

MY JOURNEY JOURNAL

Before we begin, I want to thank you for coming forward. I know that talking about these things can be incredibly difficult, and I want you to know that you are in control of this conversation.

- **You are the expert:** I am here to learn from you. If there is a question that doesn't make sense, or if you don't remember the answer, please just say, 'I don't know' is a very helpful answer because it helps us stay focused on the facts you are sure of.
- **Taking breaks:** If you feel overwhelmed or just need a moment to breathe, you can stop at any time. You can take five minutes, or you can stop for the day – whatever you need. This is your process to move through. There is no set timeline.
- **The Goal:** The goal is to gather details that can help build a clear picture of what happened. Because these memories are from when you were younger, we will try to focus a lot on what you saw, heard, and felt, rather than just dates and times. It's ok to close your eyes and think back if you need to – but only if you feel comfortable doing so. Use your own words as you would speak them. You don't need this to be or sound clinical. It should be your story, your way.
- **Recording:** If you feel comfortable, you can record this rather than writing it down, but it can also be very healing to put the words on paper.
- **Spontaneity:** If anything spurs your memory, no matter how small, be sure to write it down.

Organizing Information

When these questions are answered, the information is often organized into a **FEET** analysis (**F**requency, **E**vent, **E**xertion of power, **T**imeline). It can help turn your narrative memories into a structured case.

Category	Focus Area	Goal for Evidence
Sensory Details	Sounds, smells, textures, landmarks.	Corroborating a specific physical location, venue, vehicle, state, etc.
Anchor Events	Birthdays, holidays, weather, TV shows.	Establishing a chronological timeline without relying on dates.

Category	Focus Area	Goal for Evidence
Identity Markers	Tattoos, nicknames, specific vehicles.	Identifying offenders and linking them to other crimes.
Routines	Routine chores, grocery brands, pets.	Proving the duration of stay and the level of control exerted.

Key Reminders for the Timeline

Because childhood trauma often causes **dissociative amnesia** or "memory telescoping" (where events feel closer or further away than they were), try to link memories to external cultural markers:

- "Do you remember what music was playing on the radio?"
- "Were people talking about a specific movie that had just come out?"
- "Do you remember what the phones, appliances, computers, TVs looked like?"

Pro-Tip: The "Sensory Bridge" for Court

When a survivor describes a specific smell (like a certain brand of cleaning chemical) or a specific sound (like a train whistle every night at 9 PM), it may help investigators in their attempt to find the **exact location(s)** discussed. This is important in trafficking cases because it can help validate the survivor was physically in a location they would otherwise have no reason to know about or be in.

When interviewing a survivor of childhood trafficking, the priority is to avoid re-traumatization while gathering actionable intelligence. A trauma-informed approach should be **"Please share what happened to you?"**

The following questions are designed to be open-ended, sensory-focused, and non-judgmental.

1. Establishing a Timeline and Movement

Trauma often fragments memory. Instead of asking for specific dates (which can be difficult to recall), ask about **anchor points** like seasons, holidays, or physical growth.

- "When you think back to that time, do you remember if it was cold out or if the trees had leaves?"
- "Can you remember if you were smaller than the kitchen counter or if you could reach the top shelf yet?"
- "Do you remember seeing any specific landmarks out the window, like a bridge, a tall building, or a certain store?"
- "Were there times when you had to pack a bag or get into a vehicle to go somewhere new? What do you remember about those trips?"

2. Identifying Offenders and Co-Conspirators

Avoid "Who did this?" which can trigger a shut-down. Focus on roles, physical descriptions, and the "rules" the survivor had to follow.

- "Was there someone who seemed to be in charge of where you stayed or what you ate?"
- "Did you hear people call each other by nicknames, or were there people's names you weren't allowed to say out loud?"
- "What did the person who spent the most time with you look like? Did they have any marks, tattoos, or a specific way of speaking?"
- "Did anyone ever come to the house to fix things, deliver mail, or provide medical care?"

3. Identifying Other Victims

You may find it easier to share information about others rather than yourself. This is common and it can still provide leads for corroborating other evidence.

- "Were there other children or people staying in the same area as you?"
- "Did you have a friend or someone you felt safer with when things were difficult?"
- "Do you remember any names or descriptions of the other people who were there with you?"

- "Was there anyone who 'left' or was taken away while you were there?"

4. Gathering Physical and Environmental Evidence

Sensory details (smells, sounds, textures) are often the most resilient parts of a trauma memory and can lead investigators to specific locations.

1. "What did it sound like at night? Could you hear traffic, sirens, or perhaps farm animals?"
2. "Do you remember any specific smells in the places where you stayed, like certain foods, chemicals, or perfumes?"
3. "Were there any specific items you were allowed to have, like a certain toy, a blanket, or a piece of clothing?"
4. "If you had to draw the layout of the room, where was the door in relation to where you slept?"

