

RECOVERY WORKS

DECEMBER 2011

LINDA'S THOUGHTS

**As always, take what you like
and leave the rest.**

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over the abuse, the effects of the abuse, and that our lives had become unmanageable.

POWERLESSNESS

I hate the 1st Step, I love the 1st Step. Why do we need to acknowledge powerlessness in Step 1? We've felt powerless much of our lives, and now, we're being asked to admit to it?!? Yes, and it is such a relief to do so.

If we were powerless, it wasn't our fault. It didn't matter what we said, wore, didn't say, felt, didn't feel, etc. We had no control over the abusers or enablers.

If we're powerless, we don't have to fix the abusers and enablers. We can concentrate on us. We can't now as we could not in the past, make them either happy or miserable. We were powerless over their mood, behavior or thought processes. They were predators who harmed victims of opportunity: us. Children don't cause evil in their parents, and children don't cause pedophilia. We could not and did not control it. That's the good news. We can disengage.

If we weren't responsible, then our perpetrators *were* responsible. How sad it is to have been raised by someone so sick to conceive and perpetrate abuse often on their own child. To recognize that most of us have no idea what safety feels like in our own childhood home is painful.

Love is a feeling, but it's also a verb, an action word, so although Christine (my biological mother/perpetrator) demonstrated love at times, she did more damage than good. And parents are expected to "put food on the table and clothes on our backs" without the child paying a hefty price. Healthy love never has this much pain and misery. Christine didn't love me. Abuse isn't love.

We can't make them feel guilty or responsible. When I was most suicidal, a friend said, "I can see your mother at your funeral, 'You know she was crazy, she was seeing a therapist.'" Even suicide will not extract guilt from someone who can hurt a child and not care.

Many people associate suicide with mental illness. When survivors commit suicide, it casts doubt on our assertion of abuse. Suicide leaves only the perpetrators version of what happened, and casts a shadow of doubt on our own reliability.

Since we were powerless, we can shed all inappropriate shame like taking off a sweater. We have nothing to be embarrassed about. If anything, it's amazing that any of us are walking and talking!

WHAT DO WE NEED?

Only the adult self can look at the abuse from this perspective. A child will defend her/his caretaker if s/he still needs her/him. "My caretaker can't be sick and evil! What will happen to me and my idea of the loving family if I recognize the extent of these atrocities?" The sadness seems endless, but I can assure you, it is not.

Even as an adult, I treated my perpetrator like a higher power. Whatever she thought or felt, must be correct. If she thought I was responsible for the abuse, then I must be. We need only our truth, not the truth through the eyes of a pedophile.

INTO THE FUTURE

The 1st Step is the only Step written in past tense. All others are present tense because the powerlessness was in the past. Once we realize that the powerlessness is behind us, the world is an open book with endless possibilities.

The other Steps take us from feeling powerless to *powerful* by taking control over our lives today. We *were* powerless; we're *not* powerless anymore.

Please be gentle with yourself,

Linda D.

"A grateful heart sits at a continuous feast."

Co-founder/Executive Director
Survivors of Incest Anonymous
World Service Office, Inc.

Her Keynote Speech is available in cassette and CD. Please specify which one you want when you order.
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Today I Have Choice

A Meditation by John+

"...like a fish flopping in a puddle that was once a lake/movement constricted, gasping for oxygen..." --Anonymous

As survivors we often feel that life has boxed us in. Perception turns the world into an enormous negative. Work, career, relationships, and possibilities seem limited at best or ghastly and inhumane at

worst. We find ourselves despairing, wondering when life will finally provide the joy, love and limitless hope we deserve. We are exhausted--tired of struggling, tired of butting our heads against the seeming brick wall of day to day existence.

In this state of mind, old feelings of being trapped, unable to move or even breathe abound. Once more the past places its face upon the body of the present. We are small, helpless children again—held down, forced to endure what no human being was meant to experience. Terror slashes us. Disassociation clouds the senses. The present has once again become a time of abandonment. We wander wounded, alone and lost.

It is at times like these we must remind ourselves that we are survivors, not victims. During times of challenge, we must remember the first step: we were abused. As a consequence, our lives are unmanageable, especially when our responses are reactive not proactive. Just as when we were children, we are again protecting ourselves from hurt and pain by trying to separate from our emotional responses. *Consciously or unconsciously, we act upon the belief that no one in the world will comfort us.* Separated from our triggered child-hearts, we try to ignore our aching need. We act as if life, and its current challenges, is our abuser. The best we can manage is the desperate hope that life's abuse will somehow come to a miraculous end and never return. Once again we feel trapped—trapped in a situation that is not of our own making: the family from which there was no escape—the life challenge from which there is no surcease.

Today, however, is different. Today we have choice. First, we can reassure our inner child that s/he is safe. We can seek a Higher Power of our own understanding for comfort and reassurance. Finally, we can remind ourselves that this is *now*. We are no longer trapped and imprisoned by a

dysfunctional family. We are adults who daily make choices. If a job is hurting us we can quit. If a relationship has gone awry, we can end it, try to talk things out or seek counseling. We make, today, the lives that we live in. Likewise we can unmake or make anew. When we accept life, as it is, we can then choose to change. Many times, just remembering that today we have choice, lifts the confusion, pain and fear. Nothing on the outside has changed. Our perception, though, has altered profoundly.

Today, I will remember that choice is operational in my life. Likewise, I will recall that I have the power to change and choose anew.

To contact John, feel free to write to him at siasocalintergroup@hotmail.com

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THE ADDICTS PRAYER

Dear God help me in my hour of sadness and need. Help me not to go into my addictions which give the illusion of immediate release. When these moments come and the paths are blurred, let me see my addictions and my shortcomings for what they are – a disease not to serve me well, but to blind me, to numb me, to inevitably destroy me. Let me see the love that is mine to claim. Let me see clearly what my addictions and diseased thinking have done to me. And let me want to take the path of recovery and love. Let your lights of love enter my mind, body and spirit. Blessed are those that have this spirit. Please let it be mine.

Stan F., CT.

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DO YOU HAVE TALENT?

The WSO is looking for poetry, artwork or recovery articles to include in the next Newsletter. Please send them to: SIA, PO Box 190, Benson, MD 21018 ***signed with written permission to print it.***