

Marian's Story



At 30 years of age, Marian is a success. She is happily married, has two master's degrees, works as a linguistic speech therapist, competes in track and field and was chosen "Miss Eboness" at Southern Illinois University...

Consider that Marian did all of this despite being a physically, emotionally and sexually abused child.

Marian says that she still struggles with feelings of worthlessness.

"I felt like I was a disappointment and that everything I did didn't suffice. I don't recall a single time that my father hugged me, and yet he did all those other things that seemed easy enough for him to do. When you believe something for so long about someone who means so much, it sticks and it's really hard to get it out of your mind."

Thanks to the intuition of Marian's teacher, the cycle of abuse finally stopped. "I think ultimately my teacher had a gut instinct that day and she followed it. I was bruised from being beaten by my father the night before and just couldn't sit still. My teacher came over to me and asked if everything was alright. I lied and said I was fine. She asked again and touched my shoulder reassuringly. I winced in pain."

The teacher reported her suspicions to the local Children's Aid Society. They investigated the report then placed Marian into foster care. After one placement, she moved in with foster parents, Linda and Chip Weseloh. A life-long bond would follow. "I think Linda was the first person to tell me I was beautiful. I think she tried to hug me, even that first day."

Marian says her new foster parents took the time to get to know her. "They began to build me up by helping me see myself in a way that I didn't even realize existed."

"They enrolled me in singing lessons. They came and heard me sing and I got a great big hug. All the way home they just talked about how wonderful I was."

Gradually, Marian's self esteem started to grow. "I saw that I wasn't such a horrible person and that there was someone in there that could be somebody."

Marian eventually joined university in Illinois on a full track scholarship. She credits her success today with the support she received while in foster care and is grateful to the teacher who took action and reported the abuse.

She thinks everyone has a role to play in keeping kids safe. "I would encourage people to follow their instincts. Look, listen and watch out for kids behaving oddly. Kids are really clever at hiding abuse. But even the ones that hide it will get tired after a while and start dropping hints. Most importantly, I would encourage people learn the signs of abuse so that they too can make a difference to others like me."

You can learn the signs of abuse and how to report it by visiting useyourvoice.ca.

Story written by Anne Rappe

