

My Story – Sexual Abuse, Sexual Addiction, Recovery and Hope



On October 10th, 2010 I took part in a historic event at Harpo studios that resulted in two full episodes of Oprah’s Farewell Television Tour dedicated to male sexual abuse survivors that were abused by men. It was the largest endeavor of its kind by Oprah in her 25 years of producing the show. 200 men showed up to share their stories about their sexual abuse by other men. It is the start of a new era across the globe around awareness of sexual abuse that up until now has predominately been shunned by the church, government and media.

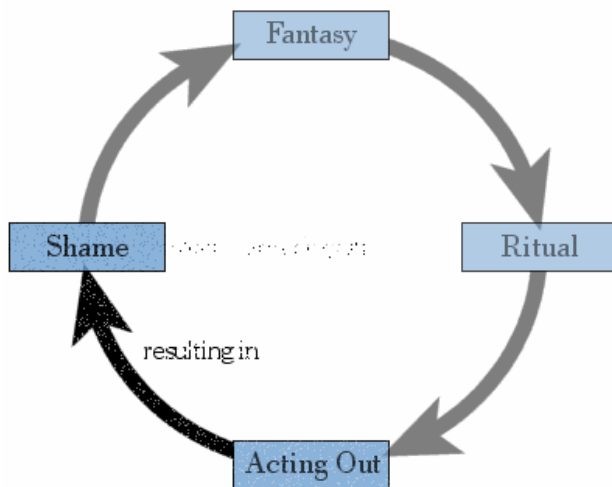
Each consecutive year of treatment and therapy I have been the happiest in my life and experience increased happiness and gratitude daily. I have been given the gift of freedom from God in the form of my extensive benefits at work, therapists, [EMDR](#), [Amen Clinics](#), my family, church and the fellows in [SA](#). After participating on the Oprah show, I was able to meet some of the 200 other male sexual trauma victims and hear some of their horrific stories. What I didn’t hear was much recovery and healing. Many still couldn’t experience intimacy with their partners, considered suicide, and were angry and hurting.

The story below documents my experiences with devastation to my life and others; it also illustrates treatment, hope, recovery and breaking the cycle of abuse. After 10 years of treatment, I have come out the other end the happiest I have ever been. I feel commissioned to help others because I was given gifts that allowed me to experience recovery, healing and hope. Others need to know there is HOPE for trauma victims that they can live fulfilling and happy lives and they don’t need to be in treatment for 10 years like I was.

I grew up in what was considered a “normal” Midwestern Christian family. My parents met via the [Christ Ambassador](#) programs from their [Assembly of God \(AG\)](#) upbringings. They both went to Christian colleges. They married when they graduated from college and my father worked as a machine shop technician and was a youth pastor at the local AG church. I was the first born after a couple years of marriage. I was raised in a regimented AG lifestyle where church was mandatory every Sunday for both the morning and evening service and [Awana’s](#) was the norm on Wednesday’s. By 3rd grade I was enrolled in a school, where I remained until 11th grade. My life pretty much revolved around the church with all the “fire and brimstone” and the “shame and guilt” preaching. The “norm” was if one wasn’t already “saved” and/or didn’t publicly come down to the alter for 30 minutes to participate in speaking in tongues and/or confessing all the sins that were committed, then there was the perception that something not right. My parents were very active in the church. Both parents volunteered in Sunday school and participated in choir. My mother played the piano for the services and my father taught grade 3-6 Sunday school.

At the age of 11, unbeknownst to me, things changed dramatically. Full disclosure from my father revealed that from the age of 11 to 13 he started sexually abusing me weekly. I can only remember three instances of the sexual abuse, which I discovered from therapy is disassociation. What I can remember is sometimes in the third person, a classic sign of disassociation. The feelings that occurred for me during the abuse varied from disillusionment, confusion, pleasure, shame and secrecy. What I have learned in therapy is the very first time the sexual abuse occurred the personality of the child stopped and a different child emerged.

