



## WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER 2012 EDITION OF THE LAUREL HOUSE NEWSLETTER

The Laurel House Newsletter is produced and circulated amongst clients, service providers and the community to raise awareness of the services available at Laurel House. It is also a venue to give advanced notice of upcoming groups and projects for survivors. There will also be a number of articles about Sexual Assault, stories from survivors, and links to other services for your information.

You can also view this newsletter on our website:  
[www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au)

This is the last edition of the Laurel House newsletter for 2012 and the end of our look at 'belief.' Next year we will feature articles on a new topic of interest. Please let us know if you have topic you would like us to explore.

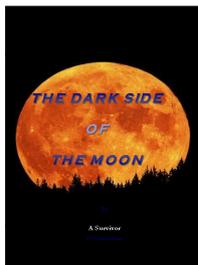
### About Laurel House

Laurel House offers a wide range of services to all members of the community, including victims of recent rape and sexual assault (both adults, children and their families and support people) adult survivors of child sexual abuse (historical sexual abuse) community education to any group, school, or organisation, and professional training to service providers in other agencies. We also offer debriefing and supervision to professionals working with victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Our Organisation offers outreach services to women, men and children within the 63 telephone region of Tasmania. These areas currently include Deloraine, Westbury, Longford, Campbell Town, St Marys, St Helens, Bicheno, Beaconsfield, Exeter, and Georgetown, with services to Scottsdale available as the need arises.

Telephone support is available to other rural areas.

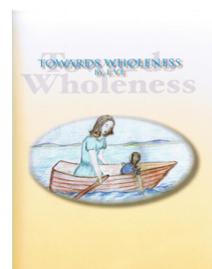
### Books



Laurel House has 2 books available for purchase

*Dark Side of the Moon*, which documents a survivor's journey through life so far; and *Towards Wholeness* a condensed account of the author's own recovery process.

Please contact the Laurel House office on 6334 2740 or email [admin@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:admin@laurelhouse.org.au) for further information or to order your copy.



# **Announcements...**

## **On Call Workers**

Laurel House is always on the lookout for workers to join our On Call Team. Laurel House On Call workers are on duty from 5 p.m.—8.30 a.m. Monday-Friday, and offer a 24-hour service over weekends and public holidays.

If you would be interested in joining the Team, or if you have any questions, please contact Jacinta on 6334 2740 or [admin@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:admin@laurelhouse.org.au)

## **Day Team**

In late November, the Laurel House Day Team were pleased to welcome Amanda to the team. Amanda is working 4-days per week.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Laurel House Day Team, please contact Jacinta on 6334 2740 or [admin@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:admin@laurelhouse.org.au)

## **Community Education**

Laurel House workers are currently involved in developing and delivering community education programmes for schools in Launceston, Deloraine, Lilydale, St Marys, Smithton, Queenstown, Roseberry, and Burnie to complete the 2012 school year.

This year has been particularly busy as we have responded to requests from a wide variety of groups, organisations and schools in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Community Education programmes offered by Laurel House, or if you would like a programme to be tailored to suit your organisation, please email [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)

# **A poem by a survivor**

## **Forsaken Heart**

*He took my innocence and walked away*

*Did you honestly expect me to stay*

*Your misplaced care*

*Is wildly unfair*

*Always taking his side*

*Behind your skirt he hides*

*You blame me*

*For an incident you did not see*

*Held captive by invisible bars*

*My soul covered in scars*

*My demons haunt me like a ghost*

*But what hurts me the most*

*Is your blatant disregard*

*For my broken, bleeding heart.*

E. Robinson

# Belief: Another Perspective

## What will people say?

*How Long Does it Hurt?: A guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, Their Friends, and Their Families,*

*I was afraid to go to practice. I figured all the guys would make fun of me and call me a faggot or something. Or that they'd be mad at me because I got the coach in trouble. I hated for everyone to know about it.*

Harry, a sixteen-year-old abused by his football coach

One of the toughest things to deal with after you tell about the abuse may be the reaction of other people. Some folks are going to be wonderful. They are going to support you, encourage you, defend you.

A lot of people are going to be awful. Some of it will be because they are just plain stupid. They haven't got a clue about how to deal with someone who has revealed that he's been sexually abused.

