

Help, My Wife is a Survivor of Sexual Abuse

Answers to Your Most Important Questions:

A Guide for Application

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INTRODUCTION

It may seem ironic that a book addressing your most important questions is accompanied by an application guide filled with questions. However, as the husband of a childhood sexual abuse survivor, only you have the answers to the questions in this guide.

As I stated in the introduction of the book, you don't need someone to talk at you with quick and easy answers. You need someone(s) who will walk with you in finding a better way. That is why this application guide was intentionally made to be conducive for both individual and/or group use. My purpose in this application guide is to walk with you by guiding you through the questions I had to ponder. Though some of my answers to these questions were painful to acknowledge, the outcome has been rewarding for both me and for my wife.

I would strongly encourage you not to hurry through this guide. Consistency, not speed, is the best method for benefiting the most from this process. Take time to refer back to the chapter content as you work through the questions.

The questions at the end of each chapter of *Help, My Wife is a Survivor of Sexual Abuse* also appear in this guide. However, the additional questions in this guide will take you further into potential personal and marital growth. I recommend answering and discussing the questions in this guide in the order they are presented.

In my personal experience, nothing has taught me more about myself, my wife, and God than this journey toward personal and marital health. The questions in this guide are based on the content of my book *Help, My Wife is a Survivor of Sexual Abuse* and are designed to facilitate further personal and marital growth and health.

Chapter One: Personal Application

WHAT IS A NORMAL MARRIAGE?

As the husband of a sexual abuse survivor, you likely experience a vast array of unpredictable events and effects resulting from your wife's childhood sexual abuse. We, as husbands, long for what we perceive to be a normal marriage. Yet, we also wonder what a normal marriage is supposed to be. However, as we presented throughout the chapter, "Normal is [really] only a setting on our dryers" (Milan & Key Yerkovich in *How We Love*).

The goal of Chapter One is to transition from a point of asking common questions about details of a normal marriage into a position of pursuing what a healthy marriage can actually be. These questions will assist you in exploring your perceptions and equip you to establish new patterns.

1. What have been the circumstances surrounding your wish for a “normal” marriage?

2. In what ways could you relate to the experiences of Chad, Quincy, Rob, Wes, or Dan? What is your own story?

3. When you wish that your marriage was “normal,” what do you mean by a “normal marriage?” What are you referring to?

4. What does your description of “normal marriage” reveal about you?

5. If you’ve described your earlier years of marriage as normal, how has this chapter caused you to rethink and revise your perception of those years?

6. The aim of this book is to guide husbands in developing healthy perspectives and patterns. That development begins with self-awareness. Initial steps were introduced in this chapter that should move you towards personal health and welfare. The first step is to draw lines of responsibility. Write down your strengths and weakness for staying within the boundaries for each of the five areas of responsibility.

- I am responsible for how I treat myself.
- I am responsible for how I treat others.
- I am not responsible for how others treat me.
- I am not responsible for how others treat each other.
- I am not responsible for how others treat themselves.

7. What steps can you take in any and each area to maintain healthy boundaries where previously your personal boundaries have been violated?

8. What have you been taught, verbally or nonverbally, about emotions from your childhood?

9. Continue working towards self-awareness, and resist burying your emotions by completing the following sentences for each of the ten basic emotions.

- I feel happiness when

- I feel acceptance when

- I feel anticipation when

- I feel surprise when

- I feel anger when

- I feel hurt when

- I feel sadness when

- I feel fear when

- I feel disgust when

- I feel shame when

10. Consider how your responsibility boundaries influence your emotions and how your emotions affect your responsibility boundaries. What conclusions have you drawn and what actions can you take for healthy boundary keeping and emotional well-being?

11. Decide on what you need to do and develop your plan for engaging in healthy self-care activity on a regular basis that will offer fun and replenishment.

12. Describe some ways in which you are unique. Describe ways in which your wife is unique.

13. What are three steps you can take this week to know your wife more deeply? For example, what questions can you ask? What gestures do you observe and how do they inform you about your wife?

