

On Behavior



Keith Trimm

On Behavior

© 2012 Keith Trimm Publishing

Table of Contents

Part 1 My Commentary.....	Page 1
Part 2 The Interviews.....	Page 54
Part 3 My Observations.....	Page 172

For Dad

Cover artwork and illustrations: Keith Trimm

ISBN: 978-1-300-11785-8

Part 1 My Commentary

None of this is new or ground breaking; it's my commentary on human behavior as I've seen it along with a large dose of interpersonal interviews tossed in.

I have an idea, I don't know if it's a theory so I'll call it an idea for now. That idea is that people are made up of bits and pieces of mental stuff like grains of sand scooped up from a sand pile and placed in a bucket and aged with a lifetime of experiences and spiced with emotions. Each grain of sand is a personality trait randomly selected and added to the pile to create a unique person with traits shared with but not in the same combination with everyone else. My instinct is to think that everyone would be for the most part alike when it comes to certain things. If you show a picture of a baby to most people they will ooh and ahhh over it and rarely do you see someone look away in disgust and make rude comments. But then maybe they do, just not on the outside.

Culture and the need to fit in can and will change a person's behavior in a group. People do things in groups they would never do in private. This isn't ground breaking new science, but it helps explain some behavior. It seems if everyone else is doing it, then it must be ok, especially in tense situations although they were taught it was wrong. When is it ok to loot from a store? I would think never, but if you live in a big city and the power goes out, there will be a group of people who think the behavior is perfectly fine. But how can that be? We were all taught as kids that stealing is wrong, and there is at least one commandment against stealing, yet prisons are filled with thieves who didn't pay attention, didn't care or were forced by economic reasons to go against what our laws say.

So why don't we live in a society where we all do our own thing regardless of others? I think that's because after a short time we would all be dead or constantly trying to kill each other off for what the others have. It seems over time that cooperation among humans has been a benefit so we try to get along but for some reason we don't go all the way and live in harmony. There must be a reason why there are

segments of the population that rebel and go against the norm. These reasons I guess are based on the situations at hand. As I said before, we are all buckets of sand and we have to conform to the situations that we encounter. The traits we have in our buckets now were formed from thousands of years of interactions with other humans.

This leads me to the theme of my article which is why are we so alike yet so different? If someone knew the key to human behavior, they would be rich because they could read people and know what to say and do to get the results they want and not have to resort to punishment or coercion to get the results they want. If you've ever had a boss, you know they have different ways of getting things done. Some are whip crackers with no personality skills and some you would do anything for and they never had to raise their voice.

If you look at body language and facial expression, they're universal, or you would think universal postures, gestures and looks that could and would be interpreted the same way would be interpreted the same way. But no, it's cultural and specific to the group you grew up in. I've known a few people that were very intuitive and could read my face better than anything I ever said. I admire these people because they can pick up on the most subtle of facial expression and body language. How they do it? Who knows? Nature or nurture? Maybe people who were able to read other people's expressions had a better survival rate and passed the trait onto their offspring. Since not everyone could do this, not everyone got that trait so again each person's sand box is different.

About 70,000 years ago the human population went through a bottle neck where there may have been as few as 15,000 humans alive on the Earth. This was in part due to the Toba super volcano in Indonesia. That means that the entire 7 billion human population of the Earth may be descended from as little as 15,000 individuals so you would think that we would be far more alike than different, and according to DNA research this bears that out. So our personality traits, of which 16 have been identified according to the Meyers-Briggs personality test, have all come from a very small population.

The different personality types are as follows: The Duty Fulfiller, The Mechanic, The Nurturer, The Artist, The Protector, The Idealist, The Scientist, The Thinker, The Doer, The Guardian, The Performer, The Caregiver, The Inspirer, The Giver, The Visionary and The Executive. <http://www.personalitypage.com/high-level.html> will link you to a page with a full description.

So what is the key to understanding human behavior? Ask someone who's good at it and find out. I have no idea. A con artist can conceal and a good liar, of which there are many can fool even the best intuitive. People who wear their emotions on their sleeves have a difficult time hiding their emotions, and we all know people who can't be read no matter what.

If you ever read the book, "**How to win friends and influence people**" By Dale Carnegie, a very good book that I recommend, you learn through a book full of anecdotal stories, that the way to make friends is to take a genuine interest in others. The book was written at the beginning of the 20th century, but the advice is timeless. People will like you if you take an interest in them first and not be fake about it. Its basic human nature and Dale Carnegie made a living teaching that skill and selling books. I'm not sure if that works for all personality types, I'm sure some people fall out of the bell curve, but for the most part, people like to talk about themselves. It comes from the most basic need which is self-preservation which is the motive for most behavior; the need to make myself number one at the expense of others.

Unless you're a mother willing to jump in front of a car to save your child, most people are out to save them first. At the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are physiological needs. The need to feed, clothe and shelter yourself. I think all behavior roots from this need in one way or another. So what motivates someone to be nice to me you ask? My answer is that being nice to you benefits the person being nice in some way. This doesn't sound like the Disney world we would all like to live in, but then even Disney was out to make a buck.

If it seems like I'm rambling a bit here there is a reason. I thought about putting my thoughts into an outline and dividing my article into sections about behaviors and personality, but then I thought maybe it would be better if I let the conversation lead itself and see where it goes. For those of you with OCD, this might not be the best format, but I want this to take on a life of its own and see where it goes.

So, we have personality, we have emotion, we have experience, we have DNA and we have situations that bring all of this into behavior. We each bring our bucket of sand to every situation and match our bucket of sand against the bucket of the person we are interacting. Mix in the time of day, the weather, the gender of the participants and what they had for lunch and you will get any different number of interactions between the participants. So how is it in court cases when they say, "What an average person would do in the same situation" hold true? You could get any combination of outcomes based on the circumstances.

Let's set up an example. You see a car hit a small dog running across the street and your first reaction is "Oh my God, that is horrible; I can't believe what I just saw, poor dog." The guy standing next to you may say, "Stupid dog should have been looking out for cars." A third person may say, "That dumbass could have hit a kid, the cops need to pay more attention to traffic around here."

Depending on your feelings about dogs and traffic, your opinion on the dog strike could vary greatly, and if you are a dog lover, you could easily get into an argument with the guy who blamed the dog instead of the driver. So what would the average person do or say in this situation? I guess you would have to take a survey and see how the bell curve turned out. Maybe 90% of the people would be sympathetic to the dog while only 2% would blame the dog. In any case, why doesn't everyone think the same way about the dog?

We have herbivores and we have carnivores and we all seem to get along for the most part. There are small populations that fight and argue against the other, but not all that often. Humans are Omnivores

by definition, primates as well and our brain size has been linked to eating the protein in meat. So being a vegetarian goes against what made us what we are. We have become so smart that we have identified the property in meat that can cause us harm and have developed compassion with animals to the point where some people won't use them as the food that made the people what they are now. Trying to predict behavior is like taking a snapshot of a raging rapid and predicting where the waves will be in the next second. Humans share the same basic emotions: love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness and fear but feel them differently depending on many variables including physiological reasons such as serotonin and dopamine in their brains. Someone suffering from depression may view and interaction very differently than someone without depression because of the lack of chemicals in their brain. These chemical differences are often genetic and run in families and must have had some sort of advantage in human history for it to survive as a trait we still possess.

I addressed this in another article where I argued that the anxious and depressed caveman served a purpose as the watchdog for the group and alerted the rest of the group when things were going bad. Depression and anxiety are caused by the same lack of chemicals in the brain and depression may be a byproduct of anxiety, which in itself can be a benefit when no one else is paying attention to how much wholly mammoth meat is left.

For my first attempt at trying to explain human behavior, I am going to republish an article I wrote last year titled, "**Why can't we all get along ?**" it is my attempt to try to explain from an evolutionary standpoint why humans aren't very good at being nice to each other. Here is the article in full.

Why can't we all get along?

It's a simple question, and I think it has a simple answer. Human beings have not evolved to get along. Let me explain, and this is just my opinion. For 100,000 years humans lived in small groups that depended on each other to survive. That group could be called the family group

and is the main reason why families are the one group that usually sticks together during good times and bad.

Other groups who came in contact with each other usually didn't do so to exchange niceties and have tea; they usually showed up to take what you had so they could survive. It has only been in the last few hundred years that the human race has now changed into a society where you go to school, and fill out job applications for work.

So what does this mean? It means that people you never would have hung out with outside of school or work are put together into groups and expected to live like the family group when in fact it is more like the territorial small group situation described above. These people have no vested interest in your survival, only their own and act accordingly. Does this make us sound uncivilized? Of course it does. Civilized is only an illusion that can be broken by the smallest of things, like a power outage. See how much looting goes on during a black out and how much crime takes place when no one is looking.

This may sound like I am saying people are inherently bad. I don't think "bad" is the proper word. People are self-serving and will do what it takes to benefit themselves or their immediate family unit. As a writer, I have often looked to motive for the stories I have written, and after all these years, it is self-preservation that seems to be the root of it all.

The altruistic trait in some people seems at odds with the norm of society. The story of the Good Samaritan is preached and taught to show us that there is more in this world than ourselves and that giving is better than receiving. So why isn't that the norm?

Like I said before, people are motivated by what they can do for themselves and it doesn't take much for them to dislike in others what they can't have for themselves. May it be envy or jealousy; these emotions are the core of the conflict of why we just can't seem to get along.

In doing research for this article, I asked some people what they saw in others that made them dislike people. These are some of their answers.

"Looks aren't a big deal when it comes to people or friends for me personally. People are born with their looks, I won't dislike them for that, I would expect the same from others to me. With personality, it kind of goes with my first comments I guess, I don't like people with hateful or superior personalities. I'm a lot easier going about people in general than some people, so it's hard for me to give you anything specific. I give everyone their fair chance to show me who they are, and I decide later to dislike the rude, mean, hateful ones."

"It always makes me uneasy when I'm meeting a person for the first time and they don't smile. Also when they say inappropriate things or curse a lot it's like wow we are not close enough for you to tell me a dirty joke yet, show some respect I'm a lady. The physical is people who have bad breath or people who stand way too close like they don't respect the personal bubble policy."

"Bad attitudes, people that are rude, don't seem to care about who they offend, how they treat their families, drugs/drunks, no eye contact means they are hiding things, people that only talk about themselves"

"Someone who thinks they are better than, has everything, knows everything, has done everything, when in fact you know they haven't and don't. Why put up that front and not be real?"

"Honestly for me it's a couple things. Bad sense of style, like if the clothes they wear have holes or are dirty, don't match. I hate ugly facial hair, if it's trimmed nicely and well groomed that's great but if they look like a caveman, no. Or if they are trying too hard to look and act like a badass when in all reality they aren't even close."

"People that are self-absorbed, greedy, bad grooming skills, and the people that have a comment for everything someone says."

"Arrogance/Cockiness/Snobby"

"I hate when people judge others. I don't care if you are dressed nice or have money or have looks or are clean or anything. I always like when a person talks with you and just plain acts normal, no judging once so ever. Everyone has something to say, everyone has a story and some of those people that others look down on are the most interesting people of all. A lot of people just don't give them a chance to speak up and be heard. Everyone has a heart and loves attention to a point, give it to them and you might really be surprised what you may learn from them."

So what does this all mean? It means that you constantly have to cover your ass and put on a show to keep others at bay. Ask a pride of lions what a chain of command is and they would say, if I can kill you, I'm at the top. It doesn't work that way in our society, we have laws against killing so we find other ways to get to the top that aren't much better than getting out baseball bats and clubbing the guy in charge. Sometimes the club is just a metaphor for something else used to take down who you need to take down.

Why do we even have laws? Well, I can only suppose it's to keep our new larger groups in line. Back in the day the law was whoever was the biggest and strongest, now it's written down and ruled on by judges and can we say it's fair to this day?

I'm not saying that we should have a hippie style utopia where we all share the wealth and sit around smoking dope and getting along. I don't think that would even last very long. It's not human nature to get along and anyone who has been picked on by a bully in the school yard as a kid knows that.

I also have written a series of articles titled, "**Everything I ever learned, I learned from caveman Bob**" which tries to explain other human behaviors from an evolutionary stand point. The next few articles are from that series.

Why we have laws

This is not going to be groundbreaking, so don't get your hopes up too high, but I would like to explore the life that Bob went through to try to explain why we do the things we do now. The question today is, "Why do we have laws?" Is it to give senators and representatives a paycheck? No, it's because we are a bunch of self-serving, gimmy what I want, babies who can't seem to get along. Follow me with this.

Back in the day, Bob the caveman spent his days hunting so he and his family wouldn't starve. Pretty simple stuff, don't eat, die, cause and effect. But down the creek lived Ed who for no other reason than bad luck couldn't catch a mammoth to save his life, literally. He had no bad motives, no ill intentions, just wanted to provide for his family. Nice guy Ed.

So one day, he happens to spy Bob out carving up a mammoth that he just felled and thinks to himself, "I'm really hungry, but I don't know this guy. I've never really shared anything with anyone before besides my family so I'm not sure if this guy would be willing. I could ask what the heck." So Ed walks over to Bob the way that cavemen do, hunched over and all barbaric and Bob looks up and sees this guy coming at him. "Hmmm, Bob thinks to himself. What an odd occurrence, someone who I don't know is coming over. Maybe he wants to play some sort of word game or ask me for directions?"

Ed makes his way over and stands looking down at Bob and says, "Hey, nice mammoth there." Bob looks up and takes a moment from his carving and says, "Yep, up at six this morning in my tree stand and this guy walked right in front of me. It was amazing. He practically fell right into my pit."

By now Ed is starting to think maybe Bob is bragging a bit and a twinge of jealousy hits him. "That's pretty lucky," Ed replies, "You

gonna eat all that?" he asks. Bob replies, "No, but I got a family and about twelve others waiting on this." Ed scratches his chin and looks back toward his territory and back at Ed. "Would you mind sharing some of that?" Bob sits back and thinks for a second. "You know we haven't got to that whole sharing thing in the bible yet because it's 30,000 years before it will be written, so I really have to motivation to share with you. I mean, what am I going to get out of this?"

Ed feels a grumble in his stomach and ponders for a second. "I could teach you how to juggle, or how to make armpit fart noises, my kids love doing that." Bob smiles and says, "I don't think so, I better get back to my mammoth before another wolf gets here." Ed says, "I didn't see any wolves around here...oh, I see, you mean me." Bob smiles back and gets on with his work.

I could stop right here because you can tell where I'm going with this, but it's too fun to write so I will continue. So, now Ed is stuck standing their listening to his stomach grumble, watching Bob carve up his mammoth, who refused to share. He thinks to himself, "I could walk away and die, or I could take this for myself. Let's ponder for a second. Hmmmmm ok, mmmmm, ok" and he shoves his spear through Bob's skull.

So now Bob is dead and Ed hauls as much mammoth off to his camp as he can and gets the rest of his clan to go get the rest. Later that evening over the fire eating mammoth, Ed's brother in law asks "Hey, how did you convince that guy to give you this mammoth?" Ed replies, "I didn't, you're eating him." The brother in law stops chewing and looks at the rib he's been chewing on and gags a bit. "Don't get all self-righteous, we don't have any laws against that yet."

"Huh?" the brother in law asks. "What's a law?"

"A law is a rule that is voted on and agreed to by the people in order to keep society a safe and structured place to work and live."

"Really?"

"Yep, in about 30,000 years you'll hear all about it. But for now we just do what we want because we're unsophisticated ape-like creatures that only do what benefits us. Kind of like a class room full of preschoolers with long hairy arms."

"Why don't we have laws now?"

"Are you kidding? Do you want to go through all that? It's easier to stick a stick in someone's skull. Plus, without laws, there are no repercussions."

"What's a repercussion?"

"Consequences, you know, cause and effect. I punch you, you punch me. Only..."

Just then a spear sticks in Ed's neck and he spits out his mammoth meat and starts pointing towards the spear in a panic as Bob's tribe attacks the camp.

"Holy crap Ed, that looks like it hurts. Is that what they call repercussions?"

Ed falls over dead and that's the end of the story. The theory is, laws were created to keep you from getting a spear stuck in your neck from stealing mammoth meat from your neighbor. Even if your intentions are the best, like to save your own skin, people are so self-preserving and self-motivated that only an act of congress and a nice fence can keep you civil to each other.

So how do we fix this problem? There is no answer. We evolved too fast for our own good and we are unable to play together. Humans are not nice by nature, we have to be taught this behavior and for a few hundred years we have got by as best we can. But don't be fooled, it wasn't that long ago we were living in huts and living on the edge of survival and those lessons are hard to forget in order to get along in a larger society. We are a small group society evolved into a large group dynamic and sometimes the puzzle pieces just don't fit so well.

The grass isn't always greener, with Bob the Caveman

If you think your life sucks and that everyone else has it easier than you do, then you may suffer from the "Grass is greener on the other side of the fence syndrome." Chances are the grass is the same color or has grubs under it and you just don't know it. People are good at putting up false fronts and using smoke and mirrors to make themselves look better than they really are. You see that fancy car and that big house? I'm sure it came with a big bill that you don't have to pay and the other guy is struggling with to pay.

So how does Bob fit into this? Well, one day Bob was sitting around the campfire when he noticed one of the cavemen from across the valley was coming up the hill to do some trading and saw the nice new mammoth suit he was wearing. Bob perked up and looked down at his ragged old goat skinned tankini and immediately got pissed. The other caveman approached Bob and laid down his sack of trading goods and looked at Bob and said, "Avon, no I'm just kidding. Got anything to trade?"

Bob looks up at this man with disgust and says, "Nice suit, where did you get that? You guys must be doing pretty well over there."
"Oh, you like this?" the man asked. "I got another one just like it back at home. You can make three or four of these out of a big one."
"It's nice, how much did that cost?" Bob asked.
The caveman looked away for a moment and with a tear in his eye he looked back and said, "It cost me my brother. He died hunting this thing. He got a tusk to the head."
"I'm so sorry," Bob replied "I didn't realize."

"No, no, that's ok; he knew what he was doing. He wanted a new pair of shoes and I told him to wait for his birthday, but no."
"I feel so bad for you. You have all this nice stuff, but obviously it cost you more than I ever knew."
So there you go, sometimes the grass is greener on the other side, but the fertilizer it took to make it greener may have cost more than you

will ever know and you are probably better off anyway where you are unless you are getting beat in the head with a mammoth tusk.

There are a few attempts to explain some human behavior and try to figure out where we got to where we are now. So now what? We take our bag of sand with us wherever we go and try to interact with the rest of our species the best we can. Is there a magic solution to how to best get along and interact with our fellow humans? No, but there are a few basic rules I could list that would keep the peace even among species. For example, if you kick a dog, it will either, lay there, get up and move or growl and bite you. Basic fight, flight or sleep psychology 101 type stuff. This goes for alligators, humans and most animals.

This universal behavior has always interested me because as far as I know humans are the only animals with a language and inner dialogue. We can sit in front of the television and have to pee and try to reason with ourselves as to why we shouldn't get off the couch and go to the bathroom. Cats and dogs don't do this I don't think. I have seen a cat sleep and wonder if it is dreaming as it twitches and moves, but if it does, how does it see it? Animals can understand some basic human words after a while like most toddlers can, but I don't think they have syntax to put the words into meaning. Do other animals have an inner dialogue as well?

If a dog has to go pee, does it say to itself, "Fido, I think I have to pee" or does it just feel the pressure in its bladder and go find a good spot to go. Our behavior has a lot to do with the words we say and the meanings we put behind them just like the subtle expressions our faces make when we speak. Have you ever noticed when you talk, it sounds like singing? Your pitch goes up and down and could be plotted on a musical staff and many of the pitches and songs you create have to do with the very message you are sending. Lifting your pitch at the end of a sentence is often the sign of a question, dropping the pitch is often the sign of a statement. Do dogs do this? Do they have to? They seem to

sniff butts and figure out what's what without speaking a word. I wonder if cave people used to do that?

When I was in college for the 3rd time I worked at Cabela's outfitters in Kearney Ne and my job was to take telephone orders. Someone with a psychology degree figured out that if the only thing you say when answering the phone is, "Cabela's this is so and So" the first thing out of the other persons mouth would be "I would like to place an order." Why is this? How are we conditioned to say those exact words after hearing the greeting? I swear, it worked every time and we had callers from all over the world. Are we all alike or aren't we?

I guess the best answer is that in some circumstances we are all alike and in others it varies. If someone yells fire, unless you are deaf you are going to panic and run. Maybe some of the people running would react differently to a rude waiter or a hitch hiker looking for a ride but for the most part, would try to find the exit in a fire. Then again, we are talking safety which is pretty low on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The higher up you go, the more leeway you have in you decisions.

So, would you ever pick up a hitch hiker? I've driven past many and never dreamed of stopping. What an ass I am for not helping out a fellow human being. If this guy was hit by a car I would surely get out and try to save him, but as long as he seems ok, I keep right on going by. Why is this? Do humans have an innate disdain for hitch hikers? If they do, based on what? I can't say I've ever met one in person; maybe they are the nicest people you could find. How else could they get you to let them have a ride in your car? Somewhere in my upbringing, in my culture, I was told that hitch hikers kill you and steal your money and car. I have no idea if the stats bear this out, but that statement made many years ago has always influenced my decision not to pick up a stranger on the side of the road.

Yet many people will pick up a stranger at the bar and take them home for sex. Explain that one. Both could be knife wielding maniac's hell bent on stealing from you and eating your brains, only in one

circumstance, you may have something in it for you. Back to the whole, the purpose of behavior is to self-serve. The hitch hiker probably isn't going to give you anything back for the ride and may be in it for their self-serving purposes; like eating your brains.

Which brings me to my next topic, "The herd mentality." My favorite example of this is when the "**Blair witch project**" came out. It was so over hyped and everyone said it was so great, the next best thing to chocolate and interstellar space travel. I understand marketing, I get it that word of mouth advertising is great and that people can get caught up in things, but oh my God that movie sucked balls. It was nothing but an hour and a half of 3 teenagers dropping the F bomb in every sentence. Maybe I'm showing my age and my generation, but I find nothing entertaining about people who can't make up dialogue well enough to not use foul language as a crutch for honest human communication. Point is I'm making is that people are sometimes glorified cows, or sheep as some people prefer.

The people who stand out as being different get picked on and the ones who go with the group fall off the cliff like lemmings. I understand that we live in a social society, and that we share a common culture, but come on. Do people that join cults realize they are joining cults? Do you have to fit in so much that you become indistinguishable from the rest of your herd? It's either fit in and make no waves living under the radar, or stand out and have someone take pot shots at you. No wonder it's hard to get people to run for office, who would want that kind of abuse. And why do people do that in the first place? Are they so jealous of others that they have to tear down others to make themselves feel better? History says yes, we do. Basic human nature is to knock down the guy on top because misery loves company.

This reminds me of a story. A long time ago, I used to work for a music store while in college, they guy that owned the store told me this. He said people with money rarely pay their bills on time, but the folks who

live paycheck to paycheck normally are the ones with the most current accounts. I was shocked by this because I was led to believe that people with money spent their money on their bills. Not true my boss said, he said they have all that money because they hold onto it. Which makes me wonder why people tend to worship people with money in the first place? By worship I mean that we pay special attention to people who dress like they have money and have nice cars and don't pay so much attention to the rest, yet the person you are fawning over is less likely to pay it forward than the person who looks like you. I'm not saying this is universally true, but now that it was brought to my attention so many years back, I can see what he meant.

Back to hero worship; explain why singers are held in such high regard? They sing. Whoopee. They don't take out tumors, put out fires or teach your kids, but since they are on television they are put on a pedestal. And you eat it up. You are a marketers dream. I've seen karaoke singers as good as signed artists; I've seen bands in local bars that would rival what's fed to us any day in the media. We are sheep. Baaa... go ahead and say it.

Maybe it all goes back to our cave days when the guy with the good voice drew our attention. Someone would bang on a log and another guy would ramble off some cave gibberish but since he stood out he was deemed special by the group. I admire people with good speaking voices; a good voice can garner attention and hold the attention of a room. Somewhere in our history having a good speaker was good for our species because it's a behavior we still cling to. So why do we have bad behaviors? I think I addressed that issue in my "Why can't we all get along ?" section, but its fun to discuss.

What's nice about writing about human behavior is that I could write till my fingers fall off. There is so much that we do that makes sense and so much that makes no sense and so much variation in how we perceive and handle different situations and I hope to cover as many as I can before I'm done. At some point I'm going to do interviews with

random people and get some anecdotes on real people on behaviors they have encountered. I'm not looking for conflict as my theme, but any behavior that shows human nature and why we do things differently.

If I was in line at the checkout, and somebody ahead of me pulled out a bunch of coupons as I was putting my noodles on the counter, I would internally become livid. In my mind I would be pummeling that person and making them pay for making me wait and inconveniencing me. To me shopping is a punishment, not something I enjoy. But to an avid coupon enthusiast, they may look upon the pile and think, "That is so awesome, I don't mind waiting because this person is just like me." But if that person were on fire, I would hope we'd both jump in and put him or her out.

Another hot topic is relationships. We all relate to each other in a basic way, but humans form pair bonds that help the survival of our offspring most of the time. Isn't it odd how the pendulum of favor changes over time? We all know the family of the 1950's is not the family of today. As each generation dies off, the next generation is free to break from the traditions of the past and change. How is that? Why don't we stay the same all the time? In a few generations we went from owning slaves to finding slavery an aberration. Gay marriage wasn't even a concept 50 years ago. Marriage used to be something you did till the day you died. Not anymore, times and behavior change like the bucket of sand you came with.

A while back I did an article on why women cheat and interviewed a few women anonymously to get their stories on why they strayed. Looking back at the article, I can see that the reasons probably could have been given 2000 years ago. Being ignored seems to be a universal reason to cheat on your spouse. Here is that article in full:

Why women cheat

If you remember, I did an article on anxiety and depression and asked for stories from my readers. It got quite a good response and led me to another topic that I thought you might be interested in. I didn't make a general request, but asked a reader to submit her story about why women cheat on their husbands. I had known for some time that she had been having problems and wanted an honest and truthful response to the question and she was nice enough to reply so and let me share her story with you. So here is her response to the question, "Why women cheat?"

People have asked me why I cheated on my husband. And I can say in all honesty, I'm not entirely sure. But I do know that I don't regret it. When I look back on our marriage and our relationship I know things have always been just "ok" in the bedroom. Things haven't changed in that regard. People grow apart and people change. But after several years of no attention or friendship any more, I sought out friendship from others. I didn't set out to have an affair. I sought someone to just listen to me and show me attention. To be their number one priority at any given moment.

We agreed to meet in the park, just to talk. We hadn't seen each other in 10 or 15 years. It was like we had never stopped talking. We talked and walked, and then our hands accidentally bumped into each other. The next thing I knew we were kissing. I felt so alive for the first time in years. I felt sexy. Like a woman. Someone found me desirable enough to actually kiss me and give me some attention. The rest is history. No, we are not seeing each other anymore, but we are still friends. But for those few months when we were seeing each other it was nice to be the one

So how did I get caught? My husband said he felt me pulling away from him. Really? That's all I had felt for years. We fought about it. Things have gotten better in the friendship department and I don't hate my husband, but I don't lust after him either. It's sad when you don't

want to have sex with your spouse. Sex isn't everything - but I do believe it can help you feel closer to each other. On many levels. Maybe I miss the adrenaline rush from knowing what I was doing was wrong on so many levels - morally and ethically. Maybe I just miss being someone's lover.

So why do I stay? We have children. And I have gotten good at hiding my feelings and letting everyone think things are going well. Would I do it again? Maybe. I mean it's not fair for someone to feel so alone. Never say never. I am not the best wife. Never said I was. But it's my life. Don't hate me if you've never walked in my shoes. I don't judge others now who are having problems with their relationships, because unless you are in that relationship, you have no idea what those in it are going through. There is always 2 sides to every story.

I think most women cheat because they have lost their emotional connection to their husband. They don't feel respected, wanted, or loved anymore. Another reason, and often a secondary to the first, is no physical connection anymore. Women who feel disrespected and unloved do not want to give their husband any physical satisfaction to 'get back' at them for the emotional issues.

I began cheating on my husband because he was verbally and physically abusive, and I was made to feel like everything I did wasn't good enough. Basically, if I said it, it was automatically wrong. I didn't feel like he was a very good dad or stepdad, as he wasn't very involved with the kids. He was too busy for any family activities. Amongst my friends, we called him 'my dictator'. We had a good laugh over it, but in reality it was very depressing. Because I had very little money and 3 kids, I dealt with it and didn't leave. I went out a lot on the weekends and drank a lot to escape my weekday reality of hell. I had a few affairs during that time, just to get that feeling of being wanted and loved, if just for a short time. It helped me escape reality for just awhile.

But, my story has a happy ending. One weekend while out with friends, I met an awesome guy. I didn't want to miss another chance at true happiness, so I mustered all the courage I had and left my husband. I went from very depressed to being the happiest I had ever been for a long, long time.

Taking all that we have learned from past failed relationships, my boyfriend and I are doing all we can to make this work and be happy and drama free. We let each other know we are appreciated, we say how much we love each other daily, and if we do have a disagreement, we cool off and talk it out, rather than fight. He is also a very good stepdad, and is very involved with us as a family unit. We go places, see things, and he teaches the kids a lot of new things. We have had an amazing 2yrs together and are planning on many more. I stopped drinking so much; I have not cheated on him, and have no desire to. I am treated like a princess with respect and love I am glad to have learned from my mistakes and to have to the chance to have a real relationship.

Why men cheat

By Nikki Zahm

So why do men find it necessary to cheat on their partners? Some men use the excuse that their partner does not put out so they need to find it someplace else. Personally I think that is just an easy way out. If you are married to someone you are committed to them and should be with just them. Every man has heard that the best way to get a woman to stop having sex with them is to marry her. Now where they came up with that is beyond me. According to some men that I spoke to they have stated that marriage sucks the sex drive out of woman, leaving men gasping for some type of fulfillment.

To me that is not even close to being true and just yet is another excuse. According to the men I spoke with men have a more of a need for sex then women. How is that? Once again to me that is just another

excuse for men to go off and cheat. Another reason from men can be that their sex life with their partner has become boring and that their partner doesn't want to try new things in bed. So does that give a man a reason to go find sex somewhere else? No not in my eyes it doesn't! Then there is the excuse that "She cheats on me". Do two wrongs make a right? Well for some men yes two wrongs make a right. They feel that since their partner went and cheated, that the only way they can get back at her is to cheat on her back. Then there is the fact that some men just like the challenge and excitement of just cheating. Some men feel that the women they sleep with are "sexual trophies" and some men just get off on the thrill of the hunt, the chase, and the conquest. For some men it is just the excitement of knowing they are doing wrong and trying not to get caught in the act.

The saying "What eyes don't see, the heart doesn't feel" is one statement some men go by. Men think that if they don't get caught then his partner will not get hurt. Men may be sly on trying to not get caught, but woman are getting more sophisticated with detecting if their partners are cheating. Later on I will cover some warning signs that may surface if a man is cheating.

Another reason a man may cheat is that their egos need to be boosted. Nothing boosts a man's self-esteem more than the fact that other woman finds them attractive. Men that are in long-term relationships may start to question their own sexual marketability, which will lead to them cheating. They seem to have to go out and "Spread their wild oats" to see if they are still in the game of picking up woman. Then there is the statement "I just can't say no!" Men use this excuse that it was in front of them and they could not tell them no. Really? How hard is it to open your mouth and say no? Men feel that if an ex-girlfriend shows up at their door that they used to care a lot about that they cannot turn her down, even though they have a partner already. Another example is that they are at the bar with their friends and they see this hot chick and she offers him a good time, the excuse "I just

couldn't say no" or "the alcohol is to blame" is something us woman hear way too often.

Some of the fault is put on use woman by forgiving our partners for cheating on us. That gives them the thought that it is ok to do it again. I stand by this saying "Once a cheater always a cheater" and this saying is true in many ways. The two main things that stick out to me that men use a lot for an excuse on why they cheat is "I am not turned on by her anymore" and "I don't love her anymore". Well if men are not happy in their relationships anymore then why stick around? Be honest with your partner and leave the relationship before even considering on having any type of sexual relationships with some other woman. It is only respect for your partner to do this for them.

Now there are many things to look for to tell if your man is cheating. One thing to look for is a sudden interest in looking good. If your partner has never really took interest in wanting to look good and all of a sudden starts buying new clothes, dress better than usual to just go run an errand, and just plan looks better than usual then he is most likely cheating. Another thing to look for is the sudden "overtime" at work. Yes maybe he is working overtime to bring in more money, but if you have ruled out the fact that he isn't working overtime for just them money it is a good assumption he is saying he is working overtime because he is cheating. He may say he has a meeting at work and really doesn't, he may say he has a business trip and really doesn't, and he may be unreachable at work.

The best way to find out if he is at work or cheating on you is by checking his pay stubs because if he has been working overtime his pay stubs are going to show it. If it is not showing up on his paystubs that he is not working overtime then you know he has lied to you and he is cheating. Also if he all the sudden is shy to be shirtless around you when before he didn't care there is another sign. If he is shy to change in front of you, makes you have sex with him in the dark (when he never did before), locks the bathroom door while he showers (when he never did before), and he has been covering himself up more than usual

when normally he walks around in just his shorts, then most likely he is cheating.

There are far too many signs of cheating when it comes to your partner and I could go on all day but the main thing I would like to say is if your partner is cheating and they think they can get away with it, they simply can't. Don't take the cheater back that will just make them think they can get away with it again. I live by the saying "once a cheater always a cheater". There is no reason for a woman or a man to cheat if they are in a relationship. If a person is not happy with their current relationship get the hell out of it, don't stay in it and think it is ok to cheat. (NZ)

As I addressed before, anxiety and depression can greatly affect our behavior and is one of the more organic reasons for why some people act as they do. Serotonin and Dopamine are brain chemicals responsible for the happy feelings we experience in our brains. SSRI's (Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) are drugs prescribed to keep those chemicals in our brains longer so we don't fall into the depression that a lack of the chemicals creates. Common names you may have heard of for these drugs are Prozac, Celexa, Zoloft, Lexapro and Paxil. There are more. Another article I wrote was about the effects of anxiety and depression and I interviewed several people who contributed to the article:

Depression and Anxiety

You may have experience with anxiety and depression and you may not, but to those who suffer it is an all too real part of their lives that can control their thoughts, emotions and behaviors. And these are not crazy people, they are your friends and neighbors and coworkers. I decided to write this article, not to teach anyone about anxiety and depression, there are a million websites out there that can do that for you. I wrote this to give you real life examples from people you may or

may not know. I put out a call for people who would be willing to share their personal stories and these are the responses I received. I am not putting any names out, but these are real people that you have probably met in the grocery store or anywhere downtown. It often helps others to understand and feel more comfortable when they know they are not alone.

I'll start out with myself as it started back when I was going to the University of Ne. @ Kearney, around 1994. That's when the symptoms started, the shortness of breath, the tightness in the chest and the obsessed worrying over things that were not in my control. I knew something was wrong, and as many do, thought it might be a physiological problem with my heart and lungs. Over time I found out the problems started in my brain and worked their way down. I had known for many years that I had a family history of anxiety and depression, I didn't realize how bad till recently. But the symptoms have caused problems in my life and I have had to seek help to keep my on track and focused. If any of you know me, I tend to be a high strung kind of guy going about 2 million miles an hour. With help, hopefully I can get this down to 1 million.

The next story is from a young woman named Amanda who wanted to help by sharing her story:

I was first diagnosed with depression at 16. I was having several issues that went beyond the normal teenager stage. I wasn't really depressed; however I had an attitude from hell. My mother knew that I needed help and then getting in trouble and being put on probation, they decided (the court and my mother) together that I needed to go talk to a therapist. I was sent to some lady at Blue Valley who told me that every problem and situation that occurred in my life, was my fault. I quit going to her and started to see another therapist. He made me take an 800 question assessment, so he could better help me. He said that I scored high for depression. I think the first medication he put me on was Zoloft.

I've noticed lately, with the help of my doctor, we're working on combinations to help level out my ups and downs. I can't really say that I'm depressed, but I get upset easily. I guess you can say that I'm a little high strung at times.

I don't see a therapist right now, I have seen many over the past years though and besides one of the first therapists, I don't see that they're really any help. I'm taking Lexapro right now and I will be starting Abilify with it on Monday to see if we can get emotions under control. Depression runs hard in my dad's side of the family. My father has suffered from depression for many many years and after the death of my oldest brother 12 years ago, he seems to suffer more.

I have had suicidal thoughts, but I have never once acted on them. Winter is a very bad time for my depression. I realized a couple of years ago that I desperately need the sun to make it through. Last winter was horrible for me as by the end of December I was already feeling the winter blues and becoming extremely cranky. I look forward to the spring and summer as I know my moods won't be so bad.

The only thing I ask is if someone doesn't have these symptoms, please try to be sympathetic and understanding and know that most of the time things are only temporary, but when I need time to myself, I need time to myself and please be respectful. It has nothing to do with me not liking you as a person, but I just may need some time to myself.

Realize that anxiety and depression are mental illnesses. They are not contagious and please don't look down on people and make fun of them because they're different than you.

From another woman we will call Mary:

I first realized I had some severe issues in my early 20s. I was almost paralyzed with anxiety, anxiety about anything and everything, there was a new "fear" every day. I went to the doctor and I walked away from that experience with a bad taste in my mouth. The doctor made me feel like I was being ridiculous and basically told me to snap out of it. I went to a psychologist who literally took a phone call in the middle of our first session to talk to another doctor about a sale of a classic car. The rest of the time he told me I was just depressed because I needed to lose some weight. Ok. Well, I never went back to him. I finally went back to the doctor, a different doctor, and was prescribed Lexapro for depression, that was later switched to Celexa.

I continue to take my Celexa, although I don't really feel like it does anything. I feel depressed some days and have to literally force myself to get out of bed. It does NOTHING for the anxiety. Sometimes, out of the clear blue, I feel like I can't breathe and have this horrific attack of anxiety. It really is paralyzing. I really really try to keep this hidden; I don't know how well I do at it. At work I think I'm ok, although I have found I get irritable very easily and am pretty withdrawn from "friendly" interaction. I don't really interact much with my coworkers unless it is work-related, because I just don't want to. It's strange, I used to be the "life of the party" but now, if I could have my choice, I'd be home, in the dark, all day long. I hate that. And it's weird because one moment I'm so full of anxiety that it hurts to breathe, and the next minute I don't really care about anything at all and just want to sleep or sit alone.

I am on Celexa, but I don't think it helps. I don't see a therapist or a doctor. I'm just pretty embarrassed to go to the doctor about it. I feel like they think I'm crazy or paranoid or a hypochondriac. I have had suicidal thoughts in the past, many years ago. But I do not have them now. It's actually pretty painful and exhausting, especially when you have NO idea why you feel this way.

This story comes from Maxine:

When I was 28, I was at work one night (I worked 3 to 11 shift) and as I was sitting there getting report from the leaving shift, I suddenly felt antsy. I had an urge to run out the door. Over the next 20 min or so my heart began to pound. I tried to begin my shift, but I suddenly started shaking and crying uncontrollably. I had no idea what was going on, but I was scared that something bad was going to happen. I was lucky enough to work with a nurse who knew the number to a psychiatrist friend, and she told him what was going on. My pulse was 140 and my BP was 150/100s.

