



Healing after Abuse

Hi, and welcome back to 'The Victim 2 Victor' podcast. My name is Anu and I am your host. In previous podcasts, I have talked about the harsh realities of domestic violence as well as the role that abusers play in influencing abusive behavior. In the most recent episode, you can learn to understand the thoughts and motives behind abusers, and the circumstances which can lead to them committing such horrible and lamentable violent attacks. If you have not listened to these already, please listen, as you may find them helpful if you have ever experienced abuse or know someone who has.

In this podcast episode, I will talk about the abstract art of healing. I am a survivor of abuse myself, and so I truly understand how strenuous the path to recovery can be. However, healing is vital as it allows us to define ourselves as survivors, not as victims. We can become a voice for those who have not spoken out yet. If you want the confidence to live an independent life that is free from fear, it is important that you complete a successful healing process after leaving an abusive relationship.

I understand that repetitive episodes of abuse can seriously damage your sense of worth. I know how it can dismantle your future capacity to protect yourself in subsequent relationships. Whether you have experienced it during your childhood, or during adulthood, the victims of continuous abuse often suffer a multitude of self-destructive symptoms. The emotional and physical expressions of these symptoms are uncannily like those of post-traumatic stress disorder: unwanted and upsetting memories, nightmares, flashbacks, disturbing bodily reactions, hyper-vigilant anxiety, blame, guilt, startled responses, as well as internal feelings of isolation and helplessness. Unfortunately, these are only a handful of the many manifestations survivors of abuse must deal with in their journey to recovery.

Being physically free from your abuser is only the first step; it can take much longer to feel emotionally free and unshackled. Also, the role of effective healing will help you to break free of the haunting trauma that abuse has left you.

So, why is healing important and how can it help? The answer to this lies in the fact that, without an effective healing process, you could find it hard to move on. You might have resided in an abusive relationship your entire life. It can be terrifying when that constant is removed, even if you know that you deserve better. Effective healing will give you the confidence to believe in yourself; the confidence to live an independent life. With the right support, you will no longer feel lost and overwhelmed, but instead you will feel liberated, proud and exhilarated. In fact, effective healing will

also help you to develop confidence in your own instincts, so you are better equipped to recognize the early warning signs in future relationships.

Next, let us gain an insight into what approaches can help the healing and recovery process. Arguably, the largest, most important part of the healing process after leaving an abusive relationship, involves being kind to yourself. Accept that you are not to blame; accept that doing things differently would not have ended the vicious cycle of abuse you were trapped in. Abuse is about power and coercion, so most of the time, even if you had done things differently, it would not have made any difference to the person who wanted to control you. No matter what your abuser told you, you did not deserve the emotional abuse that you encountered. Eliminate those negative thoughts and recollections from your mind and start to bestow compassion onto yourself. Like when you forgive yourself for being late for work, or for being unproductive, let yourself off the hook for these experiences and stop feeling guilty. You are not to blame for the abusive behavior you experienced. Remember, now you have the command over your life, so make it count.

Another powerful tool that can be used as part of the healing process, is reprogramming your inner critical voice, by reciting regular positive affirmations about yourself. These positive affirmations should be tailored to your wounds and insecurities. For example, if you are insecure about your appearance as a result of your ex-partner's abusive behavior, a positive affirmation can gently interrupt this pattern of negative rumination, by replacing the toxic thoughts with loving ones. A once self-sabotaging thought about your appearance, suddenly becomes constructive. For example, reciting affirmations like "I am beautiful, inside and out" will ensure that you do not fixate on negative emotions.

Anger is often a large part of a survivor's response to trauma. Anger helps us to cope with life's stresses, by giving us the energy to persevere when facing adversity; it can even motivate us into establishing or re-establishing control. At the same time, anger is an intense and a consuming emotion. When people start to temporarily depend on this destructive emotion, it can involuntarily become part of our defense mechanism and prevent us from exploring our sensitivity and vulnerabilities. I understand that one may not necessarily experience these unanticipated feelings in sequence and so this can overlap. But becoming more self-aware is so important for recovery. Hiding our vulnerabilities is unhealthy and undeniably destructive. It is almost self-sabotaging. It is very important for us to live through every emotion, no matter how painful. Acceptance is incredibly important for the healing process. By not working on your acceptance strategy, you are giving it the power to influence or bother you. Get in touch with your feelings and let them lead you to a path of self-awareness.

Moreover, anger can be one of the most toxic and harmful emotions. With so much negativity already residing within ourselves and so many preexisting negative emotions, increased resentment towards ourselves is unnecessary. Try to eliminate that anger residing within you and try to focus on positivity instead, as it is vital for the recovery process.

