

My Story & Why Our Program is Unique

I know that the reasons & the way this program was created is unusual. Unfortunately, the fact that child abuse trauma with it's debilitating psychological, emotional & spiritual scars has NO therapeutic module for mental health professionals to treat & heal it IS unusual... and cruel in the neglect.

Stating the fact that child abuse has been the prevalent cause of most adult dysfunction is news to most people. Several web sites can give you the statistics of the impact of child abuse on society. One of the most informative is <http://www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics>

Child abuse is a societal illness and epidemic that knows no social or economic boundaries.

Healing the psychological & emotional scars from child abuse is very personal for me. I am the 7th of 8 kids from a very wealthy "good Catholic family". I was molested by one of my 4 brothers when I was 9 & my father started beating me at age 12. My brother admitted it & apologized, & even though that is more than what most incest victims get from their perpetrator, it doesn't "make it go away" or heal the scars even though all my family thought it should...and wished it would.

Alcoholism is a genetic disease that runs in my family, so when I became a teenager & "got my memories back" of the sexual abuse, I immediately fell into the crowd that did drugs & drank. By 16, I was in alcohol & drug treatment for the 1st time & then again at 18 for my 2nd & final treatment center. I am very fortunate & proud to say that my sobriety date is September 23, 1987. I thought sobriety would cure my problems, but it was merely the necessary start to deep mental & emotional healing.

Because I hadn't received any significant treatment concerning the abuse, I still had all the debilitating scars that were the psychological equivalent of crippling broken bones that had never been set to heal correctly, so I made many behavioral & major life decision mistakes because I was, in effect, disabled. It is a classic pattern for an abuse victim to involve them selves with yet another abuser when they grow up if they do not heal. Unfortunately, I did just that with my 1st & 2nd husbands.

My daughter came to me in 2006 just before her 14th birthday & told me that my worst fears were real & her father had been molesting her since she was 7. I swore I would do for her what my mother didn't do for me & get her all the help she needed... only to find that there is almost none available...STILL! I had thought that surely the psychological field HAD to have come a long way since I was a child in the late 70's since sexual abuse was much more talked about & was being addressed now. I was dismayed to find that I was very wrong.

I had her in 3 programs in a year's time with very little progress to her healing. When my daughter came & woke me up at 2:00 am with self inflicted cuts on both forearms, there was no where to take her except an emergency psychiatric hospital. After her 1 week stay, they could give me no follow up aftercare plan for her healing besides a once a week group, individual therapy plan & medication for her sleeping so she wouldn't be wakened by the night terrors survivors experience almost every night. Not enough to even scratch the surface of her issues.

Every day has been a struggle for her with emotional & mental triggers - seeing a truck that is like her father's triggering fear that it's him "coming to get" her, sending her into a panic attack or having a friend betray her, bringing up all the feelings of the ultimate betrayal she's not healed from starting her into a deep depression & making her either "cut" to transfer the intense emotional & mental anguish to a manageable physical source that releases endorphins & actually makes her feel good, or just abuses drugs & alcohol to numb it all out.

While I was going to therapy once a week for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because of the relationship & horrific divorce with my abusive 2nd husband, I was seeing my daughter struggle with all the same issues I did as a child, then teenager & knowing she was doomed to follow in my footsteps unless I helped her heal. It has been the most excruciating thing I've experienced as a parent. The pain & anger prompted me into finding a solution since I'm not one to sit & wait for someone else to solve my problems.

The connection I had with my horse as a child was so healing because it was innocent & genuine. He

was the one totally unconditional loving & SAFE being in my life. He was the savior to my soul, my sanity & my very best friend. We would spend hours together on trails in the beautiful sanctuary of nature. I wanted my daughter to have that experience of love & serenity too, so had encouraged her to get involved with horses when she was 10. My family is also very artistic & creative, so I've been blessed with a lifetime of experiencing the joy of artistic expression when there was no other way to express my feelings, as words can't convey the depth of thoughts & feelings.

When looking for programs for her, I kept seeking out an equine therapy based program that would also have a psychiatric module with them incorporating some form of art therapy as well for a total mind, body & spirit healing. There were none that I could find that sufficiently dealt with healing all the issues of an abused child, of which I am personally & intimately familiar with as an adult survivor. There are faith based programs that do wonderful work with abused kids & horses but don't have a psychological therapeutic module, very expensive (\$15,000+ per month) psychiatric treatment based "private school" facilities that have outdoor programs & some very capable people trying to do what they can on individual fronts, but the psychiatric field as a whole does NOT have a standard cohesive therapeutic treatment plan to heal child abuse core issues. Just like recovery from alcoholism, I believe a survivor is uniquely equipped and able to help another survivor.

I know that nothing happens by mistake or with out a purpose, so all my experiences have been for a reason. There was a reason for me suffering as a child & adulthood; a reason I had a wonderful horse as a child & was taught artistic creativity as a positive form of expression; a purpose in my learning as an adult by making the tragic mistakes a person makes as a result of unhealed deep wounds of the psyche & had to search & try the different methods for healing them to become whole; a purpose in the anger, pain, terror & frustration as a parent watching the cycle of abuse continue into my eldest child while being seemingly powerless to heal her.

I had to experience all this personally to KNOW the pains & then find healing for myself, & in doing so, the process that would heal other survivors of abuse as well as give support to the parents & family of the victims. I had to make the evolution myself from wounded & disabled victim into an empowered & capable person. I had to want to heal my child more than I wanted to breathe so I would be moved to piece together the process that would provide the healing others could begin as children so as adults they not only don't suffer or continue the cycle, but are actually enriched by everything that has happened in their life.

WHAT MAKES OUR PROGRAM UNIQUE

We are Life Coaches that have been down the road of recovery ourselves, so know the process of pain & healing that no one that hasn't has the experience could begin to comprehend. Our program helps the core issues effecting survivors:

1. Low Self Esteem 2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder 3. Depression 4. Severely impaired social skills

For someone to receive the type, quantity & quality of healing our program provides in our intensive day program, they would have to attend a minimum of 3 separate therapeutic facilities 6 times a week because we have combined therapeutic horsemanship with Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills, and then art therapies with professionals.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a psychosocial treatment that was developed to treat Borderline Personality Disorder, a diagnosis that has parallel root mental & emotional dysfunctions as those of victims of child abuse. It has been shown to be the most effective treatment for emotional dysfunction and has a wonderful 95% retention rate!

www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a782025723~db=all~order=page

Art therapy is an essential module because with abuse, there are some things that a person cannot verbalize or even know is repressed with in them & this tool is an essential outlet. Here is a wonderful article about the success & application of art therapy: <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/mar/20/health/he-art20>

We hope to help with your healing & recovery process. God Bless you!