

A Program called R.E.P.A.I.R.

While the Bridge of Recovery is a visual tool, the Program is a map to take you across that bridge.

The Stages

Recognition	Recognizing and accepting that your adult problems stem from childhood sexual abuse.
Entry	Entering a program of commitment to change your life for the better.
Process	Learning tools and techniques that will enable you to become healthy.
Awareness	The coming together of reality as you gather the pieces of the broken puzzle your life became, and begin assembling them to see the complete picture. Here you discover the properties of awareness that were God-given promises at birth, lost at the moment of sexual abuse.
Insight	Seeing the complete picture and beginning to return to what you were prior to being sexually violated.
Rhythm	Developing the natural rhythm you had before the incest happened, the blueprint that is the essence of your true nature, becoming who you really are.

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Overview



**We are born and we die.
Somewhere between those two major events
Lie opportunities to be and do all that we want.
It's not a difficult goal...**

Unless you were sexually molested as a child.

Webster defines incest as “sexual intercourse between persons too closely related to marry legally.” It is a simple, almost clinical description that does not in any way imply trauma or abuse. The all-encompassing and often unspoken reality is much broader. Anyone in a position of power who coerces a person of lesser power into any sort of boundary violation dealing with their sexuality, either emotionally, mentally, or physically, is a sexual abuse perpetrator. This includes a grandfather who pins his granddaughter down while he fondles her breasts; a father who insists on watching his daughter, against her wishes, while she bathes; an older brother who forces his sister to do oral sex; and any other such boundary violations from the most minor to actual forcible entry and rape. It does not have to be a family member to have the same resultant despair. That despair, whether by a family member or an outsider, can be a life sentence of pain.

No one would willingly choose a painful life. But sometimes early victimization leads us down a path where all we experience is the dark side. Negativity, which has an actual energy field, contains great power and once it grabs hold, is not easily removed. Neither are the wounds that incest causes.

Wounded to her very soul, if not treated, an incest victim either stumbles through a life of despair or dies from it. The tragedy of incest is that, unlike a physical wound, the aftermath can spread to the children, who in turn are either sexually abused or begin a lifetime of unhealthy choices, the direct result of a poor self-image created from shame.

Guilt is the driving force that causes this shame and erodes our self-esteem. A child is egocentric, and therefore perceives all that happens to him as an event he has created and is therefore responsible for. A sexually abused child experiences the humiliation and degradation of shame in a monumental way. He senses the need to keep it secret, thereby creating more shame. If one could but talk about the pain, incest could be brought into the open and exposed as the real enemy, but humiliation keeps him from speaking the truth. Perpetrators know this, and use that secrecy as a way to protect themselves, and diminish their wrongdoing. They look for the following qualities in their victims: obedience, weak boundaries, innocence and naiveté, as well as someone smaller and easy to manipulate.

Childhood sexual abuse has nothing to do with sex. It is an act of violence with its origins in the need for power and control. In many cases the perpetrator was abused himself as a child and is acting out what was perpetrated on him. As an adult, he may become the abusive partner in domestic violence and his mate someone who has made victimization a way of life.

As for the sexually abused person often trapped in this cycle, what began as a joyful child becomes a human being who must hide her real self; hence alcohol, drugs, promiscuity, overeating and compulsive behavior

develop, all designed to create self-loathing. As the years pass, the victim piles shame upon shame with unhealthy choices; his or her self-image spirals into an all time low. But we are not the sum total of what we have done. It is necessary during recovery to separate what we have done from who we are, to see that we are not a body with a soul, we are a soul with a body. No matter what has been done to our body, no one can ever touch the soul. It remains pure and innocent. Once we arrive at that realization, we begin to let go of the shame.

Since, after being sexually abused, our self-worth plunges, it is almost impossible to pull out of the negative energy field that has been established and enter one of positive energy. If you add a non-supportive, co-dependent parent, a society that doesn't want to hear about sexual abuse, and an environment that encourages a lack of boundary setting, the continuing of a life of negativity is almost guaranteed.

We all know what it feels like to get out of bed on the wrong side and how it colors our entire day. Incest victims get out of bed on the wrong side every day. They may learn how to hide and deny it, but it's always with them, lurking somewhere in the shadows. "I've learned how to live with it," is a comment I've frequently heard. Why should anyone learn how to live with something as if it were a disease that they could do nothing about, especially when there is an option to heal? Most of the time, child sexual abuse victims are unaware that they have the power to change their own life. Unable to see the light, they become comfortable with the pain.

People with low self-esteem feel they don't deserve the wonderful opportunities available in life. When one presents itself, it is almost as if a master puppeteer pulls

our strings and causes us to veer off the path that could have proven a way out of our torment. Most sexual abuse victims move through their days as if that puppeteer were an inescapable part of their lives.

If you can take this negative energy field and, through the use of REPAIR, turn it into a positive one, it will impact the lives around you. This includes your children, and also every other human you touch. Like the reverse of an epidemic—and incest is at epidemic proportions—the light of REPAIR has the potential to change the direction of mankind. Positive (or healthy) energy repairs and negative (or unhealthy) energy destroys. The negative energy of one person can impact an entire room and what's worse, an entire day.



wounded child

A wounded child attracts negative people. Somehow, adults who were sexually abused as children find perpetrators as mates, codependents pair off with alcoholics, bullies find waiting victims, and obedient people wind up with controlling partners. The good news is that once you complete REPAIR, you'll be healthy and your ability to pull in one of a similar nature increases a thousand-fold. Doing your small part in a world that doesn't yet see the devastation of childhood sexual abuse has overwhelming rewards.