People who have experienced emotional abuse as a child, may fall into similar behavioral patterns as adults. One common reaction is to distrust others and, in several cases, this lack of trust results in

extreme and sometimes unnecessary responses to threats. A suitable solution to this, is re-building the trust in others. Learn to decipher the difference between people who will help you to adapt, and those who will try to control and assume authority over you. Learn to sharpen your sense of judgment and let go of the people who ignored your feelings and emotions in your times of need. These destructive links to the past are hindering your chances of a happy future; they make it difficult to start a new chapter in life.

Instead, surround yourself with those who cherish your company and act as pillars of support in motivating you. Most importantly, remember that there are good people out there too. Also, do not prevent yourself from trying new things; do not assume that this one lamentable experience will define you. Do not let abusive behavior hijack your happiness and spontaneity. However, I do understand the gravity of a single, distressing experience: it can be life changing. So, to resolve this, try to associate yourself with those with similar issues. Join a community of like-minded people who will empathize with you and who will share your emotions. There is absolutely nothing wrong in sharing your story. In fact, it will give you courage and make you feel powerful. The more you express your experiences openly, the less control they will have on you. You will no longer consider your past, distressing experiences as a sign of shame or weakness, but rather you would wear them as a symbol of pride, bravery and victory. Guiding others in their journey of healing will help you more than anything. The only caveat is that teaching must be by example, never by preaching. When you enter the third stage of your transition, powerful compassion, you will find yourself transformed in two significant ways.

Firstly, you will notice a difference in your thoughts and behaviors; you will no longer be attracted to abusive relationships. Instead, you will have compassion for those trapped in damaging, destructive relationships, and you will not feel obligated to join or fix them. Secondly, you will notice differences in your friendship groups; the people who now surround you will treat you with a new attitude of respect. They will want to know how you transformed from the impotent victim, into the compassionate warrior. You will tell them that you acknowledged, worked through, and broke free of the bonds of abusive behavior, and that you are now committed to being a role model for others who need help. Trust building and sharing is another secret essential to the healing process. Some other useful activities to accompany your healing process, could be journaling your reality. Often, a classic strategy for emotional abusers is to make their victims doubt themselves. So, write down everything — what you did, what you said, what you are feeling. It will give you confidence, improve your self-esteem, and give you a sense of fulfillment in life.

By keeping a record of your life, you can look back when you are doubting yourself and achieve higher levels of confidence. Confirming that your memories match with that record, will help you to trust yourself even more. This will help you re-claim your sense of confidence and above all, give you a sense of security and comfort. An important tool to remember is to take care of yourself. For those who grew up in homes that have inflicted painful memories, through physically and emotionally abusive behavior, this is difficult. The reason being is that as adults, they feel the need to prove their self-worth and value and so they end up assuming responsibility for everyone's happiness and well-being. Unsurprisingly, this can be an extremely overwhelming and exhausting undertaking, not to mention extremely destructive for your mental health.

So, I would like to say that, in the process of satisfying others, please do not forget to take care of your needs too. Tend to your self-care needs, pamper yourself with a healthy diet and weekly manicures, implement mindful exercise routinely, go on a shopping spree or do whatever activity gives you pleasure. Try not to fixate on negative emotions and recollections, but instead try to forget about them and start afresh.

Before I go, I would also like to address that it is very typical to grow suspicious of the authenticity of these techniques. Often, many people are perturbed by the observation that if certain practices were, in fact, beneficial, then why would there be a need to explore other methods. Occasionally, you will get an effective response from certain healing methods, and sometimes you will find genuine value in a multi-dynamic approach. However, you should continue to try numerous methods that can assist your recovery process, until you reach absolute success.

But please do not forget that the methods I have enlisted are meant to help you throughout the healing process over a longer period, because after all, there are no shortcuts. Remember, keep calm and carry on.

While this episode comes to an end, please do not forget to read my book 'Victim2Victor', where I have shared my journey of evolving through travel, self-help and a determination to cast off my damaging past. My goal is to reach out to fellow survivors of abuse and provide hope and motivation in their life. I hope I can help victors transform their lives and discover their true self, just like I did. I also have a 12-week self-development plan course that is FREE and aims to help you throughout your journey to recovery and achieving confidence. You can find the link in the description below. Please like this podcast and tag or share it with someone you know, who is going through a similar situation and may need help. I will be back with another podcast soon. Until then, take care and keep healing.

