

SECURE

*A Grudge Only
Hurts the
Wounded*

WHY?

**The Way
We Were**

**Is the Hype about
Self-Esteem**

**All I Need to Succeed?
More than A
Knock-off**

www.aquarterblue.org

STAINED PAINS

As a child I had an outward, perceived beauty and innocence. However the depths of my soul pained from realities that no one could see. The average person was not enlightened to the hidden truths and untold secrets that played out loud behind closed doors.

A warped sense of self developed when a church elder, who was also a Sunday school teacher, groomed me to fulfill his selfish sexual perversions. I defined myself through my sexuality and how I could please others. This tainted love affected most interpersonal relationships, but especially marred the love I should have had for myself.

This brokenness is not unique to me. It is common because of the destructive nature of sexual abuse starts at the core of how we perceive ourselves. It expedites the downward spiral where self-admiration turns into devouring ourselves with biting criticisms. Once we were free to enjoy who we were, without evaluation or disapproval. Once we had a sense of wild abandonment, because we were so confident in whom we were created to be. We were children.

Through the abuse we lose the ability to love ourselves. We begin to see self-confidence as arrogance. We freak out at the thought of actually saying that we love ourselves. But, in order to receive an authentic love from others, we must start with affirming our own self-worth. Negative self-talk eventually destroys who we are meant to be and absolutely makes it

impossible for us to be loved and be lovable.

For authentic healing, we must realize that we are each a unique work of art in the making. We were created to be admired and understood. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross enlightens us to this concept when she states, "People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

Darkness invades our lives. What we do with that pain is what matters. This feeling of hopelessness may evolve into a sense of renewed confidence when rays of hope shine through our dark experiences. Or the pain may weigh us down with guilt and self-hatred. Ignoring the pain robs our full potential. We have the power to make this choice.

We need to love ourselves and even appreciate the trials we endure. It is those pieces of broken, stained glass that either create stained pain or become a stained pane to behold.

In Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural speech, he captured the essence of embracing your magnificence and recognizing the potential light that emerges from deep, dark challenges. He quoted Marianne Williamson from her book [A Return to Love](#), describing the potential light that emerges through your struggles in life.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us.

And when we let our own
light shine, we unconsciously
give other people permission to do the
same. As we are liberated
from our own fear, our presence
automatically liberates
others.”

Live an
enlightened, li
berated life.
Confidence starts
with a love for
yourself. NO
living creature has
the right to rob
you of the love
you deserve.





WHY?

Students throughout the world struggle with countless issues: depression, suicidal thoughts, sex, eating disorders, alcoholism, cutting, bullying, and more. The question that needs to be addressed is “Why?”

Why are so many students so miserable? What are the root causes of their dark and confusing thoughts? Who is the person they see in the mirror?

There are a number of reasons for these dysfunctional behaviors. However sexual abuse is often the root of destructive decisions. This is particularly enlightening when you understand *25% of students will be sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen.* At the same time, we cannot assume that students who make harmful decisions are automatically victims of sexual abuse. Also, not all victims of sexual abuse are transparent with abusive behaviors or diminished personalities. However, this statistic may clarify the destructive decisions made by some of your peers.

Many people who have been abused never have the freedom or encouragement to work through the issues. This may be due to the fact that the abuser is a close family member, friend, or respected leader in the community which keeps the abuse silenced. They think no one will believe them; they think they are the only one; they are gripped with fear; they think that honesty about the abuse will cause the family to suffer financial stresses or humiliation. The reasons can be personalized and endless.

Most astonishingly, some victims do not recall the sexual abuse at all. They may have checked out during the acts of abuse; therefore they do not remember the abuse itself. They may have lost themselves in the surroundings or absorbed themselves into a world of imagination. Suppression of these memories may seem like a very effective coping mechanism, but it is actually destructive. Other victims minimize the effects of the abuse. Others do not even understand that those sexual relations were abusive. It may be the only form of love they have ever experienced. Perpetrators masquerade their abusive behavior as love.

While the recollection of abuse may be gone or dismissed, the effects are often visible . . .

Depression is one of the most common signs of abuse and goes far deeper than a bad mood or general sense of blah. Depression digs deep into all aspects of life. It affects motivation, interpersonal relationships, and life choices. While sexual abuse is not the sole cause of teen depression, *depression cannot be dismissed.*

"Studies indicate that one in five children have some sort of mental, behavioral, or emotional problem, and that one in ten may have a serious emotional problem. Among adolescents, one in eight may suffer from depression. Of all these children and teens struggling with emotional and behavioral problems, a mere 30% receive any sort of intervention or treatment. The other 70% simply struggle through the pain of mental illness or emotional turmoil, doing their best to make it to adulthood." www.about-teen-depression.com

Anyone who cannot pull themselves out of a slump needs to seek professional help. They may not necessarily be able to identify the reasons behind their irritability, sadness, or anger alone. Untreated depression can lead to countless destructive decisions. Counseling then becomes essential to work through depression. Going through counseling may start to pull a depressed teen out of their despair. In severe cases, medical intervention is needed. Depression must not be ignored.

