

RESOLUTION VERSES REVENGE:

ACHIEVING RELIEF AFTER SEXUAL ABUSE.

DR.WENDELL J. ROSEVEAR O.A.M.
M.B.,B.S.DipRACOG.FRACGP.J.P.(Qual.)

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Since 1992, Dr.Rosevear has cared for 844 men who have been raped or sexually abused. He works with male and female victims and male and female perpetrators of sexual abuse. He has treated 92 perpetrators. He works in General Practice, Gay & Lesbian Health and he has worked in Prisons since 1975. He is currently a Volunteer doctor at Sir David Longland Correctional Centre. He runs a drug and alcohol recovery Group.

He presented on Male Sexual Assault in Melbourne in 1992 for the Australian Institute of Criminology Conference.

He founded **MARS**: Men Affected by Rape & Sexual-abuse in 1993. It works on a self-help recovery group model. 379 men have used MARS in the last 10 years. MARS has groups in Brisbane, Gold Coast, and Ipswich. Dr. Rosevear trains with a Team in two regional centres of Queensland each year on the issues of Male Sexual Assault Recovery.

Contact:

Stonewall Medical Centre,
52 Newmarket Rd.,
Windsor, Qld 4030.
PH: 07-38571222.

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Anger is the natural, healthy reaction to sexual abuse. Whenever someone treats someone else as less than equally valuable, anger rises as a sign of the value of the abused person. If one tries to deny that anger it can become dangerous, as denial can never restore value and can become like 'a lid on a time bomb'. It takes a lot of energy to keep the 'lid of secrecy' on and individuals can suffer the burden of secrecy in aloneness or barrier. There can be associated anxiety that relief is not possible or if 'the lid comes off' there may be loss of control.

In rape and sexual abuse the major loss is a sense of personal value. In rape you don't have a choice. With no choice, you don't feel valued. Hence the major issue in recovery is to regain a sense of personal value and to regain choice that is inextricably linked to it.

Anger linked to denial and power is relief seeking, but may lead to revenge, where the victim finds themselves living a life of reaction to what has happened but maybe not regaining a sense of value or the freedom of choice that they deserve.

Anger linked to value and honesty says 'I am valuable, I don't deserve to be treated like that. What action is in my best interests. I will make all the choices from minute one of recovery'. It says 'Fair go, mate' and allows the victim to regain value and choice which is resolution: A healing that is not limited by the survival dynamics of denial or power dependency.

I will share three stories and then a Relationship Dynamics Model to build a framework of understanding to seek the optimal relief focused outcome.

Mr.X. was sexually abused by a neighbour at age eight, in the context of what he saw as a close friendship in the absence of much attention from his dad. He had no frame of reference about healthy relationships, boundaries or saying 'yes' or 'no'. When the abuse stopped unexplainedly, he actually felt a sense of rejection. He felt confused. He could not talk to anyone about it and in early adolescence he sought acceptance through peers and drug use. This led to prison, at the age of seventeen, where he was raped on three occasions. He was angry and vowed revenge which over the years he got through physical violence. He stayed angry and kept using drugs for relief. When he came to recovery group he said: 'I got my revenge, but it didn't make me like myself to treat others badly because they had treated me badly'. He's done amazingly well in group and has regained a sense of value that has allowed him to let go of drug dependency and treat himself and others as valuable individuals. He is enjoying parenting and is no longer depressed.

3.

Mr.Y. was the son of a Miner Union boss, who with another boy was sexually abused by the Union official who gave out the money to families when the miners were on strike. The abuse stopped when his family moved out of town. On a return visit he learned that other children in the village were collectively having the abuser taken to court. He asked his friend whether they would join the action but they decided not to, as they felt their parents would not believe them. In fact one of their dads gave evidence to the 'good character' of the accused. The perpetrator was imprisoned and after release about 20 years later, was found murdered in the bush at the place where the boys were abused. A day later the second boy, now a grown man, was found shot dead at the same place. The bullets matched. It became evident that he had committed suicide. He had used power to seek revenge, but it could not give him the sense of value and peace that could have let him honestly let the perpetrator own what he had done.

