I. **Understanding Our Woundedness**

A. Sexual abuse deeply traumatizes the soul of the victim. Unless we acknowledge our many wounds and seek healing we can remain traumatized, wounded, and emotionally stunted.

1. Victims of sexual abuse often experience a degree of PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

2. PTSD can delay emotional growth causing one to be relationally and mentally challenged. Consequently, the victim can easily become codependent upon their abuser and unhealthy family system for they do not know how else to live, nor do they realize there is a better life out there for them.

3. Research has proven that as a victim is given the care needed, new brain cells develop allowing the victim to better comprehend and make better choices, allowing the victim to heal.

4. The stress from sexual abuse compromises our auto immune system and can leave us vulnerable for a variety of illnesses. Many victims suffer with chronic life-long conditions that are debilitating and very painful.

5. With assistance a victim’s life can become much improved. God created us to heal and overcome. **As our heart heals so can our body.**

6. The wounds from sexual abuse are too deep for victims to heal by themselves, though many try. With the help of God and a healthy support system one can find peace and wholeness after sexual abuse.

B. **When a person is wounded or victimized,** their view of themselves is profoundly affected and often creates a **“Victim Personality”** or **“Victim Mentality.”**

1. In Latin *victima* is **“an animal offered in sacrifice.”**

2. In human terms, **a victim of sexual abuse is sacrificed to fulfill another’s need to overpower** and gain sexual pleasure.

3. Webster defines victim as **“a living being SACRIFICED.”**
   a. **To SACRIFICE** something means, in part, **to SURRENDER or DESTROY** something **PRIZED** for the sake of something **CONSIDERED having a MORE PRESSING CLAIM.**
   b. A child who has been sexually abused definitely falls under the category of a **“sacrifice.”**

C. **In the “victim” state of consciousness the abused person feels POWERLESS** and will often expect **FURTHER exploitation from the world.** They often feel abuse is their lot in life to bear and expect no other kind of treatment. Abuse and lack of respect becomes their normal.

1. As an adult, the victim continues to **feel at risk,** and **powerless** to have any affect on what happens in her life. Until she seeks healing, she remains stuck and life can seem hopeless. She or he may seek pity from others for survival and sympathy, or choose to live in denial about her abuse or dysfunctional life.
   a. “I thought that because I had a bad past it was necessary to feel sorry for myself, and that other people should feel sorry for me too.”
   b. “I really thought that if people just felt sorry for me enough that my emotional pain would go away.”
   c. “I feel that because of what happened to me, I deserve to do whatever I need to help me cope. My actions are justifiable”
   d. “I had a good childhood, as good as the next kid!” “Aren’t all kids treated this way?”
   e. “I can’t change. This is how I am.”
f. “I don’t deserve any other treatment.”

2. Things both good and bad just seem to happen to her and she feels she can’t do anything about them. She exists not knowing the power or choices she has available or that there is a better life out there.
   a. She may believe that her depression comes out of thin air and that she can’t do anything about it.
   b. Victims are unaware of the many rippling effects caused by their sexual abuse and/or lack of protection. They think that is just how they are and they will condemn themselves for their weaknesses or behaviors which are a direct result from their abuse or lack of protection.

3. She may RETREAT into isolation because of her painful life.
   a. Because of her self-deception, or ignorance about why she is like she is, she remains stuck.
   b. Victims do not take responsibility for their own feelings, behavior and mental state until they start to HEAL. Until that time they may feel the whole world does not understand, or this is how life has to be, when in fact the problems start and end with learned self-deception – the lies victims embody.
   c. Victims believe the lies others have told them or insinuated about them. They are often oblivious to how they are behaving, not realizing their behaviors are destructive to the victim and to others. Victims will innocently self destruct, bringing themselves further pain.

4. A large portion of a victim’s life is filled with intense pain for which they seek many methods to try to relieve their pain. One is self-pity.
   a. Self-pity ALWAYS creates NEGATIVITY and keeps the victim stuck in the victim mode. Acknowledging the abuse and grieving the losses are necessary to heal. Self-pity and denial inhibits healing.
   b. Alcohol, drug abuse, sex, business, spirituality are also common false antidotes victims will use to ease their pain.
   c. Until they get to the root of their pain and find healing no antidote will cure them.

