

Pandora's Project

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Secondary Survivors: An Important Healing Tool

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When someone is healing from sexual violence, it can make all the difference to have support from the people around us—known around Pandys as secondary survivors. Secondary survivors may include parents, friends, co-workers, spouses or siblings. The initial reactions that a survivor gets from these individuals can have a huge impact on the course of his or her healing journey. As a secondary survivor, one of the most important things you can do is to be-

lieve the survivor. The majority of survivors of sexual violence struggle with fears of not being believed, and often, all that is needed is a non-judgmental ear. It's ok if you don't have all the answers; ask them what you can do to help and assure them that you are there to support them along the way.

There are resources specifically for secondary survivors, and these can help you learn how to help the survivor in your life. Healing from sexual violence can

be a long and difficult process, but the support you provide to your survivor can prove to be invaluable over the course of that healing journey.

[Resources for secondary survivors](#)

[Tips for family and friends](#)

[Pandora's Aquarium Message Board](#) – We have a forum specifically for secondary survivors, where you can talk to survivors and other secondaries about what you are experiencing.

Wanted: Outreach Worker! Could it be YOU?

Pandora's Project is currently seeking an Outreach Coordinator. The responsibilities for this volunteer position include soliciting volunteers to set up and staff Pandora's Project tables at community events like local festivals, health fairs, or Take Back the Night marches. The Out-

reach Coordinator would be responsible for providing potential tablers with information about tabling, coordinating to have requested publicity materials sent out to tablers and soliciting feedback from volunteers to find out how the tabling experience went and what would have

made it better. This position is being created to help Pandora's Project reach more survivors of sexual violence who may need our services. If you have experience working in outreach or think you'd be good at it, please send a letter of interest to jessica.sears.brown@gmail.com
Thanks so much!

Have you checked out our articles section lately?

The Pandora's Project website hosts over 100 articles on a variety of topics related to sexual violence and healing. Find our articles database [here](#). If you would like to contribute an article or have any suggestions for future topics, please contact us at

admin@pandys.org.

[Losing your Virginity to Rape](#)

What does it mean if rape was your first sexual experience? This article looks at related issues and how you can address feelings that come up.

[Deciding to Pursue Legal Action](#)

Many survivors struggle to decide whether they should pursue charges against their perpetrators. This article helps you assess what choice is the best for you

[Rape & Pregnancy](#)

This article has information and resources for women who are struggling or have struggled with pregnancy as a result of rape.

[Healing your Inner Child as a Survivor of Sexual Abuse](#)

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse often have conflicting feelings about the child they were during the abuse. This article looks at ways to address

[Facebook and Survivor Issues](#)

The prevalence of Facebook and other forms of social media has brought up a new set of challenges for survivors of sexual violence. Learn how you can keep yourself safe on Facebook and how to deal with triggers that may come up.

[Having to See Your Abuser](#)

On top of normal healing triggers, some survivors must also cope with having to see their abuser in social or other settings. Find tips and ideas for dealing with these anxieties.

[Speaking Out: The Benefits for Survivors of Sexual Assault](#)

Are you considering speaking out about your experiences? This article shows how speaking out can help you in your own healing.

[Feeling Guilty About Wanting Sex](#)

Even as survivors work through difficult triggers associated with sex and intimacy they may still struggle with feelings of guilt. Look at ways to challenge those feelings and work towards your own healthy sexuality.

"Reading this article helped me realize that I wasn't alone, and it helped my friends and family to learn about some of what I was feeling."

-Member of Pandora's Aquarium

Healing Exercise: Coping With the Holidays

The holidays can be difficult, especially if our own feelings don't match the "Hallmark" messages we are bombarded with at this time of year. Most of us carry a mental picture of what the holidays "should" be like. Those expectations can add pressure and stress. Give yourself a pass this holiday season:

Give yourself permission to talk about it. Tell support people that the holidays may be difficult for you and you do not want to face it alone.

Give yourself a break. Recognize that it's okay to feel however you feel, and schedule in some planned time to relax, nurture and take care of yourself.

Give yourself a goal – set realistic goals and give yourself something to look forward to. Empower yourself by starting a new tradition...something that you have control over and that you will enjoy.

What will you give *yourself* this year?

Dealing with Holiday Anniversaries By Jackie

Regardless of whether you celebrate any holidays, holiday time can be a challenging one for many survivors who have experienced trauma during a time of year that means happiness to the vast majority of people.

As someone who was raped on a popular summer holiday, I have often struggled with the multitude of sales, commercials, advertisements, time off from work and picnics. Early on in my healing I tended to withdraw because I was too overwhelmed with the reminder of what had happened to me. It was EVERYWHERE! As I have evolved in my healing, I have almost found it comical as to just how many times I hear the name of the holiday that became the day that changed my life forever.

I've long come to terms with the fact that it may never be possible for me to "forget" the anniversary of my rape because it is on a holiday. That being said, it has become essential for me to accept that what a holiday means to me, is vastly different than it means to my friends and family. I needed to educate them on what my triggers were and I needed to learn to ask for support. That took time!

The reality is that these holidays are not going away and neither are we! We owe it to ourselves to not lose another day of potential happiness because the holidays are painful for those of us who were hurt on one of them.

It's okay to feel what you need and to honor your healing journey in a healthy way that helps you move forward. It's even okay to dread this time of year. But we all owe it to ourselves to continue to seek ways that help ease our pain and remind ourselves that we deserve to be happy and that like all things, this time too will pass.