Despite being a society that is drawn to horror, intrigued with sex scandals, and compelled to watch tragedies on television, we continue to show aversion at the mention of sexual abuse. Like an ostrich burying his head in the sand, we don't want to know about such things. If truth of the sheer number of victims in our society and the far-reaching impact of their trauma was brought to bear on the majority of the population, feelings about a need to take action would change dramatically. Since sexual abuse is so prevalent, we are literally breeding a nation of children with a hole in their soul.

Recovery, in part, is about overcoming that aversion to discussing it. If we can talk openly about the troubles of alcoholism (and today we do), we can talk about incest. Not talking about it is the main reason why incest is an epidemic. When wrongdoing is not addressed, it is not dealt with, and when not dealt with, it multiplies. Silence means implied approval and creates a deadly secret, for it builds more shame into victims already overwhelmed by it.



Hole in the Soul



Fig. 2-3: The Bridge of Recovery

Recovery is a like a bridge you need to cross to change your life. In REPAIR, the bridge is used as a visualization tool. On one side are those things destroying you. If you turn back, depression, loneliness, despair, suicidal tendencies, addictions, shame-based low self-esteem, and fear of abandonment await you. The list is endless.

On the other side is all the good stuff. There you will find peace, healthy choices, strong self-esteem, a feeling of being centered and capable. There you will find joy. Imagine a life free from pain and emotional instability; a life where waking each morning brings happy anticipation rather than dread; a life where you can stop waiting for someone to rescue you and begin to rescue yourself. All you have to do is to keep moving across that bridge. At some point in your recovery you will learn that, like a

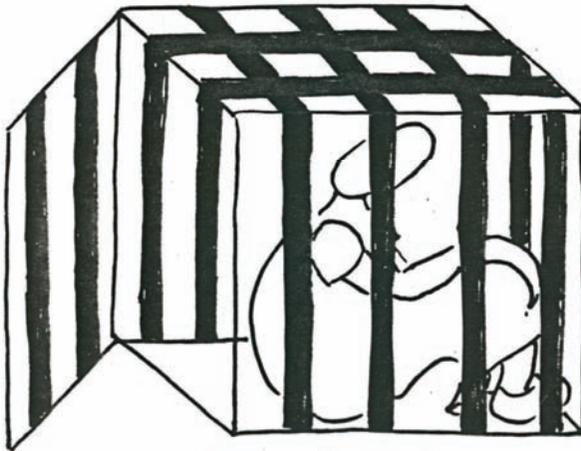
carrot on a stick, the other side of the bridge beckons and you will no longer be tempted to turn back.

The Rewards for Completing REPAIR

Learning New Truths and New Behaviors

As you move through the program, it is necessary to rid yourself of the lies that kept you violated, and also to learn new truths and new behaviors. As childhood sexual abuse victims, we live in a cage of our own construction. But that cage has only three sides—one is missing but we don't know it. The thought of breaking free is not usually a luxury we allow ourselves. Freedom has a cloudy picture. It could be scary, it could be devastating. We might have to be responsible for our own actions. We might not be able to blame our sexual abuse anymore when our lives don't go in the direction we wish.

But think about the cage. Is life happy in that cage? Are we experiencing fulfillment? Why are we clutching the bars with a look of terror on our faces and our backs to the open side?



Woman in prison

Setting Healthy Boundaries

In REPAIR, you will learn to tear down the behavior that kept you from achieving happiness, and to set healthy boundaries in areas where they are needed. While uncomfortable for a person who was sexually abused, boundaries are required for living a healthy life. Once developed and then put into practice, they will not only alleviate great stress but bring enormous personal power. Personal power is the one thing a sexually abused person never had, nor did they even realize it was one of their God-given rights. Anger used to be very dangerous. We learned that responding to upsetting events with anger brings more pain. In reality, anger its appropriate use is one of the strongest motivators to setting a boundary.

A sexual abuse victim displays the lack of personal power in various ways. One of the most prominent, knee-jerk reactions, comes from a place of fear and low self-esteem. Instead of thinking through decisions, we immediately make a choice, often not a wise one. Diametrically opposed to this is another behavior pattern of the wounded child. As we grow older, the need for self-protection causes delayed reactions to unpleasant events in our lives. Attempting to distance ourselves from the pain, we make frantic efforts to keep from feeling its full force. Learning how to set boundaries will not only empower us, it will alleviate both the knee-jerk reactions and the delayed reactions.

Regaining Confidence

There are logical steps in the journey from shame to confidence. As we go through the program and learn that the shame is not ours, but in fact belongs to our pepe-

trator, we relinquish it, little by little. When this happens, we replace it with positive affirmations and other reinforcements of the truth. The various techniques taught in the Process part of REPAIR bring confidence through healthy messages and an understanding of what happened. People with confidence willingly accept responsibility for their own shortcomings and are able, when criticism comes their way, to recognize the difference between an opinion and truth. These healthy behavior patterns are nonexistent in a victim of childhood sexual abuse. We are too filled with pain to care about learning how to gain confidence.

The shame of what we have become and the behavior we use to hide it grows and is stuffed into closets in our mind. We lean our bodies against the door and turn a deaf ear to the screams that come every time we open it to hide another piece of shame. For most of us, somewhere between our late thirties and late forties, the closets in our mind fill to overflowing and we hit what Twelve Steppers call our “bottom.” It is as if our life were on a course of self-destruction, one we have no ability to veer away from as we aim directly for the inevitable, unhappy endings in most areas of our lives.

Connecting the Mind and the Heart

At birth, the heart and mind are connected, but once sexual abuse happens, they separate and the inner self splatters. Like pieces of a broken puzzle, the heart and mind fly to far corners of our inner self where they hide in fear, disconnected from each other and their ability to act as a team. Since we have not developed emotional maturity and the ability to make wise decisions, we do whatever is necessary to fumble our way through life.