I was sobbing and gasping for air. She talked to him for a while and then she had me talk to him. He tried several different things to get me to calm down. Finally he was able to use a visualization technique and I could feel myself starting to relax. He had me floating on a pool with some big white fluffy clouds floating by. The kind you can see animals in. in the meantime, the nurse I was working with came back from the pharmacy with a prescription for me, and I was given Ativan 2mg po. My roommate was called to come take me home. I stayed on Ativan 2 mg every 4-6 hours for the next 3 days. I had a physical exam and lots of blood work to check kidneys thyroid and hormones, and no other cause could be found, so I was given an official diagnosis of panic attack. On day 4 I had to go back to work.

I was scared it would happen again, but I took a deep breath and went inside. As I sat down in the same chair I had been in last time, I could feel my heart start to pound. I jumped from my chair and ran to my locker. I popped an Ativan. It somehow made me feel better right away, just knowing I had it on board. but about 30 min later I could feel my pulse slowing down and I was able to make it thru my shift. I was lucky. I have never had another one. But I will never forget that feeling.

3 years later I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism with a multinodular goiter. Coincidence? Because research found that a failing thyroid can have periods where abnormal amounts of thyroid hormone can be excreted. Too much thyroxin can cause symptoms of a panic attack.

Then, about 2.5 years ago, the dog knocked over the trash can. The next thing I knew, I was sitting on the floor in the middle of the trash crying again. My heart was pounding, but I knew I was in trouble. As I looked back, I realized that over the last 5 years or so I was shorter to temper and easily upset. I was nervous and tired all the time. I think I was depressed but didn't want to admit it. I tried to hide in my work. I had 3 part time jobs but hated them all. I was not happy.

Well, I finally stopped crying over the trash and called my health care provider. They saw me the next day and said it could be fluctuating female hormones, or it could be actual depression. Either way, she felt that a low dose of an antidepressant would do the trick. I started on Lexapro 10 mg daily in the morning. It made me so nauseous I could hardly eat for 3 days before I started to take it at bedtime. Nausea improved and about 10 days in I had no more nausea. It took about 2 weeks before I noticed any improvement in my moods and mood swings.

- I have tried to "stop" my medication - but the first time I did we were on vacation, and my husband commented that I was being awful bitchy, so I went back on the medication immediately. I have not tried to quit since. My child would occasionally tell me I seem angry today - and if I count my meds, I have forgotten to take them for a day or two. I am more careful now to not forget my "happy pill."

I still take Lexapro 10 mg nightly. I have seen a therapist who helped me get thru what I refer to as my midlife crisis about a year ago. He asked me some tough questions about my life and helped me prioritize what I wanted out of life.

My grandfather had both anxiety and depression - he had been on antidepressants and has even had ECT (Electro convulsive therapy) for his severe depression. There is research that says some women only need antidepressants during the week before and the week of their cycle - I tried that but I have found I feel more "stable" if I take every day - no matter what day of the week or month it is.

Don't judge - until you've walked in my shoes - don't judge. I have a friend who thinks people with depression are "faking it" and I used to have a little doubt about the severity of problems this could cause people until I experienced it myself.

Next we hear from 33 year old Jane:

I was officially diagnosed at age 17 with depression which is a difficult age. It's a time in your life when you are at the point of making so many big decisions in your life, it should be wonderful and exciting, so when I wasn't happy or excited to be making the decisions, I came to the realization that something wasn't right. I think I may have been depressed prior to this, but just couldn't put a name to it. I cried a lot and was labeled "moody" by those around me. I became more withdrawn than normal. I finally went to a parent and asked to have an appointment made with a counselor for help. I went through several months of counseling at that time and went on Zoloft and had good results.

At this point in my life, I have better management of the symptoms. When you have had the issue over a good time of time, you learned how to better manage the symptoms of it. With better management, you feel less depressed. I have some symptoms of depression currently, mainly on a seasonal basis. In the past, I have had issues with depression and anxiety. They do go hand in hand, but you can have one without the other. When you are depressed, you become more aware of how others may be judging the symptoms that you have and how it

affects your communication skills. It affects personal relationships, work relationships. People notice when you withdraw or are nervous around them. I take 50mg of Zoloft. I do not currently see a therapist, but have done so in the past. Zoloft does help. Medication helps with the symptoms, but it doesn't always "fix" the causes of the depression. I use a general friend based support system right now as therapy.

My mother has had depression. There is a list of relatives on both sides of the family who have had seasonal depression. One of my cousins has anxiety and depression issues.

I did come close to acting on suicidal thoughts once. I began to experience symptoms again and went to my Dr. for medication. I was placed on a new kind of drug. The result was that the drug made me worse and suicidal and a feeling of being extremely low and high at the same time. I was to the point of having pills in hand and a glass of water ready to do it when I pulled back. No two depression medications work the same. They all work with our body chemistry differently. I can be a guessing game of trial and error until you find the right one.

I have issues with sleeping. When I can't sleep, depression gets worse. Major trigger. Occasional panic attacks, can't say I have had one in years, but have in the past on occasion. People around you don't know what to think you have one. It can range from, "are they having problems breathing?" to "is she crazy?"

In winter, it is more seasonal depression anymore. I do the best in the fall usually. Can't say I notice any changes during a day or a week. The only times one month is better or worse was if I had something bad occur in that particular month.

I wish that everyone could have depression at some point in his or her life. To go through it, then to find the cause of it and then to go from down in the dumps to having your life back....it's an amazing feeling. In the end, you appreciate your life more. When you know the feeling

of hitting rock bottom, the feeling of being on top of the world is that much stronger. You look at life differently afterward.

I have found that having depression is not well understood. Depression is a disease. Just like Diabetes or high blood pressure. People are unique. Many folks have the mindset that you pop a pill every day and then "poof," a magic cure and you are wonderfully happy again. It doesn't work that way. With Diabetes or high blood pressure, you make lifestyle changes to improve symptoms, whether it involves changing your diet, exercising or going on medication. Depression is the same but is far more complex to understand. Medication may help you...It may not...this medication may help; this medication may make you worse. Sometimes it can take years of trying before you find the right combination of medication, therapy, and support and/or lifestyle changes before a difference is found.

One of my therapists in the past told me that Prozac is one of the most prescribed medications in the country and that Prozac is only one of dozens of anti-depressant medications available. In other words, millions of Americans suffer from depression each year. When you are in the middle of suffering, you feel like you are alone, hearing her say that changed my perspective. If millions are taking the medication, they must feel the same way that I do.

It continues to boggle my mind the misunderstanding and stigma attached with having any mental illness. Misunderstanding leads to more confusion, more suffering and less healing.

And last, we hear from Grandma Mac:

I was born 2 pounds 4 oz. to a family of alcoholics, I cried all the time and had no friends was very unhappy seen school councilor they blamed it on the family, Then the abuse started , at this point I finally said enough and went to the school councilor as I was full of bruises, they removed me from the immediate home and placed me in foster

care, I hated it so bad I wanted to kill myself but that is impossible when you are placed in foster care you are watched closely, the other kids would hit me on the head with books and make me do their chores. I went to bed early one night and had a plan to get kicked out of that foster home, I placed a trash can (plastic) heater and turned the heater up as far as it would go, low and behold it got hot and melted the can, yep kicked out, gosh can't imagine why I would have done something to hurt others. I was then moved to a children's home where the counseling started and oh did I cry a lot. I am not sure the meds they had me on at that time but it was the counseling that helped the most.

I feel like a jealous person now, wish I had close family I have 4 brothers and 2 sisters and none of us talk. I don't think I am depressed now but I did go to counseling for 7 years. I do have anxiety but on rare occasions. It has affected my jobs from time to time you become very short and snappy towards people, I also believe it affected my family I think my daughter is very very depressed and chooses not to seek help and if she did she could not afford it.

I take Prozac every morning and Xanax if anxiety kicks in. I did have suicidal thoughts many times in my younger days not so much now and no I have never acted on them. I have OCD and BIPOLAR they can drive you to the point of crazy, here is how it had affected my life, going to work in Beatrice live in Fairbury, count the dead animals on the side of the road, turn around and do it again because there is one missing. There is no grey for ocd you have to know why everything. Bipolar is way worse when it is cloudy, I take Depakote for this every night for this due to the fact that your mind does not shut off and you get no sleep. Whenever it is nice enough to go outside without a heavy coat on is when it is better. Also my 2 grandgirls help make it better.

As I learned in the past do not tell them to get over it that just makes it worse, just listen no need to reply, and get them help if they threaten harm.

These illnesses are terrible imagining being in a box buried gosh knows where and you can't get out and you don't even know where you are except in a box. How would you get help when your trapped in the box buried remember, SPEAK KIND WORDS HEAR KIND ECOES.

I would like to say thank you to all that sent in their stories and I hope this will help you if you also suffer from these kinds of symptoms. We want you to know you are not alone and the feelings you share are common. The hard part is seeking treatment and finding out what will work for you. It can take years to find the right combination of drugs and therapy. Don't give up, and if you have feelings of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Disrespect; as a motivator

Roll your eyes at someone and see what reaction you get. I was talking to a woman on Facebook one day and she had posted that she had encountered two older ladies blocking the aisle at a store while chatting, and when she asked to get by one of the women rolled her eyes at her. Her exact description went like this. "They stopped to talk and blocked the whole row, I said excuse me and one lady turned around rolled her eyes and acted like I was interrupting her, I did say excuse me so I used manners."

So what is this "eye roll" anyway? I asked the woman I was chatting with and she said it was a sign of disrespect and I agreed. I have no idea how this gesture entered our culture, but it is a powerful signal that you are not liked very much. After discussing this with my wife, who has a degree in psychology, I asked her if it would be ok to go over and punch the lady who did the eye roll, you know, call her on her attitude. My wife's response was that in our society, we don't punch old ladies, we just piss them back off.

But why do we get in these little pissing matches in the first place I ask? Wouldn't it be simpler for the two old ladies to simply move to the side and let the other woman pass without any conflict at all? What was the motivation for the eye roll? What purpose did it serve? The only reason I can think of was that the old ladies were offended that someone would actually ask them to move. "How dare you?" I would think she would say in her inner monologue. Since she wasn't quite brave enough to voice those words, she let her eyes do the talking and got the same message across.

It's easy to be offended because it harks back to my original idea that all behavior stems from self-preservation. In the old days you would draw pistols and have a duel, in the store you roll eyes; it's the same thing only we are more civilized now. Or at least we have more available law enforcement. Disrespecting someone is the fastest way to offend someone I have found. If you go to a restaurant and have to wait an hour for your order and there is only 4 other customers and 2 of them are eating, you normally feel disrespected and take out your frustrations on the poor wait staff who may or may not have anything to do with the length of time it took to make your food. You feel disrespect, you leave no tip.

The one thing that everyone has is their pride and feelings of self-worth. Even the poorest person has a sense that they are worth something and if you don't respect that, you will find out sooner than later. This may sound childish, and I can remember a story from high school where a couple of kids who worked in the kitchen at the local Sonic spit in the food of some fellow students they didn't care for. This kid is now a cop (and he did a lot of other really bad things back then) so behavior can change over time. I know I'm not the same person I was back in high school. In some ways I've done a complete 180, and in some things I am just the same. You start off with your basic building blocks and form them over time with experience. But then you have heard of those people who never learn, and to some extent, that can be true as well. Behavior has a flavor, but the shape of the glass you pour it in changes all the time.

Another example of disrespect I came across was from a woman who lost her job by email. She explains, "When I got replaced at my job at the bar I was informed by email that they had hired someone else to take my Friday nights it was as if after 3 years. of working for them I didn't matter anymore I was just a bartender that was replaceable. " I asked if she met the employer in person after that and she replied, "Yes, they actually said Hi how ya doing as if nothing had ever happened of course I said I coolly and walked away I guess I still hold a grudge. They were all smiles and friendly I just thought to myself what the fuck ever."

Another example of disrespect comes from a man who found his ornamental chess set covered in dry vomit and asked his roommate if he was the one who had caused the mess. The roommate denied being the perpetrator and this is how the victim described how he felt. "I felt completely betrayed because he lied about it; my stomach knotted up and stayed that way for days. I felt nothing but descent for (name deleted) after that. Nothing he would say or do would change the way I feel about that night. I asked myself who else would have done it; there were other options but who else would have lied about it. It makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck thinking about it again today. "

Gender differences/Pecking order/ Group dynamics

I could write a book onto itself about the difference between men and women, but I am only going to hit on a few key points since I was discussing this with my wife last night and she gave me some insight on how women think and the reasons behind it. I started off by asking her why women have the reputation for being catty and cruel to each other. Women seem to move in packs like wolves and different packs don't always get along sizing each other up and putting each other down.

My wife explained it to me like this, and since I like the evolutionary ideas the best, I had to agree. She says that back in the day, when the cave man went off to get the catch of the day, the women stayed back to tend the cave. Since the women were vying for the best mate to father their offspring, the women would form a pecking order as to who came first, second and so forth in order to get the best accommodations for themselves and their children. No one knows if cave people were monogamous or not, I will assume that the male best suited for providing for the rest got the most mates and the other men sat around and played checkers.

So over time, women developed this competition among each other and a hierarchy formed which still translates into today's society. Now women can provide for their own children so the dynamic of the providing male is now a moot point, but it is hard to extinguish 100,000 years of culture and evolution. Women don't hate each other because they are evil, they hate each other because they are self-serving which again goes back to my original idea that all behavior stems from self-preservation. So why do women hang in packs like gangs? That goes to another topic concerning the survival of the group. It is in the best interest of all the members to form a group in case they are attacked by another group, but while things are going ok, it seems to still be ok to screw with your own members. This is true of all groups, not just women.

So how about men? I can't honestly say I have ever seen a group of men go to the bathroom at a bar before. I've seen women do it all the time. Men have a pecking order as well, but I have not seen the catty behavior in men that I have seen in women. If two men disagree, they punch each other and it's done, if two women disagree, they go into a different corner and make fun of what the other one is wearing to another woman. Why is this? Maybe men evolved to be more independent as they went out to hunt and didn't live in such a tight nit group.

A woman responded to my question about female group dynamics and she replied, "I think women were taught to express feelings/emotions

more freely and feel insecure about looks in my age group." Asked who taught her this kind of thinking she said it was her step father who told her, "My looks were more important than my being smart." She added, "I was raised in a chauvinistic home. Women were there to wait on the Men and make sure they were comfortable.

It was difficult because I'm intelligent but was told to down play it. It was also hard because I didn't marry a "knight in shining armor" that worked while I stayed home being Joan Cleaver." Another woman I spoke to described the behavior of women in groups this way, "Women talk, supposed have a "natural instinct" to travel in packs for protection." Asked why, she replied, "Could be physical safety, and could be to avoid being the topic of conversation with the group left behind. Could be they want to gossip about the table."

It takes a group of cave women to raise all the kids running around, and the ability to get along and help raise kids may be the reason why women still form groups today. This is all personal observation and stats may not bear out my conclusions, but I have never seen a dance recital with just males or a jewelry party or anything like that. When I first dated my wife, it was by committee because she always brought along another woman just in case I was some sort of creep. It took a few weeks before she decided she could ditch her wing woman and trust me. I've never brought a dude on a date.

Benefits of being two faced

Another article I wrote recently dealt with the phenomenon of people who like to play both sides of the fence and put people against each other in order to watch them fight. I did a few interviews for the story and it is as follows:

What is childish behavior? I've seen 70 year old ladies exhibiting what would be termed "childish behavior" so I like to refer to "childish

behavior" as just plain behavior. Children can be very cruel to each other and lack the experience of knowing what their actions could cause so hopefully with age, this behavior reduces or stops all together. But we all know people who are old enough to know better and still act like children.

In psychology, there are several personality disorders that predispose some people to act out and they are unable to learn from what they are doing to others. An example of this would be the **Histrionic personality disorder** which is described by the American Psychiatric association as "A personality disorder characterized by a pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking, including an excessive need for approval and inappropriately seductive behavior, usually beginning in early adulthood. These individuals are lively, dramatic, vivacious, enthusiastic, and flirtatious"

Another disorder is the **Borderline personality disorder** which is described as "Marked by a prolonged disturbance of personality function, characterized by unusual variability and depth of moods. These moods may secondarily affect cognition and interpersonal relations"

People with these disorders have a harder time dealing with interpersonal reaction than the average person, and can explain some of the behaviors you deal with in public. But what about those who are your average Joe who can't seem to interact in a healthy way with others?

The title of this article is "**The benefits of being two faced**" which is a bit of irony in that I don't think there is a long term benefit of being two faced. Most people have met others who like to play them against each other in a tug of war to start and prolong conflicts. For some reason these conflicts provide a satisfaction in their mind and a reward that keeps the behavior going. If they are good at it, they can manipulate their subjects for a very long time.

If you are a fan of the reality television show "**Survivor**" the "two faced" manipulator is actually rewarded with a prize at the end and shown to be some sort of hero. In real life, this person would be the despised wretch that can bring any social organization to its knees. It may be popular entertainment to watch people get manipulated, but in real life it can cause all kinds of grief and problems, especially in work situations.

In researching for this article, I asked some people what they felt the benefits of being two faced were, these are some of their replies.

"I don't think there is a benefit from it at all. If someone finds out you talked crap about them you're screwed. Some women do this because they need to feel cool I guess, but I think it's cowardly. I think those that do this may be blowing off steam about the third party not intending for them to ever hear it. I also wonder if perhaps in trying to play nice and keep the peace with someone they don't care for they come across as two faced. I'm a pretty straight shooter if I have a beef with someone I tell them in a nice way.

Furthermore if you're going to complain to someone about someone else in confidence you should be darn sure they wouldn't tell the other person. I've never seen the benefit of breaking someone's confidence because all parties involved get hurt in some way. If you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all and if you hear someone venting about someone else take it with a grain of salt they may just be having a bad day. I know I'm like a walking fortune cookie or something"

"I think that people do this when they don't have the nerve to tell you what they really think about you or don't agree with what you might be doing. Some people also do it in the name of "being nice" and not wanting to hurt your feelings."

"Because either they like the drama or the negative attention that they get from it. Some people just don't know how to seek out the right type of attention from people which would be positive attention so they seek negative attention by doing things like being two faced. It is just easier that way for them I guess"

"People think they are better than some people but they are no better than you and I. They try to run your name down in the ground but it don't work most of the time to me it's called bullying they think they are better than us"

"Because either they like the drama or the negative attention that they get from it. Some people just don't know how to seek out the right"

So what do you do with the two faced manipulator once you have discovered what they have been doing? Well, the old adage, ignore it and it will go away is probably the best way to extinguish this behavior but it is very difficult because anyone who is a master manipulator has the skills to continue to suck you in to their plot and keep up the drama. Option two is to confront the manipulator and again they probably have the skills to reverse it back on you and make you think they are helping you by doing what they are doing.

I wish I had the answer to this question, and in fact there is probably no cookie cutter answer because behavior is like a river. You can't contain it and it changes constantly to fit the container it is in. If a child parent hops to get what they want, it is usually an easy fix when the parents get together and plan not to allow this behavior, but if the same behavior is being expressed by a coworker and it's your job at stake, it can be much harder to stop the behavior. You're attempts to extinguish may actually lead to manipulator turning against you in the end once they feel threatened.

My best advice is to shut your mouth and not give the manipulator any ammunition to use and not act like you are doing it. Two faced people are like computers, garbage in, equal's garbage out and if you refuse to

give them garbage it should end. The hard part is not allowing them to suck it out of you. You have to be strong and resist and maybe move into a cave.

The other option is to get together with the person the manipulator is putting you up against and catch them red handed. It may stop, it may not and most likely they will move on to another target. You can't put them in jail, you can't cut out their tongue, all you can do is try to manage their behavior and not allow them anything they can use to cause problems.

In other words, if you don't have anything nice to say, keep your mouth shut, no matter how hard that may seem.

Fads

I debated long and hard about what to write in this section but I knew in the end I would just end up pissing people off so I will make this short and sweet. I hope in 20 years you still like that tattoo.

Nature vs. Nurture

Erik Erikson (15 June 1902 - 12 May 1994) was a German-born American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory on psychosocial development of human beings. He may be most famous for coining the phrase identity crisis. (Wikipedia) I was told in college not to use Wikipedia as a source but since this isn't being handed in for a grade I think I'll get by. Anyway, the reason why I want to mention Erikson, and no, this isn't a lesson on psychology, it's an entertainment piece and mostly opinion, is because he defined 8 stages of human development based on age. You can Google Erikson but the basic stages are as follows: *Birth to 12 to 18 months /Trust vs. Mistrust, 18 months to 3years/Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt, 3 to 6*

years/Initiative vs. guilt, 6 to 12 years/Industry vs. Inferiority, 12 to 18 years Identity vs. Role Confusion, 19 to 40 years/Intimacy vs. Isolation, 40 to 65 years Generatively vs. Stagnation and 65 to death/Ego Integrity vs. Despair.

According to Erikson, as you age you fall into different stages or categories of life that can influence your behavior depending on what your psychological needs are at the time. I guess that explains the whole, "I'm not the same person I was 20 years ago thing." So I can argue based on Erikson that nature has a lot to do with our behavior. It's almost like we are preprogrammed to enter each stage and there is no way of mixing them up or skipping over one to the next. So are we human robots with no control over what we do? Do I have to go through predictable stages just like everyone else? I think marketing people hope so, makes it easier to sell to certain age groups.

Nature vs. nurture is an ongoing debate but I feel it's safe to say it's about 50/50. If you raised a set of identical twins in different locations, I'm pretty sure the local area will greatly influence some of their behavior while their DNA will make them very alike in different things. I would hope we have some say in how we turn out and that we are not destined to be lumped into a category based on age.

On a side note, I have a 16 year old cat that we allow to go outside whenever she wants. One day she wanted back in the house and proceeded to run down to the basement to use the litter box. Why would a cat that had the entire outside world to poop on decide to come into the house to do her business? Nature says poop in the yard, nurture says use the same box I have always used since I was a tiny fur ball. Maybe she conditioned herself like a Pavlovian dog and had no choice in the matter. But then I've seen her poop outside before. I tried to ask the cat but she has no inner dialogue so it went nowhere. Maybe it should be called nature and nurture instead of nature vs. nurture.

Eye contact with Strangers

This particular phenomenon I thought deserved its own section, the "Do I look and say hi, or stare at the ground as I walk past a stranger." Every day, unless you're a shut in, you come across people you have never met walking towards you on the sidewalk, or in a store aisle and you have two choices to make. Look at them and acknowledge their presence or look away and ignore them. Why do we make the choice to do either? Since this book is basically an opinion piece on what I think behavior is about, I'll give you my idea.

When I presented this question on Facebook, I got one very good response that I will share with you here. "Well we've always been taught by our elders to not speak unless spoke to or another infamous line, you are to be seen but not heard and also don't forget the don't talk to strangers rule so really isn't it in some way engraved into the minds of the young" This reply also reminds me of another behavior that I have noticed over the years. If you ask someone a question, the first word you usually hear from your subject is "well." It may be a simple crutch word to buy some time while the respondent thinks of an answer, but often that word is the first thing you will hear. Try it sometime and see if I'm right.

I think another defining factor in whether or not you are going to respond to the person approaching you has to do with the Meyers-Briggs dichotomy of introversion versus extroversion. There have been times in my life where I have been both an introvert and an extrovert, but for the most part, according to the test I am mostly introverted so I would think when approaching a stranger I would most likely look at the ground and try to blend into the background, but no, that's not what I usually do. I usually, look them in the eye and say hi unless I can size up that person in the first 2 seconds and tell if they will be receptive to my greeting. I think people are very intuitive to body language and can spot if their greeting will be met enthusiastically or not. But then we

could be totally wrong, it could be that person you are about to meet is terrible at showing their true feelings in a 2 second approach.

Some people just look more receptive to a greeting than others. I am sure there are times when the other person walks by and says to themselves, "What a jerk, he didn't even say hi to me. He just started at his shoes as he walked by." We can't get it right every time, we all come with our own bucket of sand.

So why do people say hi or ignore you? I could be as simple as they have made a judgment about your character based on your looks, age, weight, height, ethnic background, sex , gait, tattoos, facial hair, demeanor, etc. in a micro second and have determined if they like you or not and whether or not you will get a greeting. If I have a predisposition to dislike the biker look, I may automatically shy away from a greeting to anyone wearing leather with a Harley Davison shirt, and chaps walking towards me in the shampoo isle based solely on my prejudices.

If you're a teenage boy and your shy around girls you may not look at a girl as she passes, but might turn around as she has gone by. Some people are threatening to others for personal reasons. I would think old ladies get the most greetings because they seem to me to be the least threatening group there is. Who doesn't say hi to grandma even if it isn't your own?

Revenge

What other animal besides man seeks revenge upon another of its kind? I can't think of any. I have heard of circus elephants that have attacked their trainers, I know chimpanzees will attack each other, but to get revenge upon another, takes the mental capacity to think about what was done to you and what you want to do to get them back. Somewhere in our past, revenge must have played a positive trait to our species, or it would have died out. I would think the same of baldness, but we still

have that so I'm not exactly sure how being bald is a positive trait but I'm just thinking out loud.

I wonder if a cow got stepped on by another cow, would it plot to get the first cow back at a later time? Do cows have a sense of time? Do cows have a sense of self-worth? Do they have an inner dialogue that they can use to plot their evil plan? Do they even care?

I know humans plot and scheme and I think its human nature to get that "Eye for an eye" and not "Turn the other cheek" Is revenge a learned behavior? Do babies plot against each other when one steals the others binky? Can you teach revenge to a dog? I think I'm over thinking this.

I did a brief survey of friends to see what they would admit to when it comes to revenge. Only two people actually admitted to seeking revenge in the past and one stated that she was a vengeful person. She described one incident like this. "I believe in revenge to a point though it can't be for petty stuff. Not just someone cut you off or something. I'm a very vengeful myself I have done a lot of spiteful things but I don't feel bad either. I have been in this war with my ex's new girlfriend and she won't just leave my name out of her mouth seriously for months I didn't even have to have contact with the outside world and she would blow up Facebook about me." Asked if she had ever committed a vengeful act she replied, "I have done some of the usual gravel in the gas tank and social sabotage but my favorite."

By far the most common response I received was like this, "To me revenge is a hateful word. There is too much hate in this world and not enough love, or good will toward men\women. I say to anyone that has been done wrong not to retaliate. What good will those do? It's not worth the personal satisfaction to seek revenge it leads to bad karma thus hatred. Let the person who wronged you be, let them dig their own grave. What goes around comes around. It makes you the better person and sets a positive example. Another response is as follows, "I believe

that revenge is not necessary. It only lowers yourself to the level of the one you believe has wronged you. It also tends to perpetuate any feuds you have with that person when what you should be striving for is to excise any ties you have with them. I don't believe it is worth it because it perpetuates the drama that started the incident in the first place. Some folks go for revenge because they think it is going to make them feel better, or that it will right the wrong done to them. I was always taught "two wrongs don't make a right". Guess it stuck."

I think more people tend to get caught up in revenge than will admit to it. It doesn't take long for a cycle to form between the two parties and the behaviors escalate into a feud. I believe that normally non vengeful people can become vengeful under the right circumstances. It's all about self-preservation and when you feel attacked it's only natural to want to preserve your own kind by retaliating and ending the threat.

What about when the threat isn't about your life or property but your sense of self-worth or self-esteem that has been attacked? Being put down is just as powerful a motivator as having your property destroyed, maybe even more. If a spouse cheats on you do you seek to do the same to even the score or let it go? It's difficult to be dragged through the mud and made to feel 2 inches tall and do nothing about it. I would think most people would be turning the other cheek to help find a knife or a gun instead of forgiving, but many people have told me they would forgive. Maybe that's a learned behavior, or a lie.

The other person who admitted to seeking revenge took a more spiritualistic approach. She describes her revenge like this. "My idea of revenge is a little voodoo spell; I made a little box out of mirrors. I then taped them together with black duct tape and then I took a black candle (to get her black and negative energy away from us). I scratched in her name and covered it with belladonna oil. I took a picture of her and started to pray while the black candle was lit (I told in the prayer what I wanted and asked both the goddess and the god to be there for me.

I used the moon and sun to get the right energy. Then I used 1/3 of the candle to make a little puppet of her (it works better if you have a picture of the person or a hair) and put that in the puppet. Then I put the puppet in the little box and sealed it. This meant she will get her own energy projected to herself. I put the box away on a dark place for a month and then buried it in mother earth. Very simple and very effective. She got a problem with her eyes and was blind for 2 weeks (no kidding) she backed off.. Don't fuck with a witch!!

Learned behavior vs. Instinct

What is instinct? Let me summon a dictionary and find out. According to the dictionary, instinct is the innate behavior and inherent inclination of a living organism toward a particular behavior. So what does "Innate" mean? Once again the dictionary explains that innate means inborn or natural. I take it that this means it is not a learned behavior. I need a good example of an innate behavior. *"Exemplifying this, we can refer to a particular species of digger wasp, which finds and captures only honeybees. With no previous experience, a female wasp will unearth an intricate burrow, find a bee, paralyze it with a careful and precise sting to the neck, pilot back to her discreet home, and, when the larder has been supplied with the correct number of bees, lay an egg on one of them and seal the chamber. The female wasp's whole behavior is designed so that she can function in a single specialized way. Ethnologists believe that this entire behavioral sequence has been programmed into the wasp by its genes at birth (3) thus resulting the high correlated sequences between heredity and instinctive behavior."* (<http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/biology/b103/f02/web1/amaclay.html>)

So there you go, no wasp ever went to wasp school to learn how to lay eggs on a bee. So we know that we are "hard wired" to do certain things without being taught. I often wonder in humans how much of what we do is "hard wired" Can we frown and teach ourselves that it is an expression of joy? Or is a frown always a frown? Is a smile a

reaction to serotonin and adrenaline on our facial muscles or somewhere in our distant past did a mutation in our genes provide a positive adaptation for those of us cave people who smiled while feeling joy? Maybe it's gone back and forth and changed? Who's to say that a smile has always meant the same thing? To a dog a smile might say "Hey, nice teeth, let's fight."

I think behavior is like any genetic mutation that has benefitted life. As conditions change over time, behavior I am sure has changed right along with it. We are a product of our surroundings, not the other way round. A sponge is a form of life and its behavior is to set on the ocean floor and suck in sea water and eat. If you piss it off, it won't tell you because sponges don't have a language we can understand. Can you teach a sponge to ride a bike or play piano? Of course not, sponges don't have opposable thumbs or any inclination to do any of that.

If you put a baby on an island and let it be raised by dolphins would it become dolphin like? Probably as much as physiology would allow, but we all know babies don't have blow holes and can't spend all their time in the water. But could a baby learn to speak dolphin? Well, ethically we won't know unless the Nazi's come back and clone Joseph Mengele to continue his horrific experiments. But I think an animal's adaptability and ability to learn is what makes them so successful. Trees don't learn and are basically at the will of their surroundings. If a forest fire breaks out, trees don't get up and run. I have read that some plants can communicate chemically at a distance, but what they are communicating probably isn't information that can be learned and retaught.

So I think humans and many other animals are like blank slates that can be written on and rewritten up to the point where it doesn't kill off the organism. You can teach a person to shoot and kill himself, but that's a one-time behavior. The whole concept of brain washing is that you can reteach behavior and or modify it. We have such a wide variation in culture and language that it shows that people are a species evolved to learn to survive. An animal that doesn't learn is more likely to die off

than one that can learn and adapt. When you see smoke, there is fire, and you run.

One example of a learned behavior would be smoking. What animal is born with the instinct to suck smoke into its lungs repeatedly? And somewhere along the line someone with motives to make money decided to teach the public that the use of tobacco was good for them. That is counterintuitive because any normal healthy animal would run from smoke, not stick their head in it and take a lungful. I can't even imagine how the first person discovered that tobacco had a (so called) positive effect on them in the first place. People do weird things that I can't explain no matter how hard I try other than to say it's self-serving behavior. The behavior must have a benefit or it would die off.

If you can teach a human to smoke, you can teach them pretty much anything. You can teach them that being fat is sexy, and then teach them that looking like a skeleton is sexy, and somehow people buy it. Not all, but a lot do. Or is it that people secretly think to themselves, "I hope I'm not the only person here who thinks that skinny chick is ugly, but I'll go along with the crowd because I don't want to seem out of place. Maybe I should go vomit and start taking diet pills so I can look like that too? No, this surely is a fad and will end.

I received a few comments while writing this with some opinions on why trends in fashion change over time, "Capitalists, obviously (are to blame). They want to sell women and men both that women ought to be skinny. Sells pills, diets, work out machines, and supplies the world with plenty of self-loathing so they can justify impulse spending to satiate the hole in their soul." Another comment reads, "I think some of it stems from Hollywood and fashion, fashion models have always been thin, but now it's ridiculous. Then when they are used in every add and magazine to sell the product and they have gorgeous men looking at them in the adds it leads people to think that's what beauty is.

Also the name brand clothes that people want only come in small sizes like 0 who ever invented that was NOT a woman! The industry also puts that vibe out there by not hiring models/actresses that are larger. And God forbid they do end up on a magazine only to be blasted for how fat they look! And we send the message its ok because we buy their clothes, the magazines, and watch their movies! and some of it is women's fault because we believe that stupid shit and buy the dang diet pills, starve ourselves thin, and think we are prettier when we get to that size!"

Ethics and Morals

Why do we have rules about some behavior and not others? Who decides what is right or wrong when there is no cut and dry law? This is about ethics and morals. I hate to harp on adultery but it is one of the Ten Commandments that were never legislated by any governing body as a law. You can't legally steal, kill or lie, but you can cheat on your spouse if you want too. You can't even use adultery as a legal reason for a divorce in a no fault state. In a way, adultery is theft, but not in the same way as stealing a roast from Wal-Mart or driving off without paying for your gas.

Some people find abortion to be immoral, and some people don't. The government has not yet created a law making it illegal but many people fight to stop the practice. Is it murder or isn't it? If you read signs and billboards posted in many farm fields around here it would seem that the folks think it is very immoral, yet the practice still takes place. The area of ethics and morals are so grey that popular opinion seems to rule the day, and as popular opinion changes over time, so do the ethics. Is it ethical to give a heart transplant to a 90 year old that might not get much use out of it? Or to give a new set of lungs to a smoker who ruined their own by their own means?

So how as a species do we decide the grey areas? I had a discussion with someone and talked about what marriage technically is and if you boil it down, it's a legal contract about property distribution, rights to

benefits, visitation rights in hospitals and prisons, the right to make medical decisions for a spouse etc. You would think it would also be about love and making babies, but I guess you can love whoever you want and make babies with whomever you please as well and not break the contract. As long as you are of the correct sex for the state you are in and at or above the age limit set, you can marry. At this time you can't marry a dog or a fence post, but you never know when that will change.

So why can't you marry a dog or a fence post? Marriage isn't about love; people usually own dogs and fence posts, but as recently as the 1860's people used to own people so how do our morals change so? Somewhere along the line someone decided to make it a law that you can't own another person. So there we go, that grey area got moved up to a law, cut and dry.

But there is that cultural catch that not everything you think is immoral is immoral to everyone else. Women in the United States don't cover their bodies like they do in the Middle East, they find our ways immoral. How as a species can we come up with so many conflicting standards over what is right and what is wrong? Even in the United States morals change across state lines. They don't call the Bible belt the Bible belt for no reason. We are the United States of America in a very loose way. In some states you can marry someone of the same sex, some find this immoral, and in all states you can cheat on your spouse. No wonder marriage is on the decline. We are a free country for the most part, and that's the way people like it, but if you show someone disrespect, you may find yourself not in jail, but at the end of a baseball bat.

If you enter a marriage contract without the honest desire to stay faithful, you are a liar. In some circumstances you can be penalized by law for lying. Lie to a judge and see what happens, lie to your wife and see what happens. This grey area causes a lot of problems for us humans; we would like to think we are mature and responsible enough

that we don't need a law for everything, but when you get right down to it, we are self-serving and no one can force you to stay in love or stay out of another person's bed.

Abnormal behavior?

What is abnormal behavior? I think it's like Albert Einstein's theory of relativity; it depends on where you are standing. Eating your own poop would be considered an abnormal behavior, because most people don't usually do it. But to the person eating the poop, he may think everyone else is acting abnormal. So who decides what is normal and abnormal? People with doctors degrees I think.

It's easy to do simple surveys and get a baseline of what most people do and label everyone else abnormal, but is that right? What you get is a survey that lists what's popular at the time, which can be construed as abnormal. I think people who act like hippies are abnormal, but that is generational, my parents were children of the 60's and that was normal behavior.

Now we have to distinguish between abnormal behavior and behavior disorders. Splitting hairs am I? Not really, Schizophrenia is an organic brain disorder not a mood disorder so it's not a malfunction of the brain; it is the brain itself that is either formed incorrectly or working incorrectly. People with Schizophrenia don't have a choice when they hear voices and feel the paranoia that goes along with it. It is like a broken wheel on a car, the car isn't veering to the right because of the behavior of the driver, It's because of the mechanics of the vehicle the driver is manipulating.

Recognized personality disorders can be found listed in the DSM 4 and if you want to read up on them you can Google it or buy the book. This is not a text book and I don't claim to be qualified to teach about psychology. In my previous example of someone eating their own poop, they may very well suffer from a well-defined disorder listed in the manual, or it could be a learned behavior, who knows? Diagnosing

mental issues is not an exact science. I know of a man who was diagnosed with ADHD based on a 15 question yes or no survey that took about 5 minutes to fill out. And this was from a psychiatrist.

Back to my original theme about what is abnormal behavior. Let's come up with a few examples: Talking loudly in a movie theater, driving 45 in a posted 60 mph zone, cutting in line, killing people, taking others property, stripping in public, etc. Wait a second; I think everyone knows someone who's done one or more of these. I'm not sure that any behavior can be labeled as abnormal, I have seen some odd things as well as you have I'm sure, but the abnormal behavior you are seeing is probably more common than you think.

When I did my interviews for this book, I was surprised at how common some behaviors were that I thought were considered abnormal. And this is in rural Nebraska; I can't imagine what it's like in other places. To me, adultery is abnormal behavior because in our culture we are taught as kids that we are to get married, have kids and stay married and not to cheat on our spouse. I have come across many stories of cheating and now I thinking it is a common behavior. My standard for abnormal behavior now is what zombies do. Anything else is up for grabs. I think abnormal behavior has more to do with fads and culture than anything else. What is abnormal today may have been very normal a generation ago. Ask any parent or ask any kid. Behavior is behavior and depending on where you stand is as normal or abnormal as you want it to be. I think people who live in the city and dress like cowboys is abnormal, but I'm sure they think they are as normal as can be.

Part 2 The interviews

This section, which I hope will make up the bulk of the work I am writing, will be filled with personal interviews of various people talking about human behavior and how it affects their interpersonal relations. The goal isn't to figure out the big picture, like why the Kennedy assassination happened, but the small parts that make up the picture like body language, speech patterns and posturing. I am going to try to speak to a varied mix of individuals from around the southeast Nebraska area and see if I can find a common thread that runs among people in their behavior. I don't think I need to travel the world to get a good set of results, I think any small population would be a good indicator of what the general population is like.

I am not trying to emulate the behaviors found on television; I am seeking real life from real people who have to interact with others on a regular basis. Television is designed to be different than real life in order to get people to watch it. I think real life can be more interesting than the fiction presented by writers and often the behavior presented on television is unrealistic to real life. As a writer of fiction, I am curious as to what makes real people tick so that my stories don't seem fake. That is one of the main motivations for why I am writing this in the first place.

