

Kelsey's Story

So, I am not really sure how to begin this. How do you tell a room full of strangers that you were sexually abused as a child? It's never an easy thing to do, but here it goes.

I am not really sure how the abuse started. And I am not really sure if I want to know how I was coerced and sweet talked into this situation by my stepfather.

What I do know is I was molested during the 6th and 7th grade for a year and a half.

One day I decided that I was going to tell my school counselor about the abuse. I told my best friend during 2nd period science class what was happening and what I was planning on doing during lunch. She came with me, and was the one who actually told, because I was too choked up. My mother was called and I had to tell her that I was being molested. She hugged me and we just cried in each other's arms. There was just this moment of true love and peace; nothing else mattered in the world. We went home, she kicked him out and I thought that everything was going to be ok.

Not even a month later, I can remember sitting on the living room floor playing a board game with my mom, and she casually asks me to tell child protective services that the whole ordeal was a lie. My mother wanted me to choose between breaking up the family and moving back to Missouri where money would be tight and shopping sprees to my favorite places would be out of the question. Or, I could simply just let the man who sexually abused me move back in. And like before, I was being coerced into something I did not want. But she was my mother, and don't mothers know best? So, I did what my

mom wanted and told her that he could move back in. The next day we went on a shopping spree to my favorite stores. Everything was back to normal and we were once again the perfect family.

During my junior year of high school, I met Christopher, my first boyfriend, and things began to move quickly. We were madly in love and nothing was going to change that, except for my past. Since my abuse was swept under the rug and never mentioned, I just sort of forgot about it, until I began having flashbacks and 6 months into the relationship I was not even able to kiss him. I had told him that a neighbor had abused me, so he never expected anything of our family. He was pushing me to go to therapy, but I knew my family would have known what it was for, so, I kept putting it off.

Then one night, I was so fed up with my depression, flashbacks, anxiety, and life that I decided to tell Christopher the truth. My mom, stepfather, brother, Christopher and myself were all in the living room. My stepfather was upset with Christopher about some miniscule thing, and I just blurted out “It was you – calling him by his first name”. Its funny how 3 simple words can change your life forever. He immediately knew what I was talking about. My mom was shouting “shut up Kelsey, go to your room”. She finally told me to take Christopher home and come back so we could talk about this later. I left and knew I was never going to live there again.

I moved in with my boyfriend and his mom, and began going to therapy at Y.E.S. I was a wreck before therapy and it took me quite some time to settle down, and begin to

overcome my abuse. I was never the type of person to blame myself for anything that happened. Nor will I ever, but processing my past and overcoming it was difficult. When I first began going to therapy, I was at my lowest point. I was having anxiety attacks and flashbacks at least once a day. They consisted of me completely falling apart and balling my eyes out for at least half an hour every day. I knew I had to take action on my life and emotions to get out of the rut I was in which is really hard when you cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel.

At first, it was extremely difficult to tell my story to people, especially strangers, but every time I told someone, I felt this surge of empowerment and relief. I was no longer being controlled by my past, but rather relieving the tension and pent up anger of my abuse and getting on with my future. I slowly began to relax and was able to use healthy coping mechanisms for what I was feeling. I learned relaxation techniques, how to control my anger, and the basis of a healthy relationship.

It has now been almost 6 months since I have had a panic or anxiety attack. I attend weekly therapy and have been involved with two sexual abuse survivor groups at Y.E.S. I have met some amazing people in group. We all had this instantaneous bond and understanding of one another. Its absolutely beautiful how people come together for each other in times of need. This really helped me understand that I was not alone, and I would always have someone to count on. I have been in therapy for two and a half years, and I could not be any happier with how my life is coming together. There will always be bumps in the road, but I have learned how to gracefully overcome them.

Today, I am a student at Seattle Central Community College and attending their culinary arts program. I am not yet sure where my degree will lead me, but I know that I am going to be happy doing what I love.

I want to thank those who have made the greatest impact in my life. The relationship I had with Christopher did not end well, and we have not spoken in almost a year. But I will never stop loving and thinking him for getting me out and saving my life. My therapists Debbie Taylor, Debbie Halela, Dannie Hutchins, and Galina Smith. It's funny how just sitting down and talking about yourself for an hour each week can really help. I don't know how they do it, and I would be a wreck without them. I especially want to thank all of you in this room for donating to YES. Without your support, young people like me who can't afford to pay would not be able to get the help we (they) need.

I feel as though my story and words will never be enough to truly tell all of you how greatly thankful and appreciative I am for the support I have received at Y.E.S. Thank you so very much.