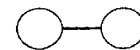
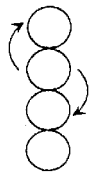
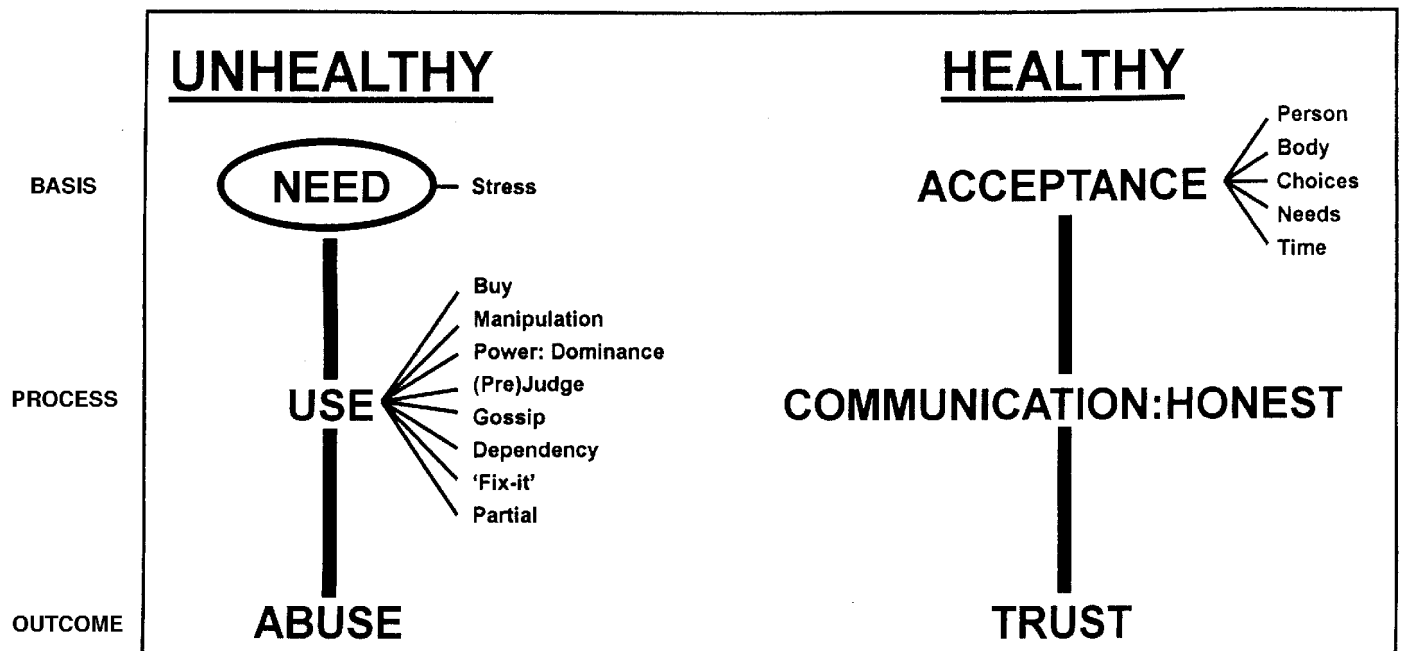
Mr.Z. was sexually abused by his father. He kept it a secret. He did well at University until the alcohol that he used to seek relief impacted on his study. He came to see me and we addressed the alcohol problem but he needed relief from the abuse before he could be free. He decided to tell his sister but asked her not to tell any one, as he wanted to decide who knew. He especially didn't want his mother to know. When sister told someone he felt unsafe as his choice hadn't been respected. He decided that he wanted resolution with his dad but was afraid of what reaction he would get. He was afraid dad would deny it or that anger would spill over. When he felt ready I gave him the choice to have a meeting with dad in the neutral, safe space of my office. Dad did attend. He told dad how he felt about what had happened. Dad listened and admitted what he had done and the fact that he felt bad about what he had done. He apologized and it helped Mr.Z let dad own it, rather than falsely blame himself for not being strong enough as a child to stop it. The apology was a healing thing. He regained a sense of value that allowed him to start making decisions that were best for him rather than seeing himself as 'no good' and abusing himself by repeating patterns that he knew wouldn't produce the relief of resolution. He could let go dependent drinking.

