



# **Sexual Assault Response Services** *of Southern Maine*

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## **Surviving and Living: A Male Incest Survivor's Story**

My name is Scott Barak Abraham, and I am an incest survivor.

Or am I?

Am I a survivor, the accepted term for a man, who was molested as a child and has begun the path to healing, or am I, and will forever remain a victim, bedeviled by the memories and the residual effects on my life?

I am unsure where the dividing line between victim and survivor lies, if it can truly exist at all, and I am not comfortable with the definitions of therapists and counselors, however well intentioned.

The dictionary defines a survivor as a person who continues to live after or in spite of a life threatening experience, and the abuse I suffered most certainly qualifies: that I did not die as a child, much less during my years as a practicing alcoholic, much less by my own hand in the insanity of early sobriety during the return of the memories, is a miracle to me.

I survived-but I did not thrive.

Authors of recovery books and experts in the field generally define an incest victim as a person who was violated sexually as a child by one or more relatives, with the proviso that each victim becomes a survivor at the magical moment that they begin to realize the magnitude of the abuse and make a conscious decision to find the "Courage to Heal": the decision itself, in current understanding, changes the status of victim to survivor.

I liked the connotation of honor and strength implicit in the term survivor, as I was true to my male conditioning and resisted labeling myself as a victim.

But victim I was, and victim I remain. I've recovered more of my memories than I ever desired, and re-lived the slimy touch of the vile hands of eight different perpetrators, male and female, relative and stranger. I survived living life with no eyelids, unable to stop the flood of images and feelings that rose like rotten corpses disinterred from the grave of remembrance. I've confronted the perpetrators that still live. I've made peace with my death wishes, and the wish I still have that I could choke the life from those baby-raping monsters who still breath. I've divorced what little remains of my family of birth, and built a family of choice. I've spoken on radio and TV. I've written, I've talked myself hoarse, and I have lived openly as a survivor for several years. I mentor those who have not walked as far on this path.

I survived, and I help others survive. For the first time, I can honestly say that I have a good life.

***Help, Hope, and Healing***

I survive. At times, I thrive. Yet I am, and always will, remain a victim. I am, and will always be warped and twisted, limited and constrained, by what was done to me. I know I shall never be able to totally transcend my wounding, that to some degree, my father and mother and grandmother and uncle, the coach and priest and neighbor lady, will once again reach out in violation, if only in memory.

I am a survivor when I hold myself to this simple law: No matter what was done to me, I am responsible for what I do to others, and to myself: under all circumstances, I am responsible for my choices.

I am not just a victim, and I am not just a survivor. I am, and shall remain, both that and more than that.

I am a man. As it happens, I am a man who was sexually abused as a child.

That does not make me less of a man, or more of a man, or inherently, irredeemably flawed as a man.

What happened to me is a part of what I am, but not all that I am, nor does it limit what I can be.

I'm Scott Barak Abraham, and I proudly chose that name.

I'm human, and I proudly claim that title.

(Excerpts taken from the original article appearing in Vol.1#1(Winter 1998) of *Men's Voices* journal)