

Seven Steps on the Journey to Thriving After Abuse

By Susan M. Omilian



STEP 1: You'll see your journey by beginning with a writing exercise about your favorite fairy tales. These stories can help you see that in everyone's life there is a struggle of some kind (e.g., a loss of a job, divorce, illness, abuse, violence). That struggle can be overcome by a life-altering event (e.g., Cinderella meets the fairy godmother, Sleeping Beauty wakes up) that sets us on the road to the happy ending. No matter how many times I do this exercise with women, they always tell me they believe in the happy ending. It will be our work, then, to get you there... to the Happy Ending!

STEP 2: You'll quiet down the Inner Critic, that negative voice in your head from childhood that becomes overprotective and too rigid for us as adults. For an abused woman, that voice tells us we're no good, stupid, can't do anything right, and it can also be the voice of the abuser. With an interactive exercise, we will tune into the voice of our Inner Critic, learn to respond to it and create affirmations to help quiet its chatter and reduce its potency to sabotage or derail us on way to our Happy Ending!

STEP 3: You'll connect with the Happy Person Inside, a part of you that has probably been trounced down by the abuse in your life. She is the cheerleader inside who loves you, supports you and guides you with great wisdom if only you would listen.

STEP 4: You'll get the positive energy going again in your life by working with the energy of the Happy Person Inside you and shifting your focus to express gratitude for all the good things in your life — past, present and future!

STEP 5: You'll vision a new life for you and your children, beginning with focusing on what you are passionate about and what dreams and desires you may have given up on in your life. We'll look at what drives us to find the work we love, such as the search for meaningful work, the need to help others or make the world a better place. Then we'll work on manifesting what we desire. We can do it!

STEP 6: You'll overcome your fears and limiting beliefs, such as "Abuse has always been a part of my life. I can't do anything about it." or "Bad things always happen to me." or "There is no way I can create the life I want right now." We'll explore peak experiences in our lives and identify positive patterns so we can repeat them again.

STEP 7: You'll set new short-term and long-term goals that will reflect the new, positive energy in your life and allow you to thrive, not merely survive the abuse. We'll look at dreams deferred, like going to law school, traveling around the world, writing a book, and we'll set out simple, easy steps so we can attain goals without any more delay.