FEELINGS MOST FREQUENTLY EXPERIENCED FOLLOWING A SEXUAL ASSAULT

* FEAR
* Of being alone
* Of the rapist returning
* Of places and people that remind them of the assault
* Of others finding out
* Of men or women in general
* Of having to report the crime or going to court
* Of their own anger
* Of going to sleep
* GUILT
* For having caused the rape
* For not fighting more
* For being stupid enough to get in that situation
* For all the feelings they feel
* ANGER
* At society and the legal system
* At significant others for not understanding
* At the abuser
* At the disruption in their life
* SHAME & EMBARRASSMENT
* The feeling that everyone can tell they were the victim of assault, just by looking at them
* BETRAYAL
* By the abuser
* By significant others
* LACK OF TRUST
* In their own ability to make judgments
* POWERLESSNESS AND DEPRESSION
* Feeling as if things will not get better.
* Feeling totally victimized
* Feeling helpless

TOOLS FOR COPING

Be gentle with your own healing process. You, and only you, know how you are feeling and how you are coping with the aftermath of the abuse. Allow yourself to feel however you need to feel, whether it is feeling angry, sad, or regretful. These feelings are perfectly normal for abuse survivors.

Give yourself time for healing. The pain and turmoil following the abuse does not go away overnight. Instead, it is a long and hard process all survivors must go through in order to heal and go on with their lives.

Try to understand and express your feelings. Your mind, body, and soul are all going to have certain ways of coping with the abuse. Taking a moment every now and then to acknowledge these feelings and behaviors are a good idea for coping.

Listen to your body. If your body needs a break, take it. The body is a strong and resilient machine, but for your body to be at its best you must take care of it. Take a few minutes in your day to do something you enjoy, by taking a minute to relax, this can make a world of difference in your recovery process.

Identify your support network. Try to be aware of supportive people in your life. Know who can talk to and trust and who you cannot trust. It is necessary for recovery to have someone you can share with.

Express feelings through writing or art. Capturing your feelings at a particular moment can make it easier to get the most out of therapy or counseling. Many times, when a person goes to visit their therapist or counselor they are unable to explain the feelings they were having prior. Writing these feelings down or expressing them through artwork can help you in the healing process. It will help your mental health care provider to offer the best and most effective treatment.

VICTIM SURVIVOR RIGHTS

* You have the right to decide what happens to your life at any time.
* You have the right to decide what you want to do about the abuse. People can give you options, but the decision is entirely yours.
* You have the right to decide whether or not you will report the crime to the police and how you want to report it.
* You have the right to decide who will know about the abuse and when.
* You have the right to be informed at any time about the police and/or the district attorney as to the progress of your case at any time.
* You have the right to have a support person with you at all times, and you have the right to choose who that person will be.
* You have the right not to be a ‘victim’ for the rest of your life. You were a victim, but now you are a survivor.

REMEMBER: YOU ARE A SURVIVOR!!!!!!!!!

(End of information from “Broken Spirits” website.)

Notes:





CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSED PEOPLE

* Low self-esteem.
* They are in denial about how far the abuse has gone. Sometimes they do not even recognize abuse and accept it as normal.
* Often, they are sick and may have addictions. Physical and mental illness may be a result. Sexual addictions may be a characteristic. An abused person may often feel starved for affection. They may misunderstand sexual encounters for intimacy. An abused person may hop from one relationship to another or from one encounter to another for one of a few reasons:
* They are scared to commit or be attached for long periods of time for fear of being abused.
* They are so over-bearing no one sticks around.
* They keep looking for a fairy-tale relationship since they have trouble facing reality and live in a fantasy world.
* The abused person usually has such a need for intimacy that they may end up addicted sexually looking for love in all the wrong places and ways.
* They may end up with addictions to alcohol or drugs to cover and mask their hurt and pain.
* Many abused people have psychological hurts and pains. To the abused these pains are very real. I have known many people addicted to pain killers and anti-depressants and other medications. They become experts at manipulating physicians to get medicines and mask their deep inner turmoil. When a physician confronts them, they change to a new physician. If they have used up their resources in physicians they will go to friends, family, or whoever to find some type of medicine to mask their pain. They become masters of manipulation. (Loved ones, you are not helping this person if you are enabling them. They hide their hurts and pains deeply which will cause major illness if not dealt with.) The chronic use of medications can affect their liver and other body organs.
* Abused people are often paranoid. Fear is the main emotion abused people experience. Instead of thinking about what is best for them, they focus on everyone else and how others will be affected by their choices. Their decisions are often made in fear because they are scared of more abuse from someone.
* Abused people may have problems setting limitations or boundaries in life. They don’t know when to say no or recognize when enough is enough. They get set in negative patterns and don’t know how to escape. When parents have been abused and don’t know how to set boundaries, they may pass this trait on to their children. If a child does not see a parent limit alcohol or medication, they may follow that example. If a child sees a parent going from partner to partner and not setting sexual standards, they may find themselves becoming a victim since this is the example they have seen.

