It makes me feel incomplete.

As the victim of sexual abuse I am always aware that my childhood was taken from me. I have never felt young. I have always been old. The gaps in my memory are just one more reminder of what was stolen from me. The abuse didn't just affect my body. It didn't just twist my mind for that one moment or incident. It trained me to Leave. Not just as a

protection for the time needed but to stay gone for weeks and sometimes months because coming back into awareness was simply too risky. The abuse literally took away my life.

I began to stay present more often as a teenager. My father had lost interest in me by then. Puberty had hit. But another relative picked up the slack.

So I used my ability to Leave with more of a purpose as a teen. I could travel back and forth at will and when necessary. The only problem was I had less control of it by then. Other people began to notice something strange about me. What could pass as a child daydreaming didn't work as an explanation for a teenager. So they called me Epileptic and told my mother I was having "petite-mal seizures". Perhaps I was to some extent. Who knows how the brain works. I just knew that the peace that came with an afternoon "gone" was something I couldn't give up.

Undoing the Leaving was not easy. I sat in my therapist's office and tried many times to escape. She would pull me back into reality over and over again all the time reassuring me that nothing could happen to me while I was there.

There was much progress as I unpeeled the layers of unconsciousness and took a look at what was beneath.

But still there are gaps in my childhood. Times that I now know I was too successful at Leaving. Times that I don't think I can ever recall.

After all, I wasn't there during those times.

I had Left.

Written by Victoria, and used with permission for www.wingsfortruth.info

19 June 2008

*Please note this story is yet incomplete – over time WINGS will be updating Victoria's story.

Progress Report:

RE: Molestation by Father and another male relative

Counseling: 15 years. I still go for an occasional "spot check"

Apologies: NONE

Charges: Statute of limitations has expired.

Convictions: NONE

Reactions: Disbelief ,although my father was known to have molested a 5 year old family member before I was ever born.
Claims that I was mentally unstable and had been "hallucinating".
They cut off all contact with me.

Offender: Was elder for many years. Denies it happened and/or says he "doesn't remember".

Victim: Happy with a loving husband and 2 AWESOME kids. Successful in my career. Accepting of my wounds and respectful of them when they re-open.