When teens are unable to express justifiable anger, they can become time bombs ready to explode. Their false sense of failure in protecting themselves from the sexual abuse may bring them to the point of not even wanting to try. They often also have appropriate anger toward the adults in their lives who failed to protect them.

It is important to know that many sexual abusers lead their victims to believe their self-worth is linked to their sexuality, and that they have no identity outside of pleasing people. It is no surprise that a consequence to this broken thinking can cause depression and a low sense of self worth. Likewise the guilt for keeping quiet can leave you feeling overwhelmed and filled with despair. Guilt and depression walk hand in hand.

Sleep deprivation leads to distorted thinking. Since many teens are sexually violated when they are in their beds, sleeping becomes scary. They may believe that if they fall asleep, they may be violated again. They also fear having nightmares. The

inability to sleep may also completely mess with their perceptions. It becomes impossible to have a healthy perspective on life.

Teens who have been sexually assaulted have every right to cry. They are mourning the loss of their innocence. It is beneficial to walk through this grieving process with a professional.

When teens cannot concentrate, it is possible that sexual abuse led them to be lost in thought. Deep sadness can cause teens to stop focusing on any tasks.

An overwhelming sense of helplessness or hopelessness IS depression. The teen experiencing these signs of depression need help beyond themselves.

Depression when left untreated may lead to suicide. "Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24." www.about-teen-depression.com Suicide is a permanent act for a temporary challenge, therefore teens must gain perspective outside of their depressing thoughts.

When hopelessness and helplessness move into a sense of worthlessness suicidal thoughts overwhelm the affected individual. According to psychotherapist Wayne Brazil, MFT, "They go to the core of the belief system that begins with the thought that 'nothing I do can or will change the way things are with me.' I am totally without hope. I am hopeless. But it goes farther than that. In addition there is a belief component that says I am not only hopeless but I am helpless. I cannot affect change and neither can anyone else. I don't know how and no one will come to my aid... Not only am I hopeless and helpless but I am not even worthy of help or hope. I am, in fact, worthless too.

Depression

Who would want to help me?... People who exhibit all three of these responses to their life conditions are eminently in danger of suicide either intentionally or through an act that would be seen by the uninformed observer to be an 'accidental death.' These are actions that on the face are not intentional but underneath is so inherently dangerous that combined with the elements of the triad make it clear that the person acted in complete disregard of their own life."

Even though they feel like life is pointless and they have no place in the world-this is a bold face lie. There is life beyond sexual abuse. Going through counseling may start to pull depressed teens out of their despair. If talking through the core issues with a counselor or psychologist has not brought relief from the depression, a psychiatrist's expertise must be sought. Life is not pointless. You **DO** have a place in the world. There is life beyond sexual abuse, the bottom line is that suicide is **NEVER** the answer! If you are suicidal, get help immediately! You need a new perspective! You need to find out **WHY** you are depressed! *You DO have reason to live!*

Even though they feel like life is pointless and they have no place in the world-this is a bold face lie. *There is life beyond sexual abuse.* Going through counseling may start to pull depressed teens out of their despair. If talking through the core issues with a counselor or psychologist has not brought relief from the depression, a psychiatrist's expertise must be sought.

Need help?
In the U.S., call
1-800-273-8255
National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline



Self-mutilation is one way that people use to "feel." Cutting is when offenders purposefully cut or scratch themselves. *Cutting is a coping mechanism for deep-seated pain, confusion, or pressure.* They believe their situations are beyond their control. Cutting was once known as the teenage girl disease, but it has become an act of demonstrating anger and internal pain for boys and girls alike.

Cutters typically hide the self-inflicted wounds. They may find beauty in the fresh cuts, since it has become their new identity. However, they may keep it a secret so that no one may have the opportunity to judge their newfound beauty.

When cutters feel like their problems are so intense they may cut to "release" the pain through bleeding. It brings them a false sense of cleansing and liberation. Their sorrow, anger, and desperation are seemingly locked inside of them. They have a sense that this act releases these trapped emotions. It seems to let the pain out in a small portion. This gives them a false sense of control. However, this seemingly unbearable pain will still remain after such acts of self-injury. Since the core of their pain and anger has not been addressed, they will always feel the need to release the pain in unhealthy ways.

Many students feel out of control. They want to grab hold of their lives and take control. Sometimes they think grabbing hold of a knife and cutting is the ultimate symbol of control and power. This is a distorted view of empowerment.

Sometimes teens who have experienced trauma feel numb. They have dissociated throughout their abusive situations so as not to feel the intense warranted pain and grief. They feel cutting is the only way they can feel again. They long to feel again, so they are obsessed with cutting, in order to feel.

Some victims of sexual abuse excuse self-injury. They believe they deserve to be hurt. They feel that nobody would care if they hurt themselves. They re-inflict pain they wrongly think they deserve. They need to come to terms with the fact that they are not guilty of the abuse that took place. They are only guilty when they turn the pain and rage on

themselves and carve their skin.