5. Because the victim personifies a low self worth and/or powerlessness, others can easily sense her vulnerability (her not knowing how to protect herself or say “no”) and take advantage of her. Thus, the victim can easily become victimized again.
   a. Victims may blame people in their life for not feeling sorry for them and giving in to them. (This is especially common for child victims.)
   b. They may blame others for not being sensitive to how they feel.

6. Victims become a member of the walking wounded, surviving the best they can.

7. Victims will often live in denial and try to live a normal life. Yet, this is very difficult for they feel different and perceive things differently. They feel like an “outsider” or stupid and as though they don’t fit in.

8. Their woundedness can also make them an overachiever or an extra hard worker for they are desperate for approval. Hard work also helps to bring order and control back into their life.

9. They become people pleasers because of their need for acceptance.

10. Victims will often seek positions of power so they can always be in control, or service jobs to nurture and comfort to make up for their lack and neediness.

No one truly understands how a victim feels or can relate to their pain and struggles except for another victim.

D. Victims of sexual abuse are often victims of other forms of abuse as well, which add to their woundedness and confusion.
(Many experience Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Verbal abuse, and/or Spiritual abuse)
Abuse is fundamentally a MENTALITY. It is a mindset of ENTITLEMENT. The abuser sees himself/herself as entitled. He is the center of the world, and he demands that his victim make him the center of her world. His goal is POWER and CONTROL over others. The abuser is not hampered in these efforts by the pangs of a healthy conscience and indeed often lacks a conscience.

While this mentality of power and control often expresses itself in various forms of physical abuse, it just as frequently employs tactics of VERBAL, EMOTIONAL, FINANCIAL, SOCIAL, SEXUAL and SPIRITUAL abuse. Thus, an abuser may never actually lay a hand on his wife and yet be very actively terrorizing her in incredibly damaging ways.

1. A victim needs healing from all wounds. There is never only one issue to deal with when abuse is present. They need to recognize how they were wounded and understand they are not at fault. They did not cause the abuse.
   a. Many victims are brainwashed to believe everything was their fault, but it was the out of control individuals in their life that overstepped their boundaries.
   b. When a child is abused it is the adult who is responsible. It is never the child’s fault. Abusive treatment is never “right” nor should it ever be excused.
   c. Victims need to believe and accept the truth, not their feelings. They need healthy individuals to love and nurture them to health so their brokenness can heal.

Looking back for the right reasons with the right attitude helps us become better equipped to look forward.

2. Victims need to examine areas of devastation that have been in their family lines for generations and discover the generational bonds and sins that need breaking.
   a. Incest is often a generational sin and children born into this evil do not know that incest is wrong.
   b. The secrets and sexual activities bond the victim to the abuser and to the dysfunctional family system.

3. Family bonds or sins continue to be the seedbed for all sorts of destruction. Children grow up with these sins or bonds so they “feel” completely natural. They view these bonds and sins as a “normal” part of life rather than an evil yoke that is destroying them. Children do not know any better and get caught up in this evil web.
   a. One of the dangers of a generational yoke is that it blends in so well with our thinking and life style. It seems so natural and normal.
   b. We excuse some of these yokes by simply believing this is “the way we are.”
   c. We may even say, “Well, I’m stuck with it, so I may as well be proud of it.” not realizing their need for change, or that life can be much better.

God’s children are NEVER stuck with anything that’s not like Him.

4. Anything passed down to us that inhibits us from experiencing the FREEDOM that God intends for us to enjoy, qualifies as BONDAGE.

God’s power and grace are enough to set us FREE from every yoke; and His truth is enough to make liberty a practical reality no matter what our ancestors left as an “inheritance.”

a. What behavior so you disliked in your parents or grandparents that you find yourself doing?

Our purpose is to recognize what we’ve inherited or how we’ve been rightly or wrongly influenced – NOT to cast blame.

