

# Granny

Training packet





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Thank you for taking on the challenge of working with trafficking survivors. This demographic is unique and comes with many challenges, but I think you will find the reward being much greater than the struggles you will face along the way.

My goal in this training is to equip you with a better understanding of what goes through the mind of a survivor, what they typically struggle with, and ways that you can meet them where they are and help them desire a brighter future.

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*In this training, I am taking the things I have learned and gained from my own experiences, my Granny, as well as the safe houses I've been a part of and counselors. It's completely from a survivor's perspective and the things I have learned through my journey.*

*You will find that I insert God into this training because He is a vital key component of anyone's healing. That's just a fact. I've seen survivor after survivor struggle through healing, only to then find a Savior in Jesus and it completely change their outlook on life. Jesus is where the miracles happen, and by following His teachings in His word. This is not a green light to shove Jesus down the throats of survivors, because that's not helpful for anyone. But if you are grounded in understanding what God is calling YOU to do, then your journey alongside survivors will find more hope, healing, restoration.*

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## *Your Role as a Granny*

- ◆ Be an example of Christ's love and compassion
- ◆ Be available
- ◆ Listen actively
- ◆ Bring them before the Lord in prayer
- ◆ Build confidence
- ◆ Be a role model
- ◆ Coach
- ◆ Share your experiences
- ◆ Encourage professionalism
- ◆ Maintain weekly contact
- ◆ Encourage open communication
- ◆ Help problem solve
- ◆ Facilitate career planning
- ◆ Encourage networking
- ◆ Inspire introspection
- ◆ Facilitate goal setting
- ◆ Maintain confidentiality
- ◆ Provide insight
- ◆ Offer feedback

## *Tips, Tools, & Advice for being a Granny*

### **1. You must love like Jesus.**

This is a must when working with survivors. You will experience an array of emotions and frustrations as you fight in this battle, but you must always remain grounded to love the survivor as Jesus loves them.

Even though there is a lot of baggage, love has to be bigger. My advocate's favorite verse is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And I truly believe that is why she was such a great mentor, friend, and advocate for me. Because she was closely connected to God in all of those areas, she was more Spirit led, and had a heart like Jesus, to where loving me, even when it was extremely hard and a struggle, became possible for her to do. So, what does loving like Jesus look like?

#### **a. No judging**

The survivor has a history of extreme abuse, neglect, abandonment, exhaustion, self-hatred, and so forth. Through their life they will have developed ways to which they have coped and essentially survived. Sometimes this involves extreme life differences, coping skills, beliefs, mental disabilities, etc, that they cling tightly to. Until you have walked in their shoes, you should never pass judgment on how they have coped. Do not judge what they have done to stay alive. Or why they stayed in "the life" as long as they did. Don't judge why they didn't ask for more help or scream when they were being attacked. Many essential tools were stolen from them during the abuse that kept them from fighting back for so long. Never judge their memories or whether you think they sound too extreme to be true. Simply, do not judge. They feel judged from the outside world as it is, so be different and don't cast judgment on



how they have survived the hell they've experienced

### **b. Be approachable**

Survivors will struggle with feeling like a burden to everyone they meet. They will second guess and question themselves almost every second of the day on whether they are doing things "right." Be easily approachable. Most survivors will not feel like they can open up and share if you are loud or constantly talking. Have moments of awkward silence because a survivor's mind is constantly running and it might take them time to process what they want to say during that silence. Be mindful of your facial expressions and responses when they begin to share things with you.

### **c. Show grace and forgiveness**

When survivors fall off the path of healing, or make a bad choice, show them what grace looks like. Remind them that they are safe. That nothing they can do will make you stop caring or loving them.