When the abuse ended at age 13, I had to keep the ecstatic feelings going and I immediately began acting out to pornography. I was never sure why I started acting out to pornography, but soon after the disclosure I realized that weekly sexual abuse created intense [neural pathways](#) that were directly connected to the deep limbic pleasure center parts of my brain. As a child, the [prefrontal cortex](#) of my brain had not even started the [myelination process](#) that was occurring already in the [deep limbic](#) parts of my brain. This created a large differential of activity from the pleasure center of my brain to the area of the brain that controlled judgment. The sexual abuse was analogous getting cocaine every week and then going cold turkey, but was exasperated because the prefrontal cortex wasn't on par for neuro activity like the deep limbic part of my brain was. I was thoroughly addicted to sexual pleasure at the age of 13 and I was absolutely powerless to control what was going to cause devastation for me, my family and loved ones for the next 30 years of my life.



Frequently abuse creates addicts. The addictions are used to cover up the pain from the abuse and a vicious cycle of acting out starts to form. The [addictive cycle](#) starts with fantasy to cover the pain of the abuse, which leads to ritualistic acting out to cover up the pain, which leads to shame and guilt, which returns to the fantasy/acting out and the cycle repeats.

For me my addiction was sex, but I also had a hatred for gays. [I used the church to validate my hatred for gays](#). 25 years later through the help of an intimate friend, I realized that I hated gays because subconsciously I thought the sexual abuse that occurred to me was

“gay” and I despised it. In addition to covering the pain, I used sexual acting out to females to help prove that I wasn't gay.

As with all addictions, the addict needs to experience a bigger high ([dopamine hit](#)) to overcome the pain and provide a fix for the pleasure center of the brain. This was no different for me and my acting out behavior continued to increase and grow riskier. By the time I was sixteen I was engaging in unprotected sex with my 15 year old girlfriend. I took nude pictures of her and eventually was caught

with them. Going to a “Christian” school, this was heresy and we were both suspended and I brought incredible shame to her, both families and myself.

The addiction didn’t stop there; it increased to VHS movies, more graphic pornography and even stronger hatred towards gays. It continued with objectifying woman and relying on sex in relationships to feel loved. After years of therapy, I realized that I never could have a normal relationship with a female because for me sex was intertwined with love. This is what was modeled to me during the sexual abuse. If there was no sex, there was no love. This misconception about intimacy haunted my life and relationships until my mid 30’s.



The females that I was unknowingly attracted to were females that were also abused. We were both looking to fix something in our childhoods. I have an analogy for this using [insect lights](#).

I believe there are two types of insect lights. There is the “healthy” light where healthy moths go to and there is the “unhealthy” light where unhealthy (abused) moths go to. The abused adult children are attracted to each other because they are trying to fix what happened to them in their childhood. They know of no other way

and the dysfunctional ways of interacting with each other seem “normal”.

After many failed relationships, I met my first wife. She was also abused, but she never knew I was abused; no one did as I unknowingly held a [trauma bond](#) with my father. With all “new beginnings” in my life, I vowed that I would stop acting out and with all the previous “new beginnings” those resolutions only lasted a short period of time. She had warned me early on that any form of pornography would not be tolerated. This just caused me to be more secretive. Before we got married, I had sold my computer consulting business in Minneapolis to work for a software firm in Seattle. Moving out on my own spiked the acting out and even days before I was to get married, I was acting out to pornographic DVD’s.

Shortly after we got married, she became very depressed, probably due to the fact that we were living in the state that she was abused in. The depression for her was devastating; she couldn’t get out of bed and cried all day long. This meant no sex, which to me meant she didn’t love me. This caused me to act out more and by our first year anniversary I was engaged in a sexual affair at work. I switched software companies, which ended the first affair, but didn’t end my acting out. My new job allowed me to travel internationally, which introduced me to a variety of new ways to act out.