5. Your parents learned their behaviors. They (most) aren’t intentionally bad or neglectful, but were carrying generational habits and sins that also wounded them.
Yet, because parents are responsible for their children, they will be held accountable for their actions towards them. It is vital for victims to seek recovery so they can break unhealthy yokes and family sins. They need to be free to save themselves so they will not pass unhealthy yokes or family sins on down to their children.

(Again, our purpose is not to condemn or dishonor people of our heritage but to recognize barriers that prevent healthy nurturing and interactions.)

6. Generational bondage is a result of generational ignorance and sin.
   a. All bondage begins with sin - innocently or purposely
   b. All bondage promotes sin - innocently or purposely

7. When someone decides to abide by his or her “own set of rules” and lives outside biblical boundaries, such a life leads to BONDAGE and PAIN.
   a. BONDAGE leads to SIN.
   b. SIN leads to more BONDAGE.
   c. The cycle continues UNTIL someone has enough courage to move back and live within the boundaries that God ordained.
      i. Our own determination and strength may bend the cycle of generational sin and bondage some, but we will NEVER break them without God’s help.

8. God’s boundaries were given NOT to enslave us but to set us FREE.
   a. Only Christ can set us free, and all other gods or idols, can only enslave us.
   b. The Scripture has a prescription for breaking one of the strangest forms of family bondage. That prescription is called FORGIVENESS.
   c. Satan uses lies, ignorance and unforgiveness to keep us locked in pain and darkness

9. Victims often fear having no one to take care of them because their power and worth has been stripped. They believe they are incapable of handling life on their own.
   a. This fear makes one vulnerable to stay in unhealthy situations and relationships.
   b. Thus, we pass down a “chain of insecurity” through several generations.
      Lack of knowledge and self-worth produces fear
   c. The truth is; unfounded fear is from Satan. Satan hopes to keep us locked in fear he will fight against your recovery.
   d. God uses others to help meet our needs by sharing truth and giving love. God is the ultimate KNOWER and MEETER of all our needs. God’s eye is upon us and wants to fulfill our needs. He is waiting for us to surrender to him and receive what we need. We cannot heal on our own though we try. WE need to accept what is true and APPLY it to our lives. If we do not, we will always remain a victim. Knowledge without actions does us no good.
   e. Healing requires us to live by what is true and not our feelings.

10. Wounded or enslaved parents teach their children how to live in bondage – even with the best of intentions to do otherwise.
    a. Our children see and believe fear is normal
    b. We can convince ourselves that our bondage or sin will not affect our children, but that is a lie. Children learn by example. They are 100% affected by our actions and will repeat our sins and weaknesses if we do not acknowledge them and change.

11. We cannot drop chains we do not even know we’re carrying!
    a. Just facing the truth of our past or present will NOT heal us.
    b. It’s facing our (distorted) truth in the light of God’s TRUTH that will set us free.
    c. When our physical lineage works against us, we need to use our spiritual lineage as a child of God to free us. It is vital we understand what is true, and live by God’s standards of truth, instead of our examples so we will be free from that bondage.

12. Sexual abuse leaves victims Relationally & Emotionally Handicapped.
    a. Victims were set up to have serious difficulties throughout their lives, and unless
they seek healing, their life will continue to be a cycle of pain and regrets.

b. No one can heal for you. You have to begin and follow through. Gaining knowledge with out change will not do it. Healing is a process of making changes.

E. The PURPOSE of a FAMILY

1. To provide a NURTURING ENVIRONMENT that PROTECTS children from evil while they are developing the Physical, Emotional and Intellectual abilities to function well on their own.
   a. God gives us parents to act as HIS STAND-IN until we can learn to shift our dependence to God.

2. Love, Compassion, Joy and Equality are vital to ones healthy development:
   a. LOVE so that the child is secure and free to give love back to others
   b. COMPASSION so that the child learns not to be selfish or self centered
   c. JOY so that the child is free to express themselves.
   d. EQUAL Respect so the child will have the self confidence to speak up and meet the challenges in life.
   e. All too often one or more of these aspects is Distorted by the family system.
      (1) Instead of LOVE, the child experiences fear and demands
      (2) Instead of COMPASSION, suffering and abandonment
      (3) Instead of JOY, sadness, pain judgment
      (4) Instead of EQUALITY, they become invisible, a door mat and abused.