These stories illustrate the need for relief focused recovery approaches.

To understand abuse and recovery I like to look at the Dynamics of how we interact. If relationships don't work, the first thing we often do is blame. I may blame myself or I blame you. This leads to communication breakdown and little chance of resolution. I find it more efficient to look at the Dynamics of the interaction and ask: 'Is this Healthy? Or Unhealthy?' If it is healthy it is likely to have the best possible outcome for both parties. The flip side of blame is that we think for a relationship to work we have to be perfect or meet someone perfect and this is disillusioning, especially if we are honest that neither of us, nor any one is perfect. Let's look at the Relationship Dynamics model and then apply it to abuse and then recovery.

4.

RELATIONSHIPS DYNAMICS MODEL



Wendell J. Rosevear.

Dr. WENDELL J. ROSEVEAR 1990

In a Healthy relationship you feel accepted for yourself. That opens up communication such that you feel free to be honest. If having been honest, you are still accepted, then Trust is the outcome. We feel a sense of equal value and safe.

We want to be accepted for our whole self: our person, our body, our choices, our needs and over time (past, present & future). With acceptance as the foundation, we feel free to say 'yes' or 'no'. Otherwise we may find ourselves saying 'yes' to get accepted. We have now defined Consent.

In a Lover relationship, Trust takes the form of intimacy. In a Healthy Friendship, you both know where you stand, so Trust is Understanding. In a Healthy enemy relationship, each person gives the other enough space, so Trust is shown as Respect: so I let you be you and you let me be me. This is also Healthy Group, where we make a safe place so each person can be honest, to set their own pace, make their own decisions etc. and so achieve healing. Healthy Self is where my acceptance needs are met and I'm free to be honest about each part of myself: my choices, my past, my sexuality, my mistakes etc. and value myself enough to be able to live with myself and be honest.

In Abuse, we don't feel accepted, we are not free to be honest and say 'yes' or 'no' and we learn not to trust.

I assess that Unhealthy Relationships are based on need (as opposed to Acceptance). When we first meet, it seems wonderful as we seem to fill each other's needs. If need is the only basis of the relationship, sadly we are at risk of using each other to meet our needs. Unmet needs produce the pain of stress. We may seek to turn off the pain with drugs or alcohol but these can't fill the need. Needs aren't bad. In a Healthy relationship we accept needs, are honest about them and learn from each other, in a parallel journey, how best to meet them. Certainly, denial can not meet our needs.

We may use each other in many different ways:

- 1) Buy each other. eg. 'I bought you dinner, you owe me sex'-date rape. We feel obligated to say 'yes' & 'yes'.
- 2) Manipulate each other. eg. 'I try to change you to meet my needs.' If I know you well, I know which 'strings to pull to get which reaction I want.' These relationships get reaction but don't and can't produce love.
- 3) Power games where one person puts his or herself up and the other person down. This is commonly seen in sexual abuse. Some people may not have power on their own, and so gang together. When power meets power we call it war. If we know that we can't win we may seek 'peace' by offering to be a loser. People then see us as weak, 'easy ride' or 'doormat' and lose respect for us and treat us worse. Hence you can see some people who don't regain a sense of equal value, vulnerable to re-victimization.
- 4) Judge (&pre-judge). eg. blaming and judging others without knowing the truth, or making them look 'bad' to make you look 'good'. This is a major reason that causes some victims (especially men) get stuck in denial as they are afraid to be blamed, seen as weak or labeled as 'gay'. If you have been a victim once, you are sensitive not to be re-victimized. (Currently only about 10% of victims go to the Police as they are afraid of being re-victimized by the court process.)
- 5) Gossip. Unless we can offer victims the safety of confidentiality, we can not expect them to disclose. This is commonly the case in prison rape where disclosure that is not linked to safety can get you labeled as a 'dog' (traitor of the side) and vulnerable to assault or murder.
- 6) Dependency. -where I depend on you to meet my needs. Sadly, dependency kills honesty, as I am afraid that if I am honest (about choice, past, mistakes etc.), I may face rejection. I like to contrast dependency with trust. In trust, I am free to be honest as I know you accept me.
- 7) A 'fix-it' relationship: where I have to 'fix', rescue or run you life to make me feel good. If I fail, I may want to reject you- eg. If you keep using drugs, being anorexic or self-harming. In these relationships some people get a sense of power out of 'learned helplessness' (Seligman): using a sense of power as a substitute for acceptance or value.eg. "You can't stop me" and so gaining power by doing things that may not even be best for me.
- 8) A Partial relationship where I use part of you: your money, your body, your 'image -as popular' or just for today and don't want to know you tomorrow. You feel used as an object, not accepted as a person.

