

Union of Saints



The Healing Paradox: Learning About Abuse Can Be Painful

When we learn about abuse, its patterns, and the psychology behind it, something paradoxical happens:

1. Heightened Awareness

- Knowledge sharpens our perception, so we start noticing abusive behavior more clearly.
- While awareness is empowering, it also makes old wounds feel fresh, because we suddenly recognize harm we may have previously minimized or ignored.

2. The Shock Factor

- Realizing that someone we love or trust has been abusive — even subtly or unknowingly — can trigger surprise, disbelief, or even trauma resurfacing.
- The reaction can feel like “re-injury” to the emotional wound: the old hurt is still tender, and new recognition makes it flare.

3. The Emotional Rollercoaster

- Feelings may include anger, betrayal, grief, shame, or confusion.
- Even understanding why someone behaves abusively doesn’t remove the pain.
- This is especially true when the abuser is someone close; knowledge alone does not shield us from hurt.

4. Psychological Side Effects of Learning

- Anxiety: anticipating potential abuse in future interactions.
 - Hypervigilance: constantly scanning for signs of harm.
 - Emotional fatigue: processing repeated cycles of hurt, especially when paired with prior trauma.
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Why Planning and Personal Rules Are Critical

Since abuse is not a question of “if” but “when”, having a plan creates stability in an unstable environment:

1. Establish Boundaries Before They’re Tested

- Decide in advance what is acceptable behavior and what is not.
- Determine your limits for confrontation, disengagement, and self-care.

2. Prepare Emotional Coping Tools

- Grounding exercises, journaling, or mindfulness practices to help manage immediate emotional reactions.
- Affirmations or reminders: “Their actions reflect them, not my value.”

3. Develop a Response Framework

- Scripts for verbal responses (calm, assertive, boundary-setting).
- Exit strategies: knowing when to leave or step away from a harmful interaction.
- Support system: having trusted people to debrief with safely.

4. Expect Surprises

- Even with preparation, abuse can feel shocking.
- Treat these moments like flare-ups of an old wound: acknowledge the pain, protect yourself, and give yourself time to heal again.



Perspective for Healing

- Healing is not linear; each encounter with abuse may stir old wounds, but it also strengthens resilience.
- Preparing mentally and emotionally reduces the intensity of the shock, and gives you agency over your responses.
- Knowledge of abuse is a shield and a compass — it allows you to navigate interactions safely and protect your energy, even when hurt happens.