

Chained to Abuse . . .

A story is told of baby elephants in the circus world coming under the “chain of control.” Immediately after birth, the baby elephant’s leg is chained to a stake. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot tug free. Soon the young elephant stops pulling against the stake. He accepts as fact that he has no power to become free. Over time, the elephant matures in his body, but not in his mind. Although he possesses the physical power to free himself with ease, he is mentally and emotionally powerless . . . he doesn’t even try! Adults who were abused as children often live with this same false sense of reality. They perceive themselves as powerless. They don’t realize that God can pull up the chains of past abuse and set them free!

*“For freedom Christ has set us free;
stand firm therefore, and do not
submit again to a yoke of slavery.”*
(Galatians 5:1)

Q: “What will help me overcome a victim mentality?”

You can overcome a victim mentality by changing the way you see yourself. As a child, you were defenseless, but as an adult, you are no longer without power.

*“When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”*
(1 Corinthians 13:11)

Q: “Does God even see the grief in my heart?”

Yes, He sees your grief, and He takes it seriously.

*“You do see, for you note mischief and vexation,
that you may take it into your hands;
to you the helpless commits himself;
you have been the helper of the fatherless.”*
(Psalm 10:14)

Q: “Where was God when my abuse was happening?”

Two attributes of God are omniscience (all-knowing) and omnipresence (present everywhere). Though God never wills evil, He is with us when we suffer.¹

*“The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.”*
(Proverbs 15:3)

*“He [God] does not willingly afflict
or grieve the children of men.”*
(Lamentations 3:33)

Survival Personalities

The Dependent . . . gives up personal responsibility in many areas of life and uses helplessness to get support from others. This disguise for protection sends the message “I need you” and in adulthood becomes a powerful means of controlling and manipulating others.

The Pleaser . . . has the motto “peace at any price.” By constant compliance with the wishes or desires of others, this individual pays a high price for approval and acceptance. As an adult, the pleaser has lost a great deal of personal identity.

The Fixer . . . has low self-worth and attempts to fix it by becoming responsible for and fixing others. Fixers are seen as very loving, self-sacrificing, and spiritual—though often these traits are window dressing used to avoid seriously addressing their own needs.

The Performer . . . as an adult, appears highly competent and seems to have it all together. A perfect performance for every act is the performer’s unattainable goal. Although there is a certain amount of personal satisfaction in doing so much so well, this person is inwardly paralyzed by the fear of being found to have inadequacies.

The Controller . . . feels secure only when in control. As an adult, the controller comes across as thinking he/she is always right and, for the most part, looking good. A fear of vulnerability is what makes this wounded lamb act like a lion.

The Martyr . . . is a great and constant sufferer. Anyone who has been abused needs and deserves the compassion of others. The martyr, however, controls others by continuing to elicit compassion for a childhood sacrificed to devastating abuse.

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
(Hebrews 12:1–2)

Pulling Away from Your Ball and Chain

Healing is a process that takes time and has periods of regression. The first step is deciding that you want to heal and believing that healing is possible with God. As you place your hope in Him and seek His plan for you, wait patiently for the Lord to lovingly show you the way.

Face the Prison.

- Do I feel powerless in my relationships?
- Do I have a lack of trust in others?

Face the Past.²

- Remembering is the first step toward healing.
- Journaling helps you to move through the stages of remembering. Writing down your thoughts and feelings helps you . . .
 - face the fact of the abuse
 - recall the feelings associated with the abuse
 - uncover hidden fury associated with the abuse

Face the Patterns of Your Behavior.³

- “What am I doing to get my inner needs met?”
 - Am I compromising my values . . . in order to feel loved?
 - Am I a perfectionist, workaholic, a fixer . . . in order to feel significant?
 - Am I a clinging dependent . . . in order to feel secure?

Face the Private Secret.⁴

- Talking about the past brings it into reality.
- Telling someone else gives your past credibility.

Face the Pain.⁵

- Pain confirms your abuse.
- Pain expressed is pain released.

Face the Perpetrator—if It Is Safe.⁶

- When the time is appropriate, talk with your perpetrator one on one, or take someone you trust with you if necessary.
- Be prepared for the offender to deny having abused you.

Face the Pardon.⁷

- Forgive the offender.
- Forgiveness gives God freedom to avenge.⁸

Face the Fact—God Permitted It.⁹

- Separate man’s free will from God’s will.¹⁰
- God will judge all sin.

*“None who wait for you shall be put to shame;
they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.”
(Psalm 25:3–4)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“You do see, for you note mischief and
vexation, that you may take it into your
hands; to you the helpless commits himself;
you have been the helper of the fatherless.”
(Psalm 10:14)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 91

Related Topics . . .

- Alcohol & Drug Abuse:
Breaking Free and Staying Free
- Childhood Sexual Abuse:
The Secret Storm
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value
- Spiritual Abuse & Legalism:
Afflicted by Authority
- Wife Abuse:
Assault on a Woman's Worth

1. David A. Seamands, *If Only* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995), 59.
2. Dan B. Allender, *The Wounded Heart* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 183–97.
3. Lynda D. Elliott and Vicki L. Tanner, *My Father's Child: Help and Healing for the Victims of Emotional, Sexual, and Physical Abuse* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988), 109–24.
4. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 197.
5. Joyce Meyer, *Beauty for Ashes: Receiving Emotional Healing* (Tulsa, Okla.: Harrison House, 1994), 52–53.
6. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 134–36.
7. Malcolm Smith, *No Longer A Victim* (Tulsa, OK: Pillar, 1992), 25–27.
8. Allender, *The Wounded Heart*, 227–29.
9. Doris Van Stone and Erwin W. Lutzer, *No Place to Cry: The Hurt and Healing of Sexual Abuse* (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 90–92.
10. Smith, *No Longer A Victim*, 33–35.

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Victimization:

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