Some of it will be because they can't deal with the idea of sexual abuse. Maybe they've never been exposed to tough things in their lives; they've had a fairy-tale existence with nothing bad in it. Or maybe your experience hits too close to home and reminds them of abuse they have suffered.

Other people will say ridiculous things like "Why didn't you just tell him to stop?" or "Are you sure you didn't misunderstand what happened?" or, my personal favourite, "I think you should just forget about it and get on with your life." (Oh, right. Forget my entire childhood and pretend that nothing ever happened. No problem!)

Regardless of what people are saying, the one voice you need to hear above the others is your own voice reminding you that you did the right thing by telling. It's not easy to discount or ignore the other voices. Maybe it will help if we talk about some of the things you can expect people to say to you.

### When people say you're lying...

People may be saying this over and over to you. Everybody from your grandmother to your little sister. The police or social services workers may be asking you to repeat parts of your story again and again. They say they want to be sure they have it straight, but you may think they don't believe you.

The parent who did not abuse you (let's say it's your mother) may be the most vocal about calling you a liar. It can be very hard for a mother to believe that her husband or boyfriend could do something like this. It's even harder for a mother to think that she had no idea this was going on. Your mother has a lot to lose if what you say is true, and she may be constantly in your face claiming you're a liar.

If the abuser is someone outside your family, then you may be taking a lot of heat from his relatives and friends.

They may be calling you a liar and trying to say that the abuse (if they'll even admit it happened) was your fault.

Hang tough. Kids lie to get out of trouble; they don't lie to get into trouble. You know what happened. Don't let the accusations make you give up.

### When people say you led him on...

This may be one of the hardest statements to ignore. As we said before, it's very easy to believe that somehow you were responsible for your own abuse—that you caused it, led the abuser on, asked for it, wanted it, and all that other garbage.

The thing to remember is that this kind of talk is garbage. Who is responsible for the abuse? Right, the abuser. I don't

care how many times you found yourself in a situation where you might end up being abused, the ultimate responsibility for the abuse is with the abuser. I'm not interested in the way you dressed, talked, or acted. It was not your job to control the abuser and his or her actions. The bottom line is that the abuser is responsible—always. You do have a responsibility to learn from this stuff, and we'll talk about that when we get to healing. But right now, this very minute, you must remember that you were not responsible for the abuse...

### **When people gossip about you...**

Some of the toughest encounters you may have are with your friends and schoolmates. School is often the place where the police and social services workers interview a victim of sexual abuse. They see it as neutral ground—away from the abuser and the person who might have protected you.

You, on the other hand, may see it as the worst place in the world. You get called out of class to the principal's office. The secretary knows the police and social worker are waiting to talk to you. The principal knows and may even stay during the interview, and later all your friends want to know what's going on.

What you tell your friends is up to you. It's nobody's business except yours and the people you want to tell. Yes, some information will leak out. Yes, some people whom you didn't tell may know about what happened. And yes, you can survive this. Simply ignore them. Hold your head up. You have nothing to be ashamed of.

You may be tempted to drop out of clubs or other school activities because you think "everybody knows." Don't do it. You need as much stability and continuity in your life as you can get right now. And doing the things you usually do will help you. Being with friends can also help—unless, of course, those "friends" turn out not to be such good friends.

If anybody snubs you, talks about you behind your back, or spreads rumours and gossip—then she wasn't really a friend in the first place. You will find out who your friends are through all this and will know who to spend time with and who to ignore.

### **When people say you're destroying the family...**

When sexual abuse or incest invades a family, a lot of anger, fear, and stress occur, not only to the parents of the victim but also to the brothers and sisters, the grandmas and grandpas, the aunts and uncles and cousins. Whoever finds out about the abuse is going to have an opinion, and it won't always be an opinion in your favour.

If the abuser is someone in your family (let's say it's your father), then your mum may be saying things like, "Just tell the police you made a mistake and I'll make sure he never touches you again. Otherwise, they're going to put him in jail and he won't be able to work, and we won't have any money, and we'll lose the house and end up on the streets."

Your sister may be begging you to say you were lying because "What will all our friends think when they hear about this?" or asking "Why do you always have to cause trouble?"

And your grandparents may be trying to save your soul because it's clear to them you're possessed by the devil. After all, their son "would never do this sort of thing."

This stinks! You weren't the one who caused the problem, and yet all of a sudden everyone in the family is pointing a finger at you and accusing you. Maybe even calling you names like troublemaker, liar, whore.