14. What steps can you take this week to be known? For example, how will you tell your wife about your day and then also inform her about your responses to your day?

Think of other ways you can be more deeply known.

Chapter Two: Personal Application

WHEN DO I GET MY WIFE BACK?

The effects of childhood sexual abuse have a mind of their own. Some effects can occur on the first day of marriage. Other effects might not occur until months or years into your marriage. In whatever manner the effects manifest, the cumulative effects and increasing intensity of the effects take their toll on the survivor, the husband, and the marriage. It is therefore not uncommon for husbands to recall earlier years of more youthful resilience and less intense effects and wonder when they will get their wife back.

When survivors get help from a counselor, maturing occurs. Emotional development that was stalled in earlier years begins to progress toward better health. Previously dysfunctional patterns are uncovered, understood, and overcome. The survivor can then experience multi-leveled growth and change: emotionally, physically, sexually, and mentally.

To “get one’s wife back” would be to bring her back to a more dysfunctional and traumatic existence. The antidote is for the husband to grow in self-discovery and emotional health as well. These questions will help you, as the husband of a survivor, move forward in your own personal growth. You will process loss you’ve experienced in a way that is counter-cultural. It’s an enriching experience.

1. List your losses in your relationship with your wife.

*As best you can, identify when this loss occurred.

2. List your wife's losses that, to your knowledge, are due to her childhood sexual abuse. Don't forget, "loss of innocence."

*Make a notation of the how old she was when she experienced her losses.

3. Pause for a moment and consider whether or not your focus on the losses you've incurred have in any way blurred your focus in seeing her losses.

4. How has any blurred vision for you affected your expression of love to your wife?

How can your vision be improved, and your love more clearly expressed?

5. If you “got your wife back” today, what aspects of your relationship with her in the past remain unresolved or unhealthy?

6. How has your grief over your loss followed the common pattern of our society? Give examples for each of the following principles.

Principle #1: Bury your feelings

Principle #2: Replace your losses

Principle #3: Grieve alone

Principle #4: Let time heal

Principle #5: Avoid pain by not getting too close to others

7. How has the ambiguous nature of your loss made your sense of loss especially difficult?

8. The Psalms invite us to embrace and express our grief to God. Write out your own psalm/prayer that will correspond to the key points identified in this chapter. It would be a good idea to process this exercise and #9 together.

a. Orientation: Recalls the times when you felt adjusted, happy, and filled with gratitude.

b. Disorientation: Reveals how you feel sad, robbed, lost and hurt; you wonder, “Where is God and what is he doing?”

c. Reorientation: Recognizes that you’ve learned or experienced something about who God really is and who you are; you’re reoriented.

9. Whether the loss is permanent or temporary, reorientation puts us on a pathway of releasing and receiving. Thoughtfully work through the following suggested steps. Don’t rush through this.

a. Acknowledge, mourn, and accept that trauma and loss—including ambiguous loss—are part of this world.

b. Empathize with the loss that your wife has experienced (e.g. her loss of innocence as a child).

c. Let go of the contaminating expectation for a perfect world.

d. Surrender to God's sovereignty as He places us in His larger redemptive story.

10. Write out what the closing statement of the chapter means in your life and situation.

To love your wife is to:
Accept all the rings that make her who she is today.
Let go of the one you thought you had.

State specifically what it will mean to love your wife for who she is.

Chapter Three: Personal Application

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Grant Cameron in his book *What About Me?* contends, “Only you [the husband] can dig deep, really deep, reflect inside yourself, and then determine whether helping the survivor heal is what you really want to do (p. 64).”

Childhood sexual abuse is not the only trauma that can threaten a marriage and thwart its dreams. A Disease or a crippling injury from a car wreck can be capable of changing a marriage in a matter of seconds or minutes. If this happens, the “healthy” spouse is challenged with many of the traumatic effects encountered in marriages affected by abuse. What then? Should the spouse be free to go, abandoning the ill and injured?

