

Abuse Survivor

The Problem

A history of abuse is a common background while the goal is to enter into or maintain recovery. Recovery is a two-fold process. The first step is healing from the traumas done to us in our past; and second step is healing from the influence these past experiences continue to have in our present lives.

(Most) Survivors of Physical / Sexual / Emotional Abuse . . .

- Are hesitant to identify themselves as victims of abuse.
- Feel isolated, depressed, worthless, and helpless to change.
- Are struggling with feelings about God in relation to their life experiences of being abused.
- Condemn themselves, denying that the past abuses affects their present circumstances.
- Feel out of control and defeated in areas of compulsive behavior.
- Feel angry, bitter, rebellious; have trouble with authority figures.
- Feel a lack of self-worth.
- Are preoccupied with thoughts of what it means to have a “normal” relationship with others; mates, friends, family.
- Question their own sexual identity and may experience confusion regarding their own sexuality.
- Desire to regain their sexuality and feel safe in intimate relationships.
- Question self-reality; “Who am I?”
- Question whether life has a purpose.
- Feel “at home” in crisis situations.
- Struggle with perfectionism or “all or nothing thinking.”
- Desire to have victory through Christ over the life experience of abuse.

The Solution

Survivors of Physical / Sexual / Emotional Abuse can experience recovery when . . .

- We recognize that we are powerless to heal the damaged emotions resulting from our abuse. We look to God for the power to make us whole.
- We acknowledge that God’s plan for our lives includes victory over the experience of abuse.
- We understand that the persons who abused us are responsible for the abusive acts committed against us. We will not accept the guilt and shame resulting from those abusive acts.
- We look to God and His Word to find our identity as worthwhile and loved human beings.
- We are honestly sharing our feelings with God and at least one other person to help us identify the areas that need cleansing and healing.
- We accept the responsibility for our responses to abuse.
- We are willing to accept God’s help in the decision and the process of forgiving ourselves and those who have perpetrated against us.
- We are willing to mature in our relationships with God and others.
- We are willing to be used by God as an instrument of healing and restoration in the lives of others.

“The Solution” is partially based upon the book *Helping the Victims of Sexual Abuse* by Lynn Heitritter and Jeanette Vought.

12 Steps: Physical / Emotional and Sexual Abuse

STEP ONE We admit we are powerless over the past, and as a result, our lives have become unmanageable.

STEP TWO Believe God can restore us to wholeness, and realize this power can always be trusted to bring healing and wholeness in our lives.

STEP THREE Make a decision to turn our lives and our wills to the care of God, realizing we have not always understood His unconditional love. Choose to believe He does love us, is worthy of trust, and will help us to understand Him as we seek His truth.

STEP FOUR Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, realizing all wrongs can be forgiven. Renounce the lie that the abuse was our fault.

STEP FIVE Admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of the wrongs in our lives. This will include those acts perpetrated against us, as well as those wrongs we perpetrated against others.

STEP SIX By accepting God's cleansing, we can renounce our shame. Now we are ready to have God remove all these character distortions and defects.

STEP SEVEN Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings, including our guilt. We release our fear and submit to Him.

STEP EIGHT Make a list of all persons who have harmed us and become willing to seek God's help in forgiving our perpetrators, as well as forgiving ourselves. Realize we've also harmed others and become willing to make amends to them.

STEP NINE Extend forgiveness to ourselves and to others who have perpetrated against us, realizing this is an attitude of the heart, not always confrontation. Make direct amends, asking forgiveness from those people we have harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others.

STEP TEN Continue to take personal inventory as new memories and issues surface. We continue to renounce our shame and guilt, but when we are wrong, promptly admit it.

STEP ELEVEN Continue to seek God through prayer and meditation to improve our understanding of His character. Praying for knowledge of His truth in our lives, His will for us, and for the power to carry that out.

STEP TWELVE Having a spiritual awakening as we accept God's love and healing through these steps, we try to carry His message of hope to others. Practice these principles as new memories and issues surface, claiming God's promise of restoration and wholeness.