3. Whenever the child says, "Hold on, there’s something wrong here," the power of the family system comes into play:
   • "What? You don’t love your mother! Shame on you."
   • "You can’t do that, you might get hurt."
   • "You think you’re hot stuff, huh? Let me show you a thing or two."
   • "You must be evil to even think that."
   • “Who do you think you are? You are nothing. Do what I tell you!”
   • “You are stupid.” “You were a mistake!”

4. Similar conditioning mechanisms operate in most family systems.
   a. The system uses SHAME and the WITHDRAWAL of ATTENTION and AFFECTION to instill obedience and FEAR into the victim.
   b. The system presents the view that power resides in the family system, not the individual.
   c. This combination creates a Dependence on the Family System for SURVIVAL and the victim knows no better than to become codependent on the family. They loose their identity and adopt the family’s mentality.
   d. Gradually, the system is internalized and the person identifies with it – HE SEES HIMSELF THE WAY THE SYSTEM SEES HIM.
      (1) His sense of who he and his worth is defined by how the family system treats him. He is clueless to his uniqueness, potential or enormous value. Thus his emotional development is stunted and he remains naïve and powerless.

II. Psychosocial Stages of Development

A. Erik Erikson, the father of Developmental Psychology, divided the life cycle into psychosocial stages, and though not proven scientifically, they do form a schema to help us understand how sexual abuse might affect a developing child.

1. Birth to One Year - (TRUST vs MISTRUST)
   During the first year of life the infant typically develops a relationship with someone who can be trusted to meet his or her needs. With TRUST established, the child will have a better chance of weathering later crises in life.

2. Two to Three Years - (AUTONOMY vs SHAME & DOUBT)
In this stage there is a need to establish that it is acceptable to be a separate person with some degree of control over himself or herself.

### IF basic TRUST was never established, OR, if one’s attempts at Independence are Over-Controlled, Ridiculed, or Punished, SHAME and DOUBT occur.

3. **Four to Five Years - (INITIATIVE vs GUILT)**
   In this stage the child needs to be encouraged to make as many CHOICES as possible, with the basic task being that of establishing COMPETENCE and INITIATIVE. They take initiative by curiously investigating everything, talking, and constantly moving.
   
   IF given NO CHOICES, they ASSUME negative messages about self, which is then followed by GUILT.

4. **Six Years to Puberty - (INDUSTRY vs INFERIORITY)**
   Middle childhood is about making things and entering the world of knowledge and work. They make things to gain RECOGNITION and PRAISE for personal accomplishments. When the child is successful, he or she feels COMPETENT.
   
   FAILURE brings a sense of INFERIORITY, a feeling of WORTHLESSNESS.
   
   (ALL of the previous stages contribute to the child’s developing IDENTITY.)

5. **Adolescence - (IDENTITY vs IDENTITY CONFUSION)**
   In this fifth stage, IDENTITY reaches a climax as adolescents are attempting to determine “who” they are apart from their parents.

   CODEPENDENT families PROHIBIT the development of the REAL “self.”

6. **Young Adulthood - (INTIMACY & SOLIDARITY vs ISOLATION)**
   When an individual has NOT had the privilege of DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE in their own identity, their attempts at INTIMACY often FAIL and they then HIDE their PAIN and loneliness in things such as drugs, alcohol, sex, food, spending, and experience increasing DESPAIR and HOPELESSNESS.

### III. Left With...

A. One can clearly see that chronic childhood abuse of any degree massively influence a child’s development.

   1. Healing is difficult because their developmental processes have been damaged or interrupted by abuse. It will INTERFERE with and DERAILED the learning of the BASIC TASKS of LIFE

   2. Profoundly influences a child’s BELIEFS about themselves and their RELATIONSHIPS with others, including GOD.

   3. Childhood Trauma definitely impinges on the development of ONES SELF.

      a. When they are threatened by physical and sexual events that offer no possibility of escape victims must find other ways of surviving and protecting themselves. Thus, children are then left on their own to Manage the Unmanageable, which is an impossible task for children.