The bottom line is that this pain or numbness will not disappear by cutting. This destructive decision brings more pain and more numbness. Self-inflicted pain only gives more power to the one who initiated the pain. The more a cutter cuts, the more numb they will become.

Cutting is a response to a deeper issue. *People who cut need to talk through the reasons why.* They need to find a person with whom they feel comfortable talking. They may need help from a psychologist or psychiatrist if they are unable to stop the cycle and remain gripped by their victimization.

It is important to not be gripped by a fear about getting help for the reasoning behind the cutting. Everyone must understand that there is not a shortcut to healing through deep issues. Teens must go to the core of the issue and start to work through that with some outside help. Sometimes that first step is the hardest. Peer counseling may be a great place to start, but sometimes professionals will need to do the majority of counseling. This does not leave the peer counselor without purpose. Many cutters feel as if no one cares. When a peer counselor is a friend who encourages and speaks value into the person in the midst of counseling without judging

Cutting

them.

Peer counselors have a great purpose in letting the person know they do not have to walk this road to peace and contentment alone.

B i n g e ,
p u r g e ,
h u r l , *starve,*
C L E A N S E ,
f i l l . . .

the destructive nature of eating disorders reflects on past traumas that well up bringing intense feelings. People who are bulimic or anorexic have many self-perception distortions. According to the Eating Disorders Unit of Florida Hospital, 50% of their anorectic and bulimic patients reported a history of sexual abuse while only 28% of a non-anorexic, non-bulimic control population reported similar problems. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2602570>

S t u d e n t s who suffer from bulimia or anorexia may also have bought into the physical expectations set by the fashion world. The current trends are unrealistic. They distort what is healthy.

Sometimes the idea of keeping thin is linked with remaining desirable visually. Out



Eating Disorders

of their experience, victims of sexual abuse wrongly believe that their self-worth is directly connected to their physical appearance and sexual allure. Teens may deny themselves of the pleasure of food. They may wrongly believe that they do not deserve anything good. The opposite extreme is students who gorge on tons of food. They hope their weight gain may deter someone from being attracted to them sexually. Overeating may also be an attempt to fill a hole that seems empty. Food might feel like the one friend who is always there and always makes them feel better.

Teens may purge in order to release the pain and sadness.

Eating disorders are an attempt to gain control. There is desperation to find something to control. Yet this is another destructive decision that only hurts teens who are manipulating their food intake.



Why are campuses filled with **SEXUAL OBSESSIONS**? Sex has become so minimized that students don't even realize that they are obsessed with sex.

One obvious reason is the convenience of **PORNOGRAPHY** through the boom of the Internet and cable television. This trend has a direct affect on the rise of sexual abuse and fixations.

1. Pornography has developed into a **FANTASY WORLD** where women are perceived to be highly sexual. Porn women long for sexual satisfaction continuously. These women negate a woman's intrinsic need of affirmation and affection. They are submissive sexual beings whose desires are equated to that of a male, which is a lie.

2. An emotional connection and commitment are absent in porn. These healthy characteristics are exchanged for **HUMILIATION, CONTROL, SUBMISSION, AND PUNISHMENT OF WOMEN.**

3. With the boom of sexual pop-up messages and the prevalence of sexual hyperlinks, children and teens have become desensitized to mere nudity and conventional sex; therefore the product that the consumer is being tempted by is more graphic and even violent.

4. With the accessibility expansion of pornography, sex has become commonplace, and teens are being taught to believe sex is not a big deal; it is just "hooking-up."

Pornography is a seed of perversion that grows into an untamable obsession. It is not a harmless medium to learn about sex and human sexuality.

Students need to reclaim their bodies and elevate their sexual standards. While porn, television, films, and sex offenders shout that there are no consequences to forfeiting control of your body to another they are only concerned about their personal gain. Sexting exploits our sexuality; and we lessen the value of our bodies. The intrigue vanishes. The desire to respect you diminishes. You become one thing—a sexual being. If you want someone to respect you for who you are, not what you do or can give them, you wait to have sex. Wait to reveal your naked body. The more we throw away our sexuality and make it our identities, the more we lose sight about who we were meant to be. We need to take back our lives and our sexuality.

Also, teens who have been sexually assaulted tend to lean toward one of two extremes. They either disdain physical contact and flinch when anyone enters into their personal space, or else they define themselves through their sexuality. They were conditioned that they were only valuable when they performed sexually. They build relationships around sexual contact to try to capture someone's approval.

Sexual

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE:

MORE MALE MINORS ARE BEING CONVICTED OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.

A twelve to eighteen-year-old boy, who is exposed to pornography, desires to recreate the material shown in the pornographic footage. He may look to a more submissive child who looks up to him when a person his own age declines his advances, or when fear keeps him from even trying. Certain porn shows adults mimicking child-like behaviors. This also creates a dangerous allure toward children that age.

STUDENTS ARE BEING PEGGED BY SEX OFFENDERS.

Teens are now on sex registries for acts that they believed were consensual. Sometime in a relationship, teens may become determined to get even at any cost. At times, sexual partners might lie about their age, and after the sexual intimacy an accusation of statutory rape will be filed. There are countless scenarios of how sexual promiscuity can backfire.