Unfortunately, this is often how family members deal with revelations of abuse. They have trouble believing it happened and have trouble controlling their emotions.

### **Taking care of yourself**

You may start to feel really beaten down and get on your own case because of all the stress and tension happening in

your family. You may start to wonder if the abuse really did happen, if it's really worth it to tell, or if maybe you're losing your grasp of reality. Don't let these doubts eat away at what you know to be true.

It's not easy to stand up to pressure and angry words from the people who are supposed to love you best—your family. But if the abuse happened and you finally worked up the courage to tell about it, don't give up now. As hard as it is, hang in there. Eventually things will simmer down and people will get over their initial shock. You may even find some members of your family becoming very supportive of you and sticking by you through everything.

### **What if nobody will stick by you?**

If no one will come to your defence, then you're going to have to find a support group on your own. This could be good friends, members of a victims' group you're attending, a therapist or social worker, or an adult in your life such as a teacher or coach. Don't be afraid to ask for support. It's okay to say, "I need somebody to believe me and to stand by me in the face of my family's rejection."

### **What if you have to move out for a while?**

You may find that you simply can't face your family's anger and accusations. It may be in your best interest to live elsewhere for a while. You can talk to your social worker or therapist about this and see if it's a good idea in your situation.

Deciding to leave won't be easy, but remember that the first priority is you and your well-being. If the people around you won't take care of you or see that you are safe—not just from the abuser but also from the pain of accusations from others—then you may need to stand up and take care of yourself. Your well-being is the number one priority.

### **Your family is responsible for their feelings and actions**

There is no question that the revelation of sexual abuse is tough on a family, but that is not a reason to change your story or say you made all this up. You are not responsible for the abuse, and you are not responsible for how your family is feeling and acting. It is grandma's choice, mum's choice, sister's choice how they want to feel and what they want to do. You are not responsible for them.

However, you do have to live with them or at the very least interact with them. It's going to be important that you have some help learning how to do that. Your social worker can get you and sometimes other family members into some kind of therapy. If no therapy has been offered, speak up and ask for it. Remember, take care of yourself.

### **When you start believing what people say...**

You may get very good at ignoring what other people are saying. However, there may be one person who is really working on you, trying to convince you that you are responsible for the abuse and that there is something seriously wrong with you. The person who may be doing all these things is you.

Kids, by nature, view crisis and trouble in their families as somehow their fault. When parents fight, siblings get into trouble, money gets tight, or the breadwinner loses her job, children often believe they did something to make all this happen. So when something as traumatic as sexual abuse happens to a kid, he or she may instantly say, "I'm responsible—I did this." Add to that the subtle and not so subtle messages you're getting from the abuser, like "You're so cute I can't keep my hands off you" or "You enjoyed it." What are you going to believe? You're going to start believing that you are the cause of your own abuse.

The fact is (everybody all together now) the child is never responsible for the abuse. You are the child in the relation-

ship. Even if you are seventeen years old and the abuser is only a couple of years older—or younger! - you're still not responsible. You were used, done to. You were not responsible.

### **I should have stopped it**

You may feel that you should have stopped the abuse, that you would have been able to stand up to the abuser and tell him or her to knock it off.

Get a grip. Think about it! How could you have done that? How could you, a kid—maybe three, maybe nine, maybe seventeen—have had any control over the actions of this person who had some sort of power or authority over you or who was bigger or stronger than you? How could you, a smaller, weaker, no-authority kid make the abuser listen to you? There is no way that you could have stopped the abuser by yourself. Absolutely none.

### **I should have been smarter**

It may be that the abuser told you that he would hurt you if you told anyone about the abuse, or maybe she threatened to hurt someone or something you love. Nobody in his right mind is going to test this threat to see whether it's a bluff—to see if the abuser was just kidding. If someone threatened you with bodily harm or threatened someone you love, you have some very good reasons for not stopping the abuse. That's logical. Don't get upset with yourself if that's what you believed.

It could be that the abuser simply told you that no one would believe you, or maybe he convinced you that the abuse was all your fault. These statements can be just as paralyzing as the threat of someone's hurting you. If you are told something over and over again—"You'll go to jail if anyone finds out," "No one will listen to you," "You wanted it, so it's your fault" - you begin to believe it. This doesn't mean you're stupid or haven't any common sense; it means that you were being abused.