B. Since children are cognitively and emotionally immature, their DEFENSE CAPACITIES are limited. Therefore, IN RESPONSE TO chronic physical and/or sexual abuse, children typically RESORT to varying combinations of these Defense Mechanisms:

   WITHDRAWAL, RATIONALIZATION, DISPLACEMENT, PROJECTION, FANTASY, ACTING OUT, REGRESSION, REPRESSION, DENIAL, DISSOCIATION.
1. In healthy development there is a sense of **COHERENCE** or **INTEGRITY** to the self where they learn that their **THOUGHTS** belong to them, and that their **FEELINGS** belong to them. So, in an atmosphere of **ACCEPTANCE** and **DISCOVERY**, children learn “**What IS me and what is NOT me.**”

2. **Chronic TRAUMA** shatters that **PROCESS of DISCOVERY** and the child’s feelings and thoughts in response to the abuse are so overwhelming that the child will **sacrifice** a **SENSE of COHERENCE** for the **SAKE of SURVIVAL**.
   a. In essence the child says, “**I cannot live with these feelings and survive, so I will make them ‘not mine.’**”
   b. Survival is gained, but such defenses also **inflict great loss** on the developing self:
      i. They lose a sense of **WHOLENESS**
      ii. Of being **REAL**
      iii. Of being **SPONTANEOUS** and **AWARE** of one’s own inner working
      iv. In essence, they lose the **INTEGRITY** of the self.

3. **WITHDRAWAL** – becoming “uninvolved” with situations and people

4. **RATIONALIZATION** – making excuses for

5. **DISPLACEMENT** – acting out how you feel, but directing it to the wrong person

6. **PROJECTION** – blaming someone else for something that you don’t like about yourself

7. **FANTASY** – “escaping” problems by daydreaming or by make-believe

8. **ACTING OUT** – repeating actions without thinking about the consequences

9. **REGRESSION** – when under stress, acting like someone younger than your age

10. **REPRESSION** is probably the least disruptive defense and the person is saying, “**I forget that this happened.**” They keep the trauma at a **distance** by **removing it from their reality** by **REPRESSION**, “Blocking out” painful thoughts or feelings. But, repression alone is usually an insufficient defense in cases of ongoing and/or severe trauma and the child usually needs to go on to **denial and dissociation** as well.

11. **DENIAL** is basically saying, “**This is not happening.**” When one denies what is real, it **requires PERCEPTUAL DISTORTION** and **IMPAIRED REALITY TESTING**. When the child senses impending danger they may quickly slide into a state of denial, telling themselves, “**What I sense is not real.**”

   Unfortunately, **DENIAL** puts the victim in **DANGER** of re-traumatization because she has taught herself to **FAIL** to **RECOGNIZE** those signs that in any way remind her of the original trauma. As a result of denial, the child loses continuity in her experience and learns to ignore aspects of herself that are vital to her well-being.

12. **DISSOCIATION** is displayed by the child saying, “**This is not happening to me.**” or perhaps she says, “**This is happening to someone else.**” Of the three defenses, the use of dissociation has the **most serious** consequences as to **dissociate**, the child must:
   a. Alter her thinking
   b. Disrupt her sense of time
   c. Alter her body image
   d. Distort her perception
   e. Experience a loss of control
   f. Alter her emotional responses
   g. Change the meaning of things
   h. Become hyper-suggestible
i. The self of the child becomes fragmented and those fragments often become totally inaccessible to her. She is no longer her “self” in any coherent sense of the word.

   (1) **INSTEAD**, she will develop a fragmented **Sense of Self**

j. When a child’s sense of self must develop in the context of ongoing abuse and sexual stimulation, the child will be unable to:

   (1) Develop a **Coherent Sense of Self**
   (2) Develop stable capacities for **TRUST**
   (3) Develop the ability to **modulate her own feelings**.

k. An **INABILITY to TRUST** because of the unpredictable and irrational shifts in her environment.

