

Fourteen Steps of Growth for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

1. I can't manage my pain alone. I must seek help.
2. I acknowledge that something terrible happened. I know it is not my imagination; I was a victim of childhood sexual assault.
3. I begin to recognize my feelings. There may be sadness, anger, fear, guilt, and shame. I allow myself to experience them all.
4. I discuss the abuse thoroughly with my therapist. I completely re-experience and begin to deal with feelings appropriate for each incident of abuse that I can recall. I share feelings of shame with my therapist.
5. I begin to realize that I was probably acting appropriately at the time the abuse occurred. That is, my reactions were appropriate; the abuse was not.
6. If there was a part of the molestation that was pleasurable to me, I am understanding that that is a natural physical response to sexual stimulation. I am coming to terms with the fact of that pleasure and I have released the guilt I have experiences about it.
7. I perceive the connection between my molestation and my current behavioral patterns and relationships. I am beginning to develop some control over that connection.
8. I recognize that I have a choice as to whether or not I confront my perpetrator(s).
9. I am beginning to understand what I desire from relationships as I learn to trust my perceptions.
10. I am able to enjoy intimacy.
11. I develop a sense of self and my self-esteem has increased.
12. My resistance to talking about the abuse (although not necessarily the details of it) has diminished.
13. I realize that I have a choice as to whether or not I forgive my perpetrator. I have forgiven myself.
14. I am in touch with past anger, but detached from it so that it is not a constant part of my feelings and a negative influence on my other emotions, my functioning, and my relationships with others. I no longer live in the past. I live in the present and welcome the future with all its fears, imperfections, and unpredictabilities.