I can vividly remember my first trip to Amsterdam and anxiously visiting the Red Light district. I remember seeing the prostitutes sitting in the window and thinking to myself “I would NEVER pay for sex”. Two years later I was in Amsterdam and acted out with a prostitute. This catapulted me to a new plateau that not only increased the intensity of acting out but also increased the risk I was bringing to myself and to my wife (STD’s, arrest, large amounts of money consumed, loss of job, etc). Fully knowing

all those risks, the addiction continued to win. The neural pathways that were established at the age of 11 couldn't be controlled on my own and I was powerless. Adding to the ability to act out, the company that I was working at was very successful and I was a multi-millionaire, fulfilling a lifelong goal of being a millionaire before the age of 30. This made my family and myself extremely proud but it enabled me to take my acting out to a new level. My success had a lot to do with my ability to put in enormous amounts of energy into my career, working days without sleep and months with 2-3 hours' sleep a night. In hindsight, I realize that I had established a form of coping with my trauma by focusing anything negative into my work. Being a workaholic was a form of coping with the abuse.

During this time period my wife had discovered some of my acting out activities. There were ultimatums, promises and more increased secrecy from my part to hide the addiction more. For the first time ever I disclosed the sexual abuse to my wife, primarily because she kept insisting that I lived in a "[Beaver Cleaver](#)" family and how could I be doing these things. Neither of us had any inclination that the addiction was associated to the abuse.

By the grace of God, the [dot-com market crashed](#) in 2000 and by the Christmas of 2000 I had lost nearly everything in terms of wealth. That October my Grandfather had a severe stroke. By January 2001, he died and his funeral was on my birthday. Those were devastating events for me and God used them to rock my foundation. For the first time I thought that I had some chemical imbalance in my brain regarding sex (little did I know that I really did). I acted out one more time after my grandfather's death and from the devastation of losing millions and the death of my grandfather I decided to seek counseling. While this counselor tried to help with the depression associated with the loss in my life, he knew nothing about sex addiction and told me it was "normal" to act out. I was surely not going to tell him about the sexual abuse.

In this same period of time I started having another affair with a co-worker. For the first time in my life, I disclosed all of my secrets (sexual abuse and sexual acting out) and she didn't run away and didn't tell me I was a bad person. As all the previous females I had been attracted to, she was abused as a child, but it was the first time all my secrets had been disclosed. I felt an immense connection to this person because I was able to share my secrets and be accepted. Even though I was acting out by having an affair partner, I never again acted out with myself or with others from that point forward. For the first time in my life I got rid of all of "stash" that I had. This was something that I could never do previously for anyone, including myself.

During the affair, I had tried to "work it out" with my wife. I disclosed everything I had done to her without any regard to how it was being done. I couldn't figure out why we couldn't work it out. She laid down some things that needed to be done, one was to dump my existing therapist and find someone that specialized in sex addiction. I found a therapist that specialized in sex addiction and on the first visit took what I thought was a ridiculous [20 question pencil test](#) and was promptly told that I was a sex addict! I thought that since I wasn't doing those behaviors now, the questions shouldn't be valid for past behavior. I was livid, I had read [Patrick Carnes "Out of the Shadows"](#) and I wasn't a [Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 sex offender](#), thus I wasn't a sex addict! Like many I couldn't differentiate the between a sex

addict and a sex offender. I was, as always, exhibiting denial and lack of education, the classic symptoms of an addict.

My feeble attempts at trying to save the marriage had no chance with the path that I was on and the affair caused the demise of my marriage and created a traumatic and drawn out divorce. I devastated the life of my first wife. Not only did I recreate trauma for her, I re-affirmed to her that she couldn't be safe with anyone.

With my first wife we tried going to church, but neither of us could keep up the energy to go. I was jaded from the "fire and brimstone" and "shame and guilt" experience from the AG church I grew up in and she couldn't believe in a God that had devastated her life.