   (1) When trust is tragically violated, it eventually causes a child to withdraw from growing emotionally, and causes suspicion of caregivers, including God.

l. And she will experience her emotions as overwhelming, chaotic, and frightening.


d. годы мы используем эти механизмы, чтобы **перекрыть** то, что мы считаем **ужасными** воспоминаниями и негативными эмоциями, мы также **перекрываем** положительные эмоции счастья и страсти.

C. A child victim often experiences ongoing trauma. Adults who are meant to protect and NURTURE unconditional love and acceptance in their children will INSTEAD use their learned experiences, which often injures their children. Parents unintentionally hurt their children because of their examples of generational sin and ignorance. Thus, the child’s very PERSONHOOD is compromised.

   God’s judgment is wise and just for those who abuse children.

   “If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin it would be better for them to have a millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to those who cause another to sin.” Matthew 18:6,7

1. **VOICE is what articulates Personhood**, but living with chronic abuse causes one to be **SILENT**. The voice of the abused is easily silenced by fear, shame, lies and the feeling of worthlessness.

   a. She is silenced by the **Deafness of Others**. (“**What is the point of speaking when no one will listen?**”)
   b. She is shut up by the **Threat of Abandonment** and lives in a world where **VOICES LIE, DISTORT, and DECEIVE**.
   c. She can only survive **IF she too learns** how to lie, distort, and deceive. So she **lies to herself and distorts the truth of her life in order to survive**. She may use her voice to say what others want her to say rather than what is in her true thoughts.
   d. She **DECEIVES herself and others, PRETENDING** she is really **all right**, when, in fact, she is **DYING INSIDE**.
   e. **Years go by and her voice is less and less a representation of her real self until she finally reaches the place where she can no longer even hear herself think**. She remains silent and dead inside. She has no identity. This is the place where most victims begin to seek help. They are desperate to find themselves and learn how to eliminate their pain.

2. **RELATIONAL** is that state of **Knowing and being KNOWN, Loving and being LOVED**. We were NOT meant to live in **Isolation**. God made us relational people and gave us a mind and the ability to speak. Our voice is important. We have the right to be heard and treated with dignity. We are equals to one another.

   a. Yet, ongoing sexual abuse requires the child to live **ALONE**.

      - She is isolated because she **cannot “tell.”**
      - She is alone because **no one comes to comfort**.
      - She is **forsaken** by those who were **meant to sustain**.
• She is **not known in truth**, she is a little girl being abused, rejected, and denied her rights.
• She is **not loved**; **to LOVE** is to PROTECT and PRESERVE, but she is being harmed and destroyed.
• Though the pretense of relationship may exist for the outside world, it is just that – a **PRETENSE**.

b. **Relationship or attachment** provides the BASIS for our **Sense of SECURITY and SAFETY** in the world.

c. **Parents** are to provide a **SECURE BASE** where
   • the child is **Nourished** physically and emotionally
   • **Comforted** if distressed
   • **Reassured** if frightened.

   The chronically abused child not only lacks a “**secure base**” but also lives in a climate of pervasive terror and danger. **Relationship has become a “House of Horrors.”**

3. **POWER** is the third characteristic of personhood and provides the ability to produce desired effects. God designed us to have a positive impact on our world. The very fact that God gave us the CHOICE to obey or disobey granted humanity power.

   **People have power to abuse. Victims have power to overcome and heal.**

   a. When a child lives with **unpredictable, terrifying, and relentless abuse**, she experiences herself as perpetually POWERLESS.
   b. She may make comments such as “**it doesn’t matter**” and “**forget it**” with a shrug of the shoulders.
   c. They have learned that **WHAT MATTERS to THEM** does **NOT MATTER** to **OTHERS** as who they **TRULY were** was **INVISIBLE** in the home as **NO response was given to the abuse**.
   d. Power, like Voice and Relationship, has been **destroyed**.