What about husbands whose wives want out of the marriage? Some survivors of childhood sexual abuse chronically struggle in any close relationship. The intimacy of marriage can seem unbearable and the survivor looks for a way to escape.

I invite you into a deep exploration of motives and attitudes by working through your responses to the following questions.

1. Various motives for staying were identified in this chapter. These motives included theological beliefs, traditional values, and selfish ambitions. Up to this point in your relationship, what has been your motive for staying with your wife?

2. What thoughts have you entertained about leaving? What have you thought of as your chosen mode for leaving? What has been your identified motivation?

3. Whether your leaning is to stay or go, this chapter recommended that you consider the perceptions you've held and the patterns you've developed. You can do so by answering these questions:

a. What are some ways in which you've seen your wife as the only one having a problem (i.e., as the identified patient)?

b. What attitudes and behaviors do you have that indicate any need for change on your part?

c. What is it like to be on the other side of you?

d. Do you have selective perception in regard to your wife? If so, how? If not, can you establish evidence for your answer?

e. What expectations do you hold for:

- Your marriage?

- Your wife?

- Yourself?

f. What personal values do you hold that form the basis of your expectations?

g. To what extent do your values have long-term durability?

4. Take some time to process and answer these additional questions that were presented in the conclusion of this chapter.

a. How am I being affected, and how much is that the issue for me?

b. How is all this affecting her? What is it like for her?

c. Am I avoiding a problem or a need to change because I only see how this affects me?

d. Though this affects me, is this really about me? If so, how do I need to change? If this is not about me, how can I respond with calm so that I do not escalate the situation?

5. If you are deciding to stay, what changes can you initiate—based on your discoveries in this chapter—that might bring greater health to your marriage?

6. If you are deciding to go, how can you do so in a way that is marked by the following:

a. Necessity rather than escape?

b. Selflessness rather than selfishness?

c. Love rather than resentment or bitterness?

d. Lasting values rather than cultural whims?

Chapter Four: Personal Application

WHY DOESN'T GOD HEAL MY WIFE?

When I prayed for God to do a miracle for my wife – or to do a miracle for me – I was actually seeking magic. I wanted order restored. That's not a bad thing is it? I'm sure you agree with me that order is better than chaos.

But the reason I wanted order restored was so that I could once again live in the illusion that I was in control. It's a good thing God knew what would be best for me.

God sometimes intervenes to erase the wounds of sexual abuse. This chapter contains a story of such intervention. But there are many times when the supernatural intervention does not occur. Dr. Archibald Hart has observed that we are often better off having “worked through” the problems rather than experiencing an instantaneous work from God. He contended that faith increases and deepens more through God's process of healing than through the instantaneous healing (Hart, *Leadership Journal*. 1991, p. 75).

As the husband of a childhood sexual abuse survivor, you've probably already had quite a few conversations with God. Perhaps, like me, some of your conversations have been the cry of a disgruntled husband. This chapter and these questions invite you into a new perspective. None of us can fully understand God; if we could, He would cease to be God. But we can grow in knowing Him and trusting Him more fully.

1. If you read this chapter, I assume God has not chosen to instantaneously heal your wife. If my assumption is correct, revisit the lessons learned from the healing of the blind man in Mark 8.

a. God sometimes chooses to do His work with us in solitude (i.e., Jesus wants one-on-one time with us).

b. Don't try to guess how God is going to answer your prayer.

c. It is going to take longer than we want it to take.

d. Jesus' incremental work is a perfecting work.

2. How have these lessons depicted your own experience?

3. What lessons would you add to the list?

4. Husbands were challenged in this chapter to be in union with God rather than at odds with Him; specifically, we are asked to desire His will as well as His work. Spend some time in solitude in order to consider and answer the following:

a. What rough edges in your life need to be chiseled away?

b. How does your perspective need to be reshaped?