STUDENTS ARE ENDANGERING THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH.

They falsely believe that every person will disclose if they have any Sexually Transmitted Diseases, as if there is a moral code with casual sex. The majority of STDs affect people for their entire lives.

Whether it be venereal diseases, pregnancy, or emotional baggage students need to realize sexual obsessions need to cease. Numbing ourselves through porn, continuing a sexual perverse lifestyle, or following the trend to be popular are ways you are muting the intrigue of sexual intimacy and endangering yourself.

Resource for the Effects of Pornography: Pornified: How Pornography Is Damaging Our Lives, Our Relationships, Our Families By Pamela Paul

Obsessions

Alcohol



Alcohol is a natural depressant so just take a guess why many teens are drinking, outside of it's the "popular" thing to do. Many students drink to numb themselves to their harsh realities.

They feel that their pain is too much to bear without taking the edge off through drinking. Since alcohol numbs the nervous system, it slows down the process of messages getting to the brain. Many students tire of hearing negative messages repeatedly; so they drink to handle the challenges of life. *Alcohol is perceived as a harmless way to cope with the static.*

Teens minimize the negative effects of consuming alcohol. They think they are in control when they drink, yet students are constantly raped, beaten, or humiliated when under the influence. Death may also occur through over drinking or driving under the influence.

Teens tend to live in the moment and can't bother themselves with the future. However, underage drinking increases risks for serious health issues as adults. It heightens the risk for liver damage, pancreatitis, some cancers, and shrinkage of the brain, and dementia.

Usually no teen believes that their drinking will compromise their dignity or life, but quite often this is the reality. A momentary "feel good" can cause a lifetime of suffering and embarrassment. Students have to choose between fleeting popularity and their health and their futures.

Drugs alter who you are—and that is what many teens are hoping for. They may be longing to escape from memories of sexual abuse, loneliness, or self-loathing, but when the high wears off, all the problems and the pains still remain.

Just like alcohol affects your life forever—drugs also alter your future as they were designed. Certain professions are prohibited from hiring people with certain drug histories. If you choose to “try it just once,” you may eliminate the opportunity to achieve your childhood dreams. A momentary pleasure or experiment is not worth the risk.

Also, you do not know if you have an addictive personality. You may intend to “try it just once,” yet be unable to walk away from the intriguing sensation created by drugs. Taking drugs once may trigger a level of impulsive behavior due to your chemical make-up.

Teens unintentionally kill themselves all the time. Teens believe the drugs they purchase are pure—as if a dealer is trustworthy. Dealers are selfish and will do what brings them the most profit and return clients.


Students must take back their lives and control their destinies. Instead of seeking to escape from the reason you want to forget, go to counseling and work through the issues. Instead of being willing to compromise for the sake of popularity, *STAND OUT!*

Make a bold statement through your actions that you are better than compromising your future with the momentary high from using drugs. Instead of relying on drugs to achieve academic success, earn it through hard work. You will appreciate that much more. You will know you deserve the accolades and awards, not your drug of choice.

One of the greatest highs in life is knowing that despite the struggles and heartache, you are in control of your destiny.



Drugs



Why do students bully? There are a variety of reasons. Many times teens who bully feel they need to belittle others in order to feel big enough themselves.

Students who bully tend to be very insecure, frustrated, and angry. Their *outlet for their pain is inflicting pain on others.*

When someone is abused by another verbally, physically, or sexually, they many times have *exaggerated emotions.* They may feel the only way they won't feel wimpy and manipulated is by acting demonstrative and controlling themselves. It gives them a sense of control.

Sometimes a bully is unknowingly *duplicating the behaviors* they have seen at home. If Dad hovers over "the bully" and yells in order to be heard, "the bully" may think that is how to talk to people. They may have become so numb to the bullying at home, that they don't understand how much it hurts others.

Other times it seems like this is what makes teens *popular.* If students flock to bullies because that's where they feel safe, they send a message which endorses this demeaning behavior. If students want to *send a message that bullying is not cool,* they need to not hang around bullies.

When a school determines to stop the bullying on campus, they first need to determine who leads and who follows. Both groups or individuals have reasons why, even though *there is no justification for bullying.* When students take the time to unveil the cause of such unhappiness, they know where to help the students who participate in bullying.

Bullying



THE WAY WE WERE

"I was molested by a male babysitter before the age of 10. As an adult, I honestly believe it led to my sexual addiction, a lot of experimentation, and bad decisions regarding relationships later in life. Having that attention from a "man" created in me a craving for love, for attention, to be "liked". Yet, deep down I never felt that I truly deserved to be loved.

The biggest problem is that when you are younger, you know of physical aspects of sex but don't really understand how it will direct your actions until later in life. I think that is why I've always tried so hard to "make" people like me, and to do things that "please" other people. And while it's nice to be a people person, it is never good to neglect oneself, just to make sure everyone else is happy. It also led to later problems with dishonesty and exaggeration in my relationships. My abuser told me to lie, to stretch the truth, and as a result, this became a part of my life. Then, later if I ever felt a sense of "letting go" or "abandonment" by those I truly loved and cared for, I would do anything to prevent that from happening, even if that meant acting in a dishonest fashion.