My affair partner was Hindu. This brought some unique challenges to my faith. While I wasn't attending church, there was something that called out to me, yearning to have something based in the "loving God" that I had heard about occasionally in church services and in Sunday school, but was overshadowed in the "fire and brimstone" and "shame and guilt" church services. I went on a quest to find "God". I attended Hindu services with my affair partner and I started attending every denomination of church in the Seattle area. We eventually settled on attending the [Unity Church](#) and attending the Hindu temple. However, something still didn't feel right. After a year of being in a relationship with my affair partner I discovered with the help of my therapist that I was in a dysfunctional and co-dependent relationship and I was able to leave it.

It took two full years for my therapist to convince me to start going to [SA](#) meetings and I distinctly remember the disdain I had towards my therapist telling me that:

- I would attend the meetings the rest of my life
- I would establish intimate relationships with other men
- There was a strict "sobriety definition" in SA that I would need to follow.

The thoughts of lifelong meetings, no sex with self or outside of marriage and intimate relationships with men that were sex addicts seemed unfathomable and insane. She told me that if I "future tripped" about all of this, I would fail and that I had to do this "a day at a time". That was probably the best advice I got from that therapist and is what allowed me to start actual recovery. In August, 2002 I started attending SA meetings and have continued to this day. I can't imagine the day I wouldn't go to SA meetings, it is as much a part of my life now as brushing my teeth. From attending meetings I had the first truly intimate relationships in my life and they were with other recovering male sex addicts.

One might think this is the end of the story. I had stopped acting out, I was out of an unhealthy co-dependent relationship that was established from an affair. I hadn't done bottom line behaviors for over two years. What more would there be to work on? It turns out that while I was addressing a symptom (sexual addiction) I was blind to the cause, the grip that the sexual trauma still had on my life.

Shortly after ending the affair relationship I was alone. I wasn't acting out, but I was alone. I started seeking out the "right person". I was sober and wasn't tempted to act out. I wanted to have the relationship that I hadn't had all my life with a female. I soon was using online dating services to find the right person. I thought I needed someone that shared common interests with me and the online dating allowed me to quickly find females that shared common interests. I was committed to having no secrets and when I met a date for the first time face to face, I told them everything about my sex addiction.

I eventually met my wife from online dating. She met all the common interests (high adrenaline activities, music, age/experiences and church background) and she also shared a craving to reconnect with a church where there was a loving God. On our first date, I told her everything about my sex addiction. She cried and I thought it was over. She told me that her previous relationship had ended because she caught him cheating on her with dozens of affair partners! She told me she wanted to try because I was honest with her, was in a recovery group and going to therapy. Little did I know that she was abused as a child and basically was doing what trauma victims do and dissociate from anything traumatic, just like they did as a child. Even then I didn't believe that the sexual trauma was something that needed to be discussed at the onset of the relationship as I didn't believe it had any impact on me.

Our relationship grew but looking back I realize it was dysfunctional and co-dependent because we were subconsciously both trying to re-create what we didn't have in our childhood and tried to "fix" each other. I continued in therapy and brought her so she would be aware of warning signs of a sex addict. My therapist told me she had family of origin issues and should be wary, advice that I disregarded as how could someone know that from one meeting. My therapist later died in a motorcycle accident, which was a traumatic event for me. Our relationship continued to grow and the issues from both of our abuse started to surface in dealing with each other. We both thought we were going to get married and with permission from my SA sponsor started to have sexual relations with each other. We had an unplanned pregnancy and decided to get married.

After our first child was born, I started to experience [PTSD](#) whenever I would see my infant son naked. I would freeze and have anxiety attacks and basically couldn't bath him or easily change his diaper. I was petrified that I might abuse my son, even though I had absolutely no arousal and the imprint for my abuse was age 11. I couldn't bond with my son and I constantly future tripped about what would happen when he turned 11. This consumed me and caused even more dysfunction in the relationship with my wife. I changed jobs at work that had me travelling almost every day of the month, flying over 250,000 miles for work a year. I never had a problem with sexually acting out during all this traveling, but whenever I came home, I couldn't bond with my son and that impacted my wife as it was bringing up her unresolved issues of abuse and the family she didn't have as a child.