The result of being used in any of these ways is that we feel devalued, 'dirty', degraded and this is my definition of Abuse: any interaction that devalues.

6.

The common survival response to abuse is to put up a wall about our needs-Denial. (secrecy, pretence, barrier, defence etc). As this can not meet our needs, we may be vulnerable to substance abuse or we may find ourselves 'using' other people to seek relief. We may jump into a dependent relationship ('please like me because I don't like myself). We may seek safety through power, where we have to always be in control to feel safe.

Denial and power are the two most common and predictable 'safety seeking' strategies. However, they may give me a sense of safety at the expense of intimacy, trust, freedom and independence. I may be unable to let people be close or see myself as equal.

Recovery is more than coming out of denial (taking the lid off/ talking). It is about regaining my value or sense of self-acceptance: Moving from Unhealthy to Healthy. Healthy and unhealthy is not about who is 'good' or 'bad', it is about what produces the best possible relief, as opposed to what expresses my needs but ultimately can't adequately fulfill my needs.

Hence it is vital that I find a safe place where I feel accepted to be honest, to make my own decisions, set my own pace, tell who I chose and be respected for my own feelings: not have others tell me how I should feel or which path I must chose to achieve resolution. (eg. Counseling/ Legal/ talking to a friend or a professional).

The saddest consequence of unresolved abuse is to see myself as not valuable now and in the future because of what someone else did to me in the past. This can lead to Self-abuse or Suicide. Some people see themselves as not valuable and seek a sense of relief through punishing themselves. I call it the 'relief of congruity' –"I am getting what I deserve". Sometimes we call this 'Borderline personality disorder' but the labeling process may not help the individual or carer find a way to get better relief.

Some victims don't regain a sense of self- acceptance or value, some get stuck in denial and some become power dependent. I see these three factors as being the major predictors of risk for a victim to become a perpetrator.

I see unresolved abuse as the risk factor. Resolved abuse means you get back your value and valuable people are most likely to treat others as valuable. People who don't value themselves are at risk of using others in an attempt to get their needs met.

Denial is a risk because if you don't see your limits you may find yourself going past them only to be shocked when out of control doing something you never thought you could. The risk then is you go into self- rejection or self- hate, deny what you are doing or the consequences and punish yourself by repeating it.

Of the first 270 victim cases that I analysed, 6% became perpetrators. Not all victims become perpetrators.(Vital understanding so that we don't stigmatize victims and risk adding to their risk of isolating in denial. I have seen some victims not be trusted by family members around children because of this stigma based in myth.)

Most studies of perpetrators show 50-90% have been victims. I assess the difference in percentages is due to the unresolved issues that perpetrators have.

Understanding these dynamics is vital to breaking the cycles of abuse. It does not excuse abuse.

7.

In working with victims and perpetrators, I seek to define acceptance of the value of the person so they can get relief from being honest and so regain their value or self-acceptance. The most efficient strategy I find to do this is to listen. Then they can tell me the truth and with perpetrators usually share with me the fact that they hate themselves for what they have done. This strategy never needs compromise my belief that abuse is unhealthy.

