



A White Paper: Abuse – A Story Never-Ending

By Gregg Tyler Milligan, Author & Abuse Prevention Advocate
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<http://www.godmustbesleeping.com/>

Abuse comes in many forms. The abuser can be physically aggressive, emotional cruel or verbally sadistic. I once read that 20% of all relationships are “inflicted” with some form of domestic violence. I am not certain this statistic is true; let alone any statistic. However, I look at the numbers all the same, which is the fact even if this statistic was true at a conservative level and/or (1%), it would still be awful.

From the perspective of what is thought to be true and what [is] true, therein lies a great crevasse. People, some well-meaning, will say to me, “So, you wrote about being abused or something?” *Something like that*, is how I respond. The fact is, most people have no idea what constitutes abuse (anywhere in the world). The word and actions surrounding it have been with the human race for so long, most cultures are indoctrinated to believe it is a normal part of life. For example, “*Yeah, my mom and dad beat us with a belt, but we had it coming.*” “*He throws me a beatin’ sometimes, but I know he loves me.*” “*A husband can’t rape his wife.*” “*A woman can’t rape another woman.*” Over the years, I’ve heard it all. Just because it’s considered acceptable behavior or an individual doesn’t know any better, does not make it ‘right.’

So, let’s start with the basics. What is abuse? Well, abuse are forced violent and non-violent actions against another person; including yourself, whether you know it to be abuse or choose to believe it (ignorance is no excuse). What is abuse/violence? You would think there would be no need for such a question, and that the answer would be obvious. Those of us who have been on the receiving-end of abuse were/are subjected to short or long-term violence. One of the many devastating results is that we develop such low self-esteem that we no longer trust our own judgment. We need ‘intervention.’ Meaning, we need someone to guide our understanding in what others take for granted and/or can clearly see. Speaking of which, another troubling remark I often hear is, “*She/he deserves what’s coming to them because they choose to stay in the relationship.*” Whereas children are excluded from this ignorance, adults are not afforded the same luxury. It’s an assumption, a deadly one, and like all assumptions – they lead only to suffering and even death.

We must address this problem: [The issue of assumptions/ignorance when it comes to abuse and violence] – the fact is that those being abused deny it in the beginning and to the point of not even recognizing themselves that they are being abused. In doing so, this is exactly what gives the abuser his/her power ... the willingness of the victim to stay instead of leave at the first sign of abuse.

With regard to adults and not children, it is the adults who allow themselves to be abused; the only way for them to break free from an abuser is for them to take responsibility for making the choice to stay when they should leave. If people didn’t put up with abuse, there would be no abuse and/or domestic violence –to be more specific. I knew this as a child. Putting it more emphatically, the following excerpt is taken from my book, *A Beautiful World, Chapter Five*:

“I SWORE TO MYSELF I WAS LEAVING THIS place. The longer I stayed, I knew Mother’d kill me for sure. She’d hit too hard or strangle me for a bit too long during one of her drunken rages; my lights would go out, and I’d have only myself to blame. It would be my fault entirely. After all, I was the one that stayed behind.”

What Can You Do If You Are In An Abusive Relationship? You can:

- 1) Point out to your spouse when you feel he/she is being abusive.
- 2) Set firm boundaries about how you will be treated and stand your ground.
- 3) Leave if your spouse is not willing to admit to a problem and seek help.

You may find it easier to stay and try to break the cycle of violence. You may believe that reason and logic will change the abuser. You may feel it only fair that you give the abuser a second chance. You may believe that deep-down the abuser's intentions are good, that he/she doesn't mean to hurt you. Or, you may not be quite ready to emotionally accept something so incomprehensible as the person you love wanting to do you physical and emotional harm.

Whatever your reason for staying in the abusive relationship, you may feel it worth making the effort to save the relationship. There are times when an abuser recognizes that his/her abusive behavior no longer gets the reaction he/she wishes. That can spur the abuser to change. This takes a great deal of work and courage on the behalf of both parties. However, please be aware though, if you stay and the abuse continues, not only does the abuser have issues, you do also.

An abuser will not have to deal with his/her "issues" until you no longer allow yourself to be abused. "*Geographical relations between the abuser and the victim are key.*" (04-17-2013 [A White Paper: Child Abuse – Unfortunately, it is about ... Who You Know](#), Gregg Tyler Milligan, Author & Abuse Prevention Advocate).

Through personal (reflective) experience and professional research, if you do choose to stay and "fix" the problems I suggest you try the following:

- 1) Be explicitly honest with the abuser through calm discussion (if possible).
- 2) Set boundaries for what is and isn't appropriate treatment of you by the abuser.
- 3) Provide an opportunity for the abuser to change by setting a time limit (ultimatum).
- 4) Actions speak louder than words; therefore, see the abuser's behavior as paramount –not the words he/she uses.
- 5) If the abuser does not stop – leave.

In my case, at only eleven-years-old, I had suffered enough abuse from my mother and strangers – enough of the abusive environment in every sense of the word. "*Before we understand our situation – we are Ignorant to opportunities ... After we understand our situation – we are Responsible.*"

Even a child reaches a certain point when they realize what is being done to them is wrong. We should expect more from adults. There is truth to the fact as humans are susceptible to accepting abuse as normal. There was a study of wild vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus aethiops*) in South Africa which showed proof that primates other than humans adopt and conform to cultural behaviors. Given a choice between two foods, infant monkeys ate only the foods that their mothers ate. And young males that ventured to other groups soon switched to the local diet. "*Some of the ways of learning that we have thought were distinctly human are more broadly shared across nonhuman primates.*" (Co-author Andrew Whiten, a cognitive biologist at the University of St. Andrews in the United Kingdom).

Cultural learning and conformity play central roles in human life. Conformity can be life-saving. It is true we adapt or die when it pertains to those things which are [necessary for survival]. Abuse/Violence is not necessary to survival. As a matter of fact, it's death incarnate.

The abused may be broken, but we don't have to stay that way. Break the Cycle.

Gregg Tyler Milligan is an internationally-known author and child abuse prevention advocate. He has written two books, *A Beautiful World*, detailing his childhood and the horrific suffering Milligan endured at the hands of his mother and strangers. Milligan later completed the continuation to *A Beautiful World*, describing his next eleven years. Both books are published under the same volume, titled *God Must be Sleeping*. Milligan is a member of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) Speakers Bureau and continues to spread his message of hope.

In his words, "Please remember, the reason we are here is to save one another – Break the cycle." More information can be found at godmustbesleeping.com/.