The law enforcement officer



For my first interview, I spoke with a local law enforcement officer who is in his mid-thirties, and has been working as a deputy sheriff for around 12 years. I sat down with him and we chatted for an hour and what follow are excerpts from that conversation:

The first question I asked the officer was, "You are an authority figure, what reactions do you get when you approach people in uniform?" He replied, "A lot of them are scared. Nervous just because I wear a badge, I don't think I put off any frightening aspects or anything like that, but the mere fact you're a cop, and people are afraid of cops. They are nervous, they shake, and they don't look at you." I asked, "Do you put on a persona when you are in uniform that you don't when you are off duty?" His reply, "No, not really, it's just something about that badge. I've been doing this for 12 years and I've gotten used to it and I don't care and it's not anything strange to me."

My next question had to deal with the interactions between the officer and a typical traffic violation stop on the side of the road. "What actions or reactions do you normally see when you approach the vehicle and the driver at the window?" His reply, "It really depends on the person, some people don't care, to some people it's a normal thing, you can see nervousness, you see fumbling with their papers, they don't look at you, things like that. I see it every day so it's hard to explain." "Are most people polite? Has anyone thanked you for giving them a ticket?" "All the time, it means I'm being nice and doing my job. When I write tickets, they are tickets for things you know you did. If I write a ticket, I make sure it's for a good case. I haven't lost many cases in court."

"Do people try to wear you down and try to get out of a ticket?" The officer replied, "I've had girls cry, I've seen them act like they're physically interested in me, they don't care, they just don't want a ticket. This usually happens with younger girls, at least for me when this has happened. I've had people try to intimidate me, yell and scream at the top of their lungs and act crazy." "Who is that typically?" "One was a minister, a lady in her 50's, who told me it was my fault that she was late for her church service and I could come and explain to the congregation why church didn't start on time. It was her doing 60mph in a 40 mph zone."

I then asked, "Have you ever approached a car and had the feeling that something just wasn't right?" Oh, yeah, all the time. I wonder a lot how close I've come to getting shot, because I'm sure I have. You don't know, that's the thing, you don't know, because you deal with so many people out there on traffic stops on the highway and stuff like that, and there are so many weirdo's out there." "Define weirdo for me." "I can't, it's just deviant behavior, I use the term loosely because the person you think might be the most normal person in the world might be the biggest weirdo you ever met in your life." "What is the vibe you are getting from them?" "I don't know, you can usually tell, it's your subconscious talking to you or something, but you know when

something is not right. It's a feeling you get, human beings are designed to figure that out. It almost feels like a demon is looking at you.

There was a guy in town we took to jail in hand cuffs, it took 5 of us and he sent one officer to the hospital. I stopped him a week before that, I didn't know who he was or anything but I stopped him for speeding and I knew that we were going to have problems if this came back that he was going to have to go to jail. He was from California; he had been in and out of jail all his life, a white supremacist, meth addict, very intelligent guy, just a bad son of a bitch."

"When you go to a domestic disturbance call, what are you looking for? You have to be an expert on reading human behavior" I asked. "I just tune it out. I have to, I don't have any choice, if I don't tune that out it is going to bother me all the time. It's not my problem to fix the issues that created the problem; it's my job to fix what happened because of the problem. I'm not a counselor, in a sense you could say that I am, but I'm not trained as one. ""So what do you do when you get to the house and a couple is fighting?" I asked. "You separate them, and you don't go unless you have another officer." "Is there anything about a domestic disturbance that is typical?" "A woman or a man who has been beat and talked down to for 20 years really doesn't want to talk to the cops. Sometimes it takes people a long time to break through that shell and want to cooperate with you."

I then followed up with the question, "Is there a gender bias when it comes to domestic calls?" The officer replied, "It's about 50-50. That murder west of town, that was female domestic violence perpetrated on a male. I have more than once gotten called to a domestic by a female, showed up at the scene, and arrested the female who called the cops. It's right down the middle. Sometimes we put both in jail, it's a common misconception that the female is always the wounded party."

The subject then changed to the interactions this officer has had with interviewing suspects over the years and what kinds of behaviors he has seen while trying to gather information. He explains, "It depends on the experience of the individual being interviewed. I've seen a member of the Mexican mafia getting interviewed and didn't give a shit one way or another. He was just cool as a cucumber and they were asking him about some pretty serious felonies. He didn't care, whatever. He gains a status in the group if he goes to jail for it so he didn't care. He wasn't nervous, very friendly. "

"Is it possible then to learn to hide your emotions over time?" "To a certain extent, but if someone is nervous or lying, they tend to repeat what they say. I didn't do it, I didn't do it, I didn't do it. They get very emotional, start crying, they won't look at you. I'm not really an expert on it, but there are certain signs to look for. If someone is telling the truth and you are accusing them of something, they will usually get pissed, very pissed. That is one sign you can tell someone is telling the truth, especially in cases of sexual assault of children. They will get very very mad. With human behavior, it's really hard for me to lock down one thing for everybody, because everybody is different. "

"How do people react to you in something as basic as seeing you in traffic?" "They usually look down at their speedometer to see if they're speeding or not, if they are speeding you see them in the rear view mirror and you see the brake lights come on. When they see you from afar you can see the back end of the vehicle go down, which means they're slowing down. It's almost an involuntary reaction. If you're following someone unintentionally, you see them looking in their rear view mirror, they hold their hands at 10 and 2 on the steering wheel, using turn signals when they wouldn't ever use turn signals before. People think if the cops are behind them it's oh God, what's he following me for? And why does he want to pull me over? There could be 8 million reasons why we're following them and it has nothing to do with them at all."

I then asked, "I know people get nervous about driving around a cop, if you were going 55 in a 60, would people stay behind you?" he replied, "Oh yes, all the time, (laughs) especially on the interstate you'll have a motorcade behind you. Some people say screw it and go around you, but going to North Dakota, half the trip I had a line of cars behind me because nobody wanted to pass me. It's almost more of a pain in the ass to take a patrol car some places because of it."

My final question to the officer was, is there anything I'm not asking about behavior that I might find interesting? His reply was, "Sometimes it comes down to a person's social standing. I'm probably going to get more shit from a banker than I am from turd, to be honest with you. You go out and arrest somebody you've arrested a million times, 90% of the time they are just going to go to jail, you stop a banker or someone high in the community for the same crime, not always but sometimes the defenses will come out. Do you know who I am? Why are you picking on me? There are all these other people out there dealing drugs and you're screwing with me. Well, you're the one driving drunk, it's almost more difficult and long to deal with people in a criminal situation than it is with someone that knows the system and has been through it."

Meth manufacturer

A short while back I made a request on Facebook for someone who had a meth lab to contact me for a story I wanted to do. I got a reply from someone who had a lab, was caught and served time for the offense. This person was gracious enough to share the story so we can all learn from someone who was there, what it was like to manufacture meth and pay the price. I want to personally thank this person for their contribution. Here is the story.

Q. What led you to decide that a meth lab was a good idea?

A. Well I started using meth in 1997. I worked road construction and was gone all week long and only had two days on the weekend to get everything done that needed done before I went off to work again for the week. Meth gave me energy I needed to stay awake long hours to get things done I needed. When I started an 8 ball or 1/8 of an ounce was \$100. when I decided to start making it myself it was \$300. I could no longer afford my tolerance level at that time so making it was the only option for me, I was too far gone at that time to consider quitting as an option.

Q. Was it someone else's idea or yours?

A. It was all my idea. I needed to save money and making it gave me more quantity for my buck.

Q. Did you start from scratch or did you join someone who had one going?

A. I learned from the people I was associated with in supplying my habit.

Q. How did you keep it secret or hide the fact you had a lab?

A. Just don't talk about it, Keep to yourself shut in mostly. Meth labs are disposable I would burn everything immediately after the processes were completed. When I think about that now, I can hardly believe that I was that far gone.

Q. What is involved in a meth lab without giving out the recipe?

A. Countless hours of preparation. A steady hand. A keen eye for detail. A comprehensive knowledge of chemistry and understanding positive and negative ions and reactions to volatile chemicals helps. Quiet place preferable miles away from any livestock, farm ground or acreage. Also need to make sure there's a lot of time available can't do it if it's hurried, it will fail.

Q. How hard is it to get the materials you need?

A. When I was doing it, the materials were more readily available. I understand now-a-days the materials need signed for over the counter. Which I agree with very much.

Q. Tell me how you got anhydrous?

A. Well, in the middle of the night find an anhydrous tank in a field somewhere remote and walk up to it and fill a plastic jug. There's a little more involved I don't want this to turn into a training seminar.

Q. How did you sell the finished product?

A. I tried to not sell the finished product; it defeated the purpose for saving money. Then it became evident that the people who were selling it for profit were cutting it with things like fruit fresh and vitamin B12 and potentially harmful ingredients to stretch it out for higher profits. I strongly disagreed with that because no matter how far gone I was I never lost my faith in humanity. I knew that though I was doing wrong that cutting the product and potentially and intentionally hurting people was even worse yet so I took it upon myself and notified a few of my closest oldest friends and said don't be doing that if you're going to do it do this it's pure and doesn't have any additives that aren't used in the actual manufacturing process.

Sounds unbelievable to me now clearly knowing that all the ingredients in meth are deadly in their raw form. Any one product can kill you in an instant in the quantity used in the manufacturing process. I'm very lucky to be able to tell my story. Also, I want to add that there's no justification for manufacturing Methamphetamine. No matter how noble the justification sounds the act is heinous and is a cancer that is

eating away at the heart of our communities and lifestyles that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Q. How large was your customer base?

A. I have no way of knowing really, I just know that towards the end of my run I was meeting new people every day and life was crazy, it was completely out of control.

Q. How prevalent is meth in the community you were in?

A. Meth is prevalent everywhere. It's in every walk of life in every circle. No one is immune to the effects of methamphetamine. No matter whom you are or where you come from Meth is not far away.

Q. How did you get caught?

A. I had a bad batch and one of my oldest friends was feeling terrible and I wouldn't give them any because it was wrong and they were gonna bang it and I didn't want the responsibility for bringing harm to this person and they turned me in to the law out of spite.

Q. What were the consequences of getting caught?

A. I was looking at a sentence of 75 years. I was honest and cooperated with the law in every aspect that concerned me and nobody else. I took responsibility for my actions and also took a plea bargain for Attempted Manufacture of methamphetamine. I didn't let any potentially incriminating evidence or statements that would have affected any other individual out during my incarceration as I am a firm believer that anything anyone else does is their own responsibility. I received a sentence of 20 to 28 months and was awarded time served and did 10 months behind the wall at Nebraska State Penitentiary.

Q. How has it affected your life?

A. My life has drastically changed. I have been clean and free of meth since Jan. 11, 2004. I have never felt better and I have also learned that the easy way in life is to work, pay bills and stay within the means provided by my work ethics and education. I believe that my choice though a bad one has greatly contributed to who I am today and I like who I am today.

Q. What advice would you give to anyone who is thinking about starting up a meth lab?

A. Don't do it, that path only leads to a prison sentence. Prison is a waste of a human being. I live with guilt and resentment for my choice of doing drugs. I buried friends that overdosed. I watched people that I have known all my life deteriorate and become dependent on others because they destroyed too much of their brain and cannot function for themselves. When we were playing together as children not one of us said "I want to be a drug dealer when I grow up" Just remember your first dream as a child of what you wanted to be and do that. If you can be a drug dealer, if you can be a drug user, you can be anything you desire. I think about how much energy it took to manufacture Methamphetamine and think what I can do if I put that energy into something that would help society rather than break it down and destroy centuries of progress and growth.

Q. Tell me anything that you have to share

A. With meth use comes paranoia. The constant mental awareness that someone is out to get you. I spent countless hours in my home with the lights off staring out through the little holes in the blinds that the strings go through to the outside and watching everyone and everything. Being careful to not make a sound and give away my position. When I would run out of meth I would instantly go look for more. I would crawl around on my floor and look for some I may have dropped for hours on end. I was always confronted by people who

would try to convince me I owed them something or other and I was always aware that things were missing from my house on a regular basis. I had several instances where someone would come over and say would you trade some meth for this and I would laugh. I have one just like that right over....hey! That's mine with? How'd you get that? I never had a nosey neighbor instance that I am aware of I never but the one time ever had anything to do with a meth lab at my personal residence. That one time was the time I got busted because I ran out of time and didn't have anything else to do with it.

I remember one time at work I was by myself and I was doing some meth in my car during a clean-up process and a trooper pulled up beside me and said, "Hey is it okay if I let my dog out to relieve himself?" I said sure, (with else was I gonna say?) turns out the wind was in the right direction and the dog really had to go and ran up wind and did his thing and came right back to the officer and jumped in the car and they left. I still remember how I felt, that was closest I ever came to being caught.

When my house was raided I wasn't home and I came and turned myself in a couple days later after I cleared my head and realized it's time to pay the piper.

Love triangle

This next story comes from a young woman I met on Facebook who was willing to tell me her personal story of her and her husband, and two friends who through a twisted set of events, ended up with marital infidelity and pregnancy. She agreed to meet me in person for this interview and we sat on my front porch and discussed the events leading up to the discovery of the pregnancy that same day, this is our conversation.

How old are you? "I'm almost 22." Basic background? "I'm from Beatrice, technically married for about 8 months. My husband is 21, we

met in high school and I knew him 5 years before we married."

Describe your relationship prior to the marriage. "Great, a friendship that was beyond, he had everything I could ask for, he was a friend and a supporter to me. He accepted me." How old were you when you met? "I was a freshman in high school."

When did you get married? "November 7th, 2011." How did things progress from there? "Until March of 2012 it was really good." Then what happened? "He told me he wanted me to be with another man to conceive a child because we couldn't. "How did he present this idea to you? "At a restaurant with my best friend of which he had just cheated on me with." Does the cheating have anything to do with this? "No, but I could feel the presence that he was cheating on me." Was he offering you off to someone else in a way to be fair about his cheating? "When he first told me he wanted me to be with another man, I think it was because he really wanted a kid and that's the only way we our marriage would have worked. "Why didn't he stick with the girl he was with? "Honestly I don't know." Is he still with her? "No, now he is with my best friend now."

Please describe to me how he acted at the restaurant when he asked you about having sex with another man. "He was fidgety, but he was happy was the best way to describe it. When the girl was there, I don't know how to put it, he was pushing himself away from me because he would talk to her when I'm trying to figure out why he wants me to be with another man. "Why did he bring her along in the first place? "She just showed up there. I tried to ask him why he wanted me to be with another man because it didn't seem right to me and then when I started asking, he started talking to her."

What was your interaction with her? "I didn't talk to her. I could tell she was fronting. "When did it come to light that he was cheating on you? "For the last month I had the feeling he was cheating on me because the last month we haven't done anything together, we had no

attraction to each other, it felt like we were more friends. He would push me away or when I tried to get him to do something with me he would go hang out or something. He would push away. The first sign to me was when we weren't sleeping in the same bed. When I tried to sleep with him, he would push me out of the bed." What was his excuse for this? "He said he wanted to be alone."

At this time was he still pressing you to have sex with other men? "Yes, for about the last 3 months he has been." Did he have someone picked out for you? "Yes, his best friend, who he knew I had been with prior to him and that, makes it hard because when we were in high school, I dated this guy. When we couldn't have a kid, that's when he offered for me to sleep with his best friend." Looking back at it, does it look like he was shoving you off onto his best friend? "Honestly yes. This all started when my mom passed away. When she passed away he would not communicate with me and me being married 3 times, I married the same guy twice, and I've been fighting for about the last 4 months to save our marriage.

I've been cheated on before and I can just sense it. For the first part of our marriage we had an attraction and never wanted to be apart from each other. Now he could care less."

You did eventually get together with his best friend and your ex-boyfriend right? "The last 2 months yes because he has been pushing it on me." Was that awkward for you? "Yes, to a point, I felt guiltier doing it." How did you reconcile the behavior knowing it was wrong? Did you do it just to please him? "Now that I look at it, and I have officially left him, I see it as yes, but in a way no because he wanted me to do it and he was already cheating on me. "

After your first sexual encounter with the other man, how did you feel? "I felt guilty. I felt like he was just throwing me away. I did this to conceive a child and save my marriage and he said one thing that would save our marriage was a kid." Describe your relationship with the other man. "It was just to help my husband. I had to put it in my mind that it was "friends with benefits" I put that in the back of my

mind that I'm doing this for my husband." Did you mask your emotions or use alcohol or anything to get through the sex? "This last time yes, when I knew it was going to happen, I tried to put it off but then my husband looked at me and said we need to do this. I dealt with it. It was set up by my husband and the other man. When it came to it and we were finally there I didn't know if I wanted to do it but I did it because my husband looked at me and said we need to do this." Was he there? "Yes"

Your husband came with you? Please be honest and tell me how that went down. "The other man asked who gets her first. My husband said you get her the whole time. During the first time, the other girl who he cheated on me with was there in the other room with him." How did this make you feel? "I just went in with an open mind; I have never cheated in my life, or been in an open relationship or anything. I have never been with a guy like that. "Did you think about turning around and walking out? "Yeah, but then I knew I wasn't working for my marriage. I see it now, but then it was that my husband wanted a kid and he wanted me to sleep with another man so I did it to make my husband happy, to make my marriage work. In society yes I did cheat, because how society looks at it, but in my eyes no, because I did it to try to save my marriage."

What if he would have said "Get a gun and let's go rob a bank, it will save our marriage?" I would have said, "You come with me and I'll do it. To me I thought it was true love. The marriage and the relationship was all about him, he made it all about him. I wanted to make him happy." Was he controlling? "No, he let me do whatever I wanted to do, but he wouldn't do anything for me, he would not help me, he was not there. " If he was so free with you, and didn't put a gun to your head, why did you do it? "No, he didn't put a gun to my head, it comes down to I was trying to make him happy and I would do anything to save our marriage. But when he cheats on me I'm not going to allow it, I didn't cheat on him, I did what he asked."

Onto the next subject, you are currently pregnant with the other man's child. Did that occur from the first sexual encounter? "No it was the second, we had 3 total." Did each get easier as time went on? "It seemed like it." Were they all set up the same way? "Yes, but we were all part of the set up. " What was his reaction (your husband) when you came out of the room finished? "He would give me a kiss and act normal. "How did that make you feel? "It didn't seem like he cared, I was ok with it by then, it seemed like we were in an open relationship, where you would have to be approved by the other spouse, and you couldn't be with another person without the approval of the other one. Last night, I was informed he was with another girl, who was my very best friend who I have known for 6 years. She has been with me through everything and they have been hanging out a lot lately, more than me and him have." What happened to the first girlfriend? "He left her for the new girl."

"I didn't know I was pregnant until today. We looked at the conception date and I would be about a month along. It went down very bad and my husband was a total asshole to me on the phone. So I said I was done with it. This was the last situation we were going to try to make our marriage work, if I couldn't get pregnant; he was going to stay with me anyway. Recently I felt like my reputation was going to be that I was a whore, because that is what a lot of people would conceive it as. And I told him I would try it one more time because you want it and so I tried and I took a test and found out I was pregnant and I told him and he came out and told me he cheated again."

"He got what he wanted and then told me he cheated on me?" Why did he tell you that? "Part of me now thinks that he wanted me to get pregnant by this other guy so he would have a reason to leave me. I was set up from day 1." How does that make you feel? "Torn, I never thought it would happen. To top it all off you know, when I told him I was pregnant and he told me he was cheating on me with my best friend, he looked at me and told me he hopes I don't carry it to term." Why would he say that? "Because he knows he's done with me."

Have you told the father and if so, what does he say? "Yes, he thinks it's messed up. They had a written agreement and everything, I made sure of that because I wasn't going to go through this without one, and now he says it's messed up. The agreement was that if I got knocked up with the father, that my husband's name would still be on the birth certificate, it would be his kid. When I told him of the pregnancy, he got really pissed." Was this something written up by a lawyer? "No, but we had it notarized by my bank."

So now what? "Now that I have seen all the signs and how he has acted, I can see and ask myself why I was so blind?" How did this all reveal itself to you? "Being married for 8 months prior to my mother's death we had an intimate relationship, we had communication; we spent all the time we could together, never arguing, never fighting, and it was like the best marriage we could have. Once my mom died, for me, I became an emotional wreck, but I didn't take it out on him. I started going to counseling to help the grieving process, I over dosed and part of the reason is when they could have pronounced me dead, they went and woke my husband up and he said, "It's not my worry, my jobs more important. And I was on my death bed because I had drunk myself sick, but the other girl was in the house with him."

Did the death of your mother change your personality so much that it drove him away? "No, because I did not change. I just became more emotional. I went to counseling for that. I didn't change anything else. If you really love someone in a marriage, he should have understood, when you have a parent die, you're going to be an emotional wreck. Part of me thinks it's because he knew my mom was my rock. My mom pushed me to do everything; my mom loved my husband as a son and kept pushing me for my marriage. "

Was her death a hard thing for him as well? "He says it wasn't, he's never been open and emotional with his feelings. "

Do you think he had good intentions to start with that changed after your mother's death? "I don't know, but the girls he cheated on with were identical to me. Attitude, mind wise, thinking wise, action wise, bigger wise, pretty damn close to each other. He had loved all of us at one point."

"I've been cheated on by every guy I have ever been with and caught me ex-husband in the act. At the time I was blind to it, I never thought he would do something this bad to hurt me."

Is he still with the other woman? "Yes." Is she still your friend? "As of now, no, I confronted her in front of him because this weekend she was with me and the other guy and said she would never do anything with my husband knowing fully well she had. So I asked her if she had any truths for me, and I told her she was a fucking whore. "

In your experience with your friends, do you consider cheating to be a normal behavior? "No, and when I hear about cheating I lecture them. You don't be with someone if you know you can't be faithful, you won't be happy and that's what made me lose my husband. "

Did your parents ever encounter similar problems? "No, they were married and divorced 4 times to each other." How about your husband, did his parents have relationship problems? "He's adopted and from a stable family." Do you have any ideas where he got the idea that this was normal behavior? "Men in general, I'm sorry, I don't want to sound sexist, but men in general. A lot of men in Beatrice cheat, lot of men we both know, they've all cheated on each other. I think it's a regular thing in Beatrice. A lot of people in Beatrice have no standards, could care less if they catch something."

This is still pretty raw, how do you feel right now? "Right now? Honestly, I feel free and better since I told him it's official and there are no ands ifs or buts about it, he ain't getting me back. I feel free. I walked out of the house with my stuff, and the girl who I still claim as my best friend, well, she asked if I was ok, and I said, don't even talk to me. I didn't walk out with any tears on my face. "

The abused child

Childhood sexual abuse is far too common a behavior in our society, a 56 year old woman contacted me recently to share her story of abuse when she was between 5 and 10 years old. She says today the abuse has affected her life and her relationships with others and this is our conversation:

Please give me some background on what happened. "I was ignored, like when I told my mom about the abuse." How old were you when the abuse began? "I was 5." Who was your abuser? "He was my brother, 15 at the time. He knew right from wrong and knew what he was doing." What was your relationship with him at the time? "When I was little, my relationship with any of my brothers was not good, because I was my dad's favorite. I was the youngest and the only girl. I think my brothers were jealous of me, anything that went wrong in the house that was a child's fault, my brothers always got punished, not me."

How did this manifest itself into abuse? "That I can't tell you, I always blamed it on an adolescent boy that was curious about sex, not enough self-esteem to go out and find it for himself. " Can you tell me an example of abuse that you can share? "Once I was in the bathroom getting ready to take a bath, sitting on the toilet and my brother came in, was going to touch me, do things that I didn't want him to do. I said no, and started to yell for my mom, he grabbed some bleach that was right there and dumped it on me, all over my private parts and ran. I yelled when the bleach hit me and my mom came and he was gone so of course I got blamed for playing with the bleach. She didn't believe me. "Even though you were the spoiled one? "It was my dad I was spoiled with, not my mom. My dad died when I was 8, I found out in later years that my dad never knew about the abuse. My mother never told my father. If my dad had known, he would have probably killed my brother."

How much of the abuse did your mother know? "She knew all of it." Did she do anything to try to prevent it? "No, it kept happening, I told her, she said she would take care of it and it still kept happening. I was abused from the time I was 5 till about the age of 10." What did this do to you as a person? "It made me think that was all I was good for." How did it affect your relationships with other people? "Even today, with most people, I am "what can I do for you?" I'm a caregiver. I'm a care giver for everybody. All my life I have craved positive attention, somebody that would make me feel like I was worth the trouble, not someone who just wanted to have sex with me. I have found over the years that the more helpful you are to others, the more positive attention you receive. "

Did the abuse make you more withdrawn or emulate the behavior that was being perpetrated upon you? "I was more promiscuous as a teenager. I was seeking approval and people liked it when I was like that. People would tell me how good I was and that's all I wanted was the approval, of any kind." When you were younger did you realize you were being abused? "I knew it wasn't right. " How did you reconcile becoming that way after being treated that way? "You have to realize that this went on for 5 years and it was my only equation with love. My brother loved me so that's what he did to me. At the time I didn't view it as abuse, over time I began to view it that way. "

Is your mother still alive? "No, and I never did get approval from her either. " Did she ever apologize? "No, my mother died when I was 33 years old and in those 33 years of life never did I hear my mother say she was proud of me. She was jealous of me because of all the attention my father poured on me. My mother was a selfish person, she was to be the only woman in my father's life and here comes a little girl and he totally doted on me, I could do no wrong. "Was there ever a time when she took your brothers aside and said "stop it"? " Not to my knowledge. "What is your relationship with your brother now? "My oldest brother who was my abuser is one of my best friends. I've forgiven him. "How long did that take? "It was when he got married and he was 24 so I was about 14 at the time. He had a motive; he didn't want me to tell his new

wife what had happened. He knew it was wrong. She probably wouldn't have married him if she had known what he did." What made him think you would say anything to her? "I have no idea." Did you find the apology sincere? "Yeah, at the time. As sincere as you can get with an apology of that nature. "To this day, does that apology still stand up? "Yes it does."

Did anyone else besides your brother abuse you? "I have 3 other brothers that abused me. One of them never touched me, but he wanted to hang out with the cool kids so he gave me to them to have sex at 12. You can have sex with my sister if I can hang out with you was his thing." Do you blame your mother? "Yes, when you're 5 years old and you tell your mother and nothing gets done, you tend to think that's the way things are supposed to be. " How do you think your generation dealt with child abuse? "I think it was shoved to the side. I think that society as a whole thought as a whole if you had that going on in your family, your family was trash. I have met several people in my age bracket that have been through this, I think it went on a whole lot more than people realized."

How has this affected your relationships with your children? "I do not have a good relationship with my son. I have a hard time relating to boys period. If I'm not there to serve them or be a sexual toy whatever, I have a hard time relating to men." You had the chance to mold your son and make him what you wanted, what happened? "I don't understand exactly how boys are supposed to be. The only model of boys I had were my brothers and how they were. My brothers didn't hang out with me, if my brothers were going to do something it was like, no get away, we don't want you around.

So I didn't know how to mold a boy, but my daughter I am very protective of. To this day I am very protective of her. I don't relate to my son the way my mother didn't relate to me so the cycle continues. My daughter is my best friend, and I have always been over protective

of her. I had to know where she was, who she was with, what she was doing, I had to be the controlling factor in her life. "How did you treat the men in her life? "I was respectful to them but at the same time I was always leery. What are you going to do to my daughter? My daughter learned of birth control at a very early age as well as right and wrong touch, and I was very controlling of that." Did she resent you for this? "She hasn't voiced it and like I said she's my best friend now."

You sort have become the opposite of your mother? "Yes, I care too much now, and she didn't care at all. I always told myself growing up if I ever had a little girl I was not going to treat her the way she treated me. "

Betrayed by internet affair

This next story of behavior comes from a man who decided to tell the story of how he discovered his wife was having an affair with a man she met on the internet which has led to the end of their marriage. He agreed to share his story as a way to come to terms with the horrible situation his life has become. He wrote the story and sent it to me and is as follows:

Sunday night. The wife and I are drinking a few beers with a friend of hers. I go to bed early, because I have to work the next day, but I'd picked up a small bottle of whiskey for them to share. Around 2am, I wake up to get a drink of water, and they are on the front porch talking. I walk towards the front of the house to check on them, but I am stopped short when I hear my wife say "Everyone thinks I'm going to Iowa for my birthday, but I'm really flying to Boston to see James." I stop and listen further, and hear more things being said. Things like, she got on birth control behind my back because she doesn't want to have any more babies with me. This was particular hurtful, because we went through fertility treatments trying to have our last child.

It turns out that she's been unhappy in our marriage for a long time, but put on a good face and never talked to me about it. She pretended that

everything was fine, and I had no idea. Instead, she found solace in someone that she met on the internet. This would be James, someone she's never met in real life. She created this story about taking a trip to Iowa to see a country music star for her birthday, she was planning to go alone. She told everyone we know, including her parents and mine, about this trip and how excited she was. It turned out to be a complete fabrication. She never intended to go to Iowa, instead she had a plane ticket to Boston.

After I heard the conversation, I asked her whether it was true. She did not deny any of it. It seemed as if I was talking to a stranger, I was flabbergasted. I never did go back to sleep that night, and left for work feeling like I wanted to die. That work day was one of the hardest days of my life, trying to put on a happy face for customers when all I wanted to do was scream and cry.

I wanted to work things out. We have an 8 year old boy in addition to the newborn, and I was worried about how this would affect him. I stayed in the house so that he wouldn't have to ask questions about where I was. She kept telling me that she needed space to think, and I tried my best to give that to her. A week went by, and then I had the proverbial "come to Jesus" talk with her. I said that I wanted to forgive her and wipe the slate clean, start over. She couldn't even say whether she wanted to do that, she said that she is falling in love with this person and couldn't even say whether she wanted to work it out. She told me that she was still going to go to Boston to be with James, because if she didn't then she would always wonder.

That night I was awake all night thinking about it yet again, and in the morning I'd come to my decision. I filed for divorce. I wasn't going to just sit around and wait for her to decide who she loves more. Her husband of 10 years, or what amounts to a stranger from the internet. Needless to say, things started going even further downhill from there. Her best friend from Texas came out to stay with us, she'd had this trip

planned before all this happened. After she got here, I ended up sleeping with her in the guest bedroom of our house. This naturally resulted in her and my wife not being friends anymore. Later I found out that our savings account had been completely drained, and this is apparently where my wife got the money for the plane ticket. I caught up to her outside of our bank, where she was walking in to open her own bank account with the remainder of our savings. I was very pissed off by this revelation, and I ripped her purse from her shoulder, and was subsequently arrested for domestic violence. I'm now under a no-contact order by the judge, which means I can only see my kids' if/when she decides to allow my mom to come get them. Long story short, my life has been turned completely upside down and I am in a living hell. I felt like I was going insane, and I did some insane things. I try to look for the positive things though. Not eating much over the past month has resulted in 20 lbs of lost weight, and I'm pretty sure my stomach has shrunk. I'm going to try to keep in that way, since I needed to lose weight anyway.

The irate customer

This story of bad behavior from an irate customer comes from an assistant manager at a national fast food chain who decided to confront the customer and defend her employees while off the clock in her street clothes. We sat down and talked about what happened and this is our discussion:

Let's start at the beginning, what happened? "We had a gentleman come through and he was yelling obscenities at one of the young girls, she was 16, and like I said, I was out of uniform and off the clock so I went outside afterwards and followed him out. I simply told the man that I hoped to God that no one would ever treat his children the way he treated that young girl in there because he was disrespectful, rude. I don't know if he had been drinking or what, but instead of taking it as helpful advice, he turned around and told me to stick it up my ass and said fuck you bitch."

How old was the guy? "Oh, he was probably in his 40s and he had kids in his vehicle with him when he yelled and screamed all that. Young kids, probably under the age of 10. Describing him, I'd say he was middle class, someone who should have known better." Do you know what his complaint was? "He had got a wrong sandwich and so then he wanted all new food, then realizing how long the lines were decided he wanted all of his money back and literally threw his food across the counter at the little girl." How did she take his behavior? "She stepped back and apologized and was very polite to him, didn't get upset about it, she handled it very well. The manager was very professional about it as well and told the man she would get his money back to him. When she got the money for him, he literally snatched it out of her hand, almost scratched her hand when he reached for the money."

Outside when you confronted him, what was his body language like? "Very hostile, he acted like he was going to get back out of the vehicle and come at me." Was he surprised you came out to confront him? "I think so, he seemed surprised to see a customer follow him out, because I was dressed in street clothes, I wasn't speaking as the assistant manager, I was speaking as a person who had my children in the store, there were several other children including one standing at the counter with his family and two others sitting behind us. I was offended as a parent that he would use that type of language in a family restaurant. There were about 25 people in the immediate area." What was the vibe of the room during his tirade? "Most of the customers literally stopped eating, stopped doing what they were doing, and stood back just to watch this guy; he even butted in front of customers in line that were ordering to form his complaint instead of waiting his turn in line. Those customers just stood back and scoffed at him like they couldn't believe he was being so rude."

Did he pay attention to the other customers at all? "No, he didn't. He continued to stand there and rant and rave about how this place was so freaking terrible that he wouldn't come here if it weren't for his kids

and yet he still comes through every day. "You know this guy? "I've seen him many times but I don't know him personally."

How often do you see this type of behavior in the store in general?

"The more irate, not very often, maybe once a month. You always get a rude or snippy person at least once a day even if there is nothing wrong with their food they still come back very rude, we had a more recent one a lady who decided she was going to hang out in the store for over 5 and ½ hours on one of our busiest nights and had the nerve to complain because they were cleaning around her. And now she is lodging all these personal complaints against me because I informed her that we did have a time limit on how long someone can sit in our restaurant. Even if they order food, there is a time limit as a turn over for the tables and she's very upset about that because we had complaints on her."

Does she feel entitled? "Yes she does, she feels entitled to sit there as long as she wants as long as she is ordering something. Every hour she'll order something small. They don't understand that someone higher up than me makes the decisions and I'm following the rules. They get upset about a price change and automatically it's my fault." Have you been trained on how to deal with difficult customers? "Yes, I have been to several classes that deal with how to de-escalate a tense situation. It is part of what I do as the assistant manager; it is my job to deal with the public."

Sexual harassment ?

This story was submitted and deals with what some people would call "normal" behavior for the situation. Not everyone comes with the same bucket of sand and the story is as follows:

A group of us got together at the bar for a work Christmas party. Everybody was drinking, socializing, having a good time, and apparently one of the woman, who was standing behind one of the guys, leaned over and her breasts touched him on the back of his head. I don't think he had a reaction at the time, and I wasn't there when that event happened but I'm guessing everyone just laughed and maybe a

couple of comments were made, but at the time the man did not act offended.

When I got pulled into human relations for the investigation, yes, she was turned in by the man for sexual harassment, the HR lady asked what happened and I replied that nothing happened in the bar that was out of character for that setting. We were drinking, laughing and flirting and having a good time. I was told what the allegations were against the woman so I told her from start to finish what we did. I did not witness the breasts touching the man's head.

My observation of her behavior was that she was drunk, very animated, loud, and flirtatious. She grabbed my breasts at one point. But that was not what she was turned in for. In my opinion, the reason why the man turned her in was because he was sitting there with a new girl and was embarrassed by the other woman's actions. He had no other issues with her that I was aware of. This man is a doctor of psychology and she was in a perceived superior administrative position.

I was surprised that he reported this as sexual harassment because I thought the alleged event was a normal bar behavior. If I were in a bar and drinking, I wouldn't be surprised that this sort of behavior would happen. Maybe it's a bad idea to have company Christmas parties at a bar in the first place. He wouldn't have gone to the bar I think in the first place if it hadn't been for the company tie to the party.

She was eventually suspended from work then an investigation followed and she was eventually terminated.

In my opinion, I think that the administration was trying to find a reason to get rid of her so when the opportunity came up they took it. I also think she was way over her head to start with in her administrative position. To my knowledge, no other staff has ever been terminated for similar behavior.

Bi polar disorder, marriage and infidelity

This story is about a 36 year old divorced woman diagnosed with bi polar disorder and her struggles with her marriage, infidelity, kids and life in general. After reading my blog on behavior, she agreed to sit down with me and discuss how her medical condition and relationships with her family has affected her thus far. Our conversation is as follows:

"We were married for 17 years before this happened, when he started a job painting a trailer house and I guess fell in love with her" Let's back up, was this a customer of his? "She was a friend of a friend." How did he manage to spend enough time with her to fall in love? "I don't know, but he would always take the kids with him and I had a feeling something was going on. I knew something wasn't right because he was pulling away from me; he was starting to text people when he usually wasn't texting people. He was getting real secretive with Facebook, he changed his passwords, I knew everything and it all changed. "

Did you know the woman he was seeing? "I didn't know her, I had only met her once and she wanted to be friends with me and get my phone number and be all nicety nice. " Then what happened? "My dad had to have shoulder surgery and I was taking care of him for 2 weeks at his place. While this was going on I ran out of my medications so I asked my husband to bring me some money and my pill purse. His reply was, "You know what? I don't have fucking time for this, you know what? I want a fucking divorce!" and I was totally taken off guard because all I wanted to do was see him, I missed him, it had been 2 weeks since I saw him. I didn't know what he had been doing in that time but he said he had been busy working."

What was your relationship with your husband at this time? "I thought it was good, but then he started to go off and do his own thing and getting drunk a lot, he had totally changed over 2 months' time." Was there a trigger? "Her." What happened then? "He told me he would take care of me until the divorce, and I was thinking he was still pissed off, I don't think he's serious." Is there a reason why he would be pissed at

you? "Just because I asked him to come see me? Why would that make him pissed? All I did was ask him to come see me, bring the kids because I missed them all, and I hadn't seen them for 2 weeks. And I couldn't leave because dad was still recovering from shoulder surgery.

"

"A couple days pass and I had the kids, the state was involved because my son called and told them I had locked him in the basement. I didn't lock him in the basement, my son has bi polar disorder also and he gets very angry when he's manic and he refuses to take his medicine. He beats me up and he beats my daughter up and he's been able to overpower me for a long time. He was 14 at that time. He was so pissed he was pushing on the door instead of pulling on the door and he thought I had locked the door. There is no way to lock the door. After this episode I was pounded with child abuse neglect charges and removed from my house. Later when things calmed down, I was arrested for assault after taking the kids to the movie and then to their father to stay overnight.

We went by his girlfriend's house and she wasn't there but I found them driving together down this gravel road so I sped up and signaled for them to pull over. We pulled over and started having an argument. I walked up to him and said, our son wants to come home but he's not coming home if she's with you. He says that's too damn bad, she's with me. "Was she there?" "Yes, she was in his truck. "How was he acting towards you?" "He was being a jerk and standoffish and he had never acted like that to me before. He started raising his voice at me and I wasn't yelling. My car was over heating and I asked him to look at it and he said, "I'm not going to fix your fucking car, I'm done helping you, I'm done fucking helping you. So I got in my car and I was going to leave when all of a sudden he gets in front of my car and kicks it. He then says "You hit me!" with my car. I say how can I hit you? I'm in park! He says you fucking hit me and I'm bleeding. He had kicked the license plate I had my hand in a splint due to an earlier altercation when he grabbed my gun from me. "Why did you have a gun?" I feared

for my life. He grabbed my thumb and pulled it backwards so hard that I had to wear a brace.

