

Last August, I was fortunate to have attended a reception for the National Sexual Assault Conference in Washington DC. As I walked through the convention hall, I once again felt a kind of despair that out of the 80 or so booths, everything was focused on women and or children. Not saying that is a bad thing but still I was thinking, "Where is the support for men?"

As we turned down the final aisle in the reception hall, I finally found it. There were half a dozen large black and white portraits of the men who had participated in a endeavor to shine light on male survivors, The Bristlecone Project.

I spoke to a couple of very nice gentlemen and in a few moments felt, "WOW, finally the support is out there!"

To keep the spirit of the Bristlecone Project going, today I am here to share my letter to Dr. David Lasik (the man behind The Bristlecone Project) with all of you.

Hello Dr. Lisak,

Like a few of the men in your video, I did not remember my abuse until my mid-thirties after numerous years in therapy, alcohol rehab, a failed marriage and so many other problems. I knew I was broken, I just couldn't figure out why. The saddest part of the years of digging into my issues with so many different professionals and institutions, no one ever brought up the possibility that I may have been sexually abused as a child!!!! I look back and find that so amazing that it was almost inconceivable 20 years ago that a man could have suffered from that.

Up until that point, here is what I remembered....

I was adopted. My father was paralyzed from a car accident and could not have children so my parents decided to adopt me and 4 years later a sister. The paralysis progressed and shortly after my 5th birthday he passed away.

A short time after that I started to have a reoccurring nightmare, one that was almost the same every night and had me in total fear of having to go to bed. Every time, when I would awaken screaming it was my mother putting me back into my bed telling me to hush up, it was just a bad dream.

The dream...

Each night after falling asleep I would hear a voice calling out for me. As though I was hypnotized, I would walk outside and lay down in the driveway, waiting.

I knew it was coming and yet I was powerless to get up and run. Then I would see it, at first just a pinprick of light matching all of the other stars in the night sky, but I knew this one was different. It grew larger and larger until finally I started to make out some features. It was the sun with an angry ram's face including the curled horns that were snarling at me with smoke shooting out of its nostrils. Then the paralysis seemed to break and I would finally get up and run back into the house slamming the door and then pushing tables and chairs in front of it to help prevent the sun from getting to me. It never helped though and soon I would see the round hole burning through the door and furniture.

Sometimes I would see a pale blue light appear and the moon (shaped like a Superman S) would appear and chase the angry sun away, but most nights would find me being carried back to my bed crying by my mother who would always tell me it was just a bad dream.

A few years later, around my 8th birthday the dreams just stopped. That was right about the time my mother remarried a widowed man who brought with him four children. We were now a family of 8 and that would begin what I thought were the worst years of my life.

My new dad was an attorney and worked all the time so the 6 children were pretty much left to be raised by my mother (a person that doesn't deserve that title). It was a life filled with daily verbal, psychological and physical abuse. I grew up with so much anger and hate for her that I felt something was wrong with me, it just didn't compute despite all the abuse I was put through and witnessed that I should feel so much hatred towards her!!!

But I did.

It wasn't until I started therapy in my early 30's that I started to weed through all of that abuse and feelings I had towards her that I started to realize that all of my problems stemmed from that - but I still had no inkling that I had suffered from sexual assault. That actually came in a very unusual way.

I had spent several years in therapy, alcohol rehabs, groups, individual counseling, etc. trying to discover why I was so broken and attempting to save my second

marriage from failure that I met an amazing woman. Up until that point no one had ever mentioned or pondered if I was a victim! She wasn't even a counselor or therapist; she was a nutritional expert brought in to a hospital outpatient treatment center that I was once again attending for my drug and alcohol abuse to talk to us about getting the right nutrients after afflicting our bodies with so many dangerous chemicals.

After the session I approached her to ask a few additional questions for I feared a little more than the other patients due to my poor diet, due to the fact that I have this unnatural fear of fruits and vegetables I don't eat them at all so I wanted to know what supplements I could take to help me out.

She just looked at me and smiled and stated, "You just need to grow up and eat your fruits and vegetables!!!"

This banter went on for a few more sessions until finally I stated, "Look lady, let me put it to you very simply. If I were stranded on an island by myself and only had fruits and vegetable to survive, I would die. No I would not change even faced with starvation and finally eat them, I Would Die!!!"

That seemed to have some sort of impact on her and the next time I saw her she shared that she talked with a psychiatrist who told her that in cases like mine where there is a complete fear of certain food items like I had that I most certainly experienced some sort of extreme childhood trauma, most likely sexual assault.

I just looked at her and laughed. While I knew that I was broken, I definitely never experienced that!!!

It took several more years of therapy and 18 months of sobriety before I finally broke through that veil. One afternoon I went to the store and bought a bottle of vodka. After a year and a half I was going to get drunk again, sad but true. Although I don't remember, I drank the entire bottle and then called my wife at work. Fortunately, she didn't answer and I got her voice mail. She had one for business that had no time limit and I left quite the confession.

I was passed out when she got home so the next morning she asked if I remembered calling her and the message I had left.

No, I didn't and all of a sudden I was scared as to what I might have said.

She played the message for me and I was stunned. I told her about a night when a male cousin had played sexual games with me in bed while my mom, aunt & uncle played cards in the living room. It was just kissing and fondling but the flashback that occurred as soon as I heard the voice mail was overwhelming.

I thought I had finally found the answer to all of my issues. I shared that in counseling and even told my mom and dad about it.

My mother cried which looking back was amazing.

I felt I was finally on my road to recovery, but funny - I still hated my mother to the extreme and it seemed that there was more to it than just allowing that abuse to happen under her watch.

Then it happened. For the 1st time in 30+ years I was having that childhood nightmare again.

This time I was an adult, sleeping next to my wife in bed. I awoke and noticed a light growing brighter in the hallway. I knew then it was the angry sun coming after me again after all these years.

I was petrified!!!!

I tried but could not wake up my wife and suddenly, the angry sun face appeared in the doorway.

With nowhere to run, I put myself between the sun and my wife and for some reason had the courage to face my nemesis.

The face of the sun started melting away, like it was made of wax and the heat of the sun was causing it to drip off.

For the first time in my life, I was face to face with my demon. Shock turned to helplessness, helplessness turned to anger. I finally knew the truth.

The melting face revealed my mother.

Although the reveal was an important step towards healing, it would take several more years of repressed memories coming to the surface before I had the complete story. I kept thinking how could any one person experience so much abuse?? I doubted myself and those memories for quite some time until I found the courage to share my story with a father whose child had been sexually assaulted by his uncle.

That was the first time in my life that I believed in myself!!

Now some 20 years later I am still trying to heal. Thank you for the excellent video for it helped me my find my courage again.

Thank you sir for having the insight that "We are many" and how sharing stories has such an impact on so many lives.

If it helps just one person then it is so worth it.

Thanks again from a 1 in 6.

Scott Sunday