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- **The Power of "I Don't Know":** If the answers that come to you are "I don't know" or "I don't remember", those are perfectly acceptable and helpful answer.
 - **Pacing Yourself:** Allow for long pauses. Silence is often when a you may be processing a sensory memory, and that's ok. Take as long as you need.
 - **Choice and Control:** You can start anywhere along the timeline of your story. The story is yours to deliver. You can also start with where you lived, good things you remember, people you knew, things that made you feel safe. Anything you are comfortable sharing.
 - **Soft Landings:** When you are done writing, end the session by coming back to the present moment. In fact, consider making plans for the rest of the day or something they find grounding or soothing.

Survivor Detail Log: Forensic Evidence Journal

Start Date: _____

Name of Person Providing Information: _____

1. Where were you born (City/State/Country/ Province) ? _____

2. What Month, Day and Year were you born? _____
3. What is your current legal name? _____
4. Is that the name you were given at birth? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know
5. Have you been known under any other names? If yes, please list them here:

6. What is your birth mother's name: _____
7. Do you know their birthdate? If yes, list it here: _____
8. Are they still living? ☐ Yes, they are ☐ No, they are not ☐ I don't know
9. What is your birth father's name: _____
10. Do you know their birthdate? If yes, list it here: _____
11. Are they still living? ☐ Yes, they are ☐ No, they are not ☐ I don't know
12. Were you adopted? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know
13. What is your adopted mother's name: _____
14. Do you know their birthdate? If yes, list it here: _____
15. Are they still living? ☐ Yes, they are ☐ No, they are not ☐ I don't know
16. What is your adopted father's name: _____
17. Do you know their birthdate? If yes, list it here: _____
18. Are they still living? ☐ Yes, they are ☐ No, they are not ☐ I don't know
19. Do you have any siblings? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

If yes, please list their names, birthdays (if known) and ages here:

Around what age were you when this first began? _____

Do you know where you lived at that time? If yes, please provide details if possible:

Were you taken from your parents when this happened? ____ Yes ____ No

If no, were either or both of your parents aware this was happening to you?

____ Yes ____ Mother ____ Father or ____ No ____ I don't know.

How do you believe you came to be in this situation?

Were any of your siblings in the same situation? ___ Yes ___ No ___ I don't know

At what age and date did this situation end for you? _____

1. For each location you were moved to, please try to describe the dwelling, indoors, outdoors, schools or playgrounds, etc.

Just do as much as you can, but don't get overwhelmed. It may help to try to describe the memories as you would if you were a witness to a third-party crime and you were reporting it. You can always add more detail later when you remember it or are feeling up to it.

The Physical Environment (The House, Vehicle, Venue or Physical Location)

Focus on details a child would notice but an offender might overlook.

Detail Category	Specific Description (Verbatim)
Sight	Colors of walls, patterns on carpet, views from windows (power lines, signs).
Sound	Train whistles, church bells, specific birds, running water (river, creek), neighbor's loud car or other loud noises nearby, spoken languages. Did aircraft fly overhead – perhaps an airport nearby?
Smells	Specific foods, chemicals, heavy perfume, damp/mold. Were there any industries nearby, like a bakery or factories?
Layout	"The stairs creaked on the third step," "The bathroom was inside the kitchen."
Ownership	Was the house, hotel, or property owned by anyone, rented, borrowed, etc?

2. People

For each location you were moved to, please try to list and briefly describe the people who were around you at the time. Those who were always there or who visited and what their involvement was with you in terms of a “relationship”. To be clear, were they a family member, a family friend, a handler, a person who installed internet? When describing them, try to use some of the prompts below.

Focus on permanent identifying items that would still exist years later.

Marker	Description
Physical	Tattoos, scars, missing teeth, birthmarks, height relative to the child.
Verbal	Nicknames, accents, slang, "Rules" they often repeated.
Habits	A specific brand of cigarettes, a favorite TV show, a type of beer, jeans, branded shirts.
Vehicles	Color, "The loud engine," "The fuzzy dice," "The smell of old fries."
Transport	Where there any other means of transport you recall being used?

4. Physical Evidence

Use this section to track physical items mentioned during the interview that might still exist.

- ☐ **Clothing:** Does you have any items you wore during that time? If yes, please place it in a warm dry place. Do not wash it. Place it in a sealed bin, box, or bag, if possible, for future reference.

- ☐ **Photographs / Documents:** Are there any photos where any of the named people appear in the background? Do you have any documents from this time that you kept or took photos of?

- ☐ **Gifts/Toys:** Did anyone give you a specific gift, toy, book, jewelry, etc. that you still possess?

