

Empower: Guide to Encouraging Victims

After many sessions of arguing with my counselor about my potential and worth, he finally said to me one day, "Ruth, I want you to write down everything that you're ashamed of and bring the list to your next appointment and we'll talk about it." Oh man! I didn't like this idea at all! He was such a nice guy and I thought if I didn't go back, I was being mean. I couldn't be mean to him. Not going back may cause him to feel bad or inadequate. So I went back but I was focused on HIS feelings and what he would think of me. I was so used to trying to manage my trafficker's emotions and approvals, to keep him happy, that I continued to do this with my counselors and with anyone who reached out to me. I focused too much on getting approval from others and how I might make them feel. I put myself second constantly, to everyone. Now I can see this is why I was so hard to reach.

I WAS beginning to trust him a bit too so I wrote a list of what was on my criminal record. I didn't write down the prostitution charges though. I didn't trust him THAT much. I was duped by counselors before so I had to keep "testing the waters" a bit more. I thought by seeing what was on my police record, would be evidence enough for him to see that I really wasn't worthy and that there's really no use in trying to go forward; that I'll never get a job or be able to turn my life around. He challenged my beliefs relentlessly but to me, he was distorting the truth. I know now that he was trying to change the thoughts and beliefs I had about myself. He wanted me to believe with all my heart that I'm just as worthy of love

and forgiveness as the next person so I could go forward. I argued with him relentlessly.

He took the list from my hand. He held it in his hands for a bit and then looked me in the face. And then he ripped it up! To my surprise he never even read it! As he was ripping it up, he said, "It doesn't matter what you've done Ruth; it's all forgiven." He then let all the pieces fall into the waste basket and said, "You can forget about all that now. Don't let what you've done in the past hold you back from a prosperous future. God has a job waiting for you out there; we just have to find it." My eyes filled with tears. No one had ever extended so much patience and acceptance to me like he had before. Knowing I had someone who believed in me was so empowering. The next list I wrote was a list of goals. I thank God for him.

Empowering Words

- You have what it takes to make it in life.
- Be true to yourself, you won't regret it.
- Tap into what that voice inside you is telling you.
- Discover YOUR truth and stand on it.
- Honor your own feelings and beliefs because your feelings and beliefs matter.

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