

Because of you ...

Below are the words from Kelly Clarkson's popular song about abuse. My interpretation of this song is that it is about a young woman who had a history of abuse as a child, and because of the horrors of her childhood, she finds it difficult to love, trust, and feel whole again.

Because of You

*I will not make the same mistakes that you did
I will not let myself cause my heart so much misery
I will not break the way you did
You fell so hard
I've learned the hard way, to never let it get that far*

*Because of you
I never stray too far from the sidewalk
Because of you
I learned to play on the safe side
So I don't get hurt*

*Because of you
I find it hard to trust
Not only me, but everyone around me
Because of you
I am afraid*

My spirit moves me to write about this subject and pay tribute to one of our own, Diana Jay, RDH. Diana is one of the most beautiful and courageous women I know. She is soft-spoken and may appear to lead the life of a middle-class woman who lives in a world that most of us would envy. Her softness is overshadowed by an inner strength that has been built on faith, character, and suffering.

The following poem was written by Diana at 45. She wrote it through her inner child's mind at an age of 8 years. This poem won an award in a poetry contest in an Illinois town.

Inner Child

Again I awake to screaming and yelling,

*How long will it last? There is no telling.
I sneak out of bed and peak through the door,
Daddy knocked Mommy down on the floor.*

*Her nose is bleeding and she has a black eye,
He hits her again, "Please don't let her die!"
I must save my mommy, but what can I do?
If I try to stop him, he'll hit me too.*

*I feel guilty, I feel helpless, and so much shame,
Sometimes I wonder if I'm to blame.
I'll try to be good so he doesn't get mad,*

Then maybe he'll stop drinking and be a nice dad.

*He's left the room now and gone to bed,
I go hug my mommy and kiss her head.
She tells me she loves me and everything's all right,
"Go to bed now, darling, I'll leave on the light."*

*I soon fall asleep and begin to dream,
But I see a monster that makes me scream!
He's big, he's scary, and he's coming my way,
But my feet won't move! "Help me!" I pray.*

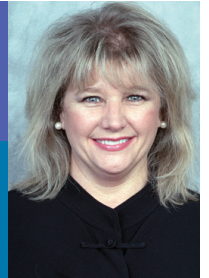
I wake up, he's gone, it was just a



Diana as a young girl

MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

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*nightmare,
But I want my mommy because I'm so scared.
I want her to hug me and say it's all right,
But if I wake Daddy there might be a fight.*

*I'll lay here and count sheep like I've done before,
Soon I see the sun creeping in under my door.
It's time to get up to school I must hurry,
I'm so very sleepy and feel so much worry.*

*The teacher says, "Diana, answer the questions!"
I say, "I don't know." She says, "Pay attention!"*

*I wish I knew the answer, but I'm not
very bright,
Daddy says I'm stupid and, well,
grownups are right.*

*It's always so much nicer when Daddy
stays away,
But then Mommy is sad and cries most
of the day.
Mommy says Daddy wasn't always this
way,
He was nice 'til he took a drink one day.*

*I just don't understand and I know I'm
not smart,
But if drinking does this, why did he
start?
Why can't he just stop and be nice like
before?
Then we'd be happy and Mommy won't
get hurt anymore.*

Can you feel her pain? There was no one to reach out to her. She could not reach out to anyone because she believed she did something wrong. Something must have been her fault.

I had the privilege of interviewing Diana Jay.

Diana entered dental hygiene school a little later in life as many of us are doing these days. One of her prerequisites was to take a psychology class. It was here that she began to break down the many walls and discover some of her subconscious behaviors and reasons for her low self-esteem. Diana realized she had a fear of anyone in authority. The monster nightmares that she wrote about were all true — she discovered the monster was living right under her own roof ... her father. At night when she would have nightmares and was too afraid to go get her mother because her father was in the same room, she learned a survival technique at an early age. Diana would count sheep until she fell asleep.

Her father was an alcoholic and would come home and tell Diana and her mother how stupid they were. There were five children under this roof. Diana's first step in building her character of strength is that she took on the "Mom" role. She wanted to protect

her other siblings from what she had to endure. She endured belt beatings and was constantly told that she was to be a "good girl." Diana became the "good girl" from fear and added another survival method ... staying quiet.

A real-life horror story that Diana observed was to see her mother's teeth being knocked out and her nose being broken. The trip to the hospital and dental office proved nothing more than beginner's first aid. No questions were asked at the dental office. No comments. No concern. Business as usual. Her father's comment at the hospital was, "WE shouldn't have done that."

Another monster nightmare Diana had was observing her mother mopping the floor and it wasn't good enough. A gun was held to her mother's head. Her mother passed out and lay on the floor. The "monster" kept yelling and screaming at her, telling her that she was "faking it." He grabbed the wet, dirty mop and stuck it in her mother's face to make her move.

These were repeated instances that no child should experience. How did Diana survive?

