

The Deafening Silence By Sherry Niemann

When adult survivors first begin their healing work, friends and family can make or break the healing journey. A survivor told of feeling as though her friends, neighbors, church community and family had turned their backs on her when she broke the silence of her childhood trauma.

In Trauma and Recovery, author Judith Herman talks about trauma and the responses to it. She says that when traumatic events are natural disasters, like fires, flood, tornados or hurricanes, the entire community lines up behind the victims to support them in ways that are astonishing. "But when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator. It's morally impossible to remain neutral in this conflict. The observer is forced to take sides. So frequently, it's the side of the perpetrator that's taken, because all the perpetrator asks is that the bystander does nothing."

The victim, on the other hand, asks the bystander to acknowledge the pain, to take an action, to respond in some way. But, too often, the bystanders stand by silently, saying and doing nothing. The old adage - see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil - takes over. In the face of evil, they say nothing. For adult survivors of childhood sexual trauma, the silence speaks volumes and volumes. It speaks of indifference, of alignment with the perpetrator, of blame for the victim. The silence reinforces old feeling of abandonment and isolation. This silence is deafening to the soul of the survivor. Sometimes this silence is so profound the survivor will stop, or at least postpone, the journey toward wholeness.

Do you know adult survivors? They need your support and encouragement for the hard work of healing ahead. They will crave your love and compassion and understanding. You can be an invaluable companion as you journey with an adult survivor.

(Sherry Niemann is the Executive Director of Mary's Hope, www.maryshope.org)

The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37

Jesus replied: "There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell prey to robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and then went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road; he saw him but continued on. Likewise there was a Levite who came the same way; he saw him and went on. But a Samaritan who was journeying along came on him and was moved to pity at the sight. He approached him and dressed his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. He then hoisted him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him. The next day he took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request; 'Look after him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on my way back.'

Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who treated him with compassion." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same."