I had my hand in a splint and I was hanging on the door, from the handle. I started yelling at the other woman saying "This is all your fault fucking home wrecking whore." She's just sitting there shaking her head back and forth signaling that it wasn't her fault. I think she said, "You did this. I said "you did this you fucking whore." My husband takes off driving with me on the running boards and then slams on the breaks and the breakaway mirror breaks away, I fall forward landing on my shoulder on the gravel leaving a huge bruise. I call the police and I'm taken by ambulance to the hospital and then to jail." Why did you get arrested if you were the injured party? "He had witnesses that said they saw me hit him. They were drunk and yet made credible witnesses? They were also my husband's friends so they are going to say anything he wants them to say. "

Is there any truth to their statement that you hit him? "No I did not hit him with my car and both my kids can testify for me. Did you end up in jail? "Yes, for 9 days. " Did it end up in court? "Yes." How did it end up? "I ended up with a 3rd degree assault charge, I plead a deal. " Why? "If I hadn't I would have ended up with felony charges." If you were innocent why would you plead anything? "Because I was scared of the alternative." Did your lawyer advise you to plead?" Yes." Looking back do you think you did the right thing? "No, I should have fought it." Did you show them your bruises? "Yes." How did they explain that away? "They said I hurt myself," Since that all went down a few years ago, how are things with your ex-husband now? "We get along real well. We actually sleep together." How? Why? Explain that to me. "I don't know, probably comfort. " Is he with the other woman any longer? "No, they broke up because they couldn't agree on how to raise kids. " Why did you take him back? "I didn't take him back, we just have sex. (Giggles)" Do you feel used? "No, because I use him too. " I am so confused on this. What is your emotional attachment to this man? "I still love him; I have 2 kids with him. I have another kid with another man but he committed suicide.

"Does this have anything to do with your depression and anxiety disorder? "It might. I was diagnosed bi polar at 14 years of age and have had several hospitalizations, because I stopped taking my meds. "What meds are you on? "Depakote, Risperidone , Gabapentin, Celexa and Topamax . You're not on Lithium now? "I'm allergic to Lithium." Being bi polar, do you swing from manic to depression quickly or slowly? "When I'm not on meds it's slow." So you have long bouts of mania and long bouts of depression? "Yes, and because of it I cheated on him a couple of times."

That was due to what? The depression? "No, the mania. I would feel really sexy and I didn't care what I did but for some reason I would find these guys attractive. "Give me an example of how one of these affairs took place. "When I wasn't on meds I started out really fat, but when I found this guy really attractive, I immediately switched to mania and I'd lose all the weight, get real sexy, and I'd go after the guy and for some reason I'd end up getting the guy. He was married too, and so was I." How long ago was this? "2000." And how long had you been married by this time? "5 years." At the time were you getting along with your husband? "Yes, but once I got involved with this guy problems started in our relationship. I caused them on purpose because I wanted my husband out of the picture because I wanted this other guy. "

Was this guy a friend? "He was a guy I worked with. We started off hanging out and talking and stuff, and I told him if he needed a haircut I would cut his hair. I had gone to beauty school. Well one day he called and I asked him if he wanted a haircut. He said no, I just want to talk to you, so actually he started the flirting. We started hanging out all the time at work and at breaks and we would go out to lunch every once and a while. "How did you hook up for the first time? "It just kind of happened, I told my husband I was going to go to the gym to work out and instead I met him at a storage shed where he kept his car and we were just going to talk and one thing led to another and there you

go. "What made you fall for this guy? "I don't know because he is an exact polar opposite of my husband. "Did he do anything for you that your husband didn't do? "He made me feel wanted. He gave me the attention my husband wasn't giving me. "

You were married for 5 years, you walked down the aisle, you took the vows, and what was it that allowed you to cross the line? "I don't know." Come on, I want an answer. "I didn't really think about it then. At the time I didn't really care, I was manic, I didn't think about other people's feelings, It is all about me. It's all about me and how can I make myself happy and it usually involves hurting everyone around you. And the fact we stayed married for 17 years is pretty damn amazing after all the shit I put him through. I was the first one in our relationship to cheat. I haven't told you the most interesting thing yet." What is that? "We've been married to each other twice. We were divorced in 2005 and apart for 26 days. So we went to Vegas and got remarried and were married for 7 more years."

From Colorado without love

This story deals with a woman looking for love online who met a man she thought she could have a relationship with and found out the hard way that even snakes can type on a keyboard. We sat down at her house and this was our conversation:

"I met him online on My Yearbook, he had the same last name as me so I sent him a message saying well we have the same last name, thought we could talk and then we got to talking and then he said he'd like to come and visit me and he asked me to marry him right then, and we hadn't even met. " How long did you know him? "Maybe 2 weeks by then. "So did red flags go off in your head? "I said well we have to be realistic about this and meet and see how things go. He said ok and packed up his stuff and he came." How far away did he come from? "Colorado."

What did you think of him when he got here? "I thought he was pretty nice when we first met and maybe after the second week he was here he wasn't getting along with my son at all. He was yelling at him, and trying to control him. I don't think you're going to step in and control a teenager. "Was he what you expected? "Yes, there was no surprise. But after a few months he started talking to others online and he was trying to make them feel sorry for him because he was here with his "ex-wife" as some of them told me later.

How was your first month? "It was pretty good, and I did consider him my boyfriend at the time, but I guess he didn't consider me to be his girlfriend." Did you know if he history of doing this to other women? "He had been married 3 other times, he hadn't told me why they had got divorced. He had told me about some other women he had traveled to meet and that they had left him high and dry." What happened when he met the "other woman" he left you for? "He was constantly lying to me, he started coming home later and later after work, or he would say he was out to Crystal Springs or something. But he was over there with her."

How did he meet her? "At work. She was a customer. After a while he started giving her rides in our car that we bought together. He took the car and I haven't got any money for it." How did you eventually find out he was seeing this other woman? "I guessed and told him I knew he was. I knew something was going on, he didn't get home till 4am when he got off at 1am? And he wouldn't go to bed until I got up out of bed and I'd get on the computer and he would go to bed. If he did come to bed when I was still in bed he'd get clean over against the wall or something. He wouldn't even touch me. He'd come here for his supper at break time and he'd sit catty corner to the bed and not even look at me. He wouldn't hold me, kiss me wouldn't do anything. "

When you confronted him, what was his reaction? "He lied; he said he wasn't seeing her. He kept on lying. He lied till the day he left here because he said he wasn't going to move in with her." At some point

did he come clean? "No. He's never told me why he left or why he started seeing her. "Did he up and take his stuff one day and leave? "No, we had to pack it. He wasn't going to get all his stuff, he said he'd be back for it and I said no you won't. "

Did you know the other woman by this time? "Yes, and she was lying to me too. A friend of mine saw them in the park kissing one day while he was still with me." Did you call him on it? "Yes, but he denied doing it. My sisters' friend saw them in the car kissing and he said it wasn't him. I don't know how many times I told him to get out and he wouldn't go, I even called the police and they said well since he has his stuff here or he's been there for over the time limit, they couldn't do anything about it and it was a domestic issue and we had to work it out. But he did say if he came home and found his stuff on the lawn you wouldn't have to let him back in." How long ago has he been gone? "Almost a year, and he doesn't talk to me still." Is he still with the same woman? "Yes, she says she's going to marry him and I said you're a damn fool, I said you're going to lose your benefits you'll lose everything. He can't support both of you.

He never has any money." How old is this guy? "52." How would you describe him in general? "A liar, cheater, has no remorse for what he does, he doesn't care that he comes into someone's life and breaks their heart by going to someone else. He came from Colorado and was living with someone then and I didn't know it."

What was his family life like? "His dad did the same thing. His dad cheated on his mom, he grew up with it." It was a learned behavior? "He could have changed, he has brothers and sisters that didn't end up like this." What is your background? "I was married once and he died of a massive stroke. I only had one guy that I truly loved and that was my husband." So you are used to stability where he has had a more unstable upbringing? "His mom's really sweet. We still keep in contact and he hates that. She can't believe he's done this again. "Does he have a criminal background? "Not that he was caught." He has a job though. "Only because he had to go look for one. He had lived here for 6 months and he still didn't have a job and he really wasn't looking till he

broke his arm. I was trying to get him some help to pay for his medical bills because I couldn't pay them."

Was he abusive? "He never hit me because if he had he would have been gone sooner. He would have been in jail because I wouldn't have put up with it. I'm pretty much done with dating and done with men. "

Renters from Hell

This story deals with a landlord who after 4 years in the business of renting had to deal with a couple who was unlike any renters he had before. This renting disaster story was relayed to me as we sat down and discussed the odd behavior of the couple. The discussion is as follows:

What is your normal screening process for renters? "I usually interview everyone who calls and interview during the showing of the apartment." How in depth was your interview? "I usually ask what their situation is and how they would take care of a property." At the unit we are talking about, how many renters were there? "2, a couple in their late 30's." When you first saw them, what was your impression? "They both looked like they were under hard times and that's what they told me. They had bags around their eyes and looked a bit sleep deprived." Were they employed? "1 was, the other was not." What made you decide to give them the unit? "They liked the place and they really needed the place." At the time were you being lied to? "Yes, neither of them had jobs." How long are things going fine? "A week." What was the first red flag? "I noticed that the storm door was removed and the trim around the front door was removed as well. This was December. I was working on the duplex above so I would see them on a daily basis."

What were they doing? "I couldn't tell at first, I know now what they were doing. " How did you address the missing door issue? "I asked what's with the door (chuckle) and they said they were going to do some weather stripping on it. I said that's not really how you do it and I

was getting some really strange answers from them. "How was their demeanor? "When I first met them they gave me eye contact, quick responses to questions from then on they would never give eye contact, they would space out, every time I would speak with them they looked off in another world and they would make answers that made sense in the same way that like if you were in a dream or something. "

What was your response?

"Kind of what are you thinking? I tried to be polite but it was difficult to reason with people who at first seemed reasonable, it seemed like a lobotomy was done. It got more and more bizarre and I let them know that basically I didn't know if this was going to work out. I then gave them 30 days eviction notice."

Why were you so trusting of them upfront? "I try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt; I didn't have a reason not to trust them." Is that your nature? "Yes." Is that still your nature? "I try to make it my nature when I can, but now I do more when it comes to screening tenants. "

What was the next episode in this drama? "At the end of two weeks they aren't getting the door fixed so I come in and then I noticed new things.

They took down 2 walls of plaster and filled a big trash can sized recycling bins and screwed it shut. I couldn't explain that for the life of me, I asked myself why you would do this. I'd look at them and ask what's going on here and they just kind of spaced off and gave me a very zonked answer. It was like mumbling then they said it was cracking so we took the loose stuff down and we didn't stop.

I noticed a lot of smoking and the unit was a non-smoking unit, so I gave them 24 hours' notice before I came to do repairs and told them I wasn't leaving until this is done. When I was there working I noticed more cigarette butts that were tossed on the floor so there were burns on the carpeting and stuff. There was filth everywhere and the garbage had never been taken out and they never cooked anything and brought in fast food stuff and it was everywhere.

When I was there I also noticed a hallway floor where they took up the flooring down to the sub floor. That just about blew my mind; I didn't know how to react. They finally got frustrated with my frustration and they left for a while. I had given them notice a month earlier but they refused to leave for good. After I took out about 7 bags of trash I called in a couple people to help me with the wall. When they were there, they noticed the glass pipe with burn marks on it. They asked me if I knew what it was and I didn't so they told me and once I found out I called the police. "

Did you ever have contact with them again? "Yes, they were calling me wanting to go back and get all their stuff which was basically gone, I threw it all out. They left about a 20 yard dumpster worth of stuff behind. I was a civil as I could be and they said they were going to sue me for evicting us and they had an uncle who was a lawyer and they would take me for everything I've got and that sort of thing. I said you're free to do what they want and they never followed though." Did you mention the drug pipe? "They gave me a few different reactions. It was like, you can't prove that was ours kind of thing." Were they more coherent this time? "Yes," Did you call them on the damages, "Yes, when I would speak of the damages they would just say so? Fixing up a place that needs restoring is awesome, but repairing a place that was already fixed up gives you burn out pretty quick."

The hardest lesson of all

The following story was submitted by **Janine Marie Uldrich** and deals with her experiences as a teacher and behavior, the story is as follows: In our "so-called" modern society, we tend to label individuals due to their behaviors, needs, and wants. We also tend to forget that these individuals are those that may be lacking i.e. love, attention, and family.

Human behaviors are influenced by: culture, attitudes, ethics, emotions, values, authority, rapport, hypnosis, persuasion, coercion and/or genetics.

In all human behavior can either be very simple or a very complex in nature.

I graduated in 1983 from Peru State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and Coaching Endorsement. The first five years out of college I was employed with the Auburn-Peru Public Schools as a Para-Educator and Substitute Instructor. My "eyes" were soon opened wider to a way of "life-styles" I had never been around. Children diagnosed with ADHD, OCD, Bipolar, aggression, poverty, (etc.), and the Individually Challenged.

For five years I learned. I learned from the students their needs and wants. I had to put myself in their situation to understand what they were needing and so desiring to make it in this world. Some have conquered this world in amazing ways and others have left us to be in the heavens.

After five years with the Auburn-Peru Public Schools I decided I wanted a new challenge and applied for a country school position with District #30-Buchanan near Nebraska City. I was hired immediately and now had five years of experience on human behavior first hand than I could ever read in a book.

With nine grades to teach and all of the extra-curricular assignments I was ready to forge ahead. My students learned one important lesson on day one. I stated to them, "If you respect me, you will always have my respect, but you also have to respect one another." I never had any issues. I had a group of students that were going to strive in life and they knew it too.

In my second year at District 30 I once again would have a new Kindergartner. A young smiling blond girl with big blue eyes. Those big blue eyes turned to tears day after day. She was struggling. I brought up the situation to her mother (whom was on board with me). In our discussion I wanted to have her evaluated for learning

disabilities. I started to inquire about her health as a young toddler and her birth. What I was not ready for was the answer I received about her birth. This beautiful little girl had trouble coming into the world. She had a loss of oxygen in the birth canal and in the process of birth had a bowel movement which entered her system. My heart sank and once again, I asked the mother to speak with her husband about having her evaluated.

He was relentless and kept stating, "There is nothing wrong with my daughter! She is a normal little girl and smart!" For weeks we would meet after school and for weeks she would struggle in tears. The body language, tone of voice, gestures, and quietness the father put out there was way too much. I had to make a decision and I had to weigh out all that I had been documenting with her in mind to achieve in life.

I scheduled a meeting one day after school and asked that both parents, as well as our School Superintendent to attend. I stated my case and told the parents I would be holding their daughter back one more year in Kindergarten. The Superintendent agreed that it would be the best for the young girl. I looked at the mother and saw a sigh of relief, but father with his arms crossed and a disgruntle look on his face gave me the "shock of my life." He would agree to hold her back, but now had changed his mind and wanted her evaluated.

One week later her evaluation came back. I sat down with her parents and our psychiatrist. She was learning disabled due to her birthing. I saw tears in both parents' eyes and they thanked me for not ignoring the fact that I was going to pass her grade to grade knowing what I did. Relief to all.

Every week after that I would send home reports on her to let her parents know how she was striving in school. The following year she was more mature and I saw great achievements from my blue eyed girl. What my other students had seen was the respect and dignity of being there. The passion for understanding and caring. They knew that their

teacher did not give up on her and that she would never give up on any of them. I soon became the instructor that would take on students that the public school could not equate to.

When I left teaching at District #30, two sisters gave me a stained glass wall hanging which I have today. It states, "God does not shut one door without opening another." No it doesn't. Lesson to learn.no matter what human behavior comes your way.Never judge a book by its cover, read all the chapters from cover to cover.

Janine Marie Uldrich

Mental/emotional/sexual/physical abuse

This story was also submitted:

For the most forthright truth, I am a survivor. No, I have not battled cancer, but have endured so much in my life of the ones I have loved. My issue is "abuse." Not only physical, but mental, emotionally, and sexually.

You can sit back and laugh, say she did deserve it and I can laugh back, with tears. The only question I ever asked was, "Oh you guys are going to have a good time?" The next moment I knew was in a split second. I had hands around my neck. I was being sworn at. I was being beaten against my body where I had bruises up and down my torso and neck, and black eyes. It was my fear that kept me alive..and my three children. The doors to their bedrooms were shut. They did not see mom on the floor beaten. They did not hear the heavy glass mug hit the living room window only to shatter the inner glass. They were safe. I cried, I was beyond my mind. I literally was a shell and did not know how to respond to my children. I knew I had to be there for them, but there was this man; their step-father. Sad.

It was Mother's Day weekend and my parents showed up. I was draped in long sleeves and looking out the living room windows, but my co-workers knew from glimpses of me wearing longer sleeves. My parents though had no clue. I kept a lot from my parents and brothers. For what

it is worth I truly "despise" myself for not doing more for my children. I was subjected between a rock and hard spot.

My former (yes ex) came into the bedroom after he had seen all the damage he had done. Apologized and said it would never happen again. I forgave him. He never laid a hand on me, but he had his agenda. He played it well. I always have to "applaud" men who believe women who work outside of the home and not only take care of their children, but theirs have some type of freedom to screw around. Well, I never did it the first time, never did it on him. But by God, when he was drinking HEAVY..I better keep my eyes wide open. Call me whatever, but I know me.

Then Jr. High came. My daughters were excited! Life changed. I went from 140 pounds and started gaining weight. Why? Bad Stress. The type that tears your heart between the person that you should be in love with and the ones you brought into this world. I was ripped. By the time my oldest daughter graduated from LSW I had gained major weight. I climbed to 210!!! I have never in my life weighed that much other than my son (which thank you my son I lost).I was being tormented day after day. Monies, where have I been? Look at the checkbook and sorry to say can't you work more? Well, I worked and worked harder than some can imagine. He obtained credit cards and would get on the internet and start his day in the "happy Rose way!" I slept lightly. It was like living with, well I guess I cannot explain it, you have to feel it.

The night before my oldest daughter graduated I receive a phone call. I was in shock and could not sleep. I just learned I was going to be a grandmother. I love my granddaughter to death, but at the time I felt that I was being put on trial. I heard words of, "I AM TOO YOUNG TO BE A GRANDFATHER!" Then, one Sunday when I was cleaning house and doing laundry the girls came back and my son was still at his ball game. My ex-husband started throwing furniture like a miniature

tornado hit. As fast as he threw things the quicker I picked up. I just washed our bedding and remade the bed..he flung it and threw all in a corner. I was on the phone to my mother. She was hearing all.I could not speak. The rest will be history.my mother had the right frame of mind to call LPD. My son walked in on all. I had four days to leave. Yes, leave.

He took off drunk and handing me the keys to his truck! Now how drunk is that? I went to work only to leave the next day and take the time to "sign him off" before he could come back at me. After all, the house was filled with my belongings except for the bed we bought and a chair. Well, he received all he or his family left him. I even left him the curio cabinet and dining table with chairs he bought me. Even after I moved, I would ring the doorbell and leave anything that belonged to him on the front porch.

The straw that broke the camel's back was when he grabbed my oldest daughter around the neck and I begged him to let go. I heard her gasp and I have no respect for anyone in that capacity to touch an 18 year old or at any age like that.

I remember my mother stating to my brothers, "Why do you think your sister is this way??? What??? Do you not know???" (i.e. referring to them going to Nebraska games and me working in the yard via mowing, cutting trees, pulling weeds.)

Yes, I have been emotionally, sexually, physically, and mentally abused but the fact of the matter is this: (A) don't ever grab me by my wrists; (B) if you are trying to drag me down, then look at your own issues; (C) you are not perfect,

What scares me? Nothing on my behalf. I have lived more than I can say. I can only be there for my children, grandchildren, and those who stood behind me in this time. Abuse, no matter how big or small, how short or long, is abuse. Everyone deals with it their way and for the record NEVER pressure a conversation on it.

There is such a word, but sorry. If you are so capable of doing any of the four forms above what right do you have to call yourself human?

I must say this. I applaud the community of Milligan/Geneva for welcoming me home. I was a mess. I dropped down to 130 pounds and could swing to protect myself. No one ever deserves to be treated in the fashion of abuse. It is a hard lesson and one we sometimes blow off pretending it is just a fight, but my fight got uglier when my daughter's neck was grabbed.

On my part if I would have looked him up on legal. I would have known NOT to get in the situation. I would have and DID raise my children by myself.

Love yourself. Love your body. Love your children, BUT NOBODY that cannot support you in the emotional, mental, physical and sexual way. I am not only stating that for women.

It's all about having your pleasure at the expense of others.

This story was submitted by a man who had to deal with learning that his wife of 16 years had been unfaithful, he sent the story to share his experience and try to help others and show the types of behavior that can occur with infidelity:

Here is a story I don't wish upon anyone, once upon a time, not so long ago, I opened an email, where there was a message from a woman telling me that I should call her to discuss my wife and her husband. My first thought was, "What the hell?" but in the back of my mind I was almost expecting this. For the last year she had been very distant to me, our sex life was history and she had been spending a lot of extra time at work. Sounds like something out of a soap, only it happened to me.

She had told me many times that I wasn't responsive to her emotional needs, that I never listened to her, I even found a journal entry she wrote saying as much. I figured it was a bunch of crap because I always felt

like I was there for her. I felt she was making a mountain out of a mole hill. Turns out I was wrong.

I make the call and listen as this woman tells me of the goings on of my wife over the last six months and my heart falls to the floor. Either this woman was filling me with the biggest bull story in the world or I was blind to what was going on. I knew my relations with my wife were rocky at best, but there was no way she would ever cheat on me. Never. I pictured her being like her mother, raised on the farm, goes to church every Sunday and a wonderful mother and respected by everyone. But somewhere along the line she crossed the line, and she admitted it when I called her on it when she got home. I had noticed the day before she had been acting a bit strange, offering to make my supper, trying to be extra nice. Turns out the other woman had contacted her the day before and told her she was going to tell me, now it all makes sense. So when she came in the door I looked at her and she could tell something wasn't right. She asked me what was wrong and I said, "You tell me." She spilled everything right then and there, not a tear in her eye and all she could offer as an excuse was, "I made bad choices." Not what I was expecting to hear. The next few lines were to blame me for what happened as if I had tossed her in his bed, or our van as it turned out to be.

I can tell you that this happened very formulaic. The guy at work noticed that she wasn't happy, started spending time with her and over a five month period they fell in love. It then evolved into a sexual relationship. She admitted she had snuck out in the middle of the night to meet with him, had sex at the lake in our van multiple times. I don't know all the gory details, but she admitted to at least fifteen sexual encounters over a five month period. The intimacy between me and my wife was given to another man. Ouch, I can't express the pain. There is no way.

My wife is the type that never admits fault, so this was very difficult for her and she became very defensive. I ended up leaving town twice for two days each to "clear my mind" I can't tell you if she ever

contacted me. Maybe once to see who was going to get the kids to school the next day.

I found out later that the other woman, the one who informed me of what happened was put in jail that same night for beating her husband with his cell phone. He eventually ended up in the hospital with heart related issues. I heard he attempted suicide, I don't know for sure. To this day I have not met the man and hold no ill will towards him. This may sound odd, but I have never considered the "Other man" to be at fault when it comes to infidelity. As a man I know that men have an overwhelming desire to breed. It's the woman's job to filter this out and decide who gets in or not. My wife's filter was broken.

Although the sex is bad enough, it is the emotional part that turns my heart to a puddle on the floor. My wife is not the type to initiate sex, so I am pretty sure he made the moves. I could be wrong, but I doubt it. But I do know she formed a deep emotional attachment to this man and that is what kills me. I took my vows very seriously, and we're not talking a short marriage, our oldest is almost a teenager. So that night I meet with the "other woman" to find out exactly what's been going on. I meet her at a bar and bring along a friend to make sure I don't flip out and kill somebody. For the next 45 minutes I get every gory detail of their sex lives. The other woman got her husband to confess and now I was getting to hear all about it. She might as well have beat me with a baseball bat during that time, it would have hurt less.

I think adultery is a worse crime than murder. Murder doesn't leave a living victim to suffer the thoughts.

The first thing I did to try to save what was left was call our pastor and have him come over to our house. It was awkward discussing this with him but he had counseling as part of seminary and knew how to help. I used the time to express my dislike for her actions. Some men would have beaten the shit out of their spouse for what they did. I internalized

it and filled my heart with rage and hate. I still have moments when I think of what she did and it sends me into fits of rage. The amount of deceit, and the malice of forethought that it took to pull this off for five months will eat me like cancer till the day I die.

I forgave her when the pastor came over. And I meant it. That doesn't mean I will forget about what happened. When I say "forgive" I mean it in the sense that I won't hold her actions against her. If I do, we will have to separate. I admit my part in this, and if I had been there for her, she wouldn't have sought it from someone else. I understand that. A few days later I get another phone call from the other woman. When the pastor was here, the first thing he said that she agreed to was to break all ties and conversations with the man she had the affair with. The call from the woman was to tell me that she had texts from her to her husband and that she wanted me to see them. She sent me some of the texts and my blood boiled. I called my wife and asked her if she had been texting him and she admitted she had "slipped."

I later found out that the texting originated from the other mans phone, but not from him but from the wife pretending to be him. She tried to bait my wife into telling her more of the things that the two of them did. I got to read all the texts off my wife's phone. There were a few comments about me that I didn't care for, but I will give her credit for showing me everything.

There were texts that were added to and made up that I got from the other woman that were not on the phone. I realized now that the other woman is so scorned that she is manipulating me to fight with my wife. I have enough issues with her that I don't need to have someone else making it worse. I agreed to stop listening to the other woman, she is the one who broke the news to me and for that I am grateful, but from now on it's like rubbing salt in the wound. I know when, where and basically how she cheated on me and I can't think of anything she could say that would be worse. What happened, happened.

Self conflict, who I am versus what I do

The next story is about a complicated set of factors that makes interactions with others difficult for one woman who struggles with the opposition of her introverted inner personality and her job which requires her to work with the public on a regular basis. She also discusses some behavior she has observed that lends some insight into a microcosm culture known as the bar. This is our conversation:

"It takes like an instant to annoy me and I am aware of it, I don't like it, I wish I was more, um, let things roll off my back type of thing. The one thing I can say about myself is that unless you know me, you probably don't know that you've gotten under my skin. I make a huge effort to not let you know that I want to punch them in the face.

I can think of an example, there is somebody who comes into the bar that I work at and like literally the sight of her face when she's getting out of the car makes me go, ug, and she comes in and she gets drunk and is overly obnoxious and touchy and walks by and always wants to touch you or lay her head on your shoulder "What are you doing?" she would ask in a whiny childish way, and it takes every ounce of my being to not say" get the fuck away from me, stop touching me, stop talking to me, I don't like you, I don't want to be anywhere around you, you gross me out. "I compensate for that by whistling or not looking at them in the face. "

Has your feelings got worse over time? "Yes, I noticed as I get older it's worse, I have noticed a change in myself, people piss me off a lot more but I keep it under control more than I used to when I was younger. Back then I had no problem giving people dirty looks and sitting with my group of friends and talking about somebody and whatever in near proximity. I had no problem doing that, now I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but at the same time I don't want them anywhere near me, I don't want to have a conversation with them."

Is this something you learned to do over time or something that came naturally as part of your personality? "I don't know, I just have a low tolerance for people and that's bad because I'm in a people job. " Do you consider yourself introverted or extroverted? "I consider myself to be introverted and I have to try really hard, it takes everything I have to be talkative and chatty with people and in my job that is what I have to do and it goes against everything inside of me. If I could work at a job where I was in a little cubicle and could type or work on a line where I wouldn't have to talk to anybody I would be so happy. "

Is it the people or is it you? "It's me, people need to be more tolerant, I'm not sure if I'm using that word right here, I don't care what other people do, I just don't like most of them. People piss me off instantly and then once they get under my skin I don't want anything to do with them anymore. "What does it take to be your friend? "I think I'm a pretty hard person to be friends with actually, if I were someone else I don't know if I would want to be my friend. I have a core group of friends, maybe 5 of us and were best friends forever and I don't know what it takes to be my friend. When you first meet someone, you can tell within a very short amount of time like maybe a minute or less whether or not it is someone you could be friends with. I think most people are that way. I meet people who I call "me" people which are people like me or who I can tolerate and then there are the other "not me" people and 99% of the people on this Earth are "not me" people. I'm not putting out the illusion out there that it's other people, it's me." Are there any underlying factors that would contribute to your behavior? "

My childhood was less than desirable and I've been very guarded all my life." You have a job where you have to meet the public, how do you reconcile your dislike of people with your job? "I have a lot of inner dialogues, let's say we just meet and I instantly didn't like you, and I pick things out about people, not their appearance but their mannerisms, how they act, and not appreciating other peoples time is a big pet peeve of mine. When someone has really gotten under my skin my throat gets tight, my chest feels tight and I feel like I'm breathing

heavier so I have this inner conversation, usually call them a fuck head or something in my head and then usually I am like chill out who cares? They are going to be gone in 5 minutes anyway. I am constantly talking to myself to get myself to chill the fuck out. I annoy myself with my little quirks."

So you know when it's happening to you? "I know when it's happening and as backwards as this may seem, I never want to hurt anyone's feelings. If I didn't like someone, I wouldn't want to tell them or point it out; I'm just irritated by them."

How do you keep from showing your annoyed to them? "I don't know if I do. I try really hard to and people who know me, who know my mannerisms, my friends across the room seeing me talking to somebody saying look at her face she's so irritated. I try to be respectful and give respect. I'm sure people walk out of here and say, "Man, what a bitch." I think I'm a smart person and I can't figure out what my deal is."

You've been doing this kind of work for a long time now, and you are still doing it, if it were a huge problem you would be doing something else right? "Yes, I like my job and I like what I do, I just wish I didn't have to deal directly with people so much."

Has your supervisors ever brought you in and say hey you've been a little snotty? "No, in fact it is the opposite, I get people that call my supervisor and say that I was very nice and appreciated me being nice and would come back and see us again."

Are there any triggers that automatically make you dislike someone? "I have little things that I can't stand, I feel weird saying this, but for example, people sniffing constantly, clearing the throat all the time, the way people chew, laugh, little things like that. When people do things like that I immediately tighten in the chest and throat."

When you are working at the bar serving drinks, how do you deal with people who want to share their personal stories with you? "I act like I'm

listening, and in my head I'm thinking "Shut the fuck up. I don't care; I honest to God don't care! It's really hard because it's part of the job listening to people. By the end of the shift I am so sick of people, listening to the jokes you think are funny as sad as it is to say, in this part of the country, in this area of Nebraska, we don't have as much exposure to things that people in the larger city have.

We don't have as many black people here, we don't have as many gay people or other things, so there are all these jokes and people use these horrible words like niggers and faggots and blah blah blah, let's kill that fucking porch monkey up in Washington. Joke after joke and it's so irritating. "

How do you respond to them? "I usually say they are terrible." You actually call them on it? "Yes, I don't reprimand them or say we don't use that word, but I will tell them that what they are saying is terrible. I try to say it in a way that is not condescending but lets them know I think their stupid. I don't know what it is that makes people think they can tell a random person a joke about a "nigger" What part of us thinks that's ok?"

Does being in a bar automatically change people's attitudes and behavior? "Possibly, "What do you see in the bar that you usually don't see at the grocery store or on the street? "You see the people who have totally no inhibitions that will go out and dance with their tits out and bump and grind against somebody when they have a husband and 2 kids at home, you see the man buying a woman beers and he has a wife and 8 kids at home. You see this whole new subset of behaviors, when the cats away the mice will play. It's like a meat market sometimes, and that is common but it's very intriguing to watch people who are upstanding members of the community, bankers, lawyers, you know who think that once you walk in the bar its fair game and you can do anything that you want. I have seen some pretty interesting behavior from some people who are usually on the other side of the coin talking down to people. "

Explain to me these entitlements? " I have people that I have come in who I know have no money, who can barely make ends meet, and they drink, that's fine, everyone deserves to have a release and if they want to have a few beers that's fine. Those are the people that are leaving \$2, \$3 or even \$4 dollar tips, the people that I know don't have any, the bankers, the business owners, the well to do who pull up in front driving a Cadillac or some sort of hybrid SUV, those are the ones who leave nothing or literally pennies and dimes and nickels for a tip. It's the rich guys that bitch about the price of the drinks and nobody else says a word. "

Do as I say not as I do

In 2006 the Nebraska Unicameral passed LB454, allowing state citizens the opportunity to carry and legally carry loaded firearms. I was appalled. I was sure it would be a return to the days of 'The Old West': two men have a disagreement in a bar and step outside to handle the matter. One reached for his pocket first, the other beats him to it. A shot rings out; someone lies dead in the street.

I could see no reason why this should ever be a law. Guns and people don't mix...pure and simple. Now back up a ways.

Prior to the bill becoming law I lobbied state senators, as well as our national leaders from Nebraska, both in the senate and the house. I asked for their support against the bill. I even asked my friend the governor to veto that piece of legislation. All to no avail. Nebraska would escalate into anarchy. Mad max meets Fairbury, Nebraska.

I lost. My friends in the law enforcement community of Fairbury, both active and retired, said I wasn't looking at it the right way. Law abiding citizens had the right to protect themselves, their loved ones and homes from those who meant to do them harm. They, of course were wrong. Fast forward nearly six years.

I had been on a business trip in Kansas City and was returning home via I-70 when I stopped at a rest area to go to the bathroom. As I

walked into the bathroom I was whistling a tune passing the time. No tune in particular.

When I closed the door to the stall and sat down to do "my business" I heard a voice:

"What kind of a person whistles in a rest stop? A fucking queer that's who. Are you a fucking queer?"

I was mortified and to say the least in an unenviable if not undefendable position. I listened further.

"You know the only thing that's worse than a fucking queer?" the voice said. "That's a fucking Christian. Are you a fucking Christian?"

Unable to complete my task in the bathroom I pulled up my pants, flushed and left the stall, carefully peeking out the door.

Nothing.

No one.

Not one single person was in the bathroom with me.

I left the bathroom. Again nothing. No one. Not one single person was seemingly waiting for this whistling Christian. The I-70 rest stop was teeming with people. Cars and trucks coming in and out. Elderly people, young people, couples walking their pets. There were a lot of folks there. But no one came up to me or said anything else.

I got back in my truck and drove home. This was on a Sunday. The next day I called and registered for the next conceal & carry class. My weapon of choice is a 9mm semi-automatic pistol. A Ruger. I also have a 380 Walther, another semi-automatic and a 22 caliber revolver. One of them is with me at all times.

In my home I have one of the loaded pistols in my nightstand. In my gun cabinet (which I had mostly to keep my father's firearms stored) I now have: a double barrel 16 gauge shotgun; a 16 gauge shotgun with clip; two 410 shotguns, one a single shot and one with a clip; a 22 single shot rifle; a lever action Winchester 3030; a 45 caliber Army Colt and a 50 caliber Springfield rifle. All in addition to my pistols. Oh, and I have somewhere between 2-3,000 rounds of ammunition. I regularly buy more when I can afford it.

That one single incident along I-70 has turned me from a guy who believes that guns are wrong and people are basically good into.....Rambo.

Harassment

This story was submitted to me via Facebook upon request for interesting stories on human behavior. The topic of this article is the harassment perpetrated by an ex during a relationship and how this affected the writer and her fiancée. The story is as follows:

To begin with, the story and the words you will read are all facts, on many occasions my fiancée and I had been harassed by my ex and this went on for about a year and a half. My ex's emotions turned to pure hate not only for me but for my new fiancée as well. For example: Our house was spray painted with derogatory statements, there were letters with threats coming from the jail house, our property was entered and our tires slashed and vicious threats wanting the blood of another. These comments had been recorded and taken to the police station and nothing was done. There had been several reports of domestic assault and he was only convicted of 2 charges. This man had 3 domestic assault charges in Nebraska and as far as I knew by law you do max on a third time, but not him. It almost makes me feel like he was paying people to dismiss his charges and I believe that's very unfair.

Things settled down and just out of the blue he started harassing again with even more violent threats and becoming physical, banging on doors windows, driving through my yard trying to run people over, police were called again and they still did nothing. What I'm wondering is does someone have to be lying in their own blood before they (the police) take action? What if there are children involved? Then one of my children did get involved and finally something was done, not only did he physically hurt me he hurt my son too. He hurt

my son emotionally, and that's abuse that is stated in law books but this one only got a slap on the wrist and a couple months in jail. I feel if there were stricter laws things like this would be cut in half and a lot of women wouldn't be afraid to live their lives being afraid of the next man that comes along.

Stopping the cycle of child sexual assault

This story comes from a 36 year old mother of 3 who as a child was molested by her uncle and was able to break the cycle of abuse that had ran through her family for years. The interaction among the family members is a fascinating look into the behavior of denial, deceit, and strength to confront an abuser. This is our conversation:

What happened? "I was living with my grandmother when I was 7 and that was the first time with my uncle that I recall anything ever happening. My uncle was my grandmother's youngest son. It was me and my sister and two cousins and my uncle called one of my cousins into the bedroom and then called the other cousin in after the other one left and then he called me and my sister both in the room. At the time he was 18 or 19 years old.

I had to watch my sister go down on him and then he made me touch it. Then he had me lying on the bed and he was rubbing my chest, which I had no chest, but he was rubbing it and telling me they would grow one day. He held a knife to my throat and said if I ever tell anybody he'd kill me. He had nicked my throat and drew a drop of blood, which to me was horrifying in itself. "What was his background?" "He had a bad criminal history of drugs."

Describe your relationship with your uncle prior to the abuse. "I can remember when he would come to our grandmothers; we thought he was an awesome uncle. He would play superman with us, he would pop fireworks for us." How did it make you feel after the abuse "Frightened, at the time we and my cousins never discussed anything then two years later when we were back at my grandmothers and the first Oprah Winfrey broadcast came on about rape and molestation we

all just looked at each other and started crying. We never discussed what happened before that. We then went to my grandmother and told her and we got a spanking because we were in the wrong because our legs were spread."

What was your grandmother's background? "Her mom died when she was very little." This was her son and she blamed you and your cousins? "Because we were the females and we had the power." But she's a female, "yeah." How do you reconcile that? "See my mom was messed with by one of her ex-husbands and she blamed my mom as well. After telling my grandmother about it and the blame being put on us we just never said anything else about it to anyone."

You left your grandmothers for 4 years and returned, how had things changed? "My grandfather was ill and he had asked my mom, he had no idea that her brother had done anything to us, and his death bed request was for my mom to take care of her little brother. So he moved in with us, my grandfather passed away and my mother worked the graveyard shift. I was messed with between 2 and 3 times a week. "How long did it take before this all started again? "After he moved in, he got a job and started back on drugs, it wasn't long."

What was his behavior? "It was rape. He would get my sister out of bed and take her into my mom's room, she was working at the time, and he would turn around when he was done with her and take me in there." Did your mother have any idea what was going on? "No, not at first and it continued for about 6 months or so when I was getting ready for school one morning and he tried to penetrate me anally when I was getting clothes out of the dryer and I screamed and ran into the bedroom with my sister and we barricaded the door. My sister asked me what was wrong and I told her and she said she thought that he had stopped messing with you because I told him to leave us alone. Well he stopped messing with her when she stood up to him, I had no idea she had stood up to him, I thought she was still being messed with and so

we timed it to where we knew our bus was coming and hauled ass out the door to get on the bus.