I married at a young age. I would never change a thing, since I love my two kids. However, the decision to stay in an unhealthy relationship, where my needs were always below those of my spouse, was the result of childhood sexual abuse.

Today I am a happily divorced woman raising my two beautiful children. I am presently in counseling to deal with divorce issues, issues with honesty, and my desire to please others at all costs. At 42, I'm still dealing with issues from over 3 decades ago, but I feel strong and able to do so.

"In high school, my personal identity was everything! What was funny though was I thought I was independent and unique, but actually I was conforming to all the fads and people around me. Whatever they thought and said was the cool thing to do, say, wear, or etc. I completely agreed with and followed. Luckily for me, I didn't begin my destructive sexual behavior until college. I began making out with girls, and I turned it into a game to see how many I could hook up with. Eventually, that turned into sex and the game continued. After getting girls pregnant and having STD scares, I still didn't stop until God shook my life for good when I attempted suicide."

"What people perceived was all a mirage, a mask, a tapestry with an unraveled and twisted reality underneath. If you are anything like I was, one of my greatest coping skills was denying that I had been hurt so much. I also wanted to deny my pain since I was scared to believe that someone who said they loved me so much and helped so many people could actually be so evil and self-serving."

"When I was a teenager I was very depressed. In my early teen years I wasn't sure why. At the age of sixteen, I began to realize that it was because of the betrayal of sexual abuse by my grandfather. I was supposed to be special to him. In reality it was all a lie. He used my weaknesses to fulfill his perverted sexual desires. I got pregnant at the age of fourteen by him—I miscarried. I did everything to escape my pain. I was a cutter. I smoked pot and drank. I gave into guys because I thought that was all I was worth. I did poorly in school, because I couldn't concentrate. I barely passed high school, because I couldn't sit still. I got in fist fights with boys. I was defiant. I buried myself in two jobs. Any way I could escape, I did it. When I turned 18, I started my journey to healing, which included taking antidepressants and going to therapy. My journey is far from over, but I have more faith now. If this has or is happening to you, it is not your fault. Tell someone until someone listens."

"When I was a teenager I was very depressed. In my early teen years I wasn't sure why. At the age of sixteen, I began to realize that it was because of the betrayal of sexual abuse by my grandfather. I was supposed to be special to him. In reality it was all a lie. He used my weaknesses to fulfill his perverted sexual desires. I got pregnant at the age of fourteen by him—I miscarried. I did everything to escape my pain. I was a cutter. I smoked pot and drank. I gave into guys because I thought that was all I was worth. I did poorly in school, because I couldn't concentrate. I barely passed high school, because I couldn't sit still. I got in fist fights with boys. I was defiant. I buried myself in two jobs. Any way I could escape, I did it. When I turned 18, I started my journey to healing, which included taking antidepressants and going to therapy. My journey is far from over, but I have more faith now. If this has or is happening to you, it is not your fault. Tell someone until someone listens."