By the grace of God, a fellow in SA directed me to a therapist that specialized in cognitive therapy and a treatment called [EMDR](#). I met with this therapist and she told me that I was an untreated sexual trauma victim! She told me that I was a sex addict from the trauma and the issues I was having with my son were PTSD and that EMDR could treat them. I started seeing her for the brief times I was in town for the three years I was traveling profusely. When the traveling stopped I was able to see her regularly and she

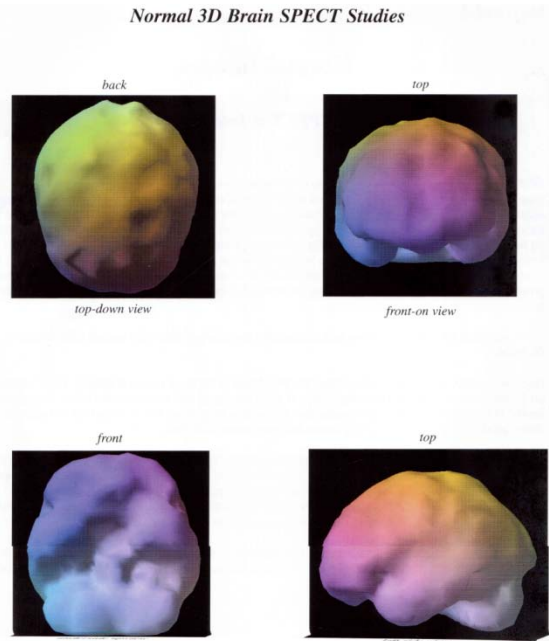
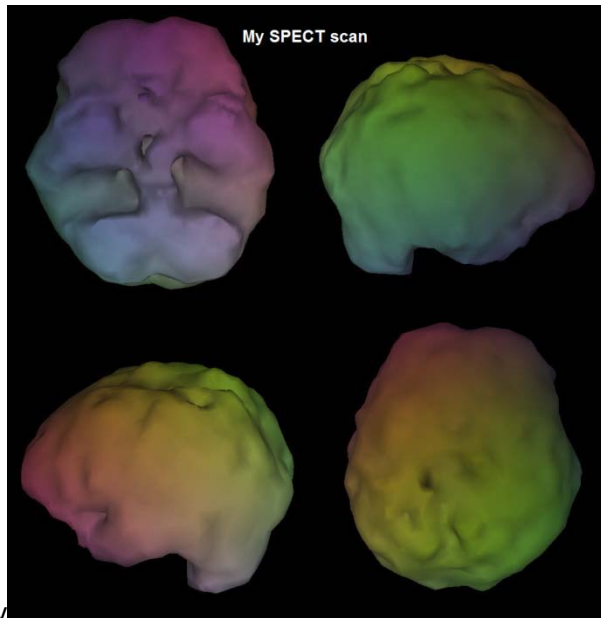
was able to start EMDR with me on the sexual trauma. Weeks after the first EMDR session, I was able to start bathing my son without having an anxiety attack. It was amazing and freeing. There are numerous examples of healing from PTSD from EMDR. Sexual trauma is simply one form of abuse that causes PTSD. [This video](#) illustrates another example of EMDR healing PTSD.

Shortly after this, my parents did their annual visit to Seattle to see their grandson. I asked them if they would be willing to help me with my therapy. My mother had found out about the sexual abuse years before this and it seemed like an appropriate time to try to address this with my parents. I didn't tell them what we would be doing, but that it would basically consume the entire week they were visiting. They both agreed and a week of family therapy ensued with full disclosure from my father, meetings with my father and mother, meetings with the three of us and finally meetings with my wife and the three of us to establish boundaries for my father to keep our son safe. While this was therapeutic for me, my family still struggles with dealing with the impact of the abuse, particularly the shame and guilt. EMDR has been proven to also treat abusers.

