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Good afternoon, first I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.

I was born with a rare condition that was supposed to shorten my life, I was also born to a mother that did not know how to overcome her own demons. Her weakness was men and she allowed men and my brothers to do what they wanted with me. Her thoughts I later found out were that I was not going to live long enough so why should it matter.

I grew fearful of males, for good reasons. I would hide if approached by any male. I would also go to school sometimes wearing the same outfit for days on end, not caring if it was dirty or stained. Often I hadn't bathed in days. If teachers or other students knew of what was going on they didn't say anything. Looking back on those days I was showing all the signs of an abused child, why no one picked up on it, why I do not know.

Until one school counselor approached me, he went to shake my hand and I immediately went to hide. I feared him. He just asked me one question "who is hurting you?" No one asked me that before. They just thought I was shy and a troubled child.

It took 14 years for someone to help me. At that time I thought that what happened in my home happened in every home. I did not know family or what a hug felt like. Even now I have a hard time with people touching me, it took me months to allow my husband to even touch my face.

I did try traditional methods of healing but it did not work for me. I was hospitalized for several suicide attempts. Being in the hospital actually left me more traumatized. While I was there I was forced into physical restraints and left at times for up to an hour. I was in seclusion rooms, with no one to talk too. When it was asked why this was happening to me by my guardians, the hospital stopped with physical restraints and started with chemical restraints. My PTSD skyrocketed and I spent more and more time isolating myself from people around me. I was then put on medication that was supposed to help but just made me a lifeless shell so I took myself off. Therapy also did not work for me due to trust issues.

What did work for me in the long run was talking to others like myself, being able to tell my story and let people know they are not alone. Even before I was working for a peer organization, I learned that telling my story helped not only myself but others. The more I told it, the more I felt like a real person. I learned I could help others by just letting them know they were not alone and help is out there.

Even though peer to peer work, worked for me and others did not, they are not to be ruled out. Everyone that goes through trauma is different and has different needs. Sometimes therapy works, sometimes medication works. But most important thing is to ask what happened to you not what is wrong with you.