Now we can see that resolution is the regaining of personal value....the linking of honest anger to the acceptance of each individual's equal value. We call this Justice.

Revenge is the linking of anger to denial or power. With power, even if you win you can not get a sense of value that gives equality or safety that lets you relax. I have seen many individuals at the top of a power ladder become target for every other person who is power dependent. So ultimately it can't deliver the safety of equality and respect. Because revenge is a reaction, the reality is the perpetrator is still 'calling the tune', especially if I now treat you badly because you treated me badly. I lose self-respect for sacrificing my values due to your action. Two people treating each other badly never can make it safe.

Currently our society's dominant response to sexual abuse is to offer a legal response based on an Adversarial model. That is one side winning against the other. This has the effect of a power game and so perpetrators often deny what they did in order to win. Victims feel traumatized by the process and are not likely to feel heard or get an apology. Apologies can be a very healing thing that helps them not get stuck in blaming themselves. The dynamics of this adversarial response means we are actually often replicating the power and denial that caused the abuse in the first place.

You can never fix a problem by using the cause.

Examples of these power and denial dynamics have caused a lot of debate in our Australian community in recent times. When Dr. Peter Hollingworth was under attack for not responding to the victims of abuse at a Toowoomba School, he said that he had acted on legal advice. Advice focused on winning a court case to minimize exposure to compensation in my assessment. Victim families didn't feel heard and so not being able to be honest in their pain made them feel devalued. The Chief Justice of Queensland, Mr. Paul de Jersey was quoted in the media as not having given the advice to not speak out in response. Equally no media quoted any alternate, constructive advice. While we only have an Adversarial model, we will continue to foster a collective, societal denial response. In the second controversial case of the fourteen year old girl that Dr. Hollingworth questioned whether she was abused: the key issue is that in response to abuse the best person to decide how they feel about what happened is the person it happened to. He has since apologized. Our role as respondents is to accept people and let them be honest for themselves. If we prejudge the impact we are not accepting the person and letting them be honest for themselves. It is fostering the individual's honesty that is the essence of recovery.

Mr. Howard also reacted to the allegation against Archbishop Pell by saying he believed him, before hearing both sides of the story or being there to know. If we need to judge or take sides, I assess it is seeking relief through power or denial rather than allowing the individuals concerned to own the interaction and resolve it.

When I listen to a story from any side I consciously chose not to judge. I find it more efficient to say 'I support you to be honest, because honesty gives me the best relief possible.' As I integrate acceptance and honesty, I see relief that is not possible through denial or power.

Some of our detecting strategies can be traumatic for victims. eg. Being wired for sound to get evidence or pretending to have a chat despite the intent of getting a confession. It is vital that we don't add to the vulnerability of victims.

With property crime we find a greater sense of resolution for victim and perpetrator using a Mediated Settlement Process. It allows victims to feel heard. It allows perpetrators to better understand the impact of their actions and be less likely to resort to defensive denial. This frees them to apologize and promotes healing for victims and learning for perpetrators. (Denial being a major factor in re-offending).

I assess that we would have a lot to gain by exploring such Resolution focused Models for sexual abuse. I am not saying that all victims should go down this path, as the most important issue is that victims have a choice. Most victims want their perpetrator to learn and change, not get stuck in denial. Victims deserve a choice.

TO BE RAPED IS.....

TO RECOVER IS.....

