

Working through loss, trauma and abuse

by Lisa in Maryland

I was nine years old when PTSD began to affect my life. I always thought the way I reacted to situations was just my personality or a character flaw. I was 40 years old when a therapist put a name to what I was feeling. I had seen two other therapists in my life but never really opened up until the third one. I look back at the failed relationships, disappointment, never feeling like I've connected with anyone, and never trusting anyone. It is obvious now after 30 years, PTSD was ruling me.

At 9 years of age my father shot himself in the head in front of me. It was a terrible thing. You can imagine what that's like for a child so I won't go on about it. Shortly after my mother's boyfriend began physically and mentally abusing me and my siblings. One night I stood and watched him break my brother's jaw by punching him in the face over and over. I was helpless at 11 to help. Teenage years were a mess. I was running away from home drugs physical abuse from boyfriends, twice raped. I'm not going to get into any more of a tale of woe. I'll just say things didn't get better as the years passed. I could write a book.

Today I struggle with PTSD, and in more rational moments I can recognize it. Just today I saw for the first time how I react to people and certain situations. I'm very easily hurt; things that most people might be able to shrug off can send me into depression for days. I never forget. I'm easily disappointed in people. The slightest conflict sends me thinking "see, there it is, they really don't care about me. It's just a matter of time before it gets worse." Once that thinking starts there is no chance for that person to be close to me again. I am a nurse and have had private health insurance and the same job for 16 years. PTSD doesn't seem to affect my professional life as much as my personal life. I'm going to try group therapy for the first time. I'm hoping to someday better manage this problem.