We got home from school that afternoon and my mom asked if I would fix her a glass of tea and I said yes ma'am. My uncle said fix me a glass too and I said get it your own damn self and my mom got up, because we were taught not to talk like that, especially to an adult and she got up mad at my behavior and my sister got up between me and my mom and she said shut up you are going to listen. My sister and I then told her what happened to us in front of him and she started bawling and confronted her brother and asked if it really had happened and my uncle admitted to it. My mother screamed and had a fit and we told her the story all the way back to when we were 7 so she kicked him out. "

How would you describe your family life? "My grandmother passed away 2 years ago, but even up until then she would say to me and my sister, although you are little whores, I still love you. My uncle was eventually jailed for drugs, never charged for child molestation ever, and I can remember being taken to the prison for a visitation. We were sitting at a table and he was sitting across from me and he's trying to tell me to spread my legs so he can. (Unintelligible) so I just scooted on down away from him. At the time I was 14 years old. He would call to my grandmother's house and tell me the stuff that he wanted to do to me when he got out."

Did you ever strike back at him? "When I was 18 I moved in with my mom, it was less than 2 weeks and my uncle and his girlfriend moved in. As soon as he showed up I told him we need to talk so we went outside. I said, you know and I know what you did was wrong and he was like "yeah" and I'm letting you know it will never happen again and I'll never trust you and you'll never have an opportunity again. And he cried. But I've seen him around other females with their kids and I know in my heart he's continued on with other kids. "

How would you describe that moment when he cried? "At the time when I was living with my aunt I was in church and went through the

forgiving phase and that's when I told him that I forgave him but you never forget it. " Did he even attempt anything after that? "Nope." How has this affected you as an adult? "I have a great love for children, as far as them not being hurt. I watch people when they are around children. "Have you become a protector? "My children have never been hurt. "If you had any idea that your own children were being abused what would you do? "Probably go to jail. It was like when I had my son in was neat becoming a mom, I didn't think about abuse having a little boy but the day I got home from the hospital and changed my daughters diaper for the first time and took her diaper off I flipped out.

I bawled, I had to call because my husband was at work. She had a poopy diaper and I was scared to clean her because I didn't want to hurt her. So I had to call my mother in law to come show me how to properly clean a little girl. I didn't want to accidentally penetrate her because I don't want any kid to have to live like I've lived." You do know the difference between a molester and a mother? "It wasn't that I was looking at her like in that type of way I just didn't want her harmed even just cleaning her." Did you see yourself in your own daughter? "Pretty much." Do you blame yourself at all for what happened to you? "I hate that I couldn't be brave enough to go and find someone that actually cared and could have stopped it. " Did the thought of talking to a teacher ever come to you? "Yeah, but the thought of a knife at my throat came to my mind also."

Now that your daughter is older, how do you relate with her?" She has a normal life, but she's not left around adult males. I don't have a complete bad view on men, but I do with a man who spends too much time and attention to children than adults. That flags to me something's wrong. "

Do you have any indications that your uncle was molested as a child? "I have no idea. But my step grandfather molested my mother as a youth and my grandmother beat the ever living Hell out of my mom for

being a little whore. My mom was sexually active at the time of the molestation and ended up pregnant. My mom thought all the way up to when my sister was 29 that she was my grandmother's ex-husband's baby. He refused to do a DNA test but gave up his military medical records and had that tested and it turned out that he wasn't the father. At one point, when I was 2 and my sister was 5, my grandmother walked into the bathroom and caught her husband messing with my sister in the bathtub."

After all of this, how has it affected your life? "Look at my eyes, I have no eye brows. I pick my eyebrows and my eyelashes. It's called Trichotillomania. I didn't find that out till my mid 20's. "

My spiral into Hell

Last summer was a bad one. So was last fall and well into the winter. Actually, pretty much the whole entire year sucked. It's only now, a year later that I'm starting to get my life back. I don't really have any justification for why I walked down this path, but there are several setting events that contributed to the direction I took. In March 2007, I took a job that turned out to be very demanding and very stressful. To put it very simply, I was responsible for a lot of stuff. I also wanted out after a couple of years; I needed to do something different. So, I started an online graduate program with the intent of earning a teaching certificate and a master's degree in special education. Meanwhile, my husband lost his job and we found out that his dad had cancer.

It was starting to seem like everything that could go wrong, was going wrong. My husband enrolled in school at the urging of his father and me. My father in laws health continued to decline and in early 2011, he passed away. I knew my husband was devastated and so was I. This man was my second dad; my own father had passed away in 2003. He was the voice of reason and a calming force for both me and my husband. My husband suffers from anxiety and no one could reel him back in like his dad, mostly because he had experienced the same

feelings. By this time, I had made the decision not to return to Cyber School, it was just too much to handle.

My husband continued with school, but told me, in a text approximately 6 weeks before graduation that he didn't really want to do what he was going to school for and, that his father and I had forced him into going to school. I was at my wit's end. I did not have the same effect on my husband to reel him back in as his dad had. To make matters worse, money was becoming an issue for us and I felt that my husband was pulling away from me. It seemed he wouldn't talk to me, he wouldn't tell me he loved me. I felt all alone. He did graduate from school, took his boards and obtained his license. But, because of his experience with a previous employer, he resisted getting a full time job, choosing instead to continue with the weekend home health care he was providing for an elderly gentleman. And, the money issues continued.

Fast forward to mid-July, 2011. I was spiraling and I knew it, but I didn't know what to do about it. I kept having dreams where I was at the top of a high hill in a car, driving down towards a bridge that was covered in swirling river water. If you're into dream interpretation, you know that water represents our emotions. Swirling, dirty water represents confusion. Bridges represent decisions that we are struggling to make. My job was getting harder and harder for me to do. My friends recognized that there was something wrong, but didn't know what to do for me or how to approach me. I tried to talk to my husband, but he was unable to give me any emotional support or encouragement because of his own emotional state.

I believe his father's death had contributed greatly to his overall depression and anxiety, something that's hard to see when you're in the midst of it. Enter my co-worker. This man was someone I had worked with and known for a couple of years. I liked the guy. We started talking and texting. He was comforting. Somewhere around mid-July, we started a sexual affair. I don't have any justification for this action. That is not how I was raised and is really not part of my personality.

None of my closest friends knew about the affair. About a month later, I was demoted from my caseload and I was devastated. My husband, I felt, offered me no support or empathy, but the other guy did and our affair continued. It continued until November when his wife found out and called my husband, but that is a totally different chapter, and believe me when I tell you I regret the entire thing from start to finish and beyond.

Now, I told you that story so I could tell you this one. The eventual outcome of my demotion was that I was put in a lesser position and into a position that was less "professional". There was much more physical labor involved in my new job, not exactly what I went to school for. I tried my best to make the best of the bed I made for myself. The interesting thing, and the point of this story is that, people's reactions and interactions to me and with me after my demotion were different. Those colleagues that are also my friends did not treat me any differently and were quite supportive. However, others were not really mean or unfriendly, but it was as if I didn't really exist to them. Literally and metaphorically, I was put in the lowest position that HR could put me in the lowest environment possible. My office was now in a condemned building at the "bottom of the hill". The building was dirty and old and infested with snakes, mice and bugs.

Those of us officing in that building began calling ourselves the "island of misfit toys". We were all kind of in the same boat, we had been moved there to be out of the way. Eventually, after several conflicts with my supervisor (yet another story about human behavior) our director moved me again "up the hill" and under a different supervisor. Although the location was better (less critters) I still wasn't being treated with much dignity or respect. It was about at this point that I decided "blooming where I was planted" didn't mean settling, so I began looking for another position. Meanwhile, to most people, I was still no one. Now, I am not an elitist. I do not think I'm better than anyone just because I have a degree or for any other reason.

But, that being said, I worked my ass off for that degree and got it so I could use it. And, even ditch diggers should be treated with respect. Recently, I applied for and was offered a promotion. I graciously accepted it. I'm back to working in a position that is related to my degree and my title has changed. This has made a big difference with a lot of people. All of a sudden, people are asking me questions about my opinion, soliciting my input, etc. Other clinicians are greeting me on the sidewalk. My office is now an actual room, with walls and without a rodent or bug infestation. In general, I feel more respected. My new supervisor knows how to treat those he supervises with respect. I am part of a professional team again. Even though, I am basically the same person, I am treated differently based on my position.

And, let me speak to that for a moment: last summer, my personal and professional life spiraled down in to a big, deep pathetic hole. I had gotten about as low as I could go, rock bottom. I cheated on my husband with a man I now realize was definitely less than stellar and not worth it at all. I have absolutely no justification for my poor behavior. I can say that I was trying to get attention because my husband wasn't giving it to me. I can say I wasn't thinking clearly because I was depressed. Bottom line is, cheating is wrong, no matter what reason you give it, be it attention, poor thinking or revenge. In addition, I suffered the shame of being demoted from my position and being stripped of my caseload. Not only was I demoted, I was put in a position that was obviously (to me anyway) derived to punish me the most. Even though I was still myself, I was not really myself because my frontal lobe was not functioning at its full capacity.

There are several points I'd like to make in telling this story. 1. Cheating is wrong for any reason, there are no mitigating circumstances when it comes to cheating and betraying someone's trust. It just should never be done. I was wrong to do it. 2. People will treat you differently based on your perceived position in life. The CEO gets treated much differently than the front line worker. The woman with the food stamps gets treated differently than the woman with the credit card. 3. Faith and perseverance will get you through anything. 4. God

helps those who help themselves. 5. Life is too short to fight about stupid shit.

So, at this point, a year later after my "fall from grace", I'm finally feeling like myself again. The whole experience damaged my self-confidence and my faith in other people. Fortunately, securing this new position has helped rebuild some my confidence. The competition for the job was fierce and I was chosen over several very qualified candidates, so I feel very thankful for being offered the position. In addition, I know that I had to work very hard to get the job given who I was up against. After cheating on my husband with a man I later came to realize was a total loser and my husband's actions following the affair's disclosure, I don't trust people or my own ability to read them much anymore. I was wrong about the other "man" and my husband chose revenge as his path after he found out. This last year has been filled with almost on going harassment from the other "man" and his family as well as contact from my husband's woman "friend", and I use the terms "man" and "friend" very lightly.

Knowing a little about behavior modification, I know that the less attention you give to a maladaptive behavior, the sooner it will extinguish itself. This is of course, easier said than done when you're being called a dirty whore by people who either need to get a life or mind their own business. See, I slipped there..let my anger come through a little bit. At any rate, faith, good friends, and little bit of humility (blessed are the humble) will get you through anything. And, just as important, there is something to be said for the thought that we should be careful whose feet we step on as they may be attached to an ass you need to kiss later. You never know who you are going to meet on the way up or the way down and we're all struggling with something. So, give everyone the benefit of the doubt and treat them with respect and kindness. Because, to quote yet another cliché, you get what you give

Woman assaulted in Nebraska for being lesbian, a response from a bi sexual woman

I am so sick of people using hate to hurt others. It is no one's business what another person does in their personal life or bedroom. Whether you are gay/straight/bi-sexual/ transgendered or a sexual, people need to act like adults and realize you cannot control everyone on the planet, obviously < Nazi Germany anyone?>

For a country that insists we were founded on God, judging other people is sure a great way to spend the day. Why don't you take the time to actually read the Bible and note the passages that state things like God loved us so much he gave us free will and the opportunity to choose how we live our lives? And as someone who is a bi-sexual I know first-hand no one chooses to be gay, they choose not to live a lie and to be the person they were born to be. It is not for you to break into someone's house and carve derogatory words into their skin.

What kind of hate possesses someone to the point where they believe for one second that this is ok? This is getting ridiculous; we need to teach acceptance and tolerance in schools, homes, and churches not bigotry and hate. If you feel this kind of hate and anger towards a group of people, please get help or at least don't act on it. We are all humans and we are all in this together. No one lives forever and who wants hate to rule their lives? I know I don't.

(Update from Lincoln Journal News 8/23/12)

More than 200 people rallied for Lincoln's gay and lesbian community on the steps of the Capitol on Wednesday night, one day after police said a lesbian woman staged a hate crime one month ago. The scene echoed the candlelight vigil the night after Charlie Rogers, 33, told police

three men broke into her house, tied her up, carved anti-gay slurs into her skin and tried to light her house on fire.

"We were all brought together by a woman who needs prayers and support," said Beth Loofe, a Lincoln woman who works as a chaplain at Inclusive Life Church in Omaha. "And essentially, we're all brought together by a woman who needs prayers and support."

Lincoln police arrested Rogers on Tuesday afternoon, and prosecutors charged her with

making a false report to police. She appeared in court and pleaded not guilty to the misdemeanor charge.

At a news conference Tuesday, Police Chief Jim Peschong made a point to note that false reports such as the one police believe Rogers made are extremely rare.

"Tell me your life story"

This story was submitted by a woman who had an interesting interaction with a stranger at a gas station and wanted to share her interactions and behavior, the story is as follows:

The other day, I stopped at the gas station to fill up as my husband and I were on our way out of town. I usually do the "pay at the pump" thing so I don't have to stand in line inside to pay for stuff. To be honest, I do this in part so I don't have to interact with a lot of people. I just want to fill up and get on my way. So, I hop out of the van and start filling up. In front of me, at the next pump, an older woman slides slowly out of her truck. I look up and I smile and say "Hi", because I was raised to be polite. Very rarely do I not acknowledge another person when they are right in front of me, that's just rude behavior.

Anyway, my greeting apparently opened the door to further interaction. I didn't know who this woman was, never seen her before in my life. I doubt strongly she had any clue who I am since we weren't even at a gas station in the town we live in. But, she looked at me and said "I hate getting gas". To which I responded, "Especially when it's this hot". I expected that the conversation would stop at that point; it was just an arbitrary exchange of words between two strangers attempting to be

friendly to each other. I was wrong. She continued talking to me about her min pin and how he doesn't like the heat. Then she began explaining to me that she couldn't take him for walks right now because she had bruised ribs. She said "I don't even want to tell you how I did that....." but she did anyway explaining how she had a screen door that was stuck and she tried to forcefully open it, injuring herself in the process.

What prompted this woman to share so many details of her life with me, a total stranger? This information was what many would consider private or at the very least uninteresting to anyone other than friends or family. Maybe this lady was just lonely and needed the social interaction? My smile and greeting triggered her response. Do I just have a face that makes people feel comfortable? This isn't the first time something like this has happened.

I heard life stories from countless people while standing in the checkout line at the grocery store, waiting in line at a movie, sitting on a plane, in the ladies' room at the bar. I joke that I must have a sign on my forehead that says "tell me your life story", but I think people's response to me is likely related to the very basic human need of validation. People want to know that their stories, their experiences, their feelings are valid, e.g. they need someone else to confirm them as real or important.

I read somewhere recently that one of the most important aspects of successful relationships, specifically marriages, is empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and imagine you inside someone else's feelings. I believe that empathy and validation go hand in hand. I showed an interest in this woman by simply smiling and greeting her. I further validated her by responding to her comment about filling up her truck. That opened the door for her to talk to me further about her dog and her health. Even though I wasn't really interested in her bruised ribs or her dog or her screen door, I tried to show empathy for her situation and therefore validated her further.

My dad was the same way. Everywhere we went, he'd be talking to someone. Didn't matter where. It could be our hometown or in another state, someone would always strike up a conversation about anything or nothing. Maybe I inherited the skills of empathy and validation from him. Or, I at least learned those skills by watching him practice them while I was growing up. These are skills that I consider very valuable and I'm not sure many people have them.

Disability and the hidden causes

This story deals with the problem of a young woman who is on disability for medical problems that cannot be seen on the outside and how it has affected her in her daily life and relationships with her family and others. This is her story:

"I have Multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, bi polar disease and chronic fatigue so you know I have a lot of physical and mental problems."

When were you diagnosed? "I was diagnosed with bi polar when I was 14, with MS in 2005, the fibromyalgia in 2003 along with the chronic fatigue and chronic pain. I constantly deal with numbness and tingling in my hands, and on my face." How long have you been on disability?

"It has been 2 years." What was the last "job" you held? "I was a manager at a fast food restaurant."

Since you have gone on disability, what kind of comments do you get?

"My brother in law is the worst, we get into a lot of fights, he tells me that I'm a lazy fat bitch, that needs to get a fucking job because I'm just milking the system, there's nothing wrong with me even though I have medical documentation that backs it up. They don't just give anybody a disability." Give me an example of a time when you and your brother in law had an argument over your disability. "It wasn't too long ago, my sister and I actually started the argument over something stupid and he had to butt in and he goes, "You're a fat lazy bitch, why don't you just get a fucking job, you're a faker.

I was like, I'm not faking, and my mom chimes in and she goes, "She's not faking, I was with her when she was at the doctor and got one of her diagnosis". He said, "I don't give a shit, she's faking. I'm sick and tired of providing for people like her who are lazy, able to get a job, but don't." So I ask him how I was supposed to get a job, you don't know what's wrong with me, you don't know what goes on in my daily life." And he goes, "Whatever you stupid bitch, I'm not going to fucking deal with you. I'm sick and tired of supporting your ass."

Was that just a dig at you? "Yes, he hates me, plain and simple it comes down to he just hates me but it's not just him, but I get the "Oh you could have a job comment from lots of people," because I don't look sick. Who else is giving you this grief? "Oh, people in the community." Do you have any examples to share? "I was in Wal-Mart, and I get food stamps because I get SSI only, because I didn't work enough when I was married because my husband wanted me to stay home and take care of the kids.

Well, I was getting food, and a lady asked, "Why do you get food stamps, don't you have a job?" I answered "No, I'm on disability," and she says, "No, you can get a job, there's nothing wrong with you. I see you out and about the town", which is a lie because I have an anxiety disorder which keeps me pretty much at home, I don't leave the house unless I absolutely have to. I felt knee high to a grasshopper because I was being belittled in front of a cashier and a line full of people and everybody else around staring at me, looking at me like, "There isn't anything wrong with her," nobody knows what my disabilities are, MS is an invisible disease as well as the rest of my illnesses."

How did you respond to her? "I said it's not worth my time. I don't have to explain to you what's wrong with me, why I'm on disability and why I get food stamps. I said I have to provide for my children somehow and this is the way I have to do it. She says, "I'm sick and tired of supporting people like you who are lazy."

How does that make you feel? "It makes me feel like I'm crazy, like is there something wrong with me? People look at me and they tell me,

well you don't look sick, and there is even a website <http://www.butyoudontlooksick.com/> and I go there a lot because it deals with invisible illnesses." Is that part of the reason why you shut yourself in? "Yes, because I don't like confrontation. I don't like people judging me based on what they don't know." Do you think it's your responsibility to educate them? "I try; I mean yesterday I posted something on Facebook about fibromyalgia because I want people to know that some of the stupidest things can cause pain." I'm a nurse, and I have heard that some people don't recognize fibromyalgia as a real disease. "Yeah, there's one doctor at my clinic that calls it a "trashcan diagnosis" and that hurts because I was diagnosed by a rheumatologist."

Do you have family history of any of these diagnoses? "Yes, my mother also has fibromyalgia, and I think she has MS but she won't go get it checked out. She has had strokes in the past, but she also has a lot of the symptoms that I have." Who do you think perpetrates the stereotype of the lazy person on disability? "I think it's a general misconception, a lot of people don't understand that there are really people that need the assistance, they may not look like they need it, but they do need it."

Over the last 2 years since you went on disability, has it got better or worse for you? "My family doesn't understand, I don't think they think I'm really sick." Since you are still a young woman, how do you intend to deal with this situation in the future? "I'm going to school." That's interesting, because if you can't hold a job why go to school? "Because I want to try at least." Is your course of study in a job that won't interfere with your diagnosis? "Yes, because most of my jobs in the past required that I was on my feet 8 hours a day and I can't do that anymore. I'm hoping with my new career, I will be able to sit and the pain won't bother me as much."

Are you going to school because people have been bothering you or because you want to prove something to yourself? "I think a little of both. I'm trying to prove to myself and everybody else." If and when

you get a job, will you lose your disability? "It depends on how much I make. I can work part time and still keep my disability."

Has anyone from your past who criticized you about being on disability now apologized to you for making Presidents list in school? "No, but they are proud of me."

For the record, what is it like to live on disability? "It's very hard to live on \$698.00 a month. That don't go far, if people really think I enjoy being on disability and that's its fun being on disability it's not, because \$698.00 don't go very far. It's barely enough to pay the bills, I get my rent paid for thru a program for my bi polar disorder, and that helps, but I still have to pay my gas bill, my electric bill, my internet bill for school and all that. Being on disability isn't glamour, it sucks."

Prison guard and inmate relations

This story comes from a Kansas correctional officer who has been working in the prison system for around 5 years. I asked him to share some stories of the interactions between guards and inmates so I could share the unique behaviors of a two populations that are at constant odds with each other. The guard asked that I do not identify in any way who he his is or where he works and I agreed. This is his story:

Can you share an instance when an inmate's behavior directly affected you, and how you dealt with the consequences? "One instance that comes to mind was with a particular inmate who was very vile, he was a young wanna be gang banger. Keep in mind gangs do not go away, in prison if anything, they become more intense. Where outside of prison, where gangs don't necessarily go along racial lines, within prison they go strictly along racial lines.

At any rate, this man considered himself to be a gang banger, considered himself to be tough and as a guard I do not believe my job is to punish these individuals, they are being punished by being in prison, I believe my job is to make sure the rules are upheld and every rule is there for a reason. There has been a situation that has caused this rule to be implemented. When you talk about safety and security you're

not talking about safety for the staff only, you are also talking about the safety of the inmates as well.

This individual for some reason or another, he didn't like me- whether I told him no on something he couldn't have or enforced a rule he thought I shouldn't have enforced I'm not sure,- but I did let him get to me." Can you explain what happened? "He mouthed off to me, I mouthed off to him back and I ended up getting a disciplinary action for it. The particular person who wrote me up on it, who turned it in, had no idea, could not remember at all what the inmate said, but knew exactly what I said, and though I don't remember the exact words I used, it made me look worse than what was actually said.

Can you describe the type of comments the inmate was making towards you? "The type of comments where threatening me, my family, everyone around me. He would have his "boys" so to speak, come after me. He would rape and kill my wife; he would have his boy's rape and kill my children. Those were the type of comments he was making." About how old was the inmate? "Early 20's." Did he have any real history to back up his threats? "He is a wanna be gang banger, I'm not sure if he ever was in a gang or considered himself to be in a gang, on the other hand, with inmates you never know. He may have had the connections to do what he said he did."

What form of communication did he use to get under your skin? "By that point we had already had several negative interactions and I think it was a combination of everything, his words, his look, his tone, everything. I do remember him using an insult, I won't say what it was, that I had read he had used on several other staff and I told him he needed to be more original." Did you feel threatened? Does he have any power? "The thing about people in prison is a lot of times are the uncertainty. He probably didn't have the connections he claimed to have, most don't, but there is always that one chance in 100, that he did."

So you didn't fear for your safety inside the prison, you feared for your families safety outside the prison. "Exactly, and inmates have a way of finding out our names, our locations, they can find this stuff out. Their phone calls are monitored but they have codes they use to talk with people outside the prison. I've been threatened many many times in my job as a guard." How do you handle that? "Most of the time I simply ignore it. I was pulled into the wardens office one day and told that an inmate had written a report saying he was going to kill me the next time he saw me because I had done this, this and this to him, and the interesting thing was I hadn't interacted with that inmate in 6 months. He just pulled a name out of the hat, but they wanted me to know that I had been threatened by this inmate and wanted to know if I feared for my life. This is a generalization, and I don't like to make generalizations, but most inmates have nothing to do, 24 hours a day, than to sit down and think about how they can get something out of the staff.

Are you trained to deal with that? "We are trained to deal with that but training versus reality are 2 completely different things. "Is there a high turnover in guard staff because of this? "There's a high turnover in guards for many reasons. Another reason is guards not trusting other guards." Is that how contraband gets into the prison? "There are many ways contraband gets in the prison, though staff, guards, family, etc. I would like to think that most times the contraband is caught, but on the other hand the reality is most likely 90% of it gets in." You're only allowed to bring so many things into the prison right? You can be searched. "Oh yeah, I can be searched at any time. I can be strip searched at any time.

For example, marijuana, that gets into the prison quite often. I knew of a woman who was bringing in marijuana and the way she was doing it was by bringing in tampons. She would empty out the tampon, disassemble it, take out the cotton, refill the tampon with marijuana, put it back together and seal the package. When her possessions were checked all they would see is a sealed tampon box. She knew they were watching her and she quit before they could catch her." This was a

guard? "Yes, it was a guard. Like I said earlier, inmates play games constantly. They have nothing better to do than sit around, and figure a way to get something out of you. I've had games played on me constantly for the last several years and I will for as long as my career exists at the prison.

What do you do to keep the inmates from getting to you? "I build defenses and I'm sure I've been manipulated and didn't even know it, but every time I recognize an inmate trying to manipulate me, I go completely cold." Give me an example of inmate manipulation. "A good example is an inmate coming up to you after you've been chewed out by another guard or superior and saying, "Man you're one of the best guards we have, that guy just doesn't get it." And try to build report with you. As they build report with you they will ask for little things. It may be like the use of my pen, or gum. As they start these small manipulations, the manipulations will get greater and greater. They may ask for me to speak to family members outside of the prison, and once you start falling into these games, and I want to make this clear, I don't pass messages from inmates to family, it's difficult to get out of the cycle.

You do develop a report with your inmates, you have to recognize when they are trying to manipulate you verses building a report with you. You have to watch how the manipulative inmates act because they will start telling you, "Look, I can turn you in for this or that. If you do this for me I won't. Many guards get manipulated and go further and further until there's no way out. "Have you met any guards that this has happened to? "Yes I have, this particular guard , the first time I met him I knew he was dirty, because an inmate came into the unit when he wasn't supposed to be and this guard pushed me to write this man up for a disciplinary correction and as soon as the paper works came across it was dismissed. The other guard claimed not be aware and screwed me over. A year later he was arrested for bringing in drugs for inmates and ended up doing federal time. "

So he started off dirty? "He was most likely manipulated into being dirty because he had been here several years before I started. There are staff members who start out dirty and there are staff who get manipulated into becoming dirty and there are staff members that have no idea they are doing anything wrong. Have absolutely no clue. With the gang problems we have today, you have to remember there are people out there who have gang affiliations but do not have a record who get hired at the prison just to be a go between for the inmates and the outside gang."

After working at the prison for the last 5 years, how has it made you feel about the human race? "Oh I have defiantly become much more negative. I trust no one. A good example is several years ago I found a person online I had known 20 years ago, and this person told me something that was quite incredible for what he was doing, my first reaction was bullshit, he's feeding me a line, then I realized this individual was probably the most honest individual I had known in my life about anything. This is the kind of person who would drive 20 miles to give back a dollar in change that he was over paid. He is that honest. I took a step back and looked at myself and said why is the first thing I thought of was him lying to me? I have known this man for years and knew how honest he was. As it panned out, what he told me would happen actually happened and I stopped to think why did I think he was lying to me?"

It is the negative influence I work under every day and day out and I am not talking just about the inmates, I'm talking about the staff as well. I won't say I trust inmates more than staff, I don't trust any inmate, but I will say this, I trust staff as much as I trust inmates. There are staff members that would sell out their brother if they thought it would get them a promotion. In terms of viewing the human race, it's made me much more negative which is a reason why I need to get out of this career.

The administration does not trust any of its employees, and there have been female employees that have carried on affairs with male

employees and inmates for years and keep in mind a sexual relationship with a confined person whether it is an inmate or someone in a mental institution or developmentally disabled is a federal crime." Do you know of an instance when this has happened? "I know of several and some with people of very high ranks. I know a female custody staff member of a very high rank who had a sexual relation with an inmate and quit when they were on the verge of proving it. I know of an administrative staff member, female again, who had a relationship with an inmate and quit before she was caught and later married the inmate." How in the world with all the cameras and bars, can a staff have a sexual relationship with an inmate? "There are blind spots. Particularly if you are higher ranking." How do you get access to an inmate? "

There are places where there are no cameras. You have to remember that in a maximum security prison there are individuals who are segregated from others. But the general population has the free reign of the general population areas of the institution. The food service area, the library, the medical area, the yard." Are they supervised? "They are supervised as much as they can be supervised. We have head counts several times a day but it's the times between the counts. For example, we do gallery checks and are supposed to do them on a regular basis within a certain amount of time.

But some guards don't do them, some guards do them obsessively at the same time and the inmates recognize those patterns and they will know this person will be back in 25 minutes, I have 25 minutes to pull what I'm going to do whether it's being with a staff member or passing contraband. The facility I work at is not a facility where people are locked in their cells 24 hours a day, it's not a county jail, and they have time.

I know of one instance of a female support service member who was supervising an inmate who was getting cleaning supplies out of the closet where there were no cameras. When they went into the closet, the guard that was to be watching that unit did not note that the door closed behind them and she was caught having sex with the inmate in

the cleaning closet by another staff member who happened to have the keys to the closet getting supplies. She was fired and is now in prison. It is a felony to have a sexual relationship with a confined person. One more thing to add about female employees having sexual relationships with inmates is the inmates can read people very well.

Most of the women they target to have affairs with, you have to remember; you are a male inmate in a facility with 2500 other male inmates. If you want a woman you are not going to be very picky, they target the women that are young, impressionable, or very insecure due to the fact they are overweight or the most attractive person in the world or some other insecurity they can find. They target these women and tell them exactly what they want to hear, it's not unlike a guy who is considered a player going to a bar and finding either a young impressionable or older insecure woman and telling them how beautiful they are and taking them to bed.

Case study, parental influence and path to destruction

This interview goes a lot deeper than most of the ones I have conducted thus far. I wanted something akin to a case study and I knew this man had a very interesting history that could show how the behavior of his parents and how he reacted affected his life and made him who he was. The basic background is a loving yet overbearing father, an emotionally abusive mother and the way this man reacted to his parents and his personal path into destruction. The interview is as follows: Describe your father to me. "My father was a very intelligent and great man, a lot of the times he came off as brusque and grumpy but the man had a huge heart, especially for his family. I used to joke that it is amazing how much he learned while I was in college, because when I left for college he was the stupidest man in the world and when I graduated from college he was the smartest man in the world."

He yelled at you a lot. "Yes he did." Can you describe the reasons why he would do this? "Too understand my dad is to understand the fact that he had no volume control, he either spoke very softly and quietly

or yelled. There was no in between. I find this amusing, I was a 30 something year old man and I worked a lot with my dad, we did a lot of projects, a lot of construction, and it was a second career for him. As a kid I was often his assistant and as a 30 year old man there was a project he wanted done and in every way shape and form I should have been able to outperform my dad in terms of work, endurance so on and so forth, and he still worked circles around me and he still either mumbled or yelled.

We had gone to a gathering and met someone we had done work for when I was quite young and she looked at me and said "Oh, I remember when you were that tall and you were working with your dad on this project and he used to yell at you so much and I thought that was horrible." I looked at her and said, "Used to? Hell, today we were working on something and he yelled at me the same way." I was in my mid 30's at the time. He was an amazing man. "

You had a tendency to make mistakes. And in a loving sort of way, he pummeled you with his voice, you are the only person I know who has been yelled at as much as you have been yelled at for things you have done. Did you deserve it?

"I would say 9 times out of 10 I probably did because I screwed up a lot. It's taken me 40 some years to realize how much I've screwed up. The stupid, stupid mistakes I've made because I was too stubborn, to trusting, or just lied to myself about the results of what my actions would be."

Now I'm heading for the dark stuff. Your dad was a very positive strait A kind of guy, like a drill sergeant who wanted you to be the best you could be. Somewhere along the line you decided to stray off that path. You did some stuff that shocked me when I found out about it." (For the record, it dealt with theft from an employer.)

"What I did I did out of desperation, I think I was older and I was still trying to rebel against what he wanted, and what he expected of me and found myself in a complete and utter dark place. At that time I did some things I shouldn't have done, I did some things that hurt people; I

did some things that hurt businesses. But I thank whatever God there is that he (his father) never found out about it because I don't think I could have faced him if he'd of found out. It was the shock of realizing what I was doing that made me turn my life around. I think it was the fear that he would and the shock of what I had become and some help from some friends along the way that made me turn my life around. " I want to concentrate on your behavior at the time. Can you tell me what you did?

"I stole from a lot of people. I used people and was a very vile individual. I took what I wanted and Hell with the rest."

What was the worst penalty you suffered due to your actions?

"I was caught, went through diversion and paid back everything that had been taken. As it was that this was the first time I had been caught for this particular crime I would spend a year on probation, pay the restitution and the case would be dismissed and it was. Had I broke probation at that time or not paid back the restitution my case at that point would have come to trial and I probably would have gone to prison. "

Was your dad too hard on you as a kid?

"No, "

Why did you rebel against him?

"I don't know, I think it's a natural inclination at one point or another to rebel against your parents. Again I thank whatever God there is to his dying day he never found out about this. You are one of the few people who know what this instance was."

That's what shocks the crap out of me, because when I heard about it I was floored. You blindsided me totally because I had no clue that stealing was in your personality. How did you hide that from me?

"If you lie to yourself and tell yourself you are not doing anything wrong you can lie to anyone around you, and convince them. I lied to myself, I told myself "Heck, they deserved this, they're making money hand over fist, I'm not making anything, they got insurance, and they deserve it." The interesting thing is at this point I've gone 180 degrees

and I'm the kind of person who has gone to a grocery store, bought groceries, got to my car and realized I didn't get charged for something and could not physically bring myself to put the key in the car until I had gone back, told them I thought they had made a mistake and paid for what they forgot to charge me for.

At the time I was doing what I was doing, I wouldn't have thought twice about driving away. It was their loss. Now I'm the kind of person that physically can't allow something like that to happen."

What caused that change?

"I wish I knew, if I did I would go on the lecture circuit and make a million bucks, but there was something that snapped within me when I realized what I was doing and realized I had to change my life. Now it doesn't happen overnight, everything takes years to happen, it takes years for you to descend into Hell and years to crawl by your fingernails out of the hole."

There wasn't one person who talked you out of it or a judge that influenced you?

"No, it was a process. Life is a process. The interesting thing to note, and this is looking at it from a more philosophical standpoint, we are not the same person we were before, even from a scientific standpoint. I am literally not the same person I was 10 years ago. Every cell in my body has been replaced from the man who sat here 10 years ago. Change can happen and change does happen, it's evolution it's people evolving into their higher selves. But it is also a physical change as well. I am not the same person I was 10 years ago and I hope that person never comes back."

How do you view that person?

"Put it this way, there is no stronger hero in any kind of fiction than a redeemed villain. He has seen the darkness, he has felt the darkness and he doesn't want the darkness to return. "

Was there an outside influence in your life that made you do the wrong thing or was this solely your idea and fault?

"I'm not going to say the Devil made me do it, this was my responsibility in and of myself. I may have been in a bad crowd, but I need to be stronger than to let my crowd dictate my behavior. If I am any kind of a man I will not let those around me dictate my behavior. It's hard."

Why didn't you walk away and say forget it?

"What kept me in it was the lure of something for nothing. Getting something I wanted easily and nothing worthwhile is obtained easily and I know that now. "

If you wouldn't have been caught do you think you would still be stealing to this day?

"I don't know. I really don't know, I can't answer that. I would like to think that I wouldn't but it could be me lying to myself again.

Remember, we lie to ourselves about a lot of things, everybody lies, whether it's to make them feel better about themselves or to try to impress somebody else, or try to justify the dark actions they take, everybody lies. I was lying to myself and maybe I'm still lying to myself, I consider myself to be redeemed, maybe I'm not, I don't know."

Do you think you could ever fall back into it again?

"Given the right circumstances I could. If I were to lose my job, my home, live out of my car and get to a point where I had to do something dishonest just to survive I probably would. But the trick is not to allow that to happen. To realize when I am getting into a pattern that could lead to a condition like that. I have no fear of dying; I have a fear of dying alone."

Looking back now that you're older, do you think that your father did make an impact on you?

"He made a huge impact on me, if it hadn't been for his influence, I wouldn't have made the change I did."

I have heard your father yell at you many times and it was off the scale. Was it so bad that it pushed you away from him? Did you feel abused?

"Not by my father. Do I feel abused and was I abused? Yes but it was not by my father. It was by another member of my family. (His mother) The psychological abuse given to me by that member I struggle with to this day. I don't want to be the kind of person who blames their parents for everything, their generation and this and that, my acts are my own. But you can only be told you're worthless for so long before it starts to sink in and that started from a very early age. That may have more to do with the darkness I allowed myself to slide into."

Did she do the same thing to your father?

"Yes, she did in many ways. "

Did she have any diagnosis?

"This was back in the time when a lot of psychological diagnosis were ignored or said it was just this or just that, or you just couldn't cope or it was your own fault. Now, this person would have been diagnosed with some severe mental problems. But keep in mind this person was not necessary for lack of a better term "evil" in and of themselves she was a product of her upbringing during the depression. I am not a parent, but I was always afraid I would perpetuate the negativity my mother gave to me if I had kids. "

You are one of the smartest people I personally know. You are practically at a master's degree level student, but somewhere along the line your mother didn't build you up to think you could achieve those kinds of goals, why was your mother so negative?

"Control, the way to control somebody is to tell them how worthless they are and how they need to depend on you for everything. It's the way a cult leader controls, the way political people control their constituents, it's the way Rush Limbaugh controls his followers by telling them they can't think for themselves but I can tell you what to think. And unfortunately some very intelligent people will give up that control and believe what they say?"

If rebelling is what kids do, why didn't you rebel against her negativity and show her a positive side of you?

"I was beat down from such an early age that I believed what she told me. If you take away a person's self-worth you can control that person."
"

Why did she feel the need to control you?

"Her own childhood was so out of control, she felt she had to have the control. Where did she find the control? In her own children. It's taken me 25 years to understand this."

When you were stealing back in the day, did you ever think I've become the person my mother thought I would be?

"I may have been. I've never thought of it that way, but that may be what I was thinking. I can't find any way out of this so I might as well become the worthless person she says I am. "

So your mom would tear you down and your father would yell at you, how did you handle this?

"My father would hammer me when I was down, but then he would back you all the way when you were right. My dad was not a touchy feely encourage you type of person, there were people he encouraged, and I've met several people he encouraged at a young age who were complete screw ups and his assistance helped change their lives. Over the last 10 years I have talked to hundreds of people he influenced and nobody ever said a bad word against him."

He came from a generation where spanking and yelling at your kids was an acceptable behavior. He wouldn't get away with that today.

"Exactly, he would not. I have to say 4 times out of 5 when I or my siblings were spanked we probably deserved it. The 1 time out of 5 we didn't deserve it probably made up for the 4 times out of 5 we got away with something he didn't know about."

So your household was pretty screwed up.

"Somehow I had a guardian angel, a guiding spirit or something that's helped me navigate this. There is something I cannot point to, I cannot touch and say this guided me, but something did."

Here is what I really don't get. When we play chess, you mop the floor with me, it's never a good idea to play trivial pursuit with you, and you are one of the smartest people I know. How does someone so smart, who should know better, do something so wrong?

"Because intelligence and ethics are 2 different things, intelligence is the brains you were born with, wisdom is learning from your experiences. You say I'm intelligent, but it doesn't mean I have the wisdom to do the right thing. "

You know when you come to a stop sign that you are supposed to stop. Do you need wisdom for that or is it intelligence?

"But if you're not wise enough to know that you may get caught if you don't stop, you'll be tempted to go through the intersection."

