



*CSA is not one group's problem; by expert accounts, it is a silent epidemic throughout the world, creating social havoc – for the children, adult survivors, and society. It can be prevented and it can be treated with a conscious and sustained effort.*

April 23, 2011

Welcome!

Besides the survivors onstage, how many survivors do we have in the audience? Survivors of childhood sexual abuse? I ask this question where I speak many times – because there usually is one person who raises their hand, but I see some in the audience who are afraid to raise their hands. They are afraid to raise a hand. Afraid to speak. Afraid to show that they too suffered through something terrible, and horrific. Afraid to face that truth, and the other truths that are residual effects of the abuse. Afraid because friends tell us to get over it. Society tells us, it happened a long time ago, and we should be able to move on. Sometimes even family members tell us it wasn't that bad, it only happened once, why can't you forget about it?

We listen to these people sometimes, but our spirits, and our actions speak so much louder about our pain. To others from the outside looking in, they deem us as damaged goods, or people who just don't know how to live right, or get it together. From our point of view, our behavior speaks of a child living in an adult world who doesn't know how to say no to someone who is willing to show some attention. We are a child lured in by drugs and alcohol, because we don't know any other way to stop the flashbacks and the memories from showing up. We behaved that way, not because we chose to. We behaved that way because we knew nothing else besides how to survive.

Well, today we know more than just surviving. Today, I am here, as others survivors who speak are here to show the world that we matter. We matter not only as adults, but we mattered as children. We didn't ask for what happened to us, and if given the choice, we would have chosen not to go through what we went through when we were constantly, even in adult life, being victimized over and over again. Today, I am here to tell you that our children today matter. That my 9 year old son matters. That the children who are getting sexually abused every 2 seconds in the United States right now matter. Do you realize that a child getting sexually abused every 2 seconds in the United States, equals 30 children a minute? That the adults in this audience who are desperate to open up about their experience, and those who have been able to finally gut out this poison matter. What you are doing today for us is not just saying that you are donating funds and giving money to a cause because it's the right thing to do. You are looking in each of the survivors (raise your hand) faces, not as we are as adults – but as we were as children, and you are saying to us “you didn't deserve what happened to you – and we are here to show you that YOU are loved and supported.” You are looking into the eyes of your own children, and saying to them “I am going to do everything possible to make sure that you are protected.” When we speak survivors, not everyone will understand. Not everyone will support you. But somebody will. And when somebody does, then other bodies follow. These people are here today survivors because we spoke and finally said to someone “WE NEED YOU”.

So how many survivors do we have in the audience today? Raise your hand.

Rhonda N. Begos