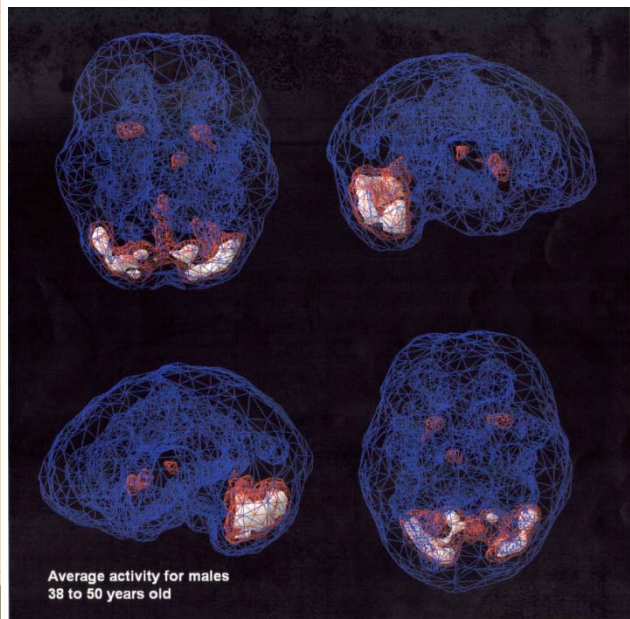
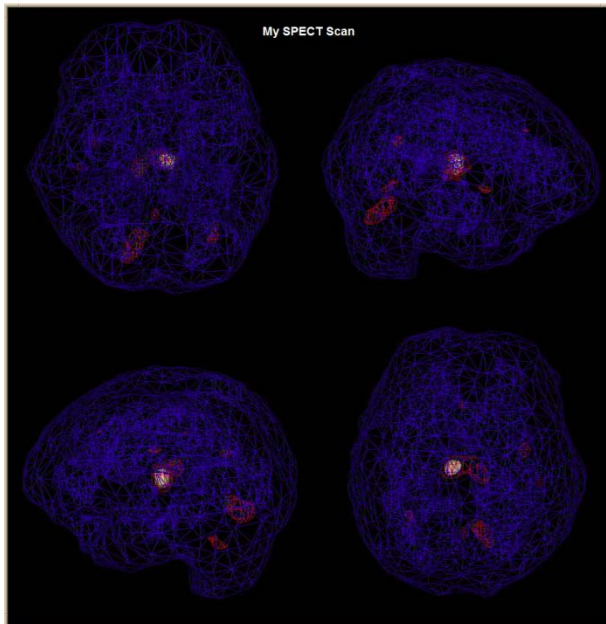
During this time my wife started seeking out therapy and her therapist introduced her to a church that was doing a sermon on pornography. What a concept, a church that was open to people having addiction!? We started attending the church and from the first service realized this is where we were supposed to be. After months of attending and constantly hearing the message that Jesus loves everyone, and I mean everyone (gays, sex addicts, sex offenders, drug addicts, you name it) we became members and started volunteering. I currently lead a group on sexual addiction at the church which is published for the entire congregation to see – talk about openness.

Through another therapist my wife was seeing, she discovered that I probably had high functioning [ADHD](#). This caused me to get a [SPECT](#) scan to determine I had ADHD, but also changed my life in discovering the impact of the brain on trauma victims and addicts from the ground breaking book from [Dr. Daniel Amen Unchain Your Brain](#). [The brain scan also highlighted](#) mild manic and OCD traits that I had. The scan didn't show the classic signs of PTSD as I had already completed EMDR treatment. I thought the episodes of working days without sleep were a gift. Being able to get that kind of focus on things that I was passionate about and had high reward is a gift; I just didn't know how to use it in a manner that wouldn't destroy my body.