TO BE OVERPOWERED

TO BE RE-EMPOWERED

TO BE DENIED CHOICE

TO REGAIN CHOICE

TO BE DEGRADED

TO BE RESTORED AND HEAL

TO BE TREATED LESS THAN

TO BE EQUAL

TO HAVE HONESTY IGNORED

TO GAIN RESPECT THROUGH HONESTY

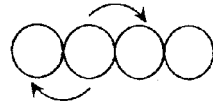
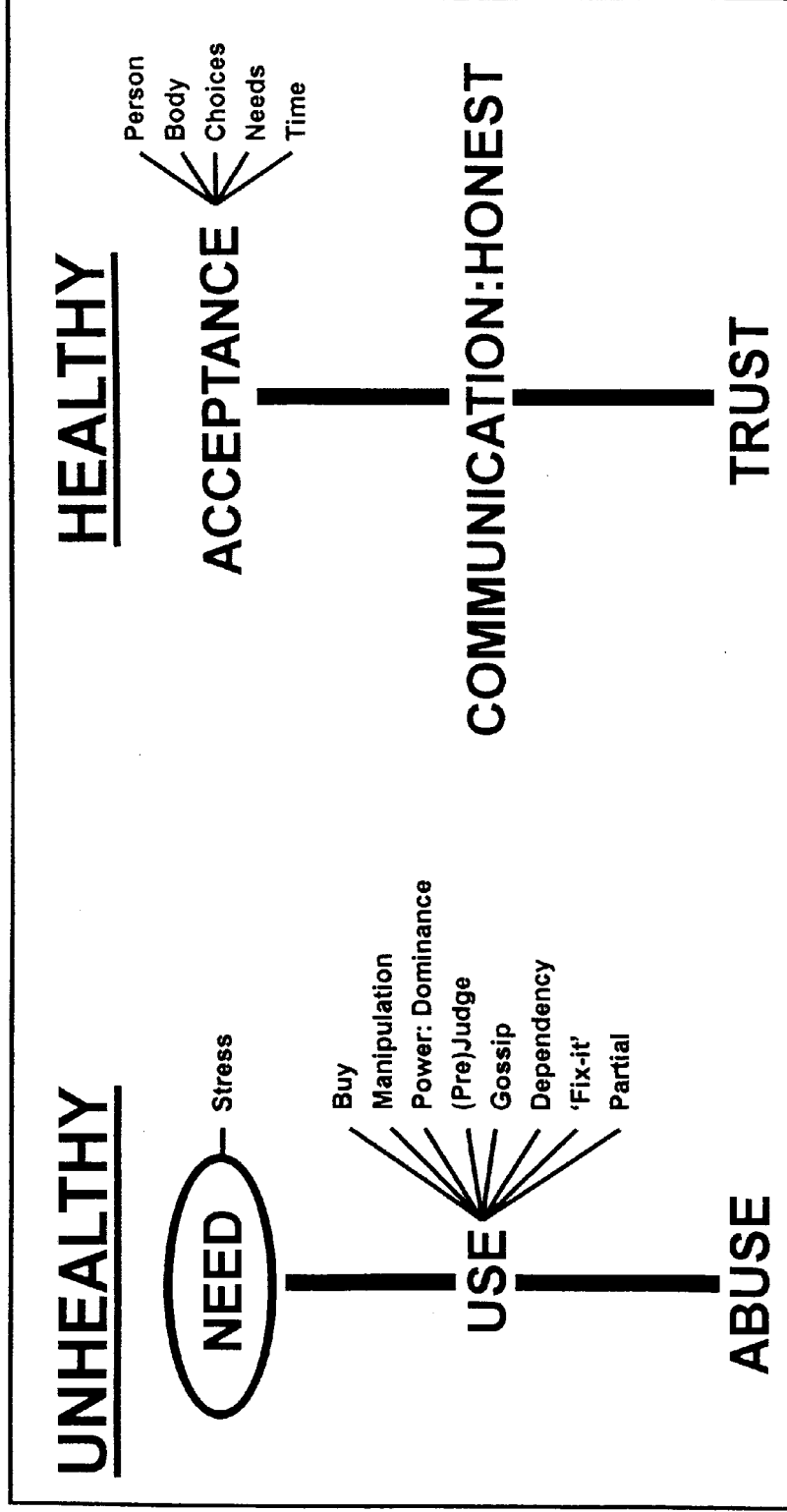
TO BE USED AND ABUSED

TO LOVE AND TRUST

RESOLUTION : THE RESTORING OF VALUE, FREEDOM, SAFETY AND CHOICE.

-Dr.Wendell J. Rosevear.

RELATIONSHIPS DYNAMICS MODEL



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