Diana knew each day when she returned from school whether or not it was a good day for her mother by counting the holes in the wall.

"I knew if I saw a hole in the wall, something happened while I was at school."

Again, Diana wrote a short poem for her own therapeutic survival.

The Hole in the Wall

*The hole in the wall says violence was
here.*

The hole in the wall tells of fear.

*The hole in the wall says that mom was
hit too.*

*The hole in the wall says it could have
been you.*

*The hole in the wall was repaired today.
But the hole in my heart can't be fixed
today.*

I asked Diana what she learned through all of this. Her answer was sim-

ply, "Never be dependent on a man," and "Take charge of your own life."

What are some of the lessons that Diana has carried through life? She has been taught to either learn from these experiences or let them destroy her.

Diana believes she is a less judgmental person and more compassionate and understanding than most. What a gift for a dental hygienist and, most of all, her patients.

Dental hygienists can save lives

The subject matter is raw, and many times we want to avoid the issues because they make us feel uncomfortable. Some of us have experienced this firsthand and are in denial because it makes us feel uncomfortable. What are your mind, body, and spirit telling you?

As health-care professionals, we are required to take a stand and be aware of this problem.

Articles have been written on PANDA (Prevent Abuse and Neglect Through Dental Awareness). **Dr. Lynn Douglas Mouden, DDS, MPH, FICD, FACD**, founded PANDA and continues to pursue his passion. My purpose in this column is to remind us again to be more compassionate and understanding of people who could have deeper reasons for having a bad day. Abuse does not stop with children and wives. There is a growing concern for the elderly. Our assessments must include an awareness for abuse and report to a higher authority when strongly suspected. *Dental hygienists can save lives.*

Support through volunteering

Cindy Kueller, RDH, of DuPage County, Ill., proudly and humbly states, "I contacted YWCA, the local domestic abuse chapter in DuPage, since in the past WSDHS had donated toothbrushes and toothpaste, and found out that there is an annual rally called 'Take Back the Night' for the survivors of domestic abuse. The contacts were very open to WSDHS support and allowed us to distribute oral-care products and educational material. Not only did the people who attended the rally benefit,

MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

but all of us who participated in this rally really were awakened to the depth of domestic abuse right here in DuPage! I think my most memorable part of the evening was handing a toothbrush to a very timid lady and seeing her shyness brighten to a gorgeous smile. I truly believe she was a survivor who had gotten to that point to trust again. And through that evening, we decided it was an important event to continue to support. Later, we even had RDHs open up about their personal stories of abuse and how they had survived. It's an awareness that it happens to all walks of life; no one social group is exempt!"

Resources

There are many references on this subject. Guidelines and protocols can be different in every state depending on the activity of the PANDA group. Here are a few:

- <http://www.sarahs-house.org>
- <http://www2.cdc.gov/nccdphp/doh/synopses/ProgramDataV.asp?ProgramID=1>
- http://www.aapd.org/media/Policies_Guidelines/G_Childabuse.pdf
- <http://www.umdj.edu/~baum/famvio.htm>
- <http://www.dent.umich.edu/about/aboutschool/news/news2006/news040506.html>

Closing thoughts

I want to leave you with one more poem that came across my e-mail and I do not know the author but, nevertheless, it touched me as I hope it does you.

Sarah

*My name is Sarah
I am but three,
My eyes are swollen
I cannot see.*

*I must be stupid,
I must be bad,
What else could have made
My daddy so mad?*

*I wish I were better,
I wish I weren't ugly,*

*Then maybe my Mommy
Would still want to hug me.*

*I can't speak at all,
I can't do a wrong
Or else I'm locked up
All the day long.*

*When I awake I'm all alone
The house is dark
My folks aren't home.*

*When my Mommy does come
I'll try and be nice,
So maybe I'll get just
One whipping tonight.*

*Don't make a sound!
I just heard a car
My daddy is back
From Charlie's Bar.*

*I hear him curse
My name he calls
I press myself
Against the wall.*

*I try and hide
From his evil eyes
I'm so afraid now
I'm starting to cry.*

*He finds me weeping
He shouts ugly words,
He says it's my fault
That he suffers at work.*

*He slaps me and hits me
And yells at me more,
I finally get free
And I run for the door.*

*He's already locked it
And I start to bawl,
He takes me and throws me
Against the hard wall.*

*I fall to the floor
With my bones nearly broken,
And my daddy continues
With more bad words spoken.*

*"I'm sorry!" I scream
But it's now much too late
His face has been twisted
Into unimaginable hate.*

*The hurt and the pain
Again and again
Oh please God, have mercy!
Oh please let it end!*

*And he finally stops
And heads for the door,
While I lay there motionless
Sprawled on the floor.*

*My name is Sarah
And I am but three,
Tonight my daddy
Murdered me.*

Because of you, it may be that you save even more lives. Thank you, Diana, for sharing this most intimate part of your life. You, again, are my hero. **RDH**