Surface View: This smooth view shows all activity that falls within 55% of the brain's maximum. Bumpy areas and places that do not “fill in” are areas of low activity.



Active View: The transparent blue matrix shows activity that is 55% of the brain's maximum. This gives us a basic outline of the brain's anatomy, and it allows us to examine internal structures of high activity: Red areas show activity falling in the upper 15% of the brain maximum, and white areas are in the upper 8%.



The brain scans, along with the detailed analysis from the Amen Clinic staff, allowed me to become compliant to a treatment plan because I could see how my brain was different from a normal person's brain. Much like a patient is willing to undergo chemotherapy when they see cancer in x-ray images; I was able to believe that what I thought was personality trait issues and gifts, were lower and higher activity in my brain than what a normal person had.

The treatment plan from the Amen Clinic removed a sugar co-addiction that I had all along. It also calmed issues around being manic and hoarding (form of OCD), which was largely caused from the over activity in my [basal ganglia](#) and [thalamus](#) and exasperated from ADHD. From the treatment plan from Amen Clinics (sleep, exercise, supplements, removal of caffeine) I have lost 28 pounds without white knuckling a diet plan, I don't crave sugar, I love to work out, I feel balanced and my wife thinks I am a different person because I can get so much done in the house.

I believe that God was instrumental in bringing me to where I am today. Many have a hard time believing in God when so many bad things were done to them and how could a loving God allow for that. I asked that question many times in my own life. Part of the problem was incorrect thinking and part of the problem was looking for a miracle. I used to think that miracles were immediate changes, a lightning bolt out of the sky causing immediate changes. I've since altered my opinion about that and a story from a therapist really highlights how to ignore a miracle from happening. The story is as follows:

There was a man that owned a house. A flood warning was issued and the police told the man to evacuate the house. The man replied "God is going to save me; I will stay here at the house". The floods came and the first floor of the house was soon under water. Rescuers came by in a boat and asked the man to get in the boat. The man replied "God is going to save me; I will stay here at the house". The flood waters continued to come and the man was force to the roof. A helicopter came to rescue him and he still refused stating that "God is going to save me; I will stay here at the house". The man died and when he was in Heaven he asked God "Why didn't you save me"? God replied "What are you talking about; I sent the police, a boat and a helicopter"!

What I have learned is that there are miracles out there; we just need to be open to accepting and pursuing them. It's difficult to take that first step; some of us don't even believe there is a need for a first step.

The purpose of this story has many facets:

- Trauma is largely undiagnosed and ignored. The shame and guilt associated with it prevents many from coming forward and admitting the pain afflicted on them.
- Many that come forward don't get treatment to address the trauma and they continue to live with PTSD because treatment focused on the symptoms, not the cause.
- Trauma many times leads to addictions. Treating the addiction doesn't treat the trauma; it's merely treating a symptom and not treating the cause.

- Many trauma victims believe they are not affected, they simply believe the numerous failed / unhappy relationships and life are personality traits.
- Many trauma victims are highly successful people and have used the trauma as a means to perform extremely well, but they are still unhappy.
- The chain of abuse can be broken so that it doesn't continue to impact the next generation. It starts with getting treatment for both the abusers and the abused. In my family the abuse was generational, documented back three generations. It stopped with this generation.
- There is hope for trauma victims in the form of therapy, EMDR in particular, support groups, SPECT scans and a loving God. Trauma victims can live fulfilling lives where true happiness and peace exists.

Call to action: If you were sexually abused and haven't been treated specifically for the abuse, particularly PTSD, run to a therapist that specializes in sexual trauma, particularly EMDR. Don't believe that failed relationships, quirky behaviors, addictions and being unhappy is a personality trait, it's your brain and are the behaviors are from the sexual abuse trauma. Treat the cause, not the symptom.

We are ALL good and worthwhile people deserving of recovery and healing.