Knowledge unto itself is not enough?

"You must have the wisdom to temper the knowledge. "

So if someone tells you not to put your hand in the fire because you'll get burned, do you have to put your hand in any way to find out?

"Not necessarily, but if you don't have the wisdom to believe what that person says, you'll put your hand in the fire. "

If I told you that committing crimes was wrong, you should have the wisdom to believe me.

"I might have the intelligence to think I'm smarter than anybody else and I can do it. No criminal ever thinks he's going to get caught, that's why they keep doing what they are doing. Most criminals think they are smarter than the authorities. "

Is criminal behavior a learned behavior or instinct?

"I would say it's 50/50. Remember there are no absolutes in this world."

You were not raised to be a criminal.

"Everything is not either black or white. Everything is shades of grey and though I was not raised to be a criminal, I was not born a criminal, most of those people are highly intelligent, and they think they are too smart for the people trying to catch them. They don't have the wisdom to realize there is always someone out there cleverer than you."

I don't understand why a person would do a behavior they weren't taught to do, like stealing.

"I'm not going to blame media, or the movies or my friends. Every choice I made was a choice in and of itself, on my own. I will say, that when you grow up and the bad guys are glorified and the good guys are shown as nerds, I think everyone is tempted to be a bad guy once or twice."

Of all the things you could have done, like get a second job, spend less money on beer, drop cable, how did criminal activity even come up as a choice?

"Because it was the easy way."

Explain how being a criminal is easy?

"To get a second job I would have to work harder, I think more to the point is that people are born lazy. Given 2 options, 9 times out of 10 people are going to choose the easier way out. Whether that easy way out is criminal activity or just going along with the flow or numbing what they feel with drugs and alcohol, people choose the easy way out. I think people are naturally born lazy."

I don't think criminal activity is lazy at all, I think it's a lot of hard work.

"I think it's the other way around, I think it's much lazier to be a criminal."

But you have to plan it out, carry it out and not get caught. That's easy?

"I think that's a lazier way than lifting yourself up by your bootstraps, getting a second job or getting rid of something you don't want to get rid of."

How easy is it to be a criminal?

"With today's technology it's not as easy as it used to be. Keep in mind the events we are talking about happened 20 years ago where there wasn't a sensor at every exit of every store, where there was not a camera in every corner. "

I don't mean from a physical stand point, I mean from an emotional standpoint. How did you go from the planning stage to the implementation stage? Did you start small?

"Of course, it's easy to shop lift a candy bar, and the better you get at the small things you look at getting things bigger, bigger and bigger to where you're planning things out and doing what I did. Nobody starts at the top with anything."

Let's finish like this, now you're the adult, what would you tell your kids, if you had kids based on what you have done and what you know"
"Don't do it, it's not worth the worry and the stress it can cause. It may seem easy at the time, but once you understand what it does to you, it's kind of like doing drugs. You start taking meth, it doesn't take much to get you high, but soon you build up a tolerance to where it's destroying you. You have to realize that you would have never got to that point if you hadn't started at the beginning."

You are now the age your father was when he was teaching you how to be a good adult. Have you become your father?

"No, I have and I haven't. The best way to describe that is I think in the more loving and respect aspects I have become like my father, because he was supportive. He wanted the star athlete because he was the star athlete, but he knew I tied and supported me in my attempts. When I chose a more artistic and intellectual route in what I did, there was nobody who supported me more in terms of what I wanted to do with my life. In the respect of dad being the person who as you says used tough love, I don't think I am as tough as he was. I am more touchy feely than my father ever was. Again not being a father, I can't tell you how I would interact with my children. Giving advice can be a bad thing because the people you give the advice to might actually take it."

Father doesn't care

This story was submitted to me by the author

This is a story about a mother of twins and a father that doesn't care about his children, I am very confused by this, at first the relationship

was great he was taking them all over buying them things they needed acting like a father, I just feel like my kids aren't good enough for him, but why are his others? He has 4 other children and will go out of his way to do anything for them.

I received a phone call from him last night and he has not called to speak with his kids in two weeks and all of a sudden there he is again, I ask him why he hadn't called, he tells me that the heat and spending time with his grandkids is the reason he hasn't called, I feel so ashamed that my kids have a father like this, what is another word for this? Dead beat dad! He tells me he can't spend money on my children but he can go clubbing with his older kids get trashed, drugs and whatever else, I have no idea, send his 13 year old daughter money, takes his grand kids to the zoo, the mall, the beach. This man always talks about quality and quantity time being spent.

I don't see this and I personally feel that because he cannot be with me he wants nothing to do with my children this is not fair! Why do my kids have to be treated different because of his own selfishness? I sit here and wonder why can't the relationship he had the bond that he thrived on before be there anymore? My kids deserve so much more than this!

This story takes me back to the time I found out I was pregnant, he told me to abort these precious lives, how could I have done that and be ok in life, I feel like he never wanted to be a father to them in the first place. Very sad, these children are amazing their so smart and so full of life. What would make a father act like this?

Despised by new community

This story was submitted by a woman who moved across the country to be with her new boyfriend and found out the hard way that not everyone is accepting of change, this is her story:

I moved with my sweetie, a wonderful kind man 16 years my senior to a new location far from home. He wanted to move with his wife but unfortunately she passed away 4 years ago. They were hoping to move

closer to her sister and he said to me before I agreed to this move "If you're not happy there, we'll do something else," so here I am, 3000 miles from my family and friends.

I knew her sister didn't like me last summer when her and her friends would start whispering whenever I came around. I started to hear things she was telling people about me, "she's squandering all his money, he'd be a fool to marry the likes of her, she's a druggie, and everything in that house belongs to me and my sister". When I told my sweetie, he said, "She's just drunk".

Every time we would see them out, the sister of his deceased wife would hug on him, kiss his face, touch his face when she talked to him, rub his thigh, all in front of me, and of course he would blow it off as "nothing".

So I told my best friend about how I was feeling and she took it upon herself, unbeknownst to me to send her a FB message, telling her to back off and leave me alone. That was back in June, so this crazy lady ran a smear campaign on me throughout the county, telling everyone that would listen that I was a "druggie" (I had smoked marijuana with her, and ate brownies too, all of it was hers) and she was going to call the Sheriff to pay a random visit to our property. Needless to say, the plants got pulled and I haven't smoked since. She has made herself the "victim" telling anyone and everyone that will listen that I accused her and my boyfriend of having an affair. So not a true statement.

Every women that friended me of FB when I moved here, has unfriended me, some have said horrible things to me in messages, others to my face, I even get phone calls on the land line telling me to "leave, we don't want your kind around here, you won't bring her sister down and my sweetie still blows it off, telling me to let it go...But you know, you can't un ring the bell. The damage is done, and I don't know if we're going to recover.

He seems to care more about her than me, I feel very alone in this community of sexually frustrated 70 year old women. I know she had

other "plans" for my sweetie when he moved here, and she and her friends are trying their damnest to run me off. I like to think he's the best thing that ever happened to me, but he doesn't seem to care that what these women are doing to me is killing me from the inside out. If I leave, they win, if I stay, I will continue to be bulldozed by women I don't even know. Yep it's a Hell of a predicament.

Used by women, it goes both ways

These next 3 stories were submitted by the author and deal with never knowing what your words or actions may lead to when it comes to women, (or people in general). Sometimes it seems, the things you say can be more powerful than you ever imagined so chose your words carefully because you may never know what kind of reaction you might get. Here are the stories:

It was over 20 years ago and I was visiting my old dorm from the previous year at college to see my old friends. I had been promoted to resident assistant at another dorm and didn't know many of the people who lived there so it was nice to get back to the people I started off with in school.

I always considered myself a fairly reserved guy, not the kind of man that is considered a player by any means and at the time had no relationships with anyone. If I had, I wouldn't be back at my old dorm looking up old friends. One day I was in the day room chatting with some friends when I noticed a girl that I had seen many times before but always thought was nowhere near my type and always came off as crabby and generally unfriendly. I noticed she was sitting in a chair by the wall wearing a short dress and for some uncharacteristic reason I can't explain, I walked over to her and said something along the lines of how sexy she looked. I know I was kidding because I would never seriously say that to a woman because that would be way to forward for me.

I can't remember what her response was but I walked away thinking that I had just played some sort of joke on her and she didn't know any better. Little did I know that I had set something in motion that I never expected.

Move ahead a week or so, and as any normal college student I liked to party. I remember coming back to my old dorm, probably because I didn't want my resident director to see me drunk, and sat down at one of the tables in the main lobby and laid my hands in my arms trying to sober up enough to walk over to my dorm and go to bed. It was after 1am and I was the only person in the room until that girl that I mentioned earlier came in the front door and stopped at the table where I was sitting. I remember looking up at her, I don't think I said anything to her, but somehow I ended up following her out the door to her car. We drove off to some house somewhere south of town and ended up talking with some people that I didn't know and I think they gave me more beer and after 30 minutes or so her and I left and she drove to one of those places in town where the street ends by some empty lot and stopped the car and turned it off. At the time I had no clue what we were doing there, I was pretty naïve I guess because she proceeded to jump my bones and have her way with me.

All I remember was boobs and I think we had sex but I can't be for sure, but I do remember her dropping me off at my dorm and letting me stumble back inside.

I don't think her and I ever spoke about what happened again, I spent a lot of time in her dorm and I am sure I ran into her many times, but we never talked about it and it never happened again. I had no idea that some comment made in jest would set in motion the events later in that week and that she would take me so seriously. I don't think she would have approached me and took me out to her car if I had been sober, but I give her credit for trying when I was drunk because I don't think she was the kind of girl that did this sort of thing on a regular basis. It seems like women like to use me for their own personal gain because in this next true story I was used by a woman to make her boyfriend

jealous or to prove to her that she was still worth something, I don't know for sure. All I know is that at the end, our friendship had changed forever.

She had a fight with her boyfriend and came over to my friend's house to find me. I was chatting with this friend of mine when she came in sort of distraught and anxious and I noticed that her demeanor was not the same as it normally was. This was a girl that I had tried to date in the past, but it didn't go anywhere and I was pretty much okay with the idea of her and I being friends so it did surprise me when she showed up at this place looking for me.

From the onset, she seemed very glad to see me. Too glad if you know what I mean. After a little chatting I found out that her and her boyfriend just had a huge fight and that she left angry and started looking for me. Something rang in my head that something was very wrong here. I'm a nice guy, and I have a good ear for listening to people and maybe she was there to vent but that wasn't the impression I got. She was getting very close to me and her demeanor was like she was trying very hard to get me to leave with her, so I did.

We end up back at her apartment and start chatting and she has no desire to talk about her boyfriend or the fight they just had. I remember sitting on her couch and somehow she ended up sitting right next to me and the next thing you know we are going at each other like 2 horny teenagers and all along I had this bad feeling in my head but was overridden by a real good feeling somewhere else.

Now understand it didn't go that far. I could have and I know it but I knew in my mind that I was being used to make her feel better about her situation with her boyfriend. She wanted to feel loved, or liked or sexy or something, but I was her crutch to fill that void while she was hurting. So I had a choice, I could take advantage of her emotional vulnerability and have my way with her, or slow down and stop and be the better guy that I knew I was.

Looking back at it I know I made the right choice. Sometimes I get mad at myself for not taking the opportunity for an easy lay but I chose not to go through with making love to her. Most men will screw any willing woman and I was of no exception, only I knew if I went through with this that I would never be able to talk to her again the same way I had before and I truly thought of her as a friend.

The odd thing was the next day was her birthday so after we parted that morning, I bought her a token birthday present and gave it to her later that day. Giving her the present was probably more awkward than the making out because she didn't act like she gave a crap about what I was giving her or why. Turns out she either told her boyfriend what happened or he found out some other way and they ended up back together the next week.

My instincts were right and I was being used and I could have used her as well but didn't. I think it was the thought that she had a child from a previous relationship that she had given away that bothered me the most and the thought of getting her pregnant on accident weighed heavy on me and kept me from following through on my lust filled desires to have sex with her. 20 years later I still think I did the right thing although many of my male friends told me I should have gone through with it and had sex. She was asking for it and using me for her own personal gain. I guess I do know the difference between right and wrong and I feel better for doing the right thing.

This last story sounds like something from a soap opera but if it didn't happen to me, I wouldn't have believed it myself. Back in the day when I was much younger, still college aged I played in a band that toured a lot of small towns around where I lived. Like any band you gain a following and your crowd grows as you keep returning back to the same bars to play.

There was one bar in particular where this tall thin blonde would show up and I instantly took an interest in her. I would watch her dance from the stage but her and I never spoke to each other, not even on the breaks. Then one day, a guy comes up to me and tells me that this girl

likes me and that I should ask her out. I was flattered but there was no way in hell I was going to ask her out because like I said before she was a tall thin blonde and I wasn't used to conversing with women like that.

Move forward a month or so and somehow I am invited to a party in the same town as this bar and who do I see there but the same blonde from before. I'm still not much of a talker, but I have a few drinks and some more to the point I am so drunk that when someone hands me some marijuana lit in a socket from a socket set, I take a puff or 2 and proceed to get more wasted. Now you have to know that I didn't even smoke cigarettes at the time (or now) let alone marijuana so it was my first time and I can't even tell you how I felt.

Next thing I know is that I have to pee really badly and someone gives me directions to the bathroom which is connected to a bedroom through the main door. I wobbled and made my way to the bathroom and did my business and managed not to fall over and crack my head on the toilet. When I left the bathroom, waiting for me in the dark is the tall thin blonde who takes my hand and leads me to a bed and proceeds to have her way with me.

I can't remember ever speaking to her, I just know that the friend of mine that gave me a ride to the party made a lot of fun of me for "getting laid" and from that point on I never saw her other than when I was playing in town. After writing this I think that I have found a pattern that women like to take advantage of me when I'm drunk or available on the rebound from a bad fight. I guess if you want to find a theme in the behavior of these women it is that they are really no different than men. I didn't go looking for sex, it came looking for me and I was used.

This is where you say, but you're a guy and that's okay because all guys like to get laid. Yes that is true, but I would like to think these women would have been interested in me sober. It's not a lot of fun to have sex when you're sloppy drunk and can't remember most of it the next day. I

never thought I was big on one night stands, but maybe I was. Looking back maybe I should have charged and made some money, it would have helped pay for college.

Trust lost due to infidelity, the hard lesson of life

The story you are about to read came from a young woman who although being raised in a home with unhealthy relationships, still tried her best to make her life the best it could be and paid a hard price. How many times can you be walked over before you learn life's lessons about people? Her story is as follows:

"I was 18 when I got married, and was married for 13 years to a man who cheated on me with 8 different women, not just one night stands but full blown relationships." How long was it after you were married that he first cheated on you? "Honestly, I didn't know until the end when he told me he was leaving me for one of them." How did he manage to hide all these affairs from you? "The jobs that he worked were rotating shifts and a lot of times he would have to be called in for maintenance calls and so anytime he was called in for work it was a mandatory 4 hours. He would call me and tell me he was working late or he would get up out of bed and answer his phone and then tell me he was called in for work. I didn't think anything of it because his paycheck was direct deposit so there was no check stub or hours to count."

Who were these women? "A couple of ex-girlfriends and some random women he met. I have always been a firm believer that in a relationship you have to be individuals so I have never had a problem with "guy" time, a night out with the guys or whatever. "You were trusting? "I tried to be, you can't have a relationship without trust, I don't believe in that. I often wonder what happened to "Do unto others as they would do unto you."

Looking back were there any signs he was having an affair? "Yes, I was married 13 years and probably had sex once a year. When he

wasn't seeing someone, we were fine, it wasn't until the last relationship that I starting finding things. I found her lip gloss in my car." How did he explain that? "He said it was his cousin's daughters lip gloss and she was only 4 years old and threw it in the car. I knew that was crap and then about a week later I found his cell phone on the vanity and he got a text message and it said it was from his boss. It was a picture message of her "who ha." I called him on it and that's when he told me about her and I asked him if this was something fairly recent and he told me that he had been talking to her for just a couple of weeks. I asked him if this is something that you want, are you really willing to throw away 12 years for somebody you've known for 2 weeks. He said no, we can work it out.

So he called her, put her on speaker phone and told her he was done with her. All in front of me and then started acted like we were dating again. We'd have picnics, he would hold my hand in public again and flirt with me until a week later when we were cleaning out my car and I found a second cell phone in the console of my car." How did her phone get into your car? "What had happened was his vehicle had broken down the week prior and so he drove my car to work a couple times. So now this cell phone is in my car and I broke it." Was there anything on it? "Oh yes I went through all the texts messages, all the phone calls and it was just her number. It was detailed, not just the lewd sexual details but the emotional details as well." Did he trash you in any of the texts? "No, not on that phone, but later I called her and she told me that I had no right speaking to her. If I were smart I would pack my bags and walk away."

Did you know this woman? "No, I didn't know her. He left that night and went to her but kept coming back every day. I wouldn't let him touch me, didn't want anything to do with him. It was while he was coming back to see me each day that I found out about all the rest of his affairs." Why did he decide to tell you about the other women? "I think guilt. We were married 8 months after we met, he was my first. I was innocent when I met him to say the least. He was messing around with other women since I wasn't ready to have sex yet. I found out later

he was messing around with a girl the day after I met him, then with the same girl the day after our first date. 2 days before our wedding he was with another girl. He had his bachelor's party, and called up one of his ex-girlfriends. This same girl was actually calling me after we were married to tell me they were messing around. At first I questioned it and wondered if she was telling me the truth because one night she called me and said "He's at my front door right now, he's been drinking, he wants in, wants me to have sex with him and I just wanted you to know and I said ok let me talk to him. She says no, I'm not letting him in my apartment. Truth was he was sitting right next to me watching television."

Please explain what is going on. "That is why I didn't believe her." What was her motivation for lying to you? "I have no idea, but like I said she had been calling me for at least once a week trying to tell me they were messing around together. At first my curiosity was getting the best of me and I was starting to wonder so I started looking for signs like was he working late, was he doing this that or the other. Everything seemed normal but we were just married and I had nothing to compare it to. She wasn't telling the truth about that night, but she was telling the truth in general.

I have nothing against these females; it was his marriage and his vows he was supposed to protect. Not all the females knew he was married and I think only one of them was married and I later found out her husband caught them together." Was your ex-husband some sort of chick magnet? How was he able to find 8 women to cheat on you? "To be quite honest, he was what young girls look for. He pretty much treated women like shit. That is what young girls look for, the guy that doesn't give them the time of day, that's who they are attracted to. They're not attracted to the guy that's nice to them and will sit and talk to them. I was one of those young girls as well." What did he do to convince those women to sleep with him? How do you be rude to someone and get them to sleep with you? "Lots of alcohol." I still don't get how he found the time. "There were times he would get dressed for work, leave the house and call in to work sick. There were

times he would stop after work and tell me he was going fishing with so and so and that person would be sitting out in his car waiting for him. Came to find out later that guy was cheating on his wife." How did that make you feel? "Worthless, like I did something wrong. I still don't forgive myself for the things that went wrong even though I know I didn't do anything wrong. You asked me if I knew the women he had left me for and no I didn't know her, but I met her."

You met her in what context? "I told him that I wanted to meet her just to clear the air, I'm not going to be mean, but I found out she was afraid of me and didn't want to meet me. He told her that I was some big woman and I was going to beat her up what not. I was bigger back then but she still had 50 lbs. on me and God awful looking as well." Did you meet her face to face? "Yes, I told him to set it up and I would meet you in a public place and went to a club we used to go to together. When they got there he came over and sat at my table and she headed to the bathroom because she didn't want to face me so he went and got her she sat down. I introduced myself, I was polite, I was nice to her and he didn't say a word because I told her and I'll never forget my exact words to her. I said, "With ever thing he's told me about you if we'd met under different circumstances we could have been friends, but that will never happen."

You know what you did was wrong, whether you admit it or not, but you can have him. I have one more thing to say to you and that's thank you." Her jaw dropped, his jaw dropped, and she asked for what? I replied, "For saving me from a lifetime of heartache. You weren't the first; you wouldn't have been the last. Finally I am free and that was the last day I cried."

Do you maintain any sort of relationship with them now? "No. When I first moved up here, he came up to spend Christmas with his family and we were still legally married at this time and he had brought her up here and while he was here picked me up and bought me a new cell phone. Renewed my contract for 2 years on his plan, right in front of her." Was this a token gesture of kindness? "I don't know but if I were

that woman I wouldn't have stood for that. Especially after everything he put me through." To your knowledge has he ever cheated on her? "I know he did because he's not with her anymore. They were together for 6 months I think? She went off on me calling me psycho and all kinds of stuff because he had moved out of her house and she went to his place and literally beat down the door and caught him with another woman. The woman he is still with today."

Does he have family history of bad relationships? "His parents have only been married to each other but his dad has cheated on his mom all the time right in front of her." Was this a learned behavior? "Oh yeah, big time. But at the same time it's like I don't think it's just a learned behavior I think it's more of a people who have it in them to do that to somebody, whether they learn it or not, it's more of a "let's see how much rope they will give me" type of behavior. That's what I'm starting to learn about life, let's see how far we can go before they'll break. "

Do you think people are inherently bad? "I'm starting to wonder to be quite honest. What happened to do unto others as they would do unto you? Why is it that people have it in them to tell somebody that they love them, cuddle up next to them every night and lie to their face?" If his father did the same thing to his mother, he may not know any other way of life but that. What does he have to judge against? "But, that was his reason for keeping me was. It was because I came from a stable family. I look at relationships as give and give, not give and take because if you always look for what you can take you're never giving as much as you can. So I figure, the more you can give in a relationship, without being walked on, the more somebody who truly loves you should give in return."

How has this affected your relationships since then? "I don't trust anybody. I went from having 1 partner, who I never cheated on, to 8 in a year. Not all relationships, but sexual conquests." You use the word "Conquest" why? "That is actually easy to answer, the first one for 2 reasons, 1. I needed for him to no longer be the only man I had been with. I needed to stand up and actually. I know this isn't the right way to

think about sex in any context, but I needed to something just for the excitement and the pleasure of it without feelings or strings attached. The second reason was for revenge."

How did revenge make you feel? "I felt liberated." Would you do it again? "Facing the same circumstances yes." But people say revenge is evil and bad behavior. "Yes revenge can be evil, but looking back at that night, I didn't seek him out, I didn't know him, I only knew of him after I had learned more about the female, and he didn't know of me either. Until the night I met the man I had sex with, the same night I met the woman my husband was sleeping with, he showed up at my house that night. This man was her husband and knew she was messing around. He was actually a decorated detective for their sheriffs department. "

I am confused. "She had my husband living with her for 2 weeks and her husband had his own place, they were divorced at the time and trying to work things out. But he knew that something was still going on and she told him that my husband was just a roommate and the detective that he is for some reason he followed them to the bar. The three of us actually walked out of the bar together and he was wondering who I was because he knew somewhat about my ex-husband and now ex-wife but he didn't know I was still married to my husband. So he followed me home that night after the bar, kind of freaked me out at first, but got up the nerve to knock on my door and introduce himself. He asked me if I was the wife and I said yes and he couldn't believe it. Now I don't think I'm better than anybody else, but at the same time I don't have low self-esteem. I'm not an ugly person, I don't think I'm Miss America but I'm not ugly. His exact words were, "Damn girl, what does he see in her?"

His ex-wife? "Yes, so we stood on my porch and I'm not inviting this strange man into my house all by myself. We probably talked for about 4 hours and I actually brought up the idea. What do you think? I asked him. I made the comment that I needed for my ex to not be the only one anymore. He didn't say anything just shook his head and we kept

talking. Then after we talked for about another hour or so he asks, "Well, would you consider acting on that?" and I said yes lets go. He took me to his house, introduced me to his son, and we had sex." You had never met this man before? "No, and after we were done he took me home, on the way back to my place, we agreed because I was still legally married knowing I was going to go through a divorce we would keep it to ourselves.

So it made it even sweeter because my ex would come over every day to do chores and this other guy would text me. Innocent stuff like how are you doing? Did your ex stop by? Are you ok? And actually being a friend. I was pretty shocked thinking I would never hear from this guy again, I didn't care. My husband would be sitting there asking me who I was texting. He saw I had a smile on my face and kept asking me who I was texting and I told him it wasn't any of his damn business. Maybe I'm seeing somebody.

He was livid, went through the roof. He wanted to know who it was, where I met him so I made up a whole story. I told him he had never met him , that I went out to the bar the other night got drunk and went home with somebody. I made him think I was some total nasty whore. It wasn't until he decided he was going to jump the gun and file for divorce that he guessed who it was. They were pissed. It was like, how does this man and this woman who both were trying to play mind games with 2 other people, seriously be that mad about something that wasn't near as bad as what they did? In the end I ended up doing pretty well. When I said I went from 1 to 8 in a year, I'll admit I wasn't proud of some of the things that I had done. It wasn't like this guy one night another guy the next night you know.

The one thing that I am most not proud of is before I met the man I am with now, I decided if I'm going to move on with my life I needed to get past the "rebound " relationship. So I met this guy, someone I knew I could never fall for, I knew before the word Go it was never going anywhere. I got into a relationship with him and he ended up being

abusive to the point where my life was threatened. I cheated on him to get out of the relationship because it was the only way he'd let me go." Where do you see yourself in your future? "I still have a lot of trust issues; I was severely depressed and gained weight and when my parents came to pick me up they feared for me. I wasn't allowed to work or go out; I didn't realize how much control he had over me during this time. I have vowed never to let myself get that way again. Because of what I went through in the past, I now go to lengths that aren't right as far as checking phones, knowing his Facebook password and checking his email. (In her current relationship) I have learned how to read somebody and know when they are lying."

What is your view on humanity in general now that you are older and wiser? "I don't have much faith in humanity anymore." What would your advice be to your child? "I've always wanted to have a child for 2 reasons, first to have someone to leave a legacy, to have something of myself left when I'm gone, and second, to raise a human being with the views I think the world should be. To raise a person who can be trustworthy, honest and respectful."

Even though you have been through the relationship ringer, you would still try to teach your kids the right thing to do. "Exactly, because to me that's what's wrong with the world. Somewhere along the line people stopped teaching family values and started greed." In a way isn't that lying to your kid because you know people aren't like that? "If I were to have a child, I wouldn't paint the world to be a pretty picture, I would teach them that the world is not a perfect place and there are people out there that are going to hurt you but at the same time don't let people walk all over you but don't lower yourself to their standards. Don't put yourself in their shoes. You don't have to treat people like crap to get by in this world. "

Stupid look on his face

Once again I dwell in the land of intoxication, but since this a short story and kind of funny I decided to add it to my collection of behavior stories. I'm sure these guys wouldn't have done what they did sober, but

it is interesting how the police handled the situation. Here is the story as it was told to me:

"It was the 4th of July 1980 something and my brother road his motorcycle out to Cheyenne to visit me. It was a Saturday night and we went to downtown Cheyenne to visit one of the bars and rode his bike down there. We got to drinking, drank quite a bit and ran around town and decided to head back to my place. For some reason he wasn't heading back to my apartment, driving kind of goofy and a cop crosses in front of us and my brother takes off following the cop. He's following pretty close and I noticed the cop and we were passing a few cars, I don't know how fast we were going but found out later this cop was on a call. It wasn't lights and sirens but he was trying to get somewhere.

We are heading off into a residential area and my brother is still following him and the cop got a little ahead of us to an intersection and he turned around facing us so we went on through and took off down the street so now the cop is going to follow us. We turned a corner and went about half a block and pull up into someone's yard and we both got off the bike. The cop wasn't in any hurry to get up behind us but we are already off the bike when he pulls up." No lights no siren? "Could have been, I don't remember. So the cop is getting out of his car and I start walking towards the curb and he starts asking me questions like where are you going? I tell him home, I didn't tell him this was my home just that I was going home.

So he's asking me other questions like how much I had to drink, I told him I had plenty. He's still questioning me when my brother walks around the police car nonchalantly and the cop notices he's behind him and starts freaking out. My brother just stands there looking at him with a stupid look on his face like "What are you talking about?" and he's not speaking to him, he's just standing there. The cop keeps going off on him asking him questions and he just stands there. I finally told the cop that he probably doesn't know what you are saying; he hasn't been in this country very long. (laughs)

The cop asked, "Where is he from?" I said Germany, the cop asked, "Does he have a license?" I replied I don't know, give me mine back and I'll flash it in his face and see if he knows what one is. The cop said, "No, you're not getting your license back." So I got out my wallet and got out my student identification, walk over to my brother and wave it in his face and made "vroom vroom" sounds and pretended like I was riding a bike. (laughs) and my brother continued to stand there with a stupid look on his face. Hasn't said a word. So about this time there are more and more cop cars showing up so the cop turned his attention back to me asked me whose bike it was. I told him it's my brothers bike, I didn't tell him the other guy was my brother, just that it was my brothers bike.

The cop assumed that I was driving, he never saw us get off the bike and my brother and I were both wearing black jackets at the time. He told me he was going to arrest me for DUI and that was the first time that I had any thought that he thought I was driving. I laughed at him, not the thing to do, I said, prove that I was driving it, take fingerprints off the handgrips in which I assumed they wouldn't have any luck doing that with foam hand grips. He tells me he's arresting me for DUI and puts me in hand cuffs and puts me in the car. So I'm just sitting in the back of this car looking around at all the cop cars around me and then I feel the car shake. It was my brother being thrown on the hood of the car (laughs) and pretty soon the cop that stopped first gets in the car and starts driving away and he's pissed. The cop says to me, "He suddenly remembered how to speak when he saw his brother going to jail."

Not even fences can make for good neighbors

Sometimes a deal is a deal and then sometimes a deal is whatever you can recover when it comes to selling products privately, especially to your close neighbors who are far less than co-operative and use intimidation to get out of a deal. This is a story about such a transaction and how it played out, this is the story:

"I sold them a 4 wheeler for \$1500 and they agreed to make payments to me and they ended up paying me like \$900 and wanted to trade the 4 wheeler off straight across for another car. They called me and asked if I cared if they done that and I said as long as it's paid for first I don't want you to trade it until it's paid for. I'm just trying to protect myself. They ended up trading it anyway without me even knowing about it and then I called and asked for the rest of the money since you traded it off. They said they didn't owe me anything because that 4 wheeler wasn't worth that much.

I had a lot of money into that 4 wheeler, the motor was hopped up, new tires and all that stuff. I also had a written contract that they wrote out and we both agreed on and every time they made a payment we both initialed it. I called him and asked for the money and he called me and my dad a bunch of names and then I heard the phone hang up so I said to my girlfriend "that piece of shit hung up on me." Then he called me back right away, I guess he heard me say that and said over the phone, why don't you come out into the street and say that to my face? I told him that I don't need to go out into the street if he would just pay me and we will all be happy."

How did it get so hostile so fast? "He has a very short fuse and all I was doing was asking him for the rest of my money. He was saying I was a crook just like my dad and all this other stuff thinking it would get to me and it did but I didn't want him to know that. Then he wanted to race cars for the difference admitting he owed me the money but still saying the 4 wheeler wasn't worth \$1500.

Did you have any further confrontations with him over this unpaid bill? "Yes, I was putting up a fence in my back yard and he would stand on the porch like he owned the world and would be mouthing off trying to get me to come out in the street. I wouldn't even respond." What did he think he was going to accomplish by doing this? "He wasn't going to accomplish anything. I told him I would see him in court and the next day I filed the papers and got some advice from a lawyer. "

How did your court appearance go down? "That was interesting. When we first walked into the courtroom you are supposed to raise your right hand and we all raised our right hands up except for him leaving his hand in his pocket. I think it kind of pissed the judge off right away and the judge says to him, "I'm talking to you too." so he raised his hand up and put it back in his pocket so the judge says, "Let's try this again, raise your right hand up." So the guy did raise his hand up and held it limp wristed like a smart ass.

The judge went on and asked me for my side of the story and this guy and his wife kept interrupting and the judge kept telling them to be quiet because he was getting my side. The judge had the original contract that was written up and said this is in two different ink colors. I told him that they had written the contract themselves, I signed it and this was what we agreed on. The dad then says that he had never seen the contract a day in his life. His son was the one who actually hand wrote the contract and I was there when it was written.

In court he denied he ever saw it, how did that sit with the judge? "Not very well, the judge looked at the son who wrote the contract and the son denied seeing it as well. So the judge says, "So you are telling me you didn't see this but you wrote it out? That's when the judge says, "The way I see it you owe him \$500 plus court costs and that's when the dad piped up with his finger in the judge's face and said, "Now you wait a minute!" The judge stood up and said back, "Now you wait a minute!, you apologize to me before you leave my courtroom."

The dad just stood there with his hands in his pockets like, screw off I'm not going to do that. The judge then says, "Either apologize to me or go to jail it's your choice." Then the dad apologized to the judge in a smart ass way. When the dad was getting ready to leave, the judge told the two officers in the court to escort him out of the building. The judge told him that he didn't want him talking to anyone until you get outside of this courthouse and it was over. Later I ran into the judge and he told me how proud he was of me in the courtroom, you kept your mouth shut and did what I asked you to.

When there were parents

The following story was submitted by a single mother who struggles every day to make ends meet and raise her 2 boys the best she can. This is an excellent example of how human perception and behavior has changed over time and now affects families today. The following her story:

In the fifties the family dynamic was completely different. Men prided themselves on taking care of their families financially and protecting the family from financial and social collapse. Women admired and praised their men for providing and thus the head of the family had his crown. Women stayed home and cultivated the home and hearth nurturing and instilling strong values in the children through supervision and interaction. The discipline of children was shared with the mother being primary disciplinarian with "I have to tell your father about this" being the final straw and the transition into the ultimate stage of punishment. This may have led to a reddened back side to correct the problem which though painful, (the pain was less than a crash on a bicycle) was more a psychological pain of disappointing parent, being overpowered, being "taken down a notch" all of which are lessons taught throughout nature in child rearing practices and teach us consequences for our actions on a basic scale. The division of labor in a marriage was equal though there were many who did not see it as so.

Women's lib was a wonderful idea. We gained the right to vote, have wonderful careers, and to become strong intelligent women who don't have to rely on men to pave our way in society and the world among other freedoms. I am proud to be a strong willed and intelligent woman who has many choices and opportunities available to me as a result of this great movement. I do not have to remain married to an abusive man because I am unable to support the family if necessary. With the many wonderful freedoms we have gained as a result of this movement, we have lost so much.

When women started going off to work, the raising of our children was then left to child care workers who are paid minimum wage, and to the teachers of our children who are also responsible for many other children as well. Parents' roles went from primary role models and disciplinarians to seeing our children for a few hours and on the weekend making us weekend warriors in the world of child rearing. The constant onslaught of outside values and beliefs was amplified by the latchkey situations being created by divorce rates skyrocketing when women realized that if we have to share the responsibility of financial resources for the family, we can do it on our own thus making us no longer dependent on a spouse who is less attentive to the family's needs or god forbid, abusive.

Balance in the marriage has shifted and while men still expect and at times demand the respect that they once had (many times even throwing temper tantrums like the small children we are raising) they are sadly not stepping up and providing emotionally and financially. The women leave their husbands and now our children have often only one parent as the other leaves skid marks down the driveway. As a result the remaining parent, many times the mother, is left to work two or three jobs while trying to provide food, shelter, and xbox games for the children.

The women's liberation movement though necessary and empowering has left a void in the family structure and in effect has brought a great famine to the nation's children in the area of parenting. I am not saying that women should not have gone into the work force. I am however, saying that when we did, someone needed to stay at home with the children running hearth and home. If the wife were working, the husband should have been raising our children. That, my dear reader, is true equality. That is where we fumbled the football.

Because both parents were working and generating more income, companies could charge twice as much for goods and services. Prices for houses and cars and all the amenities went up. Now we find ourselves in an economy where most of the time we either need two

incomes or we need more than one job to pay the bills and provide for the family. We are stuck.

I am stuck. I am one of the afore mentioned single mothers, I have two boys whom I love very much but have little time to interact with. I work many hours, struggling to provide food, shelter, clothing, and shoes (shoes being a huge area of struggle as I have a 15yr old boy who skate boards leaving me replacing his shoes every three months if I buy the hundred dollar shoes and every couple of weeks if I buy the thirty dollar shoes).

In the moments that I have with my children, I laugh with them, hold them while they cry, discipline them, work on homework with them, and attempt to put my unique spin on the men that they will become. These moments are precious. These moments must have the ultimate impact on their development.

Being a parent is not an easy job by any stretch of the imagination and my upbringing was not at all what I wanted to carry forward to my children. To counter this, when I got pregnant with my oldest son, I started attending parenting classes and reading all the child psychology and parenting books I could get my hands on, devouring the information like a hungry Ethiopian child. I implemented many of the techniques learning how to think outside the box and adapt to handle many unexpected situations.

I found that the best way to reach my children and influence their behavior in a positive way was to work behind the scenes in many ways, talking with them and asking them questions to allow them to come to the correct solution rather than demanding their obedience. I am always adapting and changing my techniques but this has worked well for me in many difficult situations.

In the fifties we worried about communism. There was something sinister about having a government take your choices away from you. I remember studying communism in school in the eighties and thanking

my lucky stars that I was born into a country where we were free to make our own choices and where we had a say in what our government does. I recently have come to the realization that I may have been mistaken. In our time of desperation, we are now allowing our government and our school system to step into the role of parent to our children.

I could not have been more wrong. I have battled with this beast since day one. I took my children to their first day of school here and my oldest son came home from third grade and informed me that they were studying information he had covered two years prior. He stated "Mom, they made me do the hokey pokey!" and emphatically stated that he did not want to go back. I spoke with the school explaining that he had been in diff classes down south and was not feeling challenged. My suggestions fell on deaf ears.

My children continued to work in accelerated classes until this year. Both have had multiple discipline issues due to their boredom and lack of interest in studies. I have spoken to multiple schools begging the administration to hold them back if they do not do the work so that my children can understand the impact of not doing your work. Their schoolwork is boring to them and with my work schedule I often must choose between making sure they actually go to school on time due to school starting after my shift does or being home in the evenings to make sure they get their homework done. In my situation there are no grandparents or family members to lean on.

They have no consequences for negative behavior. We have passed a "no child left behind" policy. This means that the government and the school system simply pushes our children further through the school to the next grade whether their grades are good enough or not. My children are simply skating along with negative behavior going unchecked and no desire to do well. My youngest son actually told me that studying was a waste of time because they would let him retake tests and it doesn't really matter what grade he gets.

Our government believes that all children should get a trophy. How does that motivate our achievers to achieve? How does that motivate our underachievers to try? How does this prepare our children for the really real world?

I would love to discipline my children for their lack of motivation and teach them consequences for their actions. When they were young, I had a staircase in the hall that had 14 steps in it. When the children got rambunctious running through the house, I would stop them and make them walk calmly up and down the stairs ten times. This worked well until the school got involved. They called social services and had me investigated for child abuse. They did not charge me with anything but warned me that this could be considered excessive discipline. I asked them what the gym teacher did at school when a child misbehaved and they said that the teacher would make the child run laps. I asked what the difference was and the social worker just shrugged and told me to be careful. I hadn't realized how much power our government had taken in our home lives until that moment.

Nebraska is attempting to pave the way for the rest of our country in an attempt to fill the void created in the home. We are losing more and more ground as parents and giving up our rights to discipline and teach our children.