TIPS:

- ⇒ If possible, have a "go to" person that knows it's not an easy time for you.
- ⇒ Remind yourself that there will be time for dealing with your feelings.
- ⇒ Come up with a list of [coping mechanisms](#) that help you work through difficult memories.

International Support Information

Australia: Lifeline 131114

Canada: Assaulted Women's Helpline
1-866-863-0511

United Kingdom: Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

United States: RAINN 1-800-656-4673

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Finding Hope: I am a Survivor Project

In 2010 we began an exciting project that focused on giving survivors a voice.

We asked survivors to take a picture with a sign of sorts that they felt helped them express their feelings.

The response was overwhelming as

you can see [here](#), where the submissions were turned into a video and posted on YouTube for all to see.

We hoped that this would help others see they are not alone and that we are more than what happened to us.

This turned out to be quite cathartic for all involved, including Board of Directors Kristy, Jackie and Jes, as featured in this photo.



Q&A With The White Ribbon Campaign

The [White Ribbon Campaign](#) is the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women. Their annual campaign goes from November 25 to December 6. This is an excerpt of our Q&A with Executive Director Todd Minerson about how men can be involved in putting an end to violence against women. Please check out the [full Q&A](#) on our website.

What can men do to help stop sexual violence against women?

WRC believes that there are many positive roles men and boys can play in working to end violence against women. Men can be allies, engaged bystanders, peer educators, and positive role models.

Specifically, men can listen to and learn from women's experiences; learn about the extent and nature of the problem of violence against women; understand why some men are violent; challenge sexist and degrading language; learn to identify harassment and violence in workplaces, schools, and communities; support local women's programmes; examine their own behaviour, be a positive role model for younger men; work towards long-term solutions; and of course – get involved with the White Ribbon Campaign.

What do you feel is the best way to educate men about sexual assault?

One of the most important principles in educating men about sexual assault is to develop programs that both address and involve men in the education effort. That means designing programs that incorporate men's experiences into the work and address their fears gaps in knowledge, or areas of ignorance. In addition, we have found that while most men may not use or condone violence against women they also feel they do not have the skills,, knowledge or language to effectively work to end it. In that way it is very important to show men **positive** examples of how to promote healthy and equal relationships, to find alternatives to violence, and how to diffuse potentially violent situations in non-violent ways.

How can survivors of sexual violence get involved in the campaign? How can survivors approach the men in their life about getting involved, without pressuring them or making them uncomfortable?

Survivors can help play an important role in working with us to share their stories and experiences of violence. Nothing is more powerful than those who are in a place where they are able to share that publicly. However, this can be a lot to ask, and there are other important ways survivors can help. One of the very important things we have learned is that many men get connected to us through women in their lives who have experienced violence. Women are critical in acting as a link to men who need to know more about the violence prevention work we are trying to do with men and boys around the world. Bringing awareness to men that there is a positive way in which they can actively work in their own community is a very powerful way survivors can help.

What changes have you seen in men's perceptions of sexual violence towards women since the campaign started? What changes would you like to see in the future?

I think gradually there is a greater awareness evolving in men that this is an extremely serious and pervasive issue. One that does not know any boundaries as far as race, class, education, culture or religion; one that is an issue that spans the entire globe; one that has the potential to affect every one of us who has a mother, a wife, a partner, a sister, a daughter or a co-worker we care about. In the future I would like to see us get to a point of real transformative change around ending violence against women. Where the issue is relegated to the garbage bin of socially acceptable behaviour, where we look at it with the same disbelief and bewilderment as slavery, genocide, and other atrocities humans commit against each other and our planet.

What do you consider the greatest success of your organization?

I think our greatest success has been tapping into the desire of men around the world to work to do something positive and effective in working to end violence against women. I think getting men to understand that even if they don't condone the use of violence, their silence about it speaks volumes. Do we have a long way to go? Unfortunately yes, but every day, from every part of the world I get to learn about amazing examples of men understanding they do have a role and responsibility to end violence against women, and as I said to start, work more broadly to achieve real gender equality in our world.

The Healing Benefits of Art

There are many benefits in incorporating art into your life. As well as being an outlet for creative expression, art activities can reduce stress and help you to become more in tune with your feelings and inner thoughts. Expressing emotions through art can release their hold on you, leaving room for further self-discovery and healing.

Many survivors worry about not being able to draw, paint or write. Art healing is not about being an artist, it is about re-awakening the inner child who loved to colour, cut, paste, and use his/her imagination in creative ways. Art is for anyone who has something to say, and the courage to say it. It's a way to express feelings and memories that are "beyond words".



Art work by Anya



Art work by Chris



Watercolour painting by Kristy

What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is a form of therapy that uses the creative process of making art to explore and improve mental and emotional well-being. There are different forms of art therapy including visual art-making, drama, and dance/movement.

In visual art therapy the emphasis is on the process of making art, rather than on what the end product actually looks like. It provides an opportunity to express feelings that may be difficult to verbalise.

How Does Art Therapy Work?

Art therapy is based on the belief that the process of art-making, within a therapeutic relationship, helps clients to process traumatic experiences and to develop a more integrated sense of self.

Although art therapists might vary in their approach, a typical therapy session usually involves making art followed by a verbal exploration of the emotional connections that you make to the art and the experience of making it.



Collages are a great place to start if you are feeling unsure of your own creative or artistic abilities. Collages can be created from almost anything, including magazine pictures. If you struggle to find a particular focus, you might allow words and pictures to pick you, or use only pictures in your favorite color.

When you finish an art piece, try to reflect on it without being self-critical. What does it tell you about yourself or your healing journey?