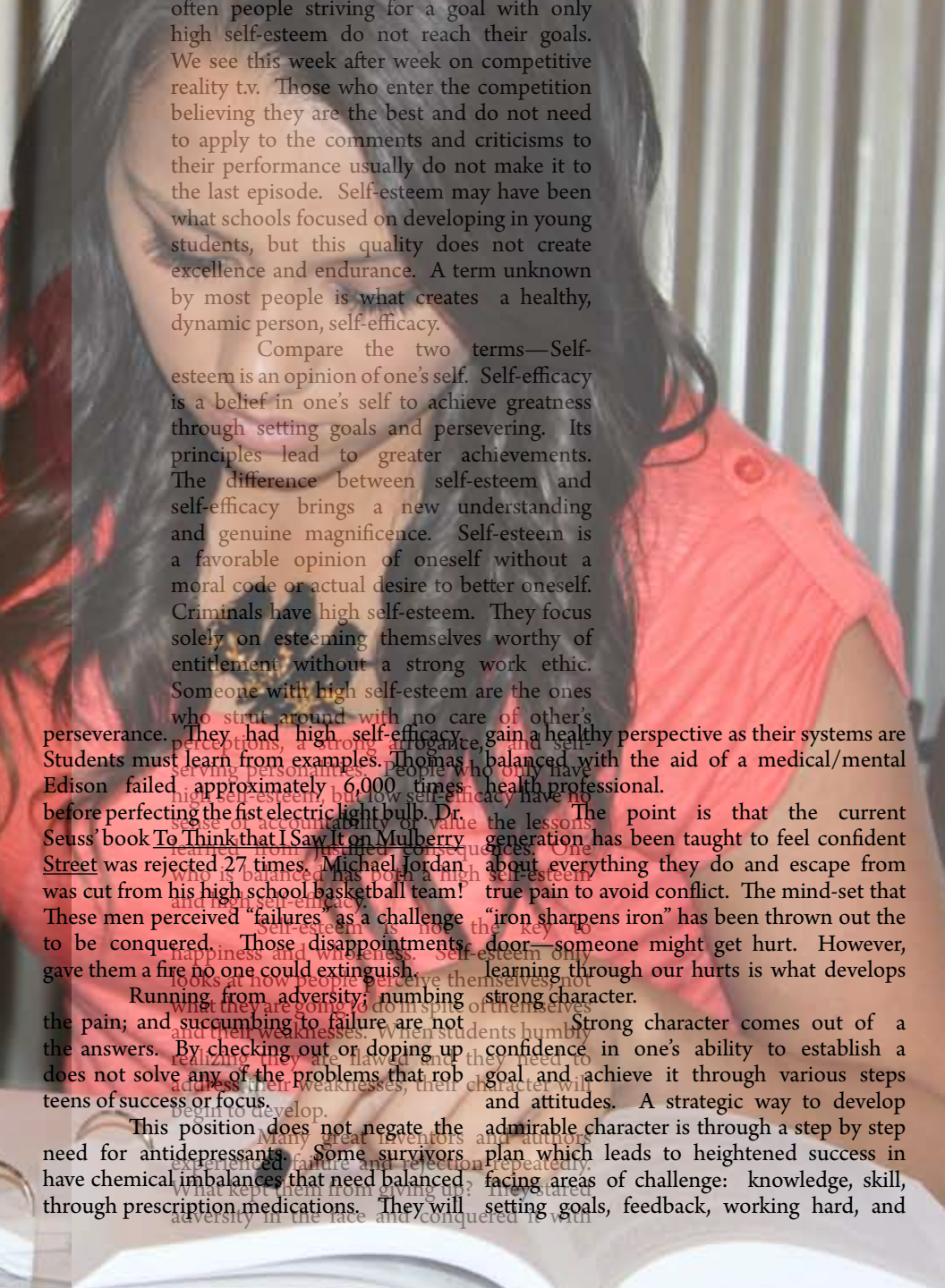
"I hated High School. No one knew the extent of it, because I was an athlete and got good grades, but I was lonely. I was depressed. I was confused, emotionally and sexually. Dating relationships were skewed because of my history of abuse. Also, I was being abused by another male student in my class. Because of my inability to draw boundaries, and my broken belief that this was "just the way it's supposed to be," and because of my deeply rooted shame, I never spoke up. Because of keeping too much locked inside, I developed a violent eating disorder and at 18 tried very hard to commit suicide. Like I said, I hated High School. There was no safe place for me. None. All these years later, the bruises from that time in my life still cause me to flinch in pain."

Is the Hype about Self-Esteem All I Need to Succeed?

On “So You Think You Can Dance,” one beautiful dancer felt hammered each week by the judges comments. She could only hear their critiques as a negative message, “They don’t like me.” On the episode where she was voted off, the judges attempted to encourage her and build her confidence. They explained that because they saw great, undeveloped potential in her, they continued to give her notes to help her evolve as a performer. She had allowed their comments to set her back, instead of catapult her forward into true greatness.

When students have high self-esteem, they think they are “all that.” They have crossed the line of confidence into arrogance. The same people struggle developing confident people in





often people striving for a goal with only high self-esteem do not reach their goals. We see this week after week on competitive reality t.v. Those who enter the competition believing they are the best and do not need to apply to the comments and criticisms to their performance usually do not make it to the last episode. Self-esteem may have been what schools focused on developing in young students, but this quality does not create excellence and endurance. A term unknown by most people is what creates a healthy, dynamic person, self-efficacy.

Compare the two terms—Self-esteem is an opinion of one's self. Self-efficacy is a belief in one's self to achieve greatness through setting goals and persevering. Its principles lead to greater achievements. The difference between self-esteem and self-efficacy brings a new understanding and genuine magnificence. Self-esteem is a favorable opinion of oneself without a moral code or actual desire to better oneself. Criminals have high self-esteem. They focus solely on esteeming themselves worthy of entitlement without a strong work ethic. Someone with high self-esteem are the ones

who strut around with no care of other's perceptions, a strong arrogance, and self-satisfaction. They come with the aid of a medical/mental health professional. The point is that the current generation has been taught to feel confident about everything they do and escape from true pain to avoid conflict. The mind-set that "iron sharpens iron" has been thrown out the door—someone might get hurt. However, learning through our hurts is what develops strong character.

Students must learn from examples. Thomas Edison failed approximately 6,000 times before perfecting the first electric light bulb. Dr. Seuss' book To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street was rejected 27 times. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team! These men perceived "failures" as a challenge to be conquered. Those disappointments gave them a fire no one could extinguish. Running from adversity; numbing the pain; and succumbing to failure are not the answers. By checking out or doping up does not solve any of the problems that rob teens of success or focus.

This position does not negate the need for antidepressants. Some survivors have chemical imbalances that need balanced through prescription medications. They will begin to develop. Many great inventors and authors experienced failure and rejection repeatedly. What kept them from giving up? They started adversity in the face and conquered it with confidence in one's ability to establish a goal and achieve it through various steps and attitudes. A strategic way to develop admirable character is through a step by step plan which leads to heightened success in facing areas of challenge: knowledge, skill, setting goals, feedback, working hard, and

being disciplined.