The Bible speaks of the sins of one generation being passed on to the next generation.This is because the sins are modeled in front of every generation of children. The generational curse can and must be broken. We have a choice in what we are going to pass on to the next generation. You may not have chosen your family or the situations you grew up in, but when you realize the addictive traits or abuse that have been passed from generation to generation, you can start the first steps to recovery. You can be the one that starts the change for a positive reaction in your family.

Notes:

SIGNS OF VERBAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Copyright 2001 Irene Matiatos, PhD web: [http://drirene.com](http://drirene.com/) Permission granted.

(Make sure to visit Dr. Irene’s website. It contains a wealth of knowledge and professional expertise that can help you with recovery issues of all types. I came across it three years ago and it was a big help to me.)

Do you wonder if your relationship may be abusive? Ask yourself the questions below. If you answer ‘yes’ to more than a few, you may want to take a closer look.

**Does your partner?**

* Ignore your feelings?
* Disrespect you?
* Ridicule or insult you and then tell you it is a joke or that you have no sense of humor.
* Ridicule your beliefs, religion, race, heritage, or class?
* Withhold approval, appreciation, or affection?
* Give you the silent treatment?
* Walk away without answering you?
* Criticize you, call you names, and yell at you?
* Humiliate you privately or in public?
* Roll his or her eyes when you talk?
* Give you a hard time about socializing with friend and family?
* Make you socialize and keep up an appearance even when you don’t feel like it?
* Make sure exactly what you want is what you don’t get?
* Tell you, you are too sensitive?
* Hurt you especially when you are down?
* Seem energized while fighting, while fighting exhausts you?
* Have unpredictable mood swings, alternating from good to bad for no apparent reason?
* Present a wonderful face to the world and is liked by outsiders?
* “Twist” your words, somehow turning what you said against you?
* Try to control decisions, money, even the way you style your hair, or wear your clothes?
* Complain about how badly you treat him or her?
* Threaten to leave or threaten to throw you out?
* Say things that make you feel good, but do things that make you feel bad?
* Ever left you stranded?
* Ever threaten to hurt you or your family?
* Ever hit or pushed you, even accidentally?
* Seem to stir up trouble just when you are getting closer to each other?
* Abuse something you love: a pet, a child, or your family?
* Compliment you enough to keep you happy but criticize you enough to keep you insecure.
* Promise never to do something hurtful again?
* Harass you about imagined affairs?
* Manipulate you with lies and contradictions?
* Destroy furniture, punch holes in walls, break appliances?
* Drive like a road-rage junkie?
* Act immature and selfish, yet accuse you of those behaviors?
* Question your every move and motive, somehow questioning your competence?
* Interrupt you; hear but not really listen?
* Make you feel like you can’t win?
* Use drugs and/or alcohol involved? Are things worse then?
* Incite you to rage, which is ‘proof’ that you are to blame?
* Try to convince you that he/she is right while you are wrong?
* Frequently says things that are later denied or accuse you of misunderstanding?
* Treat you like a sex object, as though sex should be provided on demand regardless of your feelings?

Your situation is **critical** if the following applies to you:

* You express your opinions less and less frequently.
* You find yourself walking on eggshells, careful of what & when to say something.
* You long for that softer, more vulnerable part of your partner to emerge.
* You find you make excuses for your partner’s behavior.
* You feel emotionally unsafe.
* You feel somehow it is not okay to talk to others about your relationship.
* You hope things will change…especially through your love and understanding.
* You find yourself doubting your memory or sense of reality.
* You doubt your own judgment.
* You doubt your abilities.
* You feel vulnerable and insecure.
* You are becoming increasingly depressed.
* You feel increasingly trapped and powerless.
* You have been or are afraid of your partner?
* Your partner has physically hurt you, even once?

If you feel your relationship may be verbally and emotionally abusive, talk to people you trust. Talk to clergy, call your local battered women’s shelter, educate yourself, and seek professional help. Do not allow verbal and emotional abuse to escalate to battery?

(End of article by Dr. Irene)

