

Childhood Abuse and The Fog of Recovery

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2014 Childhood Abuse Survey

Do Not write your name or today's date on this survey.
Please circle **Yes** or **No** for each of the following questions.
If you circle **Yes**, please answer the related "**If yes**" question.
When done, please fold in half and insert in the collection box.
If you prefer not to answer these questions, please check here .

During childhood, did you suffer from (by adults or other children):

1. Yes No **Emotional Abuse** - hurtful language.
If yes (circle one): once, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
2. Yes No **Physical Abuse** - hurtful touch other than sex.
If yes (circle one): once, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
3. Yes No **Sexual Abuse** - inappropriate erotic or erogenous contact.
If yes (circle one): once, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
4. Yes No **Neglect Abuse** - excessive loneliness or being left alone.
If yes (circle one): once, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.
5. Yes No If you answered yes to any of the above questions, did this abuse play a significant role in your abuse of drugs?

The information in this survey is anonymous and confidential. It will only be used to compile general statistics. No surveys will be linked to patients or be included in any patient files. Thank you for your response.

In 2014, I used this survey to sample the prevalence of childhood abuse in my opioid treatment program's patient population. Being a survivor of childhood abuse myself, I wanted to have a better understanding of how many people in my practice were affected by this experience, and how big a role it played in their drug use history. After all, childhood abuse is still taboo in our society, with both victims and perpetrators reluctant to talk about it, and I wanted to know more.

I gave this survey to 100 of my patients and, to my surprise, only one chose not to answer it. What was even more surprising was that fact that when I tallied the results, over 48% of the 99 people who did respond had answered "Yes" to question 5, indicating that the abuse they experienced in childhood had played a significant role

in their use of drugs. Given the survey results and the taboo nature of this topic, my current estimate is that the actual number of drug addicts affected by childhood abuse is much higher than 48%. **In other words, there's probably a better than 50/50 chance that if you abuse drugs, then you were abused during your childhood.**

Childhood is an extremely vulnerable time in our lives when we are little people living in a land of giants. Unfortunately, those giants are people, too, who are not perfect. Sometimes, that imperfection leads to very dark places where family members and friends can take advantage of us when we are at the smallest and weakest points in our lives. Sadly, once done, this damage is both indelible and irreversible. Yet, even worse is the fact that those memories of harm can be repressed, with society at large encouraging us to sweep our pain and suffering under the rug.

While being one of the most likely common factors shared amongst all drug addicts, childhood abuse is one of the least talked about topics in the addiction community. The pain and embarrassment of tearing open often decades' old wounds is too much for most people to endure. **So, today, repression of childhood abuse memories is still the most common way of dealing with this issue.** But repressing a memory is not the same as dealing with it or coming to terms with it, and repressed memories often grow into the ghosts in the machines of our later adult lives.

As for me, I am very familiar with childhood abuse and the damage it can cause. Those who experience such abuse during their pre-teen or teenage years often turn to drugs, become run-aways, or commit suicide. But for those like myself who were abused at an even earlier age - preschool age - the situation is far more complicated, because you think it's normal. After all, prior to 6 or 7 years of age, for the most part we believe that everything our parents say and do is right. So if one of them is raping you on a regular basis, while the other is beating you in between those rapes because they believe you are to blame for this bad behavior, then you're left with the impression that being raped and beaten is how all children are raised. That was the emotional and spiritual poison my parents gave to me starting at the age of 3.

You can't turn back the clock on childhood abuse or the damage it has done. But you can limit and, to a degree, control the damage it continues to do in your life. **Through long-term, in-depth counseling, it is possible to come to terms with the ongoing destructive forces childhood abuse perpetuates in our lives and, most importantly, to prevent us from passing on this terrible inheritance to others.** After all, victims have victims and, most of the time, those who perpetrate childhood abuse were in fact themselves the targets of such trauma when they were younger.

In my life, it took decades of counseling to come to terms with what I had endured, and to develop healthy boundaries that continue to guide me day-by-day through my adult life. Just like addiction recovery, childhood abuse recovery is not a one-size-fits-all process, and the best-solution answers vary from person to person. For some, if the abuse was relatively minor, it may still be possible to salvage a healthy, ongoing relationship with the perpetrator, given appropriate boundaries. For others like myself, faced with the unresolvable toxic nature of what had happened, it may require a total amputation of the perpetrating person or persons from your life.

No matter what happens, it is never easy to survive childhood abuse. Given how common it is amongst drug addicts, as we get older it is also probably one of the most common reasons we lapse into the fog of recovery: unexplainable cravings and withdrawal symptoms, even after years or decades of abstinence. Dealing with childhood abuse is not easy, but this situation is only made worse - thousands of times worse - by avoiding it and allowing it to grow into a poisonous weed that undermines and withers everything else in the gardens of our lives. **For some, forgiving can be healthy, but involuntary forgetting only leaves us continually vulnerable to the negative influences of past traumas that we were never allowed to confront.** Victims have victims, and repressing our past only makes us prone to victimizing ourselves and others in the future.

Also in this series:

The Fog of Recovery (June, 2016)
<http://trafn.com/fogofrecovery.pdf>

One Off's and The Fog of Recovery (July, 2016)
http://trafn.com/fogofrecovery_oneoffs.pdf

Cravings and The Fog of Recovery (August, 2016)
http://trafn.com/fogofrecovery_cravings.pdf

Robert offers anonymous and confidential substance abuse recovery telephone coaching to help those who wish to stabilize and maintain their recovery from substance abuse. Recovery coaching with Robert is available worldwide to anyone fluent in English who can reach him at **786-262-5750** (USA). For more information, please visit [**http://trafn.com/coach.html**](http://trafn.com/coach.html)