5. Have you been seeking a miracle or magic? How so?

6. Dan, one husband of a survivor, said that God used his wife's situation and its impact on their marriage as the primary means of emotional and spiritual growth in his life and marriage. Is this true for you and your situation? How so?

7. Think through how your answers and the content of this chapter might reshape how you pray. Write out your prayer to God.

Chapter Five: Personal Application

WHEN WILL THIS BE OVER?

There is an inter-connectedness for the survivor and a husband. Husbands of sexual abuse survivors are known as “secondary survivors.” Research indicates that a husband mirrors his wife’s experience and vice versa. When a wife experiences recurring trauma through a nightmare or flashback, her husband experiences some degree of trauma as well. Similarly, when a wife progresses towards healing, her husband is also likely to make progress. But the wife’s healing also relies on the progressive healing of her husband.

In this journey towards healing, six “mile markers” have been identified. Understanding these stages of healing offer insight into addressing the question, “When will this be over?” This journey is not traveled in a straight line. Sometimes we circle back to previous mile markers.

The following questions will help you identify where you might be in your marital journey towards better health. As with the other chapters, you’ll need to take a deep look within yourself. If you continue through the process, the outcome can be emotional replenishment.

1. Make a list of what you've experienced and observed over the past month in your relationship with your wife.

2. Make a second list of what you've observed in the past month regarding your wife.

3. After listing what you've experienced, now make a third list of what you personally have thought, felt, and done.

a. Thoughts

b. Feelings

c. Actions

4. Looking at your lists, determine how and where your observations and experiences fit into Remer and Ferguson's stages of the journey from pre-trauma to integration and resolution.

5. In what ways have you felt responsible for your wife's well-being?

6. Consider the advice of Dr. Daniel Green. Make your list of the matters for which you are and are not responsible.

a. I am responsible for how I treat myself:

b. I am responsible for how I treat others:

c. I am not responsible for how others treat me:

d. I am not responsible for how others treat others:

e. I am not responsible for how others treat themselves:

9. Write out a paragraph of your current thoughts about God.

10. In what ways, if any, would you like for your thoughts about God to change? How might this desired change occur?

Chapter Six: Personal Application

WHY CAN'T SHE JUST GET OVER IT?

Previous to the resurgence of research in the 1970s, childhood sexual abuse was not considered a traumatic experience. But as soldiers returned from the Vietnam War in the 70's, clinical workers began noting the similar trauma manifestations between war veterans and survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that was applied to many war veterans was eventually applied to survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Furthermore, the survivor of childhood sexual abuse experiences a trauma inflicted from a totally unexpected source, unlike the war veteran. The war veteran is trained, equipped, armed, and deployed to face a well-identified enemy. The survivor of childhood sexual abuse, on the other hand, more frequently unsuspectingly receives their injury from a trusted source. The recurring abuse from a presumed caregiver leads to what is now recognized as Complex Trauma.

Trauma affects body and mind. Therefore, long after the abuse, our bodies can still respond to triggers of previous trauma. Rational thought does not thwart the response. The body and mind react as though the traumatic event is still occurring.

We would never tell a war veteran that they should not be alarmed when they hear a loud bang. In the same way, telling a survivor of childhood sexual abuse how they should or should not respond to a trigger from the abuse is to expect something that is outside their power to perform.

Once again, it is time to look within ourselves and to also explore what it is for our wives to walk in their shoes. Carefully answer the following questions so that you can further discover and implement appropriate responses.

1. Multiple motives were noted as to why husbands ask, “Why can’t she just get over it.” There can be a selfless motive of a man sincerely wishing his wife could be freed of the pain. There can also be a selfish motive of a man no longer wanting his life and comfort to be interrupted with the pain. Identify your motive for asking, “Why Can’t She Just Get Over It?” Substantiate your answer.

2. Look over the diagnostic criterion for post-traumatic stress disorder in the DSM-5 in Appendix A. Record your observations of your wife’s life experience next to the criteria that apply.