More and more the government is telling us what is and isn't acceptable for punishing our children in and out of school. They tell us that our children need to be on drugs to be able to comply with rules and pay attention. Our test scores are dropping dramatically with every child we drug at their request. The schools have suggested and at times tried to manage the drugging of my children in an attempt for them to control them. I ask you. If their discipline techniques are working, why must we turn our children into mindless drones so that they can sit in a classroom? I know that our educators must take child psychology classes and read many of the same books I studied on my own in order to become educators. Why then can they not step out of the cookie cutter discipline structures that they have set up to find a different way to reach our children?

We currently have several laws in effect and addendums to these laws that are attempting to give the schools and social workers more power in our homes. Currently, when a child is late or absent greater than 20 times a year whether the parent has approved it or not, the parent and child must go to court to determine if the child should become a ward of the state. This means that even if your child is in the hospital for 20 days, your child could have the State of Nebraska as a parent. Even with this development, your child will progress to the next grade whether the child passes or fails. Again, no consequences.

An organization of parents and educators has united in an attempt to help us give the parenting back to the parents here in Nebraska. Nebraska Family Forum has been instrumental in working to reach our government with the voice of the parents.

They have a wonderful website dedicated to the fight of the parent at www.nebraskafamilyforum.org/p/federal-rights-in-education.html?m=1 . We must resume the role of parent to our children. We must fight to teach them consequences for their actions. Help our voices reach the ears of those who have the most time and impact on who our children are becoming. If we must rely on the education system to help us teach responsibility to our children, don't you think that the message should be the right one? Action involves consequence. Our children are needing to see that there are consequences for their actions. If the educators cannot reinforce the discipline instilled by us in the few precious moments that we have with our children, and then what are our children learning?

Plus sized prejudice

How people treat you based on your looks is as important as any other kind of behavior and shows how perceptions of others can influence your life and decisions. This next story was submitted by the author and deals with being a plus sized woman and how the people around her have treated her and their behaviors. Her story is as follows:

The typical plus sized woman could be your mom, your wife, your sister, your daughter, your aunt, your best friend, your boss or just some lady walking down the street. We are everywhere you go. You may call us a slew of names. I prefer the cuter terms fluffy, pudgy, or chubby. If you think you're funny by hollering out hey fatty or some other fat remark let me tell you Captain obvious DUH I have a mirror at home and I dress myself everyday I think I've got that one figured out.

I'm very blessed that I have not found myself in many of the unfortunate being hollered at situations. Most people have more couth than that. There are a lot more con's than pro's to being plus sized most of them are related to social situations. The few pro's I can think of is that people tell you that you have such a pretty face all the time but that's because they are avoiding anything from the neck down. Another plus most of us are more voluptuous without needing augmentations. People don't want to pick fights with you because your arm is probably as big around as their thigh (thank you years of steroids for asthma). Being plus sized can become an issue in many ways in almost every facet of your life. Some seats like in movie theaters are a little snug at times if you are a bigger gal. Booth seats in restaurants have been a no no for a few of my fluffier friends. People treat you like you're not as important or think oh she is fat her feelings don't matter. There are some men who think they can take advantage of plus size woman because they have a low self-esteem or are desperate. Trying to find cute trendy clothes that don't look like a circus tent or something your grandma would wear is a constant struggle.

In today's society over half the women are considered to be plus sized women (size 14 and up). By this reasoning wouldn't we actually be the "norm" not the outcast. Go into a shopping mall and see how many clothing stores cater to the masses of plus sized women. I can only think of maybe eight stores in Lincoln that have a somewhat decent plus size section and none in my hometown of Fairbury. Sorry Wal-Mart I love you for everything else but your big girl section is very

limited. I went to the Maurices in Lincoln expecting a big girl section since the Beatrice store has plus size but nope.

I looked around for a few minutes then I saw the sales girls talking and could overhear a little of their conversation "I don't wanna help the big one you do it". So I had a little naughty fun with this one. The sales girl painfully said can I help you to that I responded "Yes do you have size fat girl" she froze I laughed hysterically I said it's a joke sweetie you can laugh then I explained that their Beatrice location did have plus size so I figured they would too. Maybe I was a little mean to do that but I'm fat, I can hear rude comments. I might understand that kind of reaction if I looked like a messy smelly train wreck but I'm girly, prissy, and trendy I'd like to think.

Being plus sized becomes an issue socially from the day you start kindergarten. You learn to kind of hide in the shadows so you don't stand out because if you do you get made fun of. I was painfully shy in high school except with close friends. I was a smart quiet kid. For me after high school it wasn't as bad because people started to see me, my sense of humor, my cheery disposition, my intelligence, and not my body size. I finally got to be the fun one, the life of the party. You have to develop a sense of humor about the whole thing I jokingly refer to myself as a pudgy princess. To all the young plus size girls honey there is life after high school and it's a lot better. I still have my shy moments in unfamiliar crowds reflex I guess.

I don't really get the labeling of skinny or plus size. When you hear someone describes a thin woman they don't usually mention her size. I've overheard someone describe me once as "Oh she's that bigger gal, pretty, cute clothes, funny, total sweetheart". It was a major compliment but I thought, really did they have to lead in with "bigger gal".

I would say in my experience maybe only 20% of men will date a plus size woman. I think either they just like thinner women or are afraid of what other people (their friends) will think. I say "Cool points quit

counting in high school" you are allowed to be attracted to whoever you want, do what makes you happy. Due to this dating dilemma my plus sized gal pals and I have put up with not the greatest of guys in relationships users, abusers, and losers. When you're fluffy the dating pool is a little shallow so you take what you can get until you wise up and get some self-confidence. Better to be alone and okay than with someone and miserable. I hate the stigma that plus size woman are lazy. To that I say there are lazy skinny people too. I'm super energetic I'm always up doing something and I work out at least 3 time a week for 20 to 30 mins, I'm no workout over achiever but I do it.

Being plus sized can be caused by so many different things thyroid issues, slow metabolism, genetics, abuse, depression, over eating, injury, certain medications, having kids, lack of education on nutrition. It's not like we woke up one morning and decided why yes I want to be shunned by society and be plus sized. The health issues from being plus sized manifest as you get older, diabetes, heart attack, arthritis, higher likelihood of disease, the list goes on. So why don't we just lose weight with all the daunting health issues? Well it's not that easy if it was I wouldn't be writing this article. I'd snap my fingers and have a bikini worthy body in a flash!

It's funny how over the ages society's perception of beauty has changed. Greeks and Romans had full figured statues of their goddesses back then that was thought to be beautiful. Fast forward to Marilyn Monroe she has some curves to her she wasn't plus size but still curvy. Anna Nicole Smith another full figured model at one time. There really isn't much representation for plus sized women today. Even the Lane Bryant Models are not allowed to be over a 1x. It helps to see the clothes on a smaller plus size woman but it's still not my 2x or 3x size. What looks good on a size 16 might not look as great on my somewhat larger build.

The media, commercials, and magazines are over run with images of thin airbrushed beauties. You would be hard pressed to find images of plus sized woman portrayed in a positive light. So is the media telling

me I'm not beautiful or attractive? I don't think it's their intention or even a thought that crosses an advertising executives mind. They just want to sell stuff but pppssstttt I have money and so do my millions of fluffy friends. I don't need a commercial to validate me or make me feel good about myself. It's taken years for me to get to the point of being ok with me and having a sense of self worth. With age comes wisdom.

My heart cries out for all those young girls starving themselves to try to fit in and be what they think society wants them to be. That was me years ago I starved myself just to maintain a then moderately pudgy weight in hopes of fitting in better. When pudgy girls starve themselves it takes longer for people to notice something is wrong. People say oh look at you its great that you're finally thinning out. The only reason anyone ever found out was because I passed out in my dad's bathroom and he had to carry all 170lbs of me out (poor guy). At the doctors office I finally admitted I hadn't been eating for months. So what did that wonderful doctor do.. well he put me on diet pills. No counseling just told me to eat and take the diet pills he prescribed. Now days I hope they handle that sort of thing differently.

Plus size or thin we are all beautiful in our own way. Every woman has something about their body they would like to change. I don't think anyone should be treated differently for the way they look good or bad. I have thin, fluffy, short, tall, old, young, prissy, and plain friends and none of that matters. It's about who they are and the light they bring to my life. Woman are too hard on themselves. I hope my opinions have not offended anyone and maybe brought some humor and perspective to you.

A stripper with morals

This last interview I conducted with an ex stripper who I convinced to share her story with me. I may have been a bit hard on her, but I didn't want to waste this opportunity and this is our conversation:

"I was 17 years old when I first stripped. " What made you think it was a good idea to try stripping? "I knew a girl who did it and she needed

some extra girls for a dance contest over there one night and she contacted me and told her I was only 17. She said I can get you in, no problem. So I said what the Hell, I'll give it a shot." Did anyone know that you weren't legally old enough to be in the bar? "Just the girl who brought me." What kind of contest was this? "It was a dance contest, a titty contest. That's the main thing guys go to the bars for is to see boobs."

So there you are, for the first time ready to go on stage, how did that go down? "I was scared shitless, but you know most kids experiment with alcohol and stuff and I had already had some drinks by then. I was 17, it didn't take much. They didn't make me go first which was good." What did you know about stripping? "Not a damn thing." What did you base your routine on? "I didn't base it on anything, I had modern dance in high school and that is all I had to go on. I was pretty good at the modern dance class so I went with the music." How full was the bar that night? "It was pretty damn busy, I made like ton of money. Since I didn't have to go first I got to watch the other girls first and by then I had a few drinks and was feeling pretty relaxed."

How did you feel while you were dancing? "It was sort of like giving a speech, you have to imagine they aren't there or that they are in their underwear or something to distract yourself from what you are doing." Did it take long to get over your nerves? "When the dollar bills started flying it made me feel pretty good. I had battled with self-esteem issues all my life. It was kind of a validation of the fact that I was attractive." Did you feel like a piece of meat? "Actually no, I really didn't." How long did you dance that night? "After the initial dance they did a vote by applause and I won. So that meant that I had to do like 3 or 4 sets of 3 songs each more till the end of the night." By the end of the night were you comfortable with dancing in front of a crowd? "Yes, I thought it was great fun. I walked out with close to a thousand dollars that night."

Let's move forward a bit, was there a time when you started dancing regularly? "Yes, in Lincoln."

What kind of money did you bring home as a regular dancer? "On a good night probably anywhere between \$300-\$500 dollars 5 nights a week." Is the money the reason why you stripped? "Yes, unfortunately I was young and stupid and I blew it; if I knew then what I know now I would have saved my money. I stripped on and off for around 10 years." What was the longest time you stuck with it? "At one point I was working at a club in Kansas City for 3 years." At that rate of pay, what keeps women from running to that job? "It is looked down upon, and is even looked down upon more now a days. When I was stripping, the new girls would come in and do anything for a dollar, they'd let guys feel them up." Aren't there bouncers? "Yes, but that wouldn't stop them. Seriously, if they think they are going to make that extra buck they would let them do anything.

I always strictly adhered to that no touch policy. When I was doing it, there was a little bit more respect to it, I wasn't a whore, and I didn't go home with the men for money ever.

At the time in Oklahoma City I worked an all nude "juice bar" where they didn't sell alcohol in the bar. You could buy booze next door and give it to the bar tender and have him mix it with you juice. I worked this bar once and at his bar I stripped completely naked." How did it feel to be completely naked in front of strangers? "I felt uncomfortable, I didn't like it. The topless thing didn't bother me at all but when it came to taking my panties off, no I couldn't do it. I could not deal with that level of exposure of myself; I felt that was getting way to personal." When you're selling yourself, your body, you are selling your life and your image to these people, not flipping a burger, but selling them your body, and getting a physical and emotional reaction off of you, how do you do that?

"It made me feel better about myself believe it or not. I had no self-esteem; I didn't think I was attractive."
When you are seeking validation, are the customers coming in to see you, or a set of tits? "A set of tits obviously." How does that give you any validation? "Because at the time I didn't see it that way." When you

are looking down at these guys looking back up at you? "It was sort of a control thing as well; it was up to me when I was going to remove what piece of clothing. They would try to control me when they gave me a tip but I kept control of them the whole time."

This is not the sort of thing you would do in a grocery store, what makes it acceptable at a bar? If I went to Wal-Mart to buy some pencils and some lady showed me her tits, I would think that was odd. "It's not really a cultural thing it's more of a "place" type thing, those bars were specifically for that." When you were going to school, were you taught in any classes that showing your boobs to men was acceptable? "Well no." In gym class, did you shower with the boys? "No." Then why do you think it's ok to do it in a bar? "A good part of it was the money, but I wasn't the only one doing it. It wasn't like it was just me, I'm not the only stripper that has ever been or ever will be." If everyone jumped off a cliff, would you? "The first time I did it, it wasn't exactly my idea, I didn't have to, but I said what the Hell why not? After that it was my choice. And a lot of it was mainly the money."

Of all the things you could have done for money, like scoop sidewalks. "Ok, you know what? How much money are you going to make scooping sidewalks? How much money are you going to make working fast food? Checker at a store?" So you're telling me it's just the money? "Pretty much." There's no thrill to it? "Oh Hell yeah there's a thrill to it, but not so much no. A lot of the married guys that come in do it because they aren't getting the attention at home." Is there a fine line between what you do and prostitution? "Oh yeah, it's a very fine line. A lot of the girls in a lot of the clubs I worked at would go home with the clients for money.

I never got involved with any of that." What kept you from crossing that line? "I just couldn't do that." Were you a stripper with morals? "Yeah, kind of." Did you ever run into a customer outside of work and felt awkward being around him? "There was one time when I was 19 working as the featured dancer at a local club; I am pretty much sure there was a teacher of mine in the crowd.

To be perfectly honest, they are the ones who came to the club. It is advertised that there is going to be some nudity in there. "

Looking back at your life, would you do it all over again? "Probably, but this time not blow my money on crap." How do your friends and family view you? "Some of my friends do know about it, but I'm not ashamed of it." At the time was there anyone who tried to get you to quit? "No, my mother was aware but all she said was to be careful. She couldn't really tell me it was wrong because she had done it. I didn't know that till I was older and already started stripping."

Were the other strippers your only friends at the time? "Strippers can be super jealous fricken bitches if you were younger, had bigger tits, perkier, or skinnier or prettier, they could be really back biting. There were a few I would have considered friends." So who were your friends back then? "I had a few dancer fiends, and dated a few musician friends at the time, some biker friends and others." Did you ever fear for your safety? "Sometimes." Who's watching your back? "Nobody really, sometimes the bouncers would walk me out to my car. Some girls had problems like that, but part of that was because they crossed the line and would get too personal with their customers, not so much they were sleeping with them but that they would give out too much personal information sometimes and the guys would become obsessed."

How close did you ever get to a customer? What was your boundary? "I went by a stage name and I stuck by that while I was dancing. I would never talk about my personal life with my customers." Did you lie to them? "No, I don't think so. Most of those guys are there to have their ego's stroked, so we would talk more about them than me." Is there such a thing as a stripper school? "No." So how do you learn the rules? "Each bar sets them and they're pretty standard, but we are adults and should know enough that this could be a dangerous job if the wrong people fixate on you. It's common sense." If it's common sense, why did some of the girls get in trouble? "Probably the alcohol talking, I don't know."

Would you encourage your teen age daughter to be a stripper? "Oh God no, things are way different. I haven't been to a strip club in a long time but the last time I actually worked at one, some of the girls there were doing things I couldn't believe for money. Some of the girls would sit back in a dark corner and give them hand jobs or let the men finger their privates." Did the boss know this was going on? "I don't know." Would the boss care? "Probably not if they had customers there buying drinks and the girls were making some money."

What was it that eventually made you leave stripping? "The looser morals of the other girls I was working with. The fact that they would do just about anything for a dollar and I wouldn't do it so I didn't make as much money because I was following the old standards. The customers are not to touch the girls no matter what. That is how I maintained my dignity." Do strippers have dignity? "Yes, I did." Define dignity in the role of a stripper. "It's not allowing men to touch you." But you let them look at your boobs. "Yes," and you knew they were getting excited watching you. How do you say that's dignified? "I didn't say it was actually dignified, but, I did have a certain pride in what I did because I was pretty good at it." What does being good at it mean? "I was able to keep the men from man handling me in a nice way and keep them happy and still be able to go up there and dance."

Did you think of yourself more as a dancer or a sex object? "I thought of myself more as a dancer." Did you realize you were a sex object? "Yes," How did you reconcile that? "I tried to put it out of my mind." There is a big difference between dancing and dancing with your boobs hanging out. "I find nothing obscene about the human body." Then why don't you walk over to Wal-Mart and buy some watermelon with your boobs hanging out? "Because I would get arrested! Think about it this way, how many times have you gone to a bar and seen young girls with short little skirts and tight tops that are low cut and they are out on the dance floor dancing doing their little booty thing, and their skirts riding up?" You can go to the pool and see that. "Yeah, but I'm talking in the context of a bar." I've seen girls in church wearing Daisy Duke Shorts.

"That's another part of the looser morals of today. To be honest, if I had the body I did back then, I would consider stripping again today."
Why? "The money."

Part 3 The observations

This section of my book deals with my direct observations of behavior in real life. In other words, "people watching." This is sort of a style of water cooler conversation that I will be putting in writing as well as sharing with friends and coworkers. Some of it deals with interactions I have had with people and some will be just the interactions I have observed from afar. In any case, this will be a mix of objective (what I think) as well as subjective (Just the facts ma'am) behavior observations that will demonstrate different human interaction. I'm not trying to explain the why's of what I'm observing, just the behavior itself.

No ESP

In my job, I supervise several people who are charged with taking care of a group of individuals. That's all I'll say about that, but in doing so, I am often the referee when it comes splitting up the work and who does what, when and where. Recently, one of the workers approached me in private and complained that a fellow worker was not helping out with the workload. To be clear, the workload is divided into 3 uneven sections and normally the person with the smallest section helps out with the other two.

When I was approached, the first thing I heard was something like, "If she doesn't help out, I'm going home." The first thing I asked was, "Did you ask her for help" to which the reply was, "No, she should just know what to do." In my 46 years of life I have come to some conclusions about people and one of them is that you shouldn't assume that they will do anything that you don't ask them to do. The fact that they should "know better" does not translate into getting the job done. That is when you usually hear someone say the words, "I don't have esp." and I agree with that.

Now does that mean if you spill milk on the floor that you have to be told to clean it up? I wouldn't think so because the person who spilled the milk was the direct cause of the spill and knows it is there

responsibility. But when it comes to helping others, when you have a well-defined work space, it gets much greyer. Not everyone needs the same amount of assistance and the workload is never the same from day to day so one staff who constantly needs help may be totally different than a staff who gets the job done by themselves so how is the other person supposed to "know" if you need help or not? Is it their job to ask you if you need help or is it your job to ask for help?

Getting pissed off at someone for not reading your mind is a waste of time. "Well, they should know better." Nope, the staff that had the exact same load the night before may have not needed any help at all so the coworker may not automatically assume you need assistance at all. What I finally told this person is that she should not assume that the other staff is a mind reader and although she could have asked you if you needed help, ultimately it was your job to ask for assistance. If the other staff could read minds, she could get a better job where that skill could be put to use, like at a black jack table.

What seems common sense to one person can be totally uncommon to another depending on where you are in the equation. If you have a pre bias against the other staff to start with, you may put off an air of aloofness that would drive them away from asking you anything. You may be the problem yourself and not even know it. I know that supervisors are asked to fix some pretty petty personal issues in the workplace, and that is insane because most of this stuff should be handled between the staff, but in some instances, the staff feels it's the supervisors job to play mom or dad. I remember one time a long time ago when I had two staff fighting with each other. They took me into a room just so I could watch them fight with each other. I don't remember what the topic was or how the outcome was decided, but they felt they needed me there to referee just in case.

I myself have complained to the "boss" about coworkers before hoping that the boss would go out and kick some ass in my name but that rarely happens. What usually happens is a note will be posted addressing all the staff instead of the individual in question. It is easier

to put out a blanket statement than confront the one individual who is rocking the boat. The boss hopes the boat rocker will read the note and get back in line, but it actually makes things worse because everyone gets blamed for the actions of one or a few. Some people are non-confrontational and will only be so when backed into a corner and then watch out. I'm the easiest guy to get along with till you piss me off. I've been accused of being wishy washy and letting people walk over me, but I know when to hold em and when to fold em and I don't make big deals out of little crap. Gimmy some big crap and watch the shit fly.

3 to 4 thousand a month?

Back in the late 80's or early 90's there was this group of people who would show up to your door and try to recruit people to join some sort of multi-level marketing scheme that involved Amway products. I used to call it "Amscam" to the dismay of the others around me. See, I am a skeptic. I would love to believe in aliens, but I won't until one introduced himself/herself to me. So when I went to one of these meetings with a friend of mine, I was quite amazed at the behaviors I was observing.

First was the red power tie. Most of the men wore suits and red ties and it seemed to be a symbol of power or solidarity or cultism, I don't know. But when I sat down and listened to the speaker, and they kept talking about all the money you could make without working, it really bothered me. I felt like I was the only person in the room who saw a huge red flag and that everyone else was getting ready to drink the Kool aid that Jim Jones was handing out.

So the deal was that you recruited more people under you and they bought Amway products and if you had enough people you could become a star or emerald or some other symbol of power and live off of the kickbacks you got from everyone below you. I remember asking someone who signed my paychecks and he said it was the guy "above" me, and I asked "What if they don't pay me?" and he had no answer so

I asked "Who is in charge of this operation?" and he said, no one, it is a self-contained entity, to which more red flags went off in my head.

The issue I really had was with the number of people that were getting into this and not thinking the way I was. This had scam written all over it yet people were lining up to sign up and start recruiting more cult members. Now if I would have said this at the meeting, I would probably been taken outside and burned at the stake, but looking back at it, I still feel the same way and I don't understand the people who did it. I wonder if this organization is still going? I haven't heard anything about them in a while and I hope I was proven correct.

This leads me to my next story, and I am afraid that I am going to piss off a few people in writing this, but I had to share because I thought multi-level marketing was dead for good. I got a phone call from a gentleman who said that I was recommended to him by a friend that I might be interested in some "thing" they were doing that might related to what I was writing about in this blog. I was at a restaurant and it was kind of loud so I couldn't make out all the details but I agreed to meet with him the next day on my break at work.

The next day I meet this man, and he brings along a friend and they shake my hand and we sit down to talk. One of the first things they did was ask me about my website and I gave them background on what I was doing. Turns out my website has nothing to do with what they wanted and I'll get to that in a second. For the first 10 minutes of my break I talk about the interviews, and the opinions I have written and I get this funny feeling that they are pulling a Dale Carnegie on me and trying to break my ice by getting me to talk about myself. I knew the technique and caught on quick and as soon as I was done, one of the men asked me how "making 3 to 4 thousand dollars a month would improve my life?" Red flags, red flags, red flags go up.

So I tell the men that I had a feeling that I had been through this before and that it sounded a lot like the Amway scam of the past. After 20 minutes of confusing, non-specific, and what sounded like a rehearsed speech, I had an awful taste in my mouth and was a tad bit pissed that I

was led to believe that my work here had anything to do with what they were doing. It seemed like a very small crack in the door to get their foot in to sell me on something that I don't believe in. I looked up their program on Google, and found many references to multi level marketing, scams and such, and turns out that even Amway had kicked out the founder at one point so I think my gut reaction was dead on. The point of this article is the way they tried to suck me in. I couldn't get a straight answer to any of my questions and they couldn't explain in a simple way how I would make any money at all. It had something to do with selling cd's and books but I think it had more to do with recruitment and they wouldn't go into that.

they asked if I wanted to meet again and I think that's when the indoctrination really starts.

I'm not a salesman, I don't want to recruit people into a scam to make money off of their sales, it's called a pyramid scam for a reason and I want nothing to do with it and I don't understand why people fall for this stuff. Red flags should go off automatically. People get paid to work, not to make money off of the sales of your underlings while you sit back and do nothing. I don't know for sure if this is exactly how this "new" company works, but there were too many similarities. I asked who was in charge? Who signed my paycheck and they said there was no company, just some sort of community. Community huh? I asked if there was a board of directors and he said yes, I asked if there was a director of the board and he said yes, I asked if the director was in charge and he said no.

So you want me to join an organization with no leader that is supposed to pay me 3 to 4 thousand a month selling cd's and books? (The exact method of sales still eludes me) And I don't think it involves selling door to door but they wouldn't go into the real way, they just produced a diagram of a flow chart that made no sense to me.

People, wake up and use your minds and don't let people talk you into crap you don't understand. If you don't get easy to follow clear instructions then run. I didn't agree to meet with these people again but thought it might be a good experiment for this blog to see what they

say and see how they try to recruit me but I decided it wasn't worth my time.

The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

I have a neighbor, whom for the entire time she has been my neighbor, has had this habit of screaming at her small children at the top of her lungs in this high pitched screech that I can hear through her walls, through the neighborhood and through my walls into my living room. I cannot adequately describe her tone; pitch and delivery because I can't do it justice, let's say it's overkill. I have often thought of confronting this woman and ask her to stop, but it was obvious that my requests would go nowhere. Because of this, one day I did something stupid and posted on facebook the following post. "I think I'll video my neighbor screaming at her kids. Maybe that will modify her behavior. Either that or call cps." (Child protective services)

If you notice, I do not identify the neighbor in question, and keep my comment very brief, more on that later.

A few hours later a post is added to my comment that reads as follows: "And your youngest said you touch him? Should I be reporting you for molesting your kids? Keep your noise where it belongs fag." At first I had no idea who this person was that put on this reply but then soon realized it was from a young woman who I sometimes see on the porch across the street from me. She goes on with the following comment: "And p.s your kids are fucking weird. It's obviously because they have a weirdo dad. What an odd ugly mother fucker you are."

I am a little perplexed because I don't know this woman and I have no idea why she is responding to my post this way. Another post from the woman who either rents or owns the same house is as follows: "Keep out of my freaking business this is my house I own it and u stay away from it." Later this follows: "I am moving let it be I am so down with this he is a crazy man."

My only conclusion is that these people think I am writing about them. At no time did I identify who I am referring to, but for some reason they

decided to respond how they felt accordingly. Upon reading the comments, I decided to have a little talk with my neighbor who decided to post that I was a child molester and try to figure out why she had made this accusation. As I approached her sitting on her porch with her friend she decided to spew more unflattering comments towards me and then her friend decided to chime in as well.

Next thing I know, the owner of the house comes to the porch and starts screaming at me in a high pitched shrill voice telling me that she's called the cops and that I've slandered her and that if I video tape her she will get me arrested for invasion of privacy. I told her that I had not named anyone in my post and that legally I can tape her if I chose as long as it is from a public space. I've been doing video news for 4 years and I know my boundaries. I also know what slander is because I have a journalism degree and what she was referring to was "libel" not slander and you can't slander someone for whom you have not identified. Plus the comment actually has to be untruthful and when I made the post, the woman in question did in fact yell at her kids all the time so it was based in truth.

Long story short, I got into a pissing shouting match with a neighbor who assumed I was commenting on her lack of parenting skills and ended up leaving scolded like a child.

As a health care worker, I was trained to be an advocate for those who can't help themselves and I was frustrated with the way the person in my post was treating her child. Maybe facebook wasn't the best way to vent my frustration, but it did draw attention to a problem that many people are afraid to confront because of the repercussions of the accused. If the woman across the street found herself in my posting that is her issue not mine.

On the back of my nametag at work it lists 6 types of abuse that can be reported, verbal is the first one listed. If this behavior occurred at work, I would be obligated to separate the two parties and contact the authorities. I'm not sure what the police would do if I reported someone for screaming at their kids, I suppose all parents do that at one time or another, but not like this. Every time I have ever had to report abuse, I

have got a backlash from the accused and their friends and family so it is tempting just to walk away and let it go. And this reminds me of another story.

Back around 1997 when I was starting my health career, I was working in a group home for the mentally retarded where we had 3 residents and 4 staff. I was brand new, right off the street and had no other experience working in a group home or with individuals with mental disabilities. I was partnered with the supervisor who was an older lady who seemed like she was pissed at the world constantly. She would get angry at me because I was able to drive the company van to work instead of my own car although I was using the van to transport residents, not just myself. This is to give you an insight into her character.

One day, one of our residents, who had a habit of acting out to get attention, angered my boss and my boss decided that it would be a good idea to put dishwashing soap in his mouth. I stood there in shock watching my boss, the person who was supposed to train me and I was scared to death. Looking back I should have jumped in and did something, but when you are the new guy in a job the last thing you want to do is rock the boat with your supervisor. The incident was over shortly and we went on like nothing ever happened.

A few weeks later the same resident was acting out in the shower and my boss again in anger towards the behavior of this resident decided that turning his shower water to cold would be a proper punishment for his acting out. Again I stood there and did nothing and walked away. Finally I had enough and decided to talk to the manager at the main office and let them know what was going on. Wow was that a mistake. Seems the woman I reported was held in high regard by the boss, and all of my complaints were ignored. I wrote up a full page with 6 different topics on her behavior and for my trouble I was demoted to part time. I don't know what ever happened to this lady, but I do know because of my report, I have been banned from ever working there again. I guess they don't like boat rockers there.

Move a head a few years and I'm now working for a state run facility for the mentally retarded which I will not name. I had been there around 6 years when I finally moved to the day shift where I was put in with a staff made up of people who I wouldn't want watching my dog let alone human beings. I won't go into all their personalities, except for one, who this segment is about.

There was one particular woman; she was like acid, very nasty, horrible, horrible person, only she was very popular among the other staff on my unit as well as the other units in the building. Why? I have no idea, solidarity among dirt bags it must have been as I found out later.

One day, this woman brings in a huge container of soda, the kind that looks like a gallon jug with a handle on it and she sets it in the kitchen and leaves it unattended. It is well known on the living unit that there are individuals who will steal food if left unattended and the refrigerator was locked for this very reason. Not much longer, she returns to find one of the residents finishing off her jug of soda and she gets pissed. I mean pissed. She takes this resident and sits him down in the dayroom and pouts off walking down the hall to his room. At this time I am standing in the doorway of the kitchen watching this all go down.

She returns and stands in front of this resident and tells him to open his mouth. He does and she produces a bottle of cologne and proceeds to spray it into his mouth. Again I stand there in shock as she squirts a few sprays and then tells him, "That will teach you." It took only a few seconds and she was done and she walked back to his room pissed to put back his cologne. My first reaction was to report her right away and I fought with myself about this for hours knowing that she had lots of friends and that if I said anything it might come back to harm me. So I went home and talked to my wife about it.

The next day I stopped in my supervisor's room, I tell him the story and he sends me over to the investigation unit where I again tell my story to

an investigator. An hour later she is called into his office, I can only assume to get her side of the story and then my personal hell begins. It isn't long before I start getting dirty looks and comments from the staff from the other units. I did the unthinkable, I turned in someone for abuse and now I was paying the price. It didn't just affect me at work, but it affected me anywhere I went where I ran into her friends. The lesson I learned is that sticking up for those who can't stick up for themselves gets your ass in trouble and it's not worth it. That's why people fail to report abuse; the system will not protect those taking the risk to do the reporting.

At the end of the investigation, there were no charges made against her because I was the only witness and she denied the accusation. It was a "he said, she said" and I and the resident lost. She was transferred to a different unit, and eventually quit her job, but I will never forget what it was like to try to do the right thing and get punished for it.

So why did I post on facebook instead of confronting this screaming woman at the beginning of this story? Maybe it was because I learned that confronting her face to face would backfire. The woman across the street who assumed it was her I was writing about sure got pissed. You have to have thick skin to stick up for those who can't defend themselves. I'm not sure how thick mine is.

I walk the line

What other animal besides humans stand in lines? (Please don't be offended that called you an animal) When I posed this question online I got a couple of responses, one was bees as in "bee line" and the others were ducks and cows. I'm pretty sure the bee line was a joke but the cow comment came from a woman raised on a farm so I asked her if the cows stood in a linear line head to butt or just crowded around the feed trough and I guess they just crowded around the feed trough. No neat orderly line. The other answer was a duck or ducks. I had to beg to differ because ducks walk in lines but I have never seen ducks standing in lines, and the other person did agree to that point. He stated, "I guess

it's reasonable to have the first person (duck) start walking and then the others follow." To which I did agree.

So where am I going with this? There are some things that humans do that I have never seen any other animal do and we are so used to doing it that it no longer seems odd to us. This article is all about that so hang on for the ride. Speaking of rides, I got the idea for this article while at Worlds of Fun in Kansas City Missouri while getting in line to ride the Mamba roller coaster. We were there on a Thursday as to avoid the large crowd and as we entered the gate to get on the coaster, I noticed how long of a paved path there was to the top of the hill and how many "cattle pen" type things there were on the way up. The cattle pens that I refer to are those areas that have you go down a line, turn and go back and turn and go back so they can save space and pen you up like cattle. Now you might be thinking that cattle do indeed stand in lines since I just mentioned cattle pens and if you have ever been on a farm yes there are ways to put up fence to get cattle to sort of stand in a line but I'm sure the cows didn't prefer that formation and it was a human intervention, back to my point.

The first time I can ever remember being told or taught or forced to stand in line was in Kindergarten when I had to stand in line to use the toilet. I'm sure the teacher said something like, "Hey you kid, get back in line and stop peeing on the floor," and ever since then standing in lines has been as natural as wearing clothes, driving in cars and feigning interest in someone's boring conversation. Now I know I wasn't the first person to ever stand in a line, many people must have done it before me, but how did humans go from hanging out in caves to standing in neat lines? If I wanted to get a taco from the taco truck, I would have to stand in line. Dogs don't do that. Dog's don't know what lines are or care. They probably look at us and think to themselves, "What in the Hell are they doing?"

So let's look back at the evolution of the line. Once back in our history it was beneficial to stand in a line and I'm going to use most of my brain to figure this out. Oh, one thing about lines that I also find odd is

the behavior of people who stand in lines. Should I talk about that now or go on with the evolution thing? Ok, so there I am in line at the Mamba and all these people are standing around me not conversing just looking up and down and trying hard not to look me in the eye. I'm guessing they do this to avoid having to say hello to a total stranger that they have never met yet will be sharing a raging death machine in 5 minutes. You would think if the roller coaster would go off the rails and we would all die, it would at least be nice to have met your fellow corpses beforehand, but no, we prefer to stare at our shoes.

If we were on the highway (a modified moving sort of line) and someone in a car pissed us off by cutting in our lane, many people would have no problem honking the horn at them or flipping them off or in extreme cases shooting them as they passed by. But if someone cut in front of you at the Mamba, I would guess that most people would roll their eyes, maybe make a gesture or two and not make a big scene. I do know some people though who would throw a fit so it can go both ways, but it seems odd to me that when wrapped inside of a vehicle, it seems ok to express yourself more freely then when you are 2 feet away from someone who does the exact same thing.

Now every once and a while, while standing in line, especially for a long time, someone might ask where I'm from and I think depending on age and maybe gender to a certain extent, some people are more likely to speak to others than others would. I think as people age they get less nervous about speaking to others they don't know, or maybe they don't care anymore.

So back to the evolution of the line; we have to look back as far as we can to a time when a line would benefit the human race. What is the first thing we as humans ever had to wait for? I'll go with food. So when an animal brings back a kill for the group, the group waits its turn to eat. But they don't stand in neat linear lines, so somewhere it went from the pack crowding around the food, to the crowd standing in line in order to eat. Someone had to have stood up and put Fred behind Barney, Wilma and Betty and say, "Now, you stay in line and don't go

around anyone else." Fred probably said to himself, "What's a line and why should I stay in it?" So Fred walks around Barney and Barney gets pissed and clubs Fred over the head and whammy the invention of the line. The line was invented to keep Fred from pissing off Barney. There, I figured it out. It's a social thing. Humans, unlike badgers, are social so we evolved the line to get along with each other.

But for some reason, I still find the act of standing in a line to be odd behavior. It is neat, it is tidy, it gets us into places faster than an unruly crowd at the doorway, but it seems contrived and socially awkward most of the time. Another behavior I find odd is sitting in bleachers or grandstands. What other animals sit in ordered groups on rowed seating watching each other? If you had a group of social dogs sitting in an area watching some sort of dog show, they would sit there for about 90 seconds before dispersing and finding something more productive to do like sniffing each other's butts. But humans will sit and watch a play or listen to a speaker for hours and not move but to go to the bathroom or shift their backsides to get more circulation to their numb feet. I'm pretty sure most of this behavior came about from some need that I will never know and was passed on over the generations so it would be considered a learned behavior.

We are related to apes and they don't stand in lines, at least not on purpose. We as humans have come up with lots of behaviors that we basically invented and passed on, like wearing clothes and being snarky to each other. Maybe in a few million years after the human population kills itself off, the next species below us will develop the "line" and they too will feel awkward looking at the floor trying not to converse with each other. Can you imagine dolphins waiting in line at the Old Country Buffett? Maybe on tuna night.

Religion

I debated long and hard whether to actually address this in my book because sometimes my opinions can be misconstrued and people can be easily offended, so with that said, if you are the type that gets easily offended, please skip over this section to the next, thank you.

I grew up in a Catholic family, I went to church either every Sunday morning or Saturday night until I was 18 years old, at that time, my mother said that it was my choice if I wanted to continue. At 18 I no longer continued because at that time I felt the ceremony and service was to "cultish" for my liking. As I have grown older, I have come to realize that ceremony has a lot to do with church and that people find comfort in ceremonies, like weddings and funerals to a certain extent. It is the group coming together that makes the events and the service special and memorable to them.

If you have never been to a Catholic Church service, there is a lot sitting, standing and kneeling that goes on and the priest follows a set pattern of movements including some off key singing that always creeped me out. Then the altar boy would ring some bells, and people would eat and drink Jesus. I'm sure I'm not the only person who thought the way I did, but I can distinctly remember the day it was my turn to be recruited as an altar boy, when they asked if anyone didn't want to be one, I think I not only got up and left, I ran out of the church office with a sigh of relief. I wanted no part of it.

Now if you knew my father, he was a very religious man, he told me that on his high school aptitude test it came up with 2 good possibilities for a career, one of them being a law enforcement officer and the other a pastor. (He was raised Lutheran) He eventually joined law enforcement, but was very active in the Catholic Church and often did readings from pulpit. (He had a radio voice).

So here we have the almost cliché father versus son scenario where the 2 parties are of opposite views and the older wiser father is trying to teach his wayward son the ways of the world. I admired my father; he

was a very smart man and could have been a counselor. The problem was that I was a born skeptic, I couldn't believe anything unless I could see it, hear it, taste it, feel it or smell it. So the debates began, and for years I would pummel my father about questions about God and the church and try my best to run his arguments into the ground and make him feel like an idiot for ever going to church and believing in God. It got to the point that I did research on Mormonism just so I could invite the missionaries into my house and debate them about their faith.

I was on a roll, I read the bible just to find passages that made the whole book sound horrible, I scoffed at the claims of miracles and made fun of the people who believed in such garbage. I remember debating for hours a coworker who was some sort of lay minister and bring scriptures to work that I could use to make him look like an idiot. Then over time I began to realize that all I was doing was crushing the dreams of my father and for what reason? To self-satisfy my need to be correct. My father had a prayer clipped to his computer desk with the title of, "Returning love ones back to the faith," I used to look at that and say to myself, "good luck with that dad."

So in my mind I won the battle, but I gained nothing. Nobody was handing me a glass of cyanide based Kool aid. No priest was trying to molest me. I was just pissing on the faith of one of the smartest and kind men I knew.

