

SYNOPSIS

Fragments of Home

Piecing Life Together
after Childhood Sexual Abuse



Monique Lisbon

www.fragmentsofhome.com

Background

Fragments of Home: Piecing Life Together after Childhood Sexual Abuse is a multimedia production (book/audio CD) by Australian author and survivor/advocate, Monique Lisbon, published in 2010 by Acorn Press.

A singer/songwriter, Monique Lisbon has released ten albums of her own compositions, including several which explore themes of healing from childhood sexual abuse. Since 1996 she has travelled around Australia, facilitating workshops and speaking publicly (in secular contexts and inter-denominationally within the Christian church), as well as appearing on national and local radio and television. Through both word and song, Monique raises public awareness of the dynamics of healing from child abuse and gives voice to the experiences of many survivors silenced by their abuse.

More details of Monique's work, including a detailed CV, can be found at www.monomusic.com.au

Target audience

Fragments of Home has been written primarily for friends, family members, pastoral workers and other 'caring' professionals supporting adult survivors of abuse in their healing process, as well as survivors themselves. It is accessible for readers/listeners largely unacquainted with the subject matter, but also offers fresh insights for professionals and survivors who are already familiar with the themes explored.

There is little explicit or graphic description of abusive incidents, with the focus intentionally on general themes and dynamics which many survivors face.

Structure

Fragments of Home is the synthesis of many of Monique's public addresses. It explores issues of healing from childhood sexual abuse from four distinctive but integrated perspectives (see Overview). Within each of these four sections, there are four thematically based chapters, as outlined below.

Each of the 16 chapters incorporates:

- a song;
- several autobiographical anecdotes; and
- a theoretical 'Reflections' component which ties together the themes of the chapter.

The accompanying audio CD of 16 tracks includes several new songs, as well as new recordings of previously released songs.

The incorporation of these three different components (music, anecdotes and reflections), and the inclusion of the four different sections, accentuate the book's holistic approach to the topic.

Overview

1. **Beginning's End:** *This section explores the personal/psychological dynamics of coming to face and grapple with having been sexually abused as a child.*
 1. **The Lumbering Elephant:** Realising a lifetime of abuse after decades of blocking it from one's consciousness.
 2. **Unforgetting:** Understanding the repercussions of abuse in adult life as expressions of post-traumatic symptoms (a normal response to an abnormal, traumatic experience), rather than through the pathologising lens of 'sickness'.
 3. **The Wave:** Recognising and reframing feelings of shame, panic and other seemingly 'negative' emotions as constructive 'signposts' to past realities of abuse.
 4. **My Only Safe Place:** Exploring the place of therapy and its different stages in the process of healing from abuse.

2. **Perceiving God:** *This section explores one spiritual/theological perspective of healing. Though this section is distinctively 'Christian' in flavour, it does not attempt to proselytise or sway readers to a particular framework, and poses questions rather than providing definitive answers.*
 5. **Sitting on Razor Blades:** Grappling with the 'absence of God' in dealing with the aftermath of abuse. Coming to a recognition of 'God' in the 'ordinary' rather than the 'supernatural'. Exploring the context of Christian community as potentially harmful or healing.
 6. **Not Saying 'Amen':** Struggling with the non-intervention of God in situations of childhood abuse. Recognising the struggle itself as an act of 'faith'.
 7. **The Suffering God:** Recognising suffering as God's own experience in the person of Jesus. Critiquing concepts of healing as instantaneous. Redefining healing as a lifelong process. Seeing one's woundedness as a basis of honest 'ministry', rather than a hindrance to it.
 8. **Choosing Differently:** Facing the potential within oneself to abuse others, and the necessity of self-awareness and honesty to break patterns of abuse. Reclaiming and redefining the Christian concept of 'sin' as synonymous with abuse.
3. **Leaving Home:** *The third section explores the particular struggle to heal from abuse when it is perpetrated by a trusted caregiver, rather than a stranger.*
 9. **The Ceaseless Tide:** Raising the possibility of 'forgiveness' as a process whereby survivors change their perspective of themselves and the power of their abusers. Acknowledging the complexity of forgiveness, and clarifying 'pseudo-forgiveness' as tantamount to denial or justification of abuse. Recognising the circular, non-linear nature of forgiveness, and the need to often re-visit memories repeatedly before nearing a point of 'resolution'. Defining forgiveness as 'remembering differently' rather than 'forgetting'.
 10. **Gnarled Roots:** Recognising self-doubt and denial about one's own abuse as a legacy of the abuse itself, and of a child's trust in her abuser.
 11. **The Worst Thing:** Exploring the decision to cut off contact from one's abuser. Distinguishing between 'forgiveness' and 'reconciliation'.
 12. **New Roads:** Defining and acknowledging 'dissociation' as a necessary defence mechanism in situations of abuse, but recognising its counter-productiveness when adopted in situations which are no longer traumatic or dangerous. Critiquing notions of 'false memories' of abuse.
4. **Living Forwards:** *The fourth and final section explores what it means to learn to live and relate healthily as an adult in the wake of the abuse.*
 13. **Choosing My Battles:** Recognising the role of anger as a healthy, God-instilled response to injustice, and a statement of the worth of a relationship. Learning to express anger appropriately.
 14. **Skin:** Exploring issues of unhealthy and healthy 'boundaries' in adult relationships.
 15. **Inside the Mirror:** Recognising the role of inter-personal relationships as 'mirrors' to our own self-perception and body-image, including the negative 'mirror' of abuse. Learning to replace destructive 'mirrors' with more life-giving reflections of ourselves.
 16. **Perfect Vision:** Defining 'love' and 'grace' as the ability to 'find what's good in me in all that I'd replace' (from the song, *Eyes of Grace* by Monique Lisbon © MonoMusic 2006). Differentiating between abusive situations posing as 'love', and situations of true 'grace' where one's own inner beauty can be reclaimed as a healing force and a springboard to help others. Recognising that this is not the end of the process, but feeling free enough to take the risk to 'live forwards'.