Another possibility is that you were made powerless by caring too much for the abuser. You may have wanted so much to be loved by the abuser that you disregarded your own feelings. Or you may have worried about the abuser's getting hurt more than about your getting hurt.

If that's your situation, you have a harder time seeing what's happening as abuse because it's so wrapped up in love and special attention. The abuser may have told you over and over again how special you are, how important to his life you are, how no one else in the world satisfies him the way you do. This is pretty powerful stuff and can be really difficult to disbelieve.

If this is what's happening to you, let's do a reality check. Don't believe the garbage other people are saying or the garbage you may be telling yourself. You deserve to be believed—not just by other people but by yourself too. So start believing in yourself. Take care of yourself. Be gentle with yourself. What you're going through is rough.

*(How Long Does it Hurt?: A guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, Their Friends, and Their Families, C. Mather & K. Debya, 2004)*

### **Next Page:**

Christmas, the "festive season" and holidays can be an exciting time, but also for many, a time of extra challenges. Taking care of yourself is vitally important and includes eating well, resting, and staying in contact with friends and support services.

# Strawberry Cupcake Christmas Trees



**Preparation Time: 15 Minutes**

**Cooking Time: nil**

**Makes 12**

## **Ingredients:**

125g unsalted butter, softened

300g icing sugar, sifted

2 tsp lemon juice

1 tsp vanilla extract

Green food colouring, to tint

12 Chocolate mud cupcakes

12 large strawberries, hulled

Coloured cachous and stars, to decorate

## **Method:**

**Step 1:** Put butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat on high, using the paddle attachment, for 5 minutes or until pale. Add juice and vanilla. Beat for 5 minutes. Tint with colouring.

**Step 2:** Put icing in a piping bag fitted with a small star-shaped nozzle. Pipe a little on top of each cupcake. Top with strawberries. Put in fridge until icing is set.

**Step 3:** Pipe icing around each strawberry for a Christmas-tree effect. Decorate with cachous and stars. Refrigerate or serve.

*(Better Homes and Gardens, Christmas 2012 edition)*



## Useful Websites and Contact Numbers

### Children

Bravehearts Inc. [www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)  
Australian Childhood Foundation [www.childhood.org.au](http://www.childhood.org.au)  
Kids Help Line [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

### Attempted Suicide and/or Self harm

Safe in Oz Pty Ltd. [www.safeinoz.com.au](http://www.safeinoz.com.au)  
Time Out Programme [www.timeout.org.au](http://www.timeout.org.au) Mobile: 0407 102 140  
Beyond Blue [www.ybblue.com.au](http://www.ybblue.com.au)

### Crisis Counselling

Laurel House [www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au) Telephone 6334 2740 or after hours 0409 800 394  
Sexual Assault Support Service Hobart Telephone 6231 1811  
North West Centre Against Sexual Assault Telephone 6431 9711  
Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) Telephone 131 114  
Samaritans Tas Launceston Telephone 6331 3355 Rest of Tasmania 1300 364 566  
24-hour Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Support—1800 Respect (1800 737 732)  
Eating Disorders/Body Image—Tasmanian Eating Disorders Support Service—0439 189 886

### **Laurel House**

PO Box 1062, Launceston 7250  
Phone weekdays 8:30am – 5pm  
**(03) 6334 2740**  
After Hours Crisis Line  
**0409 800 394**  
Fax: (03) 6334 4234  
Email: [counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)  
Website: [www.laurelhouse.org.au](http://www.laurelhouse.org.au)

## **Christmas Closure**

**Laurel House will be closed from 2 p.m. on Monday December 24th until 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday January 2nd 2013.**

**If you require urgent assistance during this period, our on call Team will be available 24/7  
on  
0409 800 394**

**All of us here at Laurel House would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday season, and**

### **Would you like to contribute to the Laurel House newsletter?**

Laurel House is looking for people to contribute stories, poems and artwork to the newsletter to share with survivors of sexual assault, family members and service providers. Items can be published anonymously if requested. If you would like to contribute something to the newsletter please send to:  
[counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au) or PO Box 1062 Launceston, 7250. All items will be carefully considered and published in upcoming newsletters.

We would appreciate any feedback or suggestions that you may have as we continue to develop our newsletter. Please call us on 6334 2740 or email

[counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au](mailto:counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au)