D. **As adults, victims find they have difficulty:**

   1. Making wise Choices
   2. Setting Boundaries
   3. Trusting those who are trustworthy
   4. Being intimate
   5. Understanding what’s **REAL**, and what’s **NOT**.
   6. Using their voice.
   7. Being honest
   8. Being authentic

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those who were <strong>SUPPOSED to LOVE</strong> Us, <strong>ABUSED</strong> Us.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who were <strong>SUPPOSED to PROTECT</strong> Us, <strong>ABANDONED</strong> or <strong>IGNORED</strong> Us.</td>
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E. **Victims tend to MINIMIZE or RATIONALIZE** their abuse.

   1. **Acceptance** that the abuse happened gives you the **RIGHT to SET LIMITATIONS** with your abuser(s) and those who do not protect you. You can say “**NO**” and deserve the right to be respected for your decisions. **If others do not show you respect you need to separate yourself from them, for they are not safe and will continue to be abusive.**
   2. Acceptance also helps you to accept that **NO man or woman HAS the RIGHT to tell you WHEN, HOW, or WHAT you can do with your body. You own it! NO one else does!** You are no longer a victim.
   3. Acceptance involves:
• Accepting yourself as a WHOLE unique person
• Acknowledging that you are NOT a bad person
• Releasing the GUILT and SHAME from within you
• Seeing your POTENTIAL for a happy marriage, relationship, life
• Accepting NEW, more POSTIVE attitudes

F. **We must STOP denying the abuse happened and the pain it caused!**

Face the damage, allow yourself to grieve, and then begin to make changes. You are not stuck being a victim. Share your story with other victims who will understand. You need not be ashamed of it. There is no reason to cover your (unfounded) shame with drugs or alcohol for **the abuse was not your fault!!** Nor were your responses to it. You were in survival mode. Your past ways of trying to cope with your hurts and hang-ups didn’t work. Change will. Change your thinking and positive actions will follow. Accept God’s wisdom and grace and move on!

1. We have typically lived our entire lives based on LIES and false perceptions due to our abuse, and these untruths have become our Core Identity. Often, victims are confused as to **what TRUTH really is** for THEIR truth is so unstable and hurtful.
   a. Learning the REAL truth about our worth, our abuse, and the reality of who we REALLY are (**Unconditionally LOVED and ACCEPTED** by God with rights) is pivotal in our healing.

When our **PAIN** is **Greater** than our **FEAR**, we are often able to face the truth, admit the pain, and go through it.

No one leaves the lethargy of DENIAL unless there’s a spark of DISCONTENT that pierces the darkness of daily NUMBNESS.

G. **Many victims have an overblown sense of responsibility**, believing they have to do everything themselves or the world will cave in.

1. Taking responsibility for everything is a way to gain a sense of control and staying “in control” is a PROTECTIVE MECHANISM.
2. If we are in control, we think nothing further bad will happen to us. However, our **need to be in control** attitude can further **isolate** us as no one wants to be around a control freak. The burden of always being in control is exhausting.
3. Being a control freak hurts **our children** for we tend to MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS and do things for **them** that they need to learn to do for **themselves**.
4. Efforts to be in control eventually lead to being even MORE OUT OF CONTROL.

| We need to identify our Weaknesses and discover how they affect us as we relate to others: |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------------|
| Being afraid                           | Unable to trust| phobias         | Insecure | overly sexual   |
| Exaggerate                             | Self-conscious | Introverted     | Sneaky   | Suspicious     |
| People pleaser                        | Overly spiritual| Do-gooder      | Being fake | Untrustworthy |
| Unable to voice concerns              |                | Control freak   |          |                |
| Unable to have meaningful relationships|                |                | Lie      |                |

H. **Take Responsibility for your healing**

1. Do **not** allow yourself to fall into self-pity. Your life is not hopeless.
2. **Take responsibility** for making your life better. Believe what is true and start making changes. Recovery is one small step at a time.
3. **Refuse to be a victim any longer, and** develop a positive attitude. Your abuse did not change your worth. You are as important and loveable as the next person. You may have been made to do despicable things but you are NOT bad.

4. **Declare that your healing is in the works.** Believe life will get better. Allow God to fulfill his wonderful plan for your life. God wants to redeem your life and give you peace and joy.