*The purpose of this exercise is not to diagnose your wife. Rather, the purpose is to use this exercise as a means of putting yourself in your wife’s shoes.

3. When have you been aware of your own trauma as a secondary survivor? How did reading this chapter make you aware that you too have experienced trauma?

Recognizing our own trauma, as husbands and secondary survivors, is not for the purpose of casting us into fear and emotional paralysis. Rather, our recognition of our own sense of trauma prevents us from living in denial so that we can manage ourselves.

4. It was noted in this chapter that whether or not you knew about your wife's abuse when you entered into marriage, there never was a time when you've been unaffected by the trauma history.

a. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

b. How has your marriage been affected by your wife's trauma?
By your own trauma?

The purpose of this exercise is to expel any false assumption that you have not been unaffected by your wife's trauma history.

5. In response to our wife's trauma, it was recommended that we, as husbands, serve as an anchor: be steady and soothing. Specific steps were offered as a means of serving as an anchor. Think through a recent experience of past or present trauma and write in your response(s) as best you can recall.

a. Identify what you were thinking, feeling, and doing.

- How were your thoughts or perspectives impacted by the trauma? Are you becoming bitter? Hopeless? Are your questions to God transitioning more to accusations towards God?

- What were you feeling? Use the SASHET to help you identify your feeling. Remember that to ignore our feelings is to subject ourselves all the more to their influence.

- What course of action did you take at the time? Will you do the same next time, or is there an even better response now that you've had time to think about it?
- How is your emotional resilience right now? Should you increase your level of self-care and/or seek professional care?
- Based on your answer, what action will you take in the next twenty-four hours?

b. What authorities will you contact if necessary? What guidelines do you currently have in place as to whether or not you would call authorities if your wife became suicidal?

c. Determine responses that will help to stabilize the situation.

d. Read through Constance Nightingale's statement again. What do you learn from her statement and how can it shape your future responses to trauma?

e. Pray throughout this process.

- Do you believe in prayer?

- Do you engage in prayer?

- Write out a brief prayer right now, asking God in advance for the wisdom needed for when unexpected challenges occur.

f. Debrief with your counselor subsequent to the event and take steps for self-care.

Chapter Seven: Personal Application

HOW CAN I EVER FORGIVE HER PERPETRATOR?

Injustices, childhood sexual abuse among them, often cause us to focus on how we are affected whether as the survivor or the husband of the survivor. For some, the experience of injustice ensnares them in resentment or rage. However, the experience also presents an opportunity for transformative living.

In this chapter, you were invited to consider and enter into the experience of Jesus Christ when he walked on this earth. Christ faced injustice for us, but also from us. There was nothing “fair” in what Christ experienced.

Our tendency to get even when things are unfair or unjust can become instead an opportunity to identify with Christ. When we identify with Christ, we can then experience true and lasting liberty and justice.

This chapter highlights three best responses found in scripture for acting justly:

- a. Distinguish between being motivated by your own spite or by God’s Spirit.
- b. Add mercy to your sense of justice.
- c. Focus on the ultimate injustice against God rather than the immediate injustice against you.

I can be the first one to tell you that answering the questions for this chapter is not easy. You will be tempted to escape having to deal with the issue of anger and rage. I urge you to persevere because if you are not set free from the anger, you’ll be consumed by the anger.

1. Anger and rage are common outcomes when a survivor or survivor's husband recognizes the reality of the childhood sexual abuse; that it really happened. I shared that although I did not explode at people, my rage often seeped through when I sought to dominate and maintain control both at home and at work.

a. To what extent are you aware of your own anger or rage?

b. How is it being expressed?

c. How are you being consumed by it?

2. I cited a few examples of other husbands' journeys in forgiving their wife's perpetrator.

a. With whom do you most identify as you review the following responses?

