

GOD RESCUED ME FROM A LIFE OF BEING HURT

I was born August 29, 1956, here in Newton. In 1957, my parents bought a house in Aurora Heights, what I fondly call The Hood. I had one brother, who was 14 years older than me. I started elementary school the same year he graduated from high school. I was reminded often from him and my mom that I was a mistake. My dad hardly ever spoke to me. He and my brother despised each other and after a week out of high school, my brother joined the army.

I was 5 years old the first time I remember my dad beating up on my mom in a drunken rage. He was a very violent alcoholic. He never touched me, like I said, he very seldom spoke to me. My parents both worked at Maytag on separate shifts so that someone would be home with me. Sometimes when they were on the same shift, I went to a babysitter. I liked it when they were on separate shifts because the fighting wasn't so bad. But, boy, on the weekends it intensified. Every Friday and Saturday and Sunday night. In the '60's, you couldn't buy beer so he would bring home a case from the bar to get him through Sunday. You couldn't buy alcohol at the grocery store either. My dad could get himself worked into a rage for stuff all by himself and my mom got the beatings for it. I spent a good deal of my childhood under my bed, out of the way. And I ate and ate and ate. I was a very fat kid and was made fun of a lot at school. Food was my comfort. I had stashes everywhere. By the time I graduated high school I weighed well over 200 pounds. College was not an option for me. My brother went to Drake and reminded me that HE was the smart one and I was the dumb one. I knew that was true because in 3rd grade my mom told me often that I was backward, awkward and would never amount to a damn thing.

After graduating my few friends started getting married. I wanted to get married too, to get out of that house. I met a guy who overlooked my weight and I was 3 months pregnant when we married in 1976. My mom was furious with me and called me horrible names because I had sullied our family name. My husband joined the Marines and after my first son was born, we moved with him to Virginia. We were there for 2 years and I noticed that my husband's activities were questionable, but I didn't question him. When he got out, we moved back to Iowa, settling in Grinnell. Our second son was born in 1980. Our marriage broke apart when I found out that my husband was gay and had been advertising his "services" in men's magazines. I found out later that he had sexually abused our oldest son. Once again, I felt like such a failure. My dad had died from alcohol poisoning in 1981, and my mom and brother accused me of lying about my husband to get attention in my sick way.

I moved the boys and myself back to Newton. I raised them alone without child support of any kind. Also, in 1981, I qualified for the new weight loss surgery. My family was not supportive because the surgery was new and I proved just how dumb I was to get it.

I met my second husband and married him in 1988. We had a son together who was born in 1989. My new husband also adopted my two other sons. It took 11 years of marriage to figure out that we really had nothing in common. I divorced him. I'm certainly not proud that I have 2 divorces under my belt and realized I was just as dumb as my family told me.

2007 was by far the worst year of my life. Keep in mind that there was no God in my life. I had no idea that anyone, including God, could possibly love anyone like me. My oldest son died unexpectedly that year and I felt like I had been kicked so hard, I would never get back up.

My mom died in 2009 and my brother died in 2014. I finally felt freed. I had known a woman who went to The Way for several years by then. We lived across the street from her parents until I got divorced. We also worked together at the phone company and she simply wouldn't let go of me till I agreed to go to her church.

The Way and the church family saved my life. So many times it would have been so much easier to call my life quits. But, I have found a God who loves me and friends I can count on to lift me. I truly don't understand why my son had to die, but the rest I can put behind me. I am so glad I can finally be a child of God.