5. Rid yourself of all the lies that have directed your life. Victims need a renewing of the mind and a healing of the heart. Admit you need help and allow God to work the miracles you need. Accept God’s grace and live free from the past sins. We cannot heal by ourselves but with God we can become NEW.

There is HOPE and there is HEALING for all who choose it.

“For I will restore health to you “ and heal you of your wounds,“ says the LORD” - Jeremiah 30:17a

IV. **Identifying Your Woundedness**

As you begin to look back at your own story, think about what shows up in your life now as clues to places where there is need for change, empowerment, and healing. Consider the following statements as possible clues, and circle the ones that apply to you.

1. I have had relationship struggles with family, friends, and especially in marriage. It is difficult for me to trust.
2. I have felt distanced from God, afraid of Him, or distrust Him.
3. I have had low self-esteem; feelings of unworthiness, being dirty, not able to measure up.
4. I have found myself asking, “Who am I?” I have avoided mirrors.
5. I have had feelings of guilt that motivate me to try to do better or to give up.
6. I have experienced tiredness, insomnia, nightmares, sleeping disorders, flashbacks, or burnout.
7. I have experienced suicidal tendencies such as drinking and driving, driving with eyes closed, or any combination or prescription or over-the-counter drugs and alcohol.
8. I have had headaches, backaches, or neck aches with no physical reason.
9. I have had memory blocks where I have forgotten people, places, events or periods of my life.
10. I have experienced loneliness, isolation, emptiness or depression.
11. I have struggled with overeating, anorexia, or bulimia.
12. I have experienced repeated victimization.
13. I have felt flat, numb, impenetrable, isolated, preoccupied, or self-absorbed.
14. I have used drugs, alcohol, being overly busy, ministry, work, relationships, or humor to dull pain.
15. I have fantasized my view of my dysfunctional family. “They did the best they could.” Or, “I had a wonderful childhood.”
16. I have experienced lack of self-control.
17. I have experienced sexual struggles: sexual identity confusion, fear of the opposite sex, fear of people of my own gender, same-sex attraction, lack of sexual desire or sexual obsession.
18. I have struggled with male strength/female vulnerability.
19. I have felt overly critical, contemptuous of self and others or used anger to push others away.
20. I have longed for intimacy but was afraid when I got it.
21. I have had anxiety attacks or panic attacks.
22. I have experienced an exaggerated startle response.
23. I have had swallowing or gagging sensitivity or have felt suffocation feelings.
24. I am not at home in my own body, failed to take care of my body, or have had a poor body image.
25. For females: I have experienced frequent vaginal infections, and/or pelvic pain.
26. I have experienced joint pain, arthritis or fibromyalgia.
27. I have had a fear of baths, fear of anger, or fear of the dark.
28. I have wrestled with self-destructive behavior, such as skin carving or cutting, pulling out hair, etc.
29. I have had obsessive-compulsive behaviors: counting things, repeated washing, rituals, etc.
30. I have been obsessed with exercise and/or diet.
31. I have wrestled with abandonment issues.
32. I have felt crazy, or that “something is the matter with me.”
33. I have had an inability to play, have fun, or celebrate in a healthy way.
34. I have struggled with stealing or shoplifting.
35. I have struggled with perfectionism.
36. I have struggled with people-pleasing and/or fear of rejection.
37. I have had boundary issues: it is hard to say “no,” to confront, or to protect my own space.
38. I have wrestled with control issues.
39. I have experienced childhood hiding or nervousness over being watched.
40. I have hidden by dressing in layers, wearing baggy clothing or failing to remove clothing when swimming, bathing or sleeping.
41. I have had problems with anger, rage, and intense hostility toward an entire gender or inability to recognize my own anger or express it.
42. I have felt like I have had a secret and fear being found out.

To live significantly LESS than what one was made to be is as severe a BETRAYAL of the soul as their childhood ABUSE.

I Want Freedom!

The way out of pain is always by going through it, not avoiding, repressing, or denying it.

We will move through recovery more quickly if we refuse to look at our pain as an enemy we need to avoid and begin looking at it as a friend telling us that we have been violated and need to face the impact it has had on our lives.