I no longer debate anyone about religion. I go to church every Sunday at the Presbyterian Church and join in with the ceremony. I don't think that my views on religion have changed since I was 10 years old, but I do respect the beliefs of others now and no longer try to tear them down. If I felt a religion was purposefully hurting someone I would step in, I guarantee that, but I have never come across a priest that has tried to molest me or anyone else I know and as far as I know, no church is moving to Guiana and passing out cyanide laced Kool aid.

How to know if you are an asshole, (or a bitch)

Some people know they're an asshole and some don't. I've always wanted to write this article to help those who may not realize that they are an asshole to realize that they are and maybe give them a chance to get some help. I am basing the following on a composite of many people I have met throughout my life who have stood out as true examples of what I call an asshole. If you are reading this and find yourself relating to what you are reading, do not automatically assume I am writing about you, (if you know me personally) most of these people have long since left my life and to good riddance. So here we begin our journey with "How to know if you are an asshole (or a bitch)."

The first sign you are an asshole is arrogance. I base this on the personality of a man who after 25 years I still despise to this day. We all know of someone who is arrogant, but let me describe this guy. He was about 5'8", dark hair, big nose, and talked through it like he had been punched in the face too many times. He was an assistant manager at a national retail store and was way too young to be in the position he was in.

He talked down to his subordinates, was cocky as Hell, and was generally despised by most of the regular staff who knew him before his promotion. Now to this day I will never understand why he was promoted, but someone recognized his ability to be a prick and thought he would be a good manager. I hear he even made district manager but that is hear say. For all I know he lives under a bridge and realized his place in life as a troll.

Another key characteristic of being an asshole is disrespect. There is that old saying, "You can get more flies to honey than shit," and that's true. Conflict breeds conflict and if chewing out subordinates is not a good management tool. Pointing out others faults in front of others and making them feel small is another key trait to the disrespectful asshole. There is a time and a place for consultation and correction and a manager with some age and experience should know to keep that

private. Another way disrespect can be shown is by posting snarky notes without any kind of please or thank you attached. The void of any basic human respect can quickly identify you as an asshole.

Next on my list is "thinking you're smarter than anyone else." If you offer an opinion to someone and you are brushed off as some sort of an idiot because the idea does not confer to their opinion, they may be an asshole. If you are not allowed to make a decent thoughtful intelligent counter argument and are treated like cattle, they may be an asshole.

I think the key here is that the "asshole" has no empathy for the person they are belittling and are so centered on their own agendas that they may not realize that they are coming off bad. Empathy is the ability to see things from another person's perspective and I don't think most assholes care what the other person is feeling. They only care that they get what they want in the most brutal, uncaring, condescending way they can come up with at the time. When you are raised in a house where you are put down constantly for what you do, and never told you are worth anything, I think this behavior can translated into the real world where those raised that way feel that is the only way and the correct way to deal with conflict.

Who wants to deal with an asshole? I prefer people who care about other people, not people who only care about themselves and what they can get. Another key characteristic of the asshole is spouting off without doing any leg work. If you don't know the facts, why present them? Even if you do know the facts, why present them in a way that belittles the person you are speaking to? What does this behavior gain you? A sense of well-being that you ripped on someone else and made them feel like shit? Is it your duty to be a prick?

The best supervisors I have ever had were the ones that coached and taught instead of whipped and ripped. I have seen people who speak down to subordinates in the next breath smile and be very pleasant to a customer, why is this? Why treat one person with no respect and then turn around and treat another with respect? What kind of screwed up morals are those? If you think the customer deserves more respect than

your employees you are sadly mistaken. An employee can do as much damage to you as any customer if you piss them off.

So what is the key to not being an asshole? As I said before, this is not a text book, nor a self-help book, but I will offer a few suggestions on how to be a better human.

1. Always show respect to everyone no matter if you are the boss or the customer. Everyone deserves to be treated like they are someone special.

- a. Do not talk about people behind their backs.
- b. Do not talk down to people.
- c. Do not correct people in front of others.
- d. Do not make false claims against people intentional or not intentional.
- e. Do not ignore others opinions or feelings.
- f. Do not use a tone that breeds more conflict.
- g. Do not bring a baseball bat to an argument (figuratively)
- h. Do not find faults in others just to make you feel better about yourself.
- i. Help those who need help, do not condemn and walk away.
- j. Do not give off the impression you are above others in your gestures or speech.
- k. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- l. Realize that subordinates are people with feeling and emotions.
- m. Do not conspire against others.
- n. Try not to hold grudges.
- o. Analyze your own behavior and take the advice of people around you.
- p. Don't perpetuate the idea that beating someone down is the only way to get them to conform.
- q. Break the cycle.

After writing that list I came up with another dozen people I could write about. I think there is or maybe used to be the idea that the only way to get people motivated was with a whip. Whip crackers are despised and make life miserable and get the label of asshole for a reason. I would like to think that as we age, we become more mature and we realize what does and doesn't work when it comes to relating with people. But that isn't always the case. Some people never learn, and some people learn at a very early age.

I have met young people with more people skills than I could imagine. Maybe they were raised like that and I am very happy for them. It is when they get into the real world and interact with those with less than positive outlooks that I feel sorry for them. It is not against the law to be a prick, and you would think that natural selection would weed them out, but no, when one prick goes away, another is always there to take their place. Maybe there is an evolutionary reason for this disrespectful behavior. Maybe it was easier to club someone with a stick than try to negotiate with them in a peaceful manner.

Diplomacy keeps bombs from being dropped and it can work in the workplace and anywhere else. A smile, a please and a thank you go a long way. If you are too much of a prick to realize that basic human kindness, even in the heat of conflict, is the way to handle situations, then you should not be in a position to work with people. If you piss someone off, they will piss you back in some way and you will lose. There is a grain of truth to Karma and in the end what you reap what you sow. It is too bad that many people along the way have to go down with you as you journey through life and learn your lesson.

I think back to that guy 25 years ago and wonder what I would do if I met him today. Is he still the same prick he used to be or did age and time mellow him out? I still have fantasies of punching him in his huge nose and teaching him a lesson for treating me with disrespect, but I know I will never do that. I am sure in all those years he got his payback somewhere along the line and someone other than me decided not to take his disrespect any longer. Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek,"

and that is a tough lesson when someone is punching you in that same cheek, but if you step back, take a chill pill and wait it out, things will usually even out and work themselves out.

I personally hold grudges. I hate people that I hated 30 years ago. It is a personality trait that I don't like in myself, and I can't just get rid of it, but I have grown more tolerant over the years. I know more now than I ever did as a kid, and I know when to walk away from an argument and recognize when it is escalating out of hand. I rarely raise my voice, and only do when backed into a corner. I think I inherited this trait from my father who as he got older also became a student of human nature and learned what to and what not to say and do. For me to forgive is counterintuitive, my blood pressure raises when I see someone who pissed me off in the past, I feel the need for them to apologize to me and I know that will never happen, So what do you do?

Count to ten, take a deep breath, walk away and don't become the bully that they are.

Can you give advice to a bully? Yes, but it takes time for lessons to be learned. I can say to a bully, "Don't treat people like that," but until one of those people fights back, they will have no incentive to change. Fences are great to keep asshole neighbors away, but if you have to go to work or have to go to school and find yourself with an asshole that you absolutely cannot escape from, find someone who can help you. Bullies aren't just in the school yard; they are in the workplace and never really go away. It is most difficult when for some God forsaken reason the bully has been promoted to the position of the boss, and for the life of me I will never understand how this happens, that you have to live your life in fear and dread.

I guess like on a cactus, pricks are everywhere. How you manage not to get poked is either luck or skill and if you know the skills to maneuver around the points let me know. Often people who get along with the asshole boss are called, "Brown nosers" and are almost as despised as much as the asshole they are enabling. No one likes a brown noser and

most fear that they are in league with the boss and have a direct line to them so in a way become the asshole by default. Brown nosing is a self-protective behavior that in itself is an unhealthy and unproductive as the original behavior.

We all can't live in caves and be hermits, so there must be a Golden rule that we can use to all get along. Oh yeah, there is a Golden rule, it goes like this. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." If you want people to treat you like shit, go ahead and treat them like shit. Not the kind of life I want to lead, but everyone is different. Thank you for reading this article, and please have a nice day.

Escalation and the cycle of doom

Back in my younger days I played in bands and one of my favorite things to do was to watch bar fights from the stage. My wife would bring a camera and would take pictures of the fights for my band scrapbook. Good times, good times. This article is about the escalation of behavior and how quickly a pissing match can turn into a fight. Conflict breeds conflict and tempers can speed up the interactions between the participants to the point of no return. What is the best way to stop the cycle and not end up as a skid mark under someone else's boot? That is a matter of opinion and how thick your skin is. If you want to end a competition, take out one of the players. Problem is in a pissing match, when one of the players walks away, they are chided and made fun of for being a coward and the competition starts all over again. If you have thick skin, you can brush off the comments and live to fight another day. If you have thin skin, get ready to have 2 large men grab both of you and separate you after you lunge at each other. I've never seen a bar fight that lasted more than a few minutes, there are usually a few guys around ready to step in and lend a hand once the boiling point is struck.

I remember specifically an instance when my band was playing at the Holiday Inn and we had a pretty good sized audience rocking out to our

music. It must have been around 11pm and plenty of drinks were downed and the crowd was having a good time when a situation arose. We were playing a packed house and all the band members were heading off stage onto the dance floor for break when this guy steps up and glares at my singer. From what I understand, the singer's girlfriend at the time had ripped this guy's shirt and he was pissed and an argument ensued. I don't know if the tearing was intentional or not, but our singer stepped in to break the two apart and, the angry drunk guy said, "I got your face burned into my memory."

Now I'm 6'4" and the other guitar player on the other side is probably 6'5" and we are both flanking our singer waiting for this guy to take a punch. As hard as he tried, the drunk couldn't get my singer to budge and escalate the fight. I was pretty impressed with his ability to stand there and take this abuse and I'm sure it was quite embarrassing for him to stand there in front of the crowd. If this guy would have lunged forward, he would have hit the floor before he ever got to my singer, he didn't realize how close he was to getting close lined and tackled by the guy on the left and the guy on the right.

My singer saw this same guy 2 days later at cost cutters and the drunk didn't say a word to him. Now usually I don't include behaviors altered by drugs or alcohol in my book because being under the influence is an animal all in itself. But I wanted to include this story because of the way that an argument could have escalated into fight but was stopped by the cool demeanor of one of the participants. Was he a coward for not yelling back and taking a swing? In this instance I would say no because it wasn't a fair exchange because one party wasn't fully sober and probably wouldn't have been so aggressive any other time. Bar behavior is not the same as real life behavior. Real life doesn't have bouncers.

Escalation can take place anywhere and take much longer to get to the boiling point. Anyone who has had a job knows of coworkers who spent more time trying to get each other fired than doing any real work. All it takes is one person with a disrespectful attitude and the pendulum

starts swinging back and forth and all focus turns to what the other is doing instead of what you are doing and whispers in the hallway and secret notes tossed under the door of the boss build the tension until there is a blow up in the break room and both parties are sitting in the bosses office trying to explain why the other is a piece of crap and needs to go.

This fight happened because the drunk felt disrespected and his emotions spilled over into disrespect for the singer's girlfriend. How do you fix aggression before it gets out of hand? If I get this right I want everyone who reads this to send me \$10 because good advice should be worth something. Now the normal thing to do is to go to the boss and complain and hope the boss does something about it. Then you get the situation where the other person says, "Why didn't you just come to me face to face instead of being a coward and going over my head?" In some instances the boss should be responsible to step in and stop the conflict, in some situations the boss has nothing to do with it, and in no situation do your coworkers have anything to do with it because your bitching only feeds their need for excitement at your expense. What do you do?

Take a deep breath and count to 10; if that don't work count to 12. Point is break the cycle and follow the clichéd advice and walk away. After you have cooled down move on to the next step. One person has to buck up and be the bigger man (or woman) and calmly sit down with the other and use diplomacy. Now again I said this is not a self-help book and my intention is not to make your life better, but trust me, taking a deep breath and calmly speaking with the other is the only way to go. Unless the other person is doing something that directly interferes with your personal safety. Sometimes going to the boss only makes things worse depending on the boss's personal skills. If your boss has a history of avoiding conflict, you may have to handle the offending person yourself, if their personality is so vile that you cannot continue to be around them, get the Hell out.

"Are you telling me to run like a scared school kid? How is this guy ever going to learn if I don't teach him a lesson?" Bottom line, you weren't put on this Earth to teach this Bozo a lesson. Life will do that for him with time. The serious situation you are in now will only fester or decline on its own. Is confrontation the way to go? Only if done with diplomacy, never turn up the heat on the coffee pot because they will only respond with turning up theirs.

I have personally been in situations where diplomacy would never work and the only solution was to separate from the offending party. I have also been in situations where I was able to sit down and work out solutions to problems. We all have our own bucket of sand and it all depends on the other persons bucket as to what will play out and how to handle the situation.

I can't give you a cut and dry answer, but I can say this. Look at the situation, size up your competition and think hard about your response. If you are in place where you absolutely cannot leave and have no choice but to confront this person on a regular basis, and you don't feel it's your responsibility to be the one with the olive branch, get ready to have a crappy life. The bully will get their due in time, wait for it and you will see. It may suck the very life out of you until this happens, but look back 6 months ago and see how things have changed. In 6 months, you may never have to be around this person again. Just remember not to get into a cycle of escalation that ends in a gun fight across your desk.

Diabetes and God

If you remember from my earlier section on religion, I quit trying to argue with people about their faith a long time ago because I found it does no good. Well, I was put to the test recently and this section has to do with a personal interaction I had with an individual and something I overheard from another at a family gathering. I hope they never read this.

So here we are out in this wonderful wooded park area in a cabin overlooking dunes of sand and grass up high on a hill, when one older gentleman stands up and says, "My big bang theory is just this, only God could create this big bang and make all this blah blah. I can't remember the rest and people applauded. I sat there and sipped on my lemonade. Next thing I hear is another man talking to a lady saying something along the lines of "Well they say we have evolution and this and that, but where did all this stuff come from?" with a smirk on his face as if he was making fun of all the evolutionists and people who watch the Science channel instead of the hunting channel all day.

Once again, I sipped my lemonade and said nothing. Then my son, who I have been teaching about evolution pipes up like kids do and asks about evolution and a different man, the one this story is about says, "Evolution, there is no such thing." I had to muster all my inner strength not to stand up, grab this man by the collar and shake some sense into him. By sense I am referring to my opinion as I realize not everyone shares what I believe. What did I do? Nothing, I sat there and sipped my lemonade. I realized again it wasn't my place to argue with this man's beliefs and went on my business.

My son asked me about Darwin and the finch beaks and I again explained how natural selection and mutations created different species of birds from on original species and felt better that my son would have some education versus whatever you call this creation theory. Life goes on and somehow the topic of diabetes comes up. Seems to be a common topic at this family gathering because many of them on are insulin or some sort of oral diabetes medication, including this guy who basically told my son he was an idiot.

I was once told by a different man that I was the most opinionated person he had ever met and I agreed. I am very opinionated and at one time in my life would have no problem telling you exactly how wrong you were about anything. A few kicks in the teeth fixed that and I don't do that anymore. But when Mr. Diabetes spoke up and said that alcohol

had no effect on blood sugar, I blew a top and could not contain myself. I am a registered nurse and have read and studied and been tested over and have dealt with diabetics for the last 12 years. My diabetes teacher was a diabetic and I feel I have a firm grasp on the topic.

I calmly stood up, walked over to this man who was telling my wife and a few others at his table that it wasn't the alcohol that caused blood sugar changes but the amount of carbs in the booze that made a difference. According to him, white liquor had no effect at all as to caramel colored drinks which contain carbs that do. I leaned my 6'4" frame over and basically told him he was full of shit. Now here I was, in front of a group of people telling this guy he was wrong when a few seconds ago everyone in the group was nodding their heads in agreement with him as if he was some sort of expert. He had diabetes for 14 years so he knew more than I did. So basically I ended up looking like an idiot.

So I did what anyone would do in my situation, I got out my phone and Googled alcohol and blood sugars and found about a million web pages that spoke on the topic and chose one that I thought he could understand. I scanned through the article until I found a paragraph that would put it into easy to understand language for him. The paragraph said that alcohol can vary blood glucose greatly and if on oral medications can reduce the readings even further. I handed him the phone and he had to hold it away from his face at arm's length, I spoke up and said that he might have diabetic retinopathy due and he said, "No man, I wear bifocals." I wonder why you wear bifocals, but I digress.

After reading the paragraph he turns to me and said, I didn't say alcohol wouldn't reduce your blood sugar if you were on oral diabetic meds to which my jaw almost hit the floor. I didn't stomp on his religion, but I did stomp on his made up medical crap and when I called him on it he made an excuse to get around his claim.

I walked away not with my pride but with a sense of satisfaction because as a nurse we are trained to educate patients and although I may have used a baseball bat to educate this man, I still stood up and gave the correct information so that this man was not spreading misinformation about diabetes to people who didn't know better. I would never have spoken up like that to a patient of mine, but since this was a family gathering and I sort of knew this guy and his ignorant spouting was pissing me off I sort of when off the handle myself, but I did use restraint and walked away once my point was made. I probably went overboard with this situation, but he didn't seem interested in sitting down in private and conversing about diabetes so I spoke up in front of everyone.

Just like the guy at the beginning of this story who said the big bang came from God. I have no idea where we all came from, but when it comes to something that can be tested and retested and facts can be found, the truth needs to be told. I would hate to see someone who was a diabetic drink alcohol, and based on this man's expertise have their blood sugar dive or spike and die. It's all about the delivery, and I think my delivery matched his.

Although as I stated earlier in this book the intention isn't for this to be a text book, I few friends of mine contributed some papers they wrote in college on Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder and I asked them if I could add them and they agreed. I would like to thank Cindy and Jill for the contributions and the following articles are their work:

"THE NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER"

By Cindy R. Everett

INTRODUCTION

Having a feeling of grandiosity or a deep need for admiration, with no regard for other people's feelings, may be signs of narcissistic personality disorder. Other symptoms include a sense of superiority, or an exaggerated sense of self-importance. Accomplishments, realistic or fantasy, are often highly exaggerated, but persuasive. Boasting and bragging about these accomplishments often lead to pathological lying and deceit. A person with this disorder likes to be flattered and the subject of attention. If the attention is turned to someone or something else, they become annoyed, and at times abusive. Control and manipulation are also features of the narcissistic personality disorder. However, the narcissistic person hiding behind this charade of ultra-confidence is a person with a delicate sense of self-esteem that is very susceptible to the slightest bit of criticism (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2011).

HISTORY

Greek mythology holds the roots of the narcissistic personality disorder. The name of the disorder comes from Narcissus. He was a gorgeous young man that became obsessed with the beauty of his reflection in the water. He refused to leave the water's edge and he eventually wasted away while admiring his image. (Cherry, 2011). Self-admiration and vanity was associated with the disorder in the early 1900's. Otto Rank, an Austrian psychoanalyst, published an early description of narcissism in 1911 (Cherry, 2011). Sigmund Freud published a paper called, *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, in 1914. His theory was that narcissism was a normal part of the human psyche. From Freud's point of view, people are born without a basic sense of self. The sense of self is gained through experiences during infancy and childhood, creating the ego, or a sense of self. Interactions with the outside world, learning social norms and experiencing cultural expectations, lead to the development of the ego, or the perfect image that a person wants to attain (Cherry, 2011).

During the 1960's, psychoanalysts Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut introduced the term "narcissistic personality structure". This theory included normal adult narcissism, normal infantile narcissism, and pathological narcissism. In 1968, Kohut termed the disorder "narcissistic personality disorder". Freud's ideas, though they were expanded, were the basis for Kohut's ideas on self-psychology (Cherry, 2011).

In 1980, the disorder was included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and the criteria for analysis were included (Cherry, 2011).

SYMPTOMS AND TRAITS

The majority, 75 percent, of narcissists are men (Vakin, 2008). The narcissist thrives on admiration. They tend to exaggerate their accomplishments, even creating fantasies that fit their world of illusion and grandiosity. These exaggerations or fantasies often include having power, beauty, wealth, intelligence, or heroic accomplishments. A conversation with a narcissist consists of listening to them talk, brag, or boast about themselves. If the topic is changed they become upset. The narcissist believes that they are special and unique, and they have a strong sense of entitlement. Taking advantage of others, or exploiting others to achieve his goals, is common to the narcissist. Often a narcissist displays a jealousy of others, or they believe that others are envious of him or her. Arrogance, or conceited behaviors and attitudes, are often displayed by the narcissist (Psych Central Staff, n.d).

According to the Narcissistic Personality Disorder Organization, 2011, there are common traits for narcissism. These traits include the incapability of listening to others or admitting any wrongdoing. They may display severe fits of anger, and have the ability to walk away from friends forever. Interpersonal relationships are met with coldness or overly practical responses. A narcissist may show pride in the achievements of family or friends, but it will be combined with an excessive desire for controlling their lives and their behaviors. The

narcissist may show an above average interest in social class and importance.

The criteria for being diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder, according

to the Mayo Clinic Staff, 2011, and the DSM includes:

- An exaggerated sense of self-importance.

- Preoccupation with fantasies about success, power, or beauty.

- Believing that you are special and can associate only with equally special people.

- Requires constant admiration.

- Having a sense of entitlement.

- Taking advantage of others.

- The inability to recognize needs and feelings of others.

- Being envious of others.

- Behaving in an arrogant or haughty manner.

Diagnosis is based on the signs and symptoms of the disorder, requiring a complete psychological evaluation, which may include questionnaires. Requirements may possibly include a physical examination in order to eliminate any physical ailments (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2011).

Narcissists are not able to see things from anyone else's point of view. They only "see things through their own eyes" (McCoy, 2006). If they do not receive the justification they are looking for, or the support they want, they may become highly critical and retaliatory (Butcher, Mineka, & Hooley, 2011). The narcissist is reactive and will vacate the situation over a trivial criticism. Their reaction may be forms of improper fury if someone reduces their superiority, answering with violence. They may even attack and attempt to destroy their source of criticism (McCoy, 2006).

CAUSES

The causes of the narcissistic personality disorder are not quite understood. It is believed that there is a biopsychosocial basis of causation. Biological and genetic factors are believed to play

significant roles, as well as social factors. The social factors include the how the person's early interactions were between their family, friends, and other children. Psychological factors pertain to the narcissist's personality and temperament and how it is shaped or influenced by the environment. Part of this includes learning skills on coping with stress. The disorder seems to have several factors that influence it which become intertwined together, making the disorder very complex (Psych Central, n.d.).

An article in Psychology Today, 2010, contained a hypothesis that stated, "Self-reflection of heritable traits may also be a cause of developing the narcissistic personality". These people may believe they are "attractive and that they deserve special treatment" (Holtzman, 2010).

Being spoiled as a child may create a false sense of self-importance or a false sense of power. If a child is the "favorite" child, extremely pampered, or the child that receives excessive love, such as the "golden child", "daddy's little girl", or "mommy's little boy", it can be very damaging to the child. The real world can never measure up to them (DeFoore, 2011).

Contrary to excessive love, being abandoned or neglected can also cause narcissism. Extreme physical or sexual abuse can be a causal factor. Narcissism may develop when an individual overcompensates by creating an exaggerated sense of self-importance and entitlement (DeFoore, 2011).

Verbal abuse can be associated with the narcissistic personality disorder, as well as borderline, obsessive-compulsive, or paranoid personality disorders, when the victim reaches adulthood. It was found that children that experienced verbal abuse, such as being told that they aren't loved, or with the threat of being sent away, were three times more likely to develop one of the disorders including narcissism (American Psychological Association, 2011).

TREATMENT

Due to a narcissist's feelings of perfection and grandiosity for themselves, they do not always seek help. If they do, and if they are found to have an illness, it may shatter their world. Doctors or therapists are either devalued by the narcissist or seen as being superhuman (Psych Central Staff, n.d.).

Individual psychotherapy is one of the approaches to treatment. The patients are treated for symptoms associated to crisis and the external Axis I diagnoses instead of treating the personality disorder itself. The psychotherapist's goal is to use the patient's narcissistic personality to reconstruct an undamaged self-image. The therapist must be aware of the principals of the narcissistic disorder for interpretation purposes for the patient, and to battle counter transference (Psyche Central Staff, n.d.).

Group therapy is to aid the patient in developing personal individuality, as well as recognizing others as individuals. The patient may experience shock and hurt because of the conflicts within the group setting. The therapist remains in the background, and is less intimidating to the narcissist's grandiosity (Psych Central Staff, n.d.). Family therapy may also be considered for treatment. This approach would have the ability to explore conflicts, open up communication gaps, and solve problems in the relationship by bringing the entire family to the sessions (Cable News Network, 2010).

Short-term goals include issues such as substance abuse, depression, shame, and low self-esteem. For the long-term, goals of changing the distorted self-images and creating a realistic self-image is intended. Learning to relate to others is another objective (Cable News Network, 2010).

Medications are not given for narcissistic personality disorder; however, they may be given for depression or anxiety that may be factors of the disorder. These may include antidepressants or anti-

anxiety medications (Cable News Network, 2010). Hospitalization may occur if a patient is quite impulsive, self-destructive, or suicidal (Psych Central Staff, n.d.).

THE NARCISSIST IN RELATIONSHIPS

Narcissists are "quintessential sharks" according to Psychology Today, 2011. In the beginning they are charismatic, self-confident, well groomed, and well dressed. This "false self" makes them very alluring and desirable. Eventually, the partner becomes a victim to the narcissist. Game playing, cheating, their constant need for power and admiration, puts the partner in the position of being a scapegoat and being emotionally abused (Vogel, 2011).

"He will pursue and win you over with calculated too-good-to-be-true pseudo-charm, and then he will drain you dry", according to Dorothy McCoy in her book, *The Manipulative Man*. In a relationship, the partner has to show the narcissistic total adoration and bow down to his superiority. Her needs, wishes, dreams, and hopes are denied. She becomes merely an extension of the narcissist to the point of nothingness. Submissiveness becomes part of her life, and any deviation is met with aggressive and violent reactions. It becomes hard to distinguish between right and wrong, or what is true or forbidden. The victim loses her sense of self in the process (Vakin, 2008). The narcissist is all about control in a relationship. He will create dependency by making his partner financially dependent on him, preventing her from working, and not letting her have any access to money. The partner may be threatened, verbally or physically abused, or berated to the point of having no self-esteem. The narcissist is a "master of mental torture and psychological nightmares" (Vakin, 2008).

Leaving the relationship only adds to the nightmares. The narcissist sees the separation as losing his control. He may view it the same as losing one of his limbs. Considering he is a pathological liar, has no regard for the law, does not keep agreements, and can fly into an ultimate rage, leaving him could be very dangerous (Vakin, 2008).

Narcissists are high risk for a marriage partner if someone is looking for a long-term, stable marriage. Basically, narcissists base relationships on what they can get out of them. If they are not satisfied, and there is another option, they are the first to go (Knox & Schacht, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The narcissist with his feeling of grandiosity and his deep need for admiration reaches for his feelings of superiority, damaging or destroying people or things that get in his way. He shows no remorse or empathy, and feels that he is entitled to be placed upon a pedestal in life. He will use and manipulate, and take and never give anything in return.

The disorder, though named from Greek mythology, is more like the Wizard in the Wizard of Oz, who also showed a false self before Dorothy pulled back the curtain, unmasking his façade, and finding the reality that he was just human. Relationships can be this way. The narcissist lives in a fantasy or fairytale world, an evil character that was never real that demands undeserving admiration. When his mask is removed and his charade is revealed, he flees with no regret in search of another victim to control and manipulate.

Bio psychosocial factors are entangled in a narcissistic personality disorder diagnosis. Heredity, genetics, environment, personality, abuse, and social factors are all causal possibilities in the development of the disorder.

Psychotherapy, which may be individual, group, or family, is used for treatment. No medication is available for the treatment of the narcissistic personality disorder itself.

A relationship with a narcissist may start out as a fairytale, but the journey is an exhausting, humiliating, and degrading trip. Once the charade is revealed and the narcissist's mask is removed, the rest of the

journey is a nightmare. Unfortunately, the partner does not have any ruby red slippers for protection.

References:

American Psychological Association (2011). What Causes Personality Disorders.

Retrieved December 2, 2011 from

<http://www.apa.org/topics/personality/disorders-causes.aspx>

Butcher, James N., Susan Mineka, and Jill M. Hooley (2011).

Abnormal Psychology

Core Concepts. Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

Cable News Network (2010). Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Retrieved December 7,

2011 from

<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/narcissistic-personality-disorder/DS00652.html>

Cherry, K. (2011). The History of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. A Closer Look at the

Myth and History Behind the Disorder. Retrieved November 27, 2011 from

<http://psychology.about.com/od/psychiatricdisorders/a/history-Of-narcissistic-personality-disorder.htm>

DeFoore, W. (2011). Anger Management Resource. Deal With The Narcissist In Your

Life. Retrieved December 2, 2011 from

<http://www.angermanagementresource.com/narcissist.html>

Holtzman, N. (2010). Psychology Today. Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Retrieved

November 25, 2011 from

<http://psychologytoday.com/conditions/narcissistic-personality-disorder>

Knox, D. and Caroline Schacht (2010). Choices in Relationships. An Introduction to

Marriage and the Family. Belmont: Wadsworth

Mayo Clinic (2011). Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Retrieved December 1, 2011 from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/narcissistic-personality-disorder/DS00652>

McCoy, D. (2006). *The Manipulative Man*. Avon: Adams Media

Narcissistic Personality Disorder Organization, (2011). *Basic Diagnosis, Understanding, And Support from the NPD Association*. Retrieved, November 29, 2011 from <http://narcissisticpersonalitydisorder.org/>

Psych Central (n.d.). Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Retrieved December 1, 2011 from <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/sx36htm>

Vakin, S. (2008). *Healthy Place*. What is Narcissism? Retrieved December 7, 2011 from <http://www.healthyplace.com/personality-disorders/malignant-self-love/narcissistic-personality-disorder-npd-definition/menu-id-1469/>

Vogel, C. (2011). *Psychology Today*. A Field Guide To Narcissism. Retrieved December 7, 2011 from <http://psychologytoday.com/articles/200512/field-guide-narcissism>

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER:

By Jill Slama

What is Borderline Personality Disorder?

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is an often misunderstood, serious mental illness characterized by pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self-image and behavior. It is a disorder of emotional deregulation. This instability often disrupts family and work, long-term planning and the individual's sense of self-identity. While less well known than schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, BPD is just as common, affecting between 1 - 2 percent of the general population.

Sadly enough I happen to suffer from BPD. I was diagnosed just about two years ago by a local psychologist, because I met five of the nine criteria needed to obtain the diagnosis. Obtain.sounds like I am winning a prize, but let me tell you it is not a prize! The criteria that I met which got me my diagnosis was:

1. Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment.
 2. A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation.
 3. Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self.
 4. Affective mood instability.
 5. Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger (e.g., frequent displays of temper, constant anger, recurrent physical fights).
- I suffer from BPD, Bi-polar disorder, MS, Chronic Fatigue, Fibromyalgia, Anxiety, and a few other things, which I forget what they are.when you get to that many diagnosis you tend to forget them all. I remembered on I also suffer from CRSS Can't Remember Shit Syndrome! All joking aside, BPD is a real disorder that has serious effects on a person's life. It affects relationships, jobs, social interactions, and much more. Here is how it affects my life.

I fear abandonment by everyone, my friends ok not so much my friends because I really don't have that many to speak of, my family; and my boyfriend. My husband left me why wouldn't everyone else? My family members have died and left me, why wouldn't everyone else? My kids don't live with me, they live with their dad most of the time, and I feel abandoned by them even though it is not their fault. I fear being alone, no I loathe being alone! When I am alone I will try to sleep so that I do not have to deal with the aloneness that surrounds me.

I refuse to be in my living room because I do not feel safe out there so if I want to watch TV I will go lie down in bed watch TV and fall asleep. I really do not handle being alone well at all. It is not just limited to my kids not being here, it can be when I am single, things

like that. When I am single I am on dating websites looking for my next boyfriend.why? Because I HATE being alone! I don't know if there is some form of comfort in having someone if it is anyone, or if being in a relationship defines who I am. It is perplexing to me, and it's almost like an addiction, I can't stop this. It is something that I have to have. I think the longest I have been single is two weeks, I know not enough time to heal right? Well for someone that needs to be in a relationship it's long enough.

For about the last two years, I was in a relationship and the minute it ended I was right back in another one. I fear being alone like no other. I really think that I fall in love with these guys way too fast and I think that this is part of my disorder. I guess I think if I love them enough they will love me back and it will be enough to make the relationship work, but it never does. I think out of all the relationships I have been in over the last two years it was a four month max on all of them. No actually the longest one was seven months and that one lasted as long as it did because he was having an affair on his wife with me eventually left her for me we moved in together and then he left me for her.talk about karma! I know it was wrong to be messing around with a married man, but I somehow justified it in my mind that it was ok because he told me his marriage was over.and I didn't want to be alone even though I was sharing him with his wife I felt like he loved me and only me. I guess that would be where the intense interpersonal relationships comes in.

I have to admit; I look at myself and probably don't see what others see. I see this old,(I'm 36) ugly, undesirable, fat person. Then there are other times I look at myself and wonder why I think that, and believe what my mom says when she tells me I am very beautiful. My ex-husband always use to tell me I was beautiful, I have had boyfriends tell me I am beautiful, but most times I just don't see it. I wish I could, I clean my glasses regularly ha, ha, but I still don't see what they say. I go through serious bouts with depression and anxiety to the point that I have basically become a hermit in my own home. I have isolated myself from pretty much everyone because I am now so afraid of

getting hurt by someone; I am doing all I can to protect myself from it even happening in the first place. I also have periods of extreme happiness, and lack of anxiety. I get bored and want to leave the house, but those times really are getting fewer and further between. I like the comfort of my home where I know nobody will be judging me, nobody will be hurting me, and I won't have to experience the anxiety of leaving the house. I am 36 for goodness sake I should want to live a life not hide and shelter myself living as full of a life that I can with all that is wrong with me. There are times I really hate being me because I am really ashamed of the person I have become.

I use to be outgoing and fun. I use to have friends, and have fun! There was a time in my life where I did everything for my family, and I am now withdrawn from them, not so much my children, just extended family.

I still help my mother out who has suffered several strokes but even doing that requires me to leave the house, but going over to my mom and dad's house really isn't that hard on me, but I do it because I love my mom. I would do anything for my mom, I feel like she may be the only person who won't abandon me until she dies, and right now I am afraid with her health that she is going to die sooner rather than later and when she dies that will kill me. I craved a relationship with my mother I didn't have one with her growing up as a child to really speak of, nor did I have one in early adulthood it has happened here recently and I am not ready to let go of that. I just got my mom's attention I don't need her to leave me now.

I just found out today a guy that I have been hanging out with that I thought was just a "friend" and a guy who I have quite a history with is actually my boyfriend. how did I miss that memo? This poor guy I have put through hell. I was dating him, left him for the married guy was cheating on the married guy with this guy, he and I have been on again off again more times than I can count. He loves me obviously or he wouldn't put up with my shit. He even has said he is going to marry me. I broke up with him on the night he was going to come over and

propose the first time. The first night we met and when he met my parents for the first time, he said he was going to marry me, he even told my dad that. because I was perfect! Never before have had I heard that come from anyone's mouth yet I still am so full of so much doubt. Problem here though is this, he loves me, and I am hoping that I can fall back into love with him. Usually for me it is so easy, but right now I don't know why I can't.

I use to love him, and I don't want to hurt him, or have it be a situation where I hope he can love me enough for the both of us, maybe this is me devaluating the relationship? I don't know, I really don't know. I just know it is confusing as hell to me. I am going to give him a fair shot and see where this can go, yes probably because I need to be in a relationship to be happy, but also to see if I can in fact fall back in love with him because I really care a lot about him, he has done a lot for me, and stood by me through some pretty rough times in my life. So yes I do care very deeply for him I am just confused on if I love him or not. I think the clincher for my diagnosis was my anger; I even took anger management classes with my therapist. I do have a hard time controlling my anger even still after the classes. The littlest things will piss me off it can be from the way a person chews their food, to someone smacking their gum will send me over the edge.

I would fly off the handle at my now 16 year old son, ok I admit I still do, but sometimes I feel he provokes me because he knows what flips my trigger. I wouldn't say that I am constantly angry; I just am very easy to anger. I haven't gotten into any physical altercations, mostly verbal. I will yell at the top of my lungs and let everyone know that I am not happy. My anger is one thing I really hate it's a monster. I think things would be a lot smoother with my son if I could control my anger and when I get angry at him, let it go instead of dwell on it and keep bringing it up to continue the argument. I use to start arguments with my ex-husband for no reason, and I don't know why. When I was married I think I was angry all the time, but not so much now it is kind of hard to be angry when you are alone almost 99% of the time.

As you can see, trying to live with an illness such as this can't quite possibly be easy and it's not especially when you throw bi-polar on top of it, it then compounds the problem tenfold.

I take medication and see a therapist, and have a community support worker that comes to my house (thank God!) who all work together to make sure that things are ok in my life. I am down to seeing my therapist to two times a month where it used to be once a week. My community support worker has kind of stepped into the role of therapist and I see her once a week, she is a RN, who works under an A.P.R.N. who works under my psychiatrist. I have a whole mental health team watching out for me which is nice. I am med compliant which most bi-polar patients aren't which wouldn't then help my BPD, or any of my other illnesses that I have, so that is one positive. Now, if I could just get this relationship thing under control and not wanting to leave my house I might get to experience somewhat of a normal life, but I really don't see that happening anytime soon.

References

NAMI, (2011). Mental Illness Borderline Personality Disorder
Retrieved from:

http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=By_Illness&Template=%2FTaggedPage%2FTaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=54&ContentID=44780

Borderline Personality Disorder Demystified by Robert O. Friedel,
M.D., Marlowe & Co., 2004

National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder's
Teachers Manual for Family Connections, 2006

A BPD Brief, An Introduction to Borderline Personality Disorder by
John G. Gunderson, M.D., 2006

In conclusion



So there you go- my book on behavior. I could have come up with a lot more topics and done more interviews but at some point I had to say enough. That point was when I surpassed 80,000 words which according to Google is the lower limit of what can be considered a novel. If anyone out there wants to pay for this to go to print, send me a message, I won't hold my breath, but it would be cool to see my writing on a book shelf as well as on the internet.

I hope you enjoyed what you have read, and if there is enough interest, I might write a volume 2 or something similar. I had a blast doing the interviews, met lots of people I had never met before and was surprised at how easily people would open up to a complete stranger and share their most personal stories. I didn't go out looking for horror and tragedy, but when I asked for stories of human behavior that is what I got.

Most of my writing is opinion, and this was intended to be an entertainment piece and not a self-help book or text book so feel free to disagree with anything I said.. Now it is time to go find something else to do with my time and let my creativity expand and retire my digital recorder for a while. If you made it to this point, thanks for reading and please share this with your friends. If you want to use any of my interviews in any school papers, please cite me as your source.
Thanks

Keith Trimm
keithtrimm.com

This is a legally distributed free edition from www.obooko.com
The author's intellectual property rights are protected by international Copyright law. You are licensed to use this digital copy strictly for your personal enjoyment only: it must not be offered for sale.