GUIDE FOR DIRECTING ANGER

* You are responsible for your own anger. You have a choice to be calm or angry. No one can “Make you angry” unless you allow it.
* Be aware of your anger signs. If you see them rising up in you, take a time out. If you are at home take a walk or go into another room. If you are at work excuse yourself to the bathroom or take a break if you are able. Remove yourself from the situation until you can get it under control.
* Have a true and trusted friend you can trust to listen to you. Often, we can recompose ourselves after having someone to vent to. If you find yourself going to this friend constantly you may want to seek professional help. You can burn a friendship out if all they hear if complaining. People do not need to be around others who remain negative, it affects their own attitude in many cases.
* Get yourself a journal. Sometimes it helps to write your feelings down. If you are worried about someone finding your journal, just write it down and throw it away. By doing this you were able to express yourself and by throwing it away no one will get it and sometimes it is like throwing the problem away. Also, if you throw it away you will not have to worry about the abuse getting it. Journals are best if writing down goals and positive happenings while problems are best to be written and tossed.
* When we are hurt and angry, we often go on a pity party and our self-esteem bottoms out. Learn to take negative thoughts and talk and turn those thoughts and words into positive ones.
* Learn to be patient and realistic, with patience comes virtue.
* Do you only see things in black and white? Can you see the gray areas? Do you view things your way or can you see the other person’s point of view? When you are angry, and the other person is angry it is usually over fear and hurt? Can either of you see the underlying causes of this fear and hurt? What is your perception of the problems? Do you both see it as the same or a different problem? Try to see each other’s point of view and talk this out calmly. Do not focus on your anger, decide how you can change your thought process to help in resolution to the problem.
* Learn how not to be provoked by another person. Know your trigger points and when to step away. (An angry assailant knows where to push buttons and how to shift the blame of their anger to you.)
* Understand your trigger points. Remember with death, separation, or divorce there is a grieving process. (Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.) Please get counsel from your pastor or a Christian counselor if you cannot get past your grieving process. Do it first for yourself. Secondly do it for the ones that love you so that you can continue to love them without blurred emotions and thoughts.
* Do you get angry again and again over the same ‘ole things? If so you have an ongoing problem that needs to be dealt with. Identify the problem and find creative ways to resolve it. When you identify the problem go to God’s word and seek counsel in the Bible. Do not take verses out of context to appease your anger. Look up how we are to love all our brothers and sisters, how Jesus loved unconditionally, and look up jealousy, forgiveness, etc. Whatever you have previously done did not work since you are still angry.
* If you continue to battle with anger, humble yourself and seek help from a professional! It is better to seek assistance, so you stop hurting yourself and others. Once you can identify your anger, source the root because you can learn how to deal with it and rebuild your self-esteem and begin to like and love yourself again. When you learn to work out your own anger you can start to love others and not abuse others due to your anger. Remember to ask forgiveness of the people you have hurt and to forgive yourself and make sure you have asked God’s forgiveness.

HOMEWORK:

* List examples how you have overreacted to someone in the past. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* List ways you have under acted.

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* List situations in your life over which you have been in denial.

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* Make two lists. One list is what you like about yourself and the second is what you do not like about self. On the list of things, you do not like identifying the things that you can change and the things that you feel you cannot change. The things you are able to change, think about how you can change them and make a list.

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Read the following from your Bible.

* 1 Peter 5:10 God of all grace
* Matthew 9: 10-13 They that are sick
* Matthew 9: 21-22 Faith has made you whole…
* What goals have you set for your life? After you have set you goals the next step is to confront the aggressor. Remember to go in love and be firm while showing compassion. If you go in anger you will not accomplish resolution or the begin the stages of healing. To do this:
* Have a plan. (Timing is everything!!! Do not approach when the aggressor is angry or tired.)
* Know what you will accept and what you won’t.
* What will happen if abuse occurs?

If you are in a life-threatening situation or physically abusive situation, get professional and/or legal advice.

On making your plan: Do not set yourself up for failure. If your aggressor is drunk, high, just lost their job or had a fight with someone; or is with their friends, do not approach them. They will be more apt to carry out further abuse. Find a time when they are sober-minded and not tired.

You do not have to go by yourself if you are afraid. There are interventions that consist of a counselor, therapist, or other professional, a minister, family members and close friends who are not addicts or abusers and who care about their friend and you. Depending on age and maturity sometimes children are involved. The intervention can be done at home, at a relative's or you may involve their employer and meet in a private room at work. Many employers have programs to help fund rehabs. Rehabilitation services are available to help addicts and abusers. There are groups to help victims recover. Many churches have support groups. Rehab does not mean a person will necessarily conquer their problem and change but it is a step in the right direction. Every situation is different. If you feel you are in an unsafe environment and don’t know whom you can trust, seek out help. There are many 800 numbers that will listen to your situation and guide you in the right direction.

Read:

* John 15:22
* Ephesians 4:14-15
* Titus 3:10
* Galatians 2:11-14

Daily Devotions:

* Matthew 6:33
* Matthew 7:7
* Colossians 1: 9-14

Pray for those who hurt us. Pray for strength and wisdom. If you are familiar with spiritual warfare, pray against the spirit that is lingering around you. We do not have control over people. However, if you are a born-again believer, you have spiritual authority over any spirit and can command it to leave. There are spirits and demons over sickness, anger, addictions, etc. Pray for wisdom and if you pray in the spirit, this will help you in discernment.

The following story holds true to life. It was sent to me over the internet. The author is unknown.

Once there was a little girl who had a bad temper. Her mother gave her a bag of nails and told her every time she lost her temper, she must hammer a nail into the back of the fence. The first day the girl had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as she learned to control her anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. She discovered it was easier to hold her temper than drive those nails into the fence. Finally, the day came when the girl didn’t lose her temper at all. She told her mother about it. The mother now suggested that the girl pull out one nail for each day so that she was able to hold her temper. The days passed and the young girl was finally able to tell her mother that the nails were all gone. The mother took her daughter and led her by her hand to the fence. She said, “You have done well, my daughter, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same again. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.” You can put a knife in a person and draw it out. It will not matter how many times you say I am sorry the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical wound and sometimes worse. Friends are rare jewels indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear; they share words of praise and they always want to open their hearts to us. Let your friends know how much you care about them.