- Quincy's response was "I'd certainly want him brought to some kind of justice."
- Clay said that he didn't even respect the memory of his wife's perpetrator. He wondered, "Am I supposed to forgive this guy for what he did to my wife when she was a young girl? I'm still struggling with that point."
- Nigel, on the other hand, said, "You've got to forgive because of biblical instruction."

b. What are some phrases and concepts that have expressed your response(s)?

3. Do you agree that forgiveness would be the best thing to do but find it almost impossible to free the perpetrator so that you can be free from hurt?

4. Review the six points outlined in the section on “Exploring a New Perspective.”

- Forgiveness in relationships is based on covenant, not contract.
- Forgiveness is not without cost.
- Forgiveness does not nullify legal consequences.
- We don’t “forgive and forget.”
- Forgiveness is not acting as though no wrong was done.
- Forgiveness is not the same as reconciling.

a. Where have you had misperceptions about forgiveness in the past?

b. How can you adopt a new perspective in respect to the six points?

5. My interviews with husbands of childhood sexual abuse survivors indicated how men have varied responses to anger. I observed three different categories for describing their anger:

- Indulgent
- Indignant
- Unidentified

a. Go back to the descriptions of these three categories and identify your response to anger.

b. What do you learn about yourself by your answer?

6. It is time now to begin progressing the four identifiable steps towards forgiveness in order to be freed from your anger and rage. Once again, here are the steps:

- i. Admit to your anger and rage and accept responsibility for your feelings.
- ii. Respond appropriately toward the perpetrator.
- iii. Redirect your thought patterns.
- iv. Progress toward forgiveness by identifying what Christ has done for you.

As you move through this process, remember these guidelines:

- Each step requires sufficient time to honestly assess your attitudes, motives, and intentions.
- This is not a hurried process and no two people will travel through these steps at the same pace.
- Progress is what matters.
- Though there is some sequential movement through these steps, there is no solid line between them.
- At times, you will find it necessary to revisit earlier steps.
- You will also discover the need to occasionally go back through the entire process and forgive at a deeper level. This is often the case when the effects of the abuse exert renewed trauma on your wife. But with each journey through the steps, the forgiveness becomes deeper, and you will become freer.

Chapter Eight: Personal Application

OUR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP IS IN TROUBLE! WHAT SHOULD I DO?

There are at least three reactions for husbands whose marital sexual relationship is affected by his wife's childhood sexual abuse: shame, emasculation, and trauma. Husbands of survivors experience any or all of these three reactions whether their wives avoid sexual intimacy or pursue sexual promiscuity.

Husbands can benefit from having knowledge of the survivor's thinking. This knowledge is not to serve the husband so that he can "get his wife straightened out in her thinking," but so that he can appreciate all that she is up against in her thinking and perception of her sexuality.

This chapter explores how significance and a sense of wholeness can be discovered outside of the bedroom when (a) our identity is not grounded in what we do, achieve, or conquer, but in who we are, (b) we pursue intimacy through vulnerability, and (c) we grow in empathy; knowing what it is to be in our wife's shoes while continuing to know what it is to be in our shoes. Empathy enables us to navigate through the disappointments when intimacy is hindered because of past abuse.

Words like intimacy, empathy, and vulnerability are not typically found in men's conversations. But the words represent concepts necessary for satisfying relationships. These questions will lead you towards a potentially more intimate and satisfying connection with your wife.

1. In what ways have you experienced any of the three reactions of husbands to their wives' avoidance of sexual intimacy or pursuit of sexual promiscuity?

a. Shame

b. Emasculation

c. Trauma

2. What does it mean for you to be a secondary survivor of childhood sexual abuse?

a. How does your answer inform you about what it is like for your wife to be a primary survivor?

3. Write a paragraph on why your wife's response to sexual intimacy makes total sense.

4. What do you want others to know about yourself?

a. What does this answer indicate about your source of identity?

5. Describe your level of agreement and awareness of God's extraordinary love for you.

a. What misperceptions do you have about God that hinder your awareness of His embrace of you?

b. How can you let go of these misperceptions?

c. What truths about God will help you know His embrace?