- [] **Medical:** Did you ever go to an ER, hospital, clinic, or dentist during this time? If you recall the location (City/State, or names of them or the people who you saw, please list them here:

- [] **Law Enforcement:** Did you ever report this to any law enforcement agency? If so, please provide the dates, places, names and officers involved if possible.

- [] **Counseling:** Did you ever go counseling regarding this situation, either during or after? If so, please provide the dates, places, names and counselors involved if possible.

- [] **Physical:** Do you have visible and invisible physical scars and, if you feel comfortable sharing, how did you come to have them?

You can take this time to list specific traumas if you feel comfortable doing so. You can share what was your understanding of the “rules” or expectations of you were at that time and what were you worried might happen if you spoke to someone or tried to leave the situation. This is your journey. You can share as little or as much detail as you choose and come back to this later. Remember, you are recording this for the future, so you do not need to relive the moment. Take breaks as often as needed.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Do you have any advice for parents, teachers, law enforcement, or others that you believe may help prevent this from happening to others in the future?

Do you have any advice for about how to expose situations like this so they can be stopped?

Do you feel that current measures, such as the information in bathroom stalls or missing persons pages on social media, are helpful to situations like these? ___ Yes ___ No

Why or why not?

What else should be considered or what else could be done to help prevent, locate, expose these types of issues and irradiate them?

What do you feel could have prevented or stopped this situation for you personally?

[illegible]

What Happens Next? (A Guide for Your Journey)

Thank you for your courage in documenting and sharing your story. It is a monumental step. Here is a clear look at how your information will be handled and what you can expect moving forward.

1. Organizing the Information

The details you shared may be a basis for later testimony. This helps investigators look for patterns, like specific locations or names, that may match other records. The focus will be on the **sensory details** (what you saw, heard, and smelled) because those are often the strongest pieces of evidence in court. You can go back to your journal at any time to include other details that come to mind at a later date. You can also use your phone to record something you remember in the moment and write it down later.

2. The Investigative Phase – Once you are ready to move forward with your case, this information will become important.

Investigators may use your "anchor points" to search for physical proof. This might include:

- **Property Records:** Checking who lived in a home or location that matches your description.
- **Employment/Prison Records:** Tracking where suspects were during that time.
- **Other Witnesses:** Reaching out to other people you may have named to see if they can corroborate your story.

1. Procedural Integrity (Before you begin) for actual interviews with police or media

- **[] Recording Device Check:** Ensure high-quality audio/video recording. Visuals are vital for court to show you, the survivor, was not being coached or coerced.
- **[] Presence of an Advocate:** If possible, have a trauma informed victim advocate present. This establishes that you, the survivor's, mental health was prioritized.
- **[] Conflict of Interest:** Verify that the any interviewer has no prior personal connection to the survivor or the accused.

2. Information Quality (During an Interview process)

- [] **Avoid Leading Questions:** Ensure questions do not suggest an answer (e.g., "Was the car red?") but remain open (e.g., "What color was the car?").
- [] **The "How do you know?" Check:** When a survivor identifies a person or place, ensure follow-up questions to establish the basis of their knowledge (e.g., "What made you sure it was him?").
- [] **Spontaneous Utterances:** Note any statements made by the survivor that were not in response to a question—these are often highly valued in court as "spontaneous utterances."

3. Evidence Categories for Legal Building Blocks

To build a solid case, you need to "connect the dots" between the survivor's memory and physical reality.

Legal Requirement	Questioning Goal	Evidence Type
Jurisdiction	Identifying specific towns, states, or crossing of borders.	Road signs, license plate colors, accents of locals.
Corroboration	Finding "independently verifiable" facts.	Floor plans, wallpaper patterns, pets, specific scarred features on offenders.
Continuity	Establishing how long the abuse lasted.	Growth spurts, losing baby teeth, school years missed.
Knowledge of Others	Linking the offender to a pattern of behavior.	Names or descriptions of other children/adults present.

4. The Memory Chain (Post-Interview)

- [] **Transcription:** Create a verbatim transcript of the interview immediately.
- [] **Chain of Custody:** Document exactly who has handled the recording or any physical evidence collected during the interview (like old photos or clothing).
- [] **Disclosure Log:** Keep a log of any details the survivor remembered *after* the interview ended, as these often surface as the brain continues to process.

3. Legal Review – At the point where attorneys become involved, you can share this with your counsel. They will review everything to determine if there is enough evidence to bring formal charges. This part of the process can take time—often months—because then need to be as thorough as possible to build the strongest case.

Important Things to Remember

- **Memory is Not a Straight Line:** It is completely normal to remember new details days or weeks after journaling. If a new memory "pops up," just jot it down to record it.

Immediate Resources for You

- **National Human Trafficking Hotline:** 1-888-373-7888 (24/7)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text "HOME" to 741741