Establishing high self-efficacy starts with knowledge. As students face their problems, they must seek knowledge which will develop certain skills. When faced with a challenge students will feel thrown off balance. They may feel sad, frustrated, or helpless. Students have a choice—give up or press forward. They must choose to work through the issues with tenacity and hope. Unfortunately, many students have grown up with high self-esteem without self-introspection and accountability. Accepting feedback from peers, parents, teachers, and coaches is crucial in achieving greatness. Students benefit from surrounding themselves with people who encourage excellence and balance, not people who puff them up with large egos. If friends only focus on building an ego and ignoring faults, they feel that they can do no wrong. They are surrounding themselves with liars. When someone has experienced trauma they typically have a more difficult time trusting people and wanting to listen to their opinions. At the same time, it only hurts the person wounded if they continue to block out everyone's insights. Feedback is crucial in having great achievements. Accountability is paramount.

Becoming committed to the process of persevering in the eye of a storm can be invigorating. The tornado chasers prove that every episode. Part of their thrill is creatively getting out of the eye of the storm and then learning from the experience. Fighting adversity with self-confidence and creativity can be thrilling.

Creatively working out of a rut or a failure has the potential to develop self-confidence. Defeat is not an option. Creativity

in the battle is absolute. Students must press on with confidence and an inner positive voice that motivates them to persevere. They must develop creative routes to pull themselves out of the rut they SEEM stuck in.

Teens must become skilled in how to approach these challenges, and be optimistic in their attempt. "Optimism is an attitude that puts a buffer between people and apathy and hopelessness and depression when things go wrong. It must be realistic optimism or it could be disastrous." "The Impact of Self-Efficacy on the Achievement of Elementary School Students in a Christian School in Southern California." by Virginia Jean Nix, PhD

Students must be real with themselves. They must study the reasons behind dead ends or failures. They must look at negative outcomes with an optimistic drive for improvement. They must refuse to settle for mediocrity, when there's opportunity for improved change. Being honest about personal weaknesses and tendencies, develops a person who can stand up and push through the hardships in life that will be thrown at them. Sometimes goals will need to be re-adjusted. People will not always reach their first set of goals, but to give up because of difficult circumstances is ridiculous.

Whether using these principles for academic success, athletic development, or emotional health, greater contentment will be achieved when applied to various situations. All of us who encounter challenges must refocus our efforts, knowing that we will pass through difficulties in the process of arriving at joy. Joy does not come from circumstances; that is momentary happiness. Joy comes through triumphs..



A Grudge Only Hurts the Wounded

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong... If we practice an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, soon the whole world will be blind and toothless." -Mahatma Gandhi

All over campuses in the United States students are holding a grudge against someone: a teacher, a parent, a classmate. What they don't realize is that they are being held hostage because of that resentment and lack of a willingness to forgive. Forgiveness seems to be the new four-letter word. Certain people gasp at the repulsiveness of the word, and refuse to let it be in their vocabulary.

The reality is that without forgiveness people remain locked into the crime perpetrated against them or the insult hurled their way. Many people throughout our lives will let us down and some will do something seemingly unforgiveable. Sexual abuse is one of those crimes that would be considered unforgiveable. Through my experience as an adult survivor, I was determined to reclaim my innocence and joy through forgiveness. I did not want to live out of a "get even" mentality. And now, my desire is to transform the views of fellow victims into forgiving survivors. When we have unforgiving hearts, it only inflicts personal pain—emotionally, physically, and spiritually. To hate another person paralyzes one's ability to love wholeheartedly. A person who chooses to hate will always be shackled to the memories of his/her pain.

Medical proof shows emotional worries transfer to physical ailments. A lack of forgiveness creates this burden from headaches to life threatening diseases. Many people blame religious and educational institutions, God, and others, rather than the one behind the pain. This mind-set badly affects their trust in anyone, because they have not put the blame in the appropriate place, in the face of the offender. As long as we hold onto anger and hatred, our offenders remain in control of our complete health.

Part of the hatred for forgiveness is a misunderstanding of what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is a releasing of control. It is an act meant to free you from a hurtful memory. Forgiveness is shifting the blame and guilt—putting the blame onto the offender. Beauty comes out of moving from a negative focus on our past, which manipulates our present views, into enlightening us to positive ideas and goals for a hopeful future. Destruction is not in people's future if they forgive. Restoration is. Forgiving offenders provides the potential for healing from within. Students have the potential of turning ugly shards of useless, hurtful



memories into a beautiful, potentially healing process. Teens have to let go and forgive. It is taking a toll on the overall health of campuses—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In forgiving someone, it does not mean offenders become trustworthy. They may never be trustworthy. People who forgive are doing their part. This leads the wrongdoer to face his/her faults. The forgivers cannot be responsible for the offenders response. When I told my sexual perpetrator that I forgave him, he said, “Thank you! Thank you! You forgive me! He seemed to be glowing with relief—he thought that I was excusing his countless years of sexual abuse.