6. In this chapter, the multi-dimensional aspect of intimacy—knowing and being known—was considered. How much of yourself are you revealing to her? How much does she know about the following?

a. What makes you sad?

b. What makes you angry?

c. What makes you scared?

d. What makes you happy?

e. What makes you excited?

f. What makes you feel tender?

7. Empathy is knowing what it is to be you (i.e., your wife) while simultaneously knowing what it is like to be me (yourself).

a. Describe your empathy with your wife.

b. Are there aspects of you that are hidden? What are those aspects, and what would it take to make them known?

c. Present evidence that you are not narcissistic.

d. Present evidence that you are not co-dependent (refer to Melody Beattie's questions).

8. How well have you placed yourself in your wife's shoes in regard to sexual intimacy?

a. Does she long for sexual intimacy even though she appears averse to it?

b. Does she have a sense of defeat due to never reaching orgasm?

c. What has she told you that helps you understand?

d. What has she told you that confuses you?

e. What has she not told you that you wish you understood?

9. Has your sexual experience shown you to be a lover or more of a consumer? How so?

10. Have you ever known a man who was satisfied to look at just one pornographic image over and over? How does your answer inform you?

11. This chapter compared the consumers of pornography with perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse. What is your response to this comparison?

12. Compulsive masturbation was considered in this chapter. Sometimes, masturbation is a reversion back to childhood means of self-soothing. If you are finding this to be your experience, think through the following questions:

a. What would help you to develop more emotional maturity?

b. If you are aware of self-soothing as a motive, what other options do you have that don't result in shame and disappointment?

13. Mark & Debbie Laaser present the following seven desires common to all of us: (a) to be heard and understood, (b) to be affirmed, (c) to be blessed, (d) to be safe, (e) to be touched, (f) to be chosen, and (g) to be included. How are these seven desires being fulfilled or going unfulfilled right now in your life? Next, identify healthy ways each of these desires can be fulfilled in your life and fill in the chart accordingly.

Desire	How is it fulfilled or unfulfilled	Healthy ways to fulfill the desire	Actions Steps: "I will ..."
To be heard & understood			
To be affirmed			
To be blessed			
To be safe			
To be touched			
To be chosen			
To be included			

14. Go back to the diagram in the conclusion of this chapter. Once again, read through and think through the explanation accompanying the diagram.

a. List four actions steps you will take, based on the diagram, to nurture the further development of intimacy with your wife.

b. Begin to regularly practice connecting with a safe other, with yourself, with truth, and with God.

15. What conversation do you need to have with your wife? Write out how you can have that conversation while keeping in mind what it is like to be in her shoes.

Chapter Nine: Personal Application

WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO COMMUNICATE WITH MY WIFE?

Childhood sexual abuse distorts many of the perspectives of the survivors. For example, survivors view God, men, and life through a different lens compared to those who have not been abused. Husbands will connect more empathetically with their wives by understanding the rationale and origin of these perspectives. Better understanding can occur in communication as husbands are mindful of the possible distortion that rises out of past abuse.

This chapter also identifies four domains in which communication can go right, or wrong. The following questions enable you to assess your functionality within the four domains and equip you to implement the recommendations outlined in the chapter.

1. How has your ability to express yourself been influenced by

- Your family-of-origin?

- Past rejection?

- Your fears?

- “Reasons” you’ve always given for your lack of communication?

2. How are these influences from question #1 positively or negatively influencing your expressive ability?

3. From this chapter, what steps can you take to develop healthier expressive ability?

4. What have you learned about your motives from this chapter? Think through a recent conflict with your wife. Write down not only what you felt and thought but also why you felt and thought as you did.

What deeper motive(s) did you identify? Was the motive accurately stated, or was it hidden? What was the effect on you and your wife's accurate knowing and being known?