“Wait! Obviously you do not understand the true meaning of forgiveness.” I went on educating him on my newfound meaning of forgiveness. I decided to no longer be shackled to my perpetrator.

Sometimes face-to-face forgiveness is not an option because of safety, death, unwillingness, or distance. People cannot falsely believe this means you are damned to be shackled to your past their whole life. Forgiveness is a state of the heart. Forgiveness is being free from bitterness. Forgiveness is a process of letting go and realizing all justice will not be served on earth. Forgiveness releases resentment from controlling the forgiver. Forgiveness allows forgivers to not be defined by their discontent. Forgiveness is about freeing the one willing to forgive. Forgiveness opens up the door for peace and true joy.

As you transform your understanding of forgiveness, may you feel free to forgive. Will you begin to dream of the peace and possibilities beyond forgiveness? Remember that forgiveness is not excusing someone's behavior. Forgiveness is letting go. It is saying, “I release you. You are no longer my problem. I no longer want to self-inflict pain, and hold onto to you and what you did to me.” Our true potential will emerge as we adapt to having a heart of forgiveness and beautifully transformed thoughts of hope and restoration. So, unless the four letter word you were thinking of is hope, So, stop hurting yourself, and forgive those who have wronged you.



More than A Knock-off

Why do many of you live behind a mask? You need to realize you are compromising your integrity. The façade may fool many, but not yourself. There is a constant pressure of playing a role. It is time to discover your inner, authentic beauty and stop settling for a knock-off performance.

Knock-offs are not a new concept. Knockoffs were common in ancient times, too. Romans figured out ways to mask human errors in their sculptures. Romans would fill cracks with wax in order to have art appear perfect. When the pieces were placed in outdoor gardens, the sun's rays began to melt the wax that hid the cracks. The frauds were exposed. This is how the word sincere originated. "Sine" means without, and "cere" means wax.

When you determine to have an authentic beauty, you must be sincere, without wax. You must work through your flaws and not mask them. This way you will be able

to stand up against the heat of life. Learning through heated situations and circumstances will transform your weaknesses into strengths and tools to help others.

Knock-offs might be acceptable to some people, but you are worth more! You are a unique creation. You are worth time, effort, and transparency. Your true potential and beauty that has been diffused behind a mask for long enough.

Allow your face to show hope and faith that tomorrow will be a brighter day. There is a time for all experiences and emotions. There is a time to cry and laugh. There is a time to grieve and celebrate. There is a time to hold onto memories and a time to let go. Today is the day to take the risk. Destroy the mask you have glued to your face. Today is the day to build a new future of hope and faith that your true beauty has not yet been revealed. In due time, you can be restored. Peel off the mask

of disillusionment. Start living a life of authenticity.

This transformation starts with self-love. Choose to love yourself. Choose to believe in yourself. Your uniqueness should be embraced and built upon, not muted and masked over.

It is important to spend less time in front of the mirror and more time talking to people. Talk to those who have admirable life-experiences. Listen to soldiers who fought for the freedom of America. Take time to understand doctors and nurses who choose to serve the hurting. So many people have stories to tell that would unveil an insightful map for living. You don't have to learn the hard way. Your path is only unique to a point. Many people have succeeded in spite of learning challenges, parents who divorced, an abusive upbringing, and more. You must make a strong attempt to spend time with safe and quality people. This will allow you to gain a new and healthier perspective. If you cannot seem to find healthy people, you can read about quality examples.

Life is less about your look—it is about an inner beauty. You have to pull yourself away from your own reflection and strive for a true beauty of inner strength, integrity, and confidence—for you are more than a knock-off.





SECURE

integrity AUTHENTICITY

TRUTH

Does weakness come out of truthfulness or vulnerability? We are concerned if people know who we really are, they would run the other way. Or we panic about the consequences, if we stand up to those who abuse their position and power. But I believe it is time to break free. We must live above the pressure of people's judgment.

I obsessed over being accepted for who I was, and because that secret nearly immersed my inner being. I had to create a seemingly transparent, joyful façade to counteract the truth in order to fool the average onlooker.

People who are not truthful about their vulnerabilities create a hardened mask to throw off others, so that they will not see the broken heart beneath the "full-proof" exterior. They may hide their pain in a bottle of Southern Comfort that leaves them ultimately un-comforted. They might try to create control and a cleansing through an eating disorder. That feeling and secret is not excised in any of their times hugging the porcelain. The burden only increases through denial masked by coping mechanisms. Denying the truth does not change its validity.

Healing begins as we stop denying the truth. When we validate the memories and the affects that abuse has caused in our lives, we can begin the healing process. Society might not be ready for this truth-seeking, but that is not our burden to bear. Truth is a liberating force. You were created to experience this freedom. Your mission should be to live a life beyond that of perpetrators. You should strive to live a life filled with transparency and authenticity. This will result in dignity and integrity. Both will be noticeable as you break out of the lies, and live a life based on truth.

Transparency

VULNERABILITY

dignity