5. Take inventory of your fears. Give thought right now to something that you are afraid to talk about with your wife and then work through answering these questions:

a. What am I afraid might happen if I express my needs/frustrations?

b. What is compromised if I do not express my needs?

c. What are the long-term consequences if I do not express my needs?

d. Is the short-term pseudo peace worth the long-term cost if I do not express my needs?

d. If you don't agree with the message you are receiving, then add in what's been left out. Stone and Heen state, "You aren't seeking to persuade the giver that you are right. You're not trying to replace their truth with your truth. Instead, you're adding what's 'left out.' And what's most often left out is your data, your interpretations, and your feelings [73]."

Stone and Heen contend that once all the pieces of the puzzle are on the table, you and your wife can begin to see how you perceive things similarly, differently, and why it is so. A successful effort will give evidence of empathy: your ability to be aware of what it is like to be your wife—what her inner experience is like—while being aware simultaneously of your own inner experience.

Chapter Ten: Personal Application

WHY DOES SHE SEEM TO CHANGE AT THE FLIP OF A SWITCH?

Husbands of survivors speak of their unpredictable behavior and sudden outbursts. Literature on relationships with survivors of childhood sexual abuse frequently cites the term “walking on eggshells” to describe the challenge of relating to survivors. Two explanations for the sudden changes are explored for husbands to consider: triggers and dissociation.

Triggers are events and communications, with their accompanying sensations, that incite a sudden recall or recurring experience of the initial trauma. The trigger can be anything as simple as the sound of a doorbell, or use of a word, or smell of a fragrance or odor. Husbands are encouraged in this chapter to be students of their wives by gaining awareness of various triggers and understanding their link to the past.

Dissociation and Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) can also be an explanation of sudden changes. Without attempting to diagnose survivors and cautioning husbands to guard themselves from diagnosing, this chapter provides an explanation for dissociation. The BASK model is used as a core explanation with a goal of removing some of the fear in husbands that occurs when observing dissociation.

1. Dawn Scott Jones said, “Living with a survivor of sexual abuse is a blurry world of uncertainties and double standards.”

a. How have you experienced uncertainties in your marriage relationship?

b. How have you experienced double standards?

2. Write down how your wife’s inner world as a child was filled with memories of unpredictable betrayals, contradictions, and craziness.

3. How might your wife’s childhood experience of unpredictable betrayals, contradictions, and craziness shed light on her current behavior and responses?

4. Before reading this chapter, what was your perception and understanding of dissociation?

5. Jot down three things you learned or were reminded about from this chapter regarding dissociation.

6. What sights, sounds, smells, events, and so on have you identified that trigger a current sense of trauma for your wife?

7. Do any of the possible indications of dissociation apply to your wife?
Which ones?

- Not being able to remember segments of the day
- Wishing to be called by another name that is completely different from one's given name or nickname
- Being somewhere and not knowing how you got there
- Covering one's eyes and being unable, not simply unwilling, to speak
- Out-of-body sensation; feeling like you are up in the corner of a room looking down on yourself
- Finding items in your possession that you did not purchase or recall purchasing

8. Review the six recommendations listed in the section “Establishing New Patterns.” For each one, write down one or two actions you can take in order for you to develop further in offering a loving and healthy response to your wife.

a. Be calm, compassionate, and confident

b. Don't be a therapist

c. Love the whole person

d. Be patient

e. Take inventory and responsibility for your own feelings

f. Remember that your children are in the house

Conclusion: Personal Application

THE FINAL ANSWER

As husbands, and given what seems to come naturally for men, we want to fix things. When this tendency is applied to the relationship of marriage, our wives then become an object to be fixed. If husbands who want to fix their wives have any feeling, it is that of sympathy; feeling sorry for their wives. Consequently, wives then become weak objects.

Wives who are survivors are not in need of sympathy. But, like everyone, they are in need of empathy, especially from their husbands.

1. Here's a question that will place you in your wife's shoes while remaining in your shoes: What questions in this book are questions that your wife also asks?

There is hope and there can be healing