### **d. Be real**

Don't say one thing, but mean another. Don't sugar coat things that need said in boldness. Survivors can pick up on fake people, and fake people feel unsafe. If your words don't match up to your actions, then they won't know when to believe what you say. It will exhaust them trying to figure you out, and many times they simply won't try. If you feel hurt about something they did, voice it. Not in a shaming way, but being real. It gives the survivor a chance to also see what it's like to communicate feelings and emotions in a healthy way. You can't play mind games with the survivors. Explain things in detail without confusion. Never shame or trick the survivor into doing something or be manipulative with their feelings. There should be no hidden meanings to your words. Be 100% genuine, upfront, bold, and authentic.

### **e. Stand by them through thick and thin**

They will assume that the first time they mess up, you will walk away from them. That's what they are used to. They won't believe you when you say you are never leaving them. They may always question it, because of the depth of their abuse. It's nothing against you, but simply their hard wiring from the abuse. Show them that the love of Jesus doesn't walk away, leave, or give up no matter how hard things get.

## **2. Confidentiality**

We want you to share with others about your "Granny" experience and what God is doing in and through this experience for you, but be mindful that you do not share sensitive information about the survivor to others. This is key for their trust, but also for safety. Be a safe place for them to disclose to where they know that you will keep their story and their truths confidential unless they agree to you sharing with someone else

However, you must always share when there are certain issues.

- ◆ When sexual abuse is committed to or by the survivor.
- ◆ Plans to commit a crime
- ◆ Any suicidal thoughts or actions

### **3. Don't have an agenda**

This is a huge problem with people choosing to be a mentor. Often times, people don't even realize they have an agenda. It's hidden to them, but it becomes apparent to the survivor very quickly.

Before working with survivors, it is very important to work through your own trauma, or PTSD prior to being a mentor. You cannot carry an agenda of needing to "fix" others to help you feel validated in your own life. You can't be doing this job because you need something fulfilled in your life that was taken from you through struggles of your own. This isn't about you and your healing. You need to get those things worked through and processed first because if you are in this job to fulfill your own emotional needs, you will become codependent on the survivor. Which is extremely unhealthy for both individuals.

Codependency comes from trauma and is a condition in which a person struggles with low self esteem and self worth as a result of their trauma. When you are codependent you depend on others to fill the holes in your life. You try to fix that empty or painful feeling inside of you by becoming obsessed with someone else who "needs" you. You become addicted to being "needed" and form relationships with the underlying reason of being their provider, caretaker, and hero. This in turn gives you a feeling of worth and satisfaction but it is at the expense of others. Be mindful of your needs and your reasons for taking on this job. Be humble in what is true and know that if God has called you to this ministry that you can and will find the healing you need first before you begin helping in the ministry. It's extremely important for you and the survivors.

### **4. You will have to repeat simple concepts often**

Even when you feel like it's obvious and the survivor should know it, and possibly does know it, saying important truths to the survivor often helps reinforce them in the survivor's mind. Survivors need this reinforcement and encouragement more often than most people. For example, you are loved, you are valued, you are important, you are special, you have a purpose, you are a joy to be around. I am blessed to have you in my life. Those affirmations are powerful for a survivor to hear often.

The negative self talk that a survivor develops through the years of abuse is hard to break. Little situations can trigger that negative self talk and even though you feel like you've made those affirmations clear yesterday, sometimes repeating those simple concepts are important to say again today.

Over time, you won't have to repeat those truths as often, in fact, you want the survivor to start to gain the skills of positive self talk that combats their own negative thoughts. You want them to develop skills of identifying the lies they are hearing in their head and replace them with the truths you've told them a thousand times. But even still, when they are years in their recovery, it is important to occasionally remind them. You wouldn't believe how exhausting it sometimes gets for a survivor simply trying to remind themselves of their worth when their



head is constantly trying to tell them differently.

## **5. You must be the hands and feet of Jesus**

This is similar to loving like Jesus, but with a plan of action with it. Take time to spend with the survivor. Be willing to take them to special appointments, or appointments that will be difficult for them. Be there when things are hard. Most likely, you are one of the first people the survivor can truly be themselves around, so be someone they can trust. They will look to you for comfort and encouragement. And that's okay. But also always remember to point them to Jesus as their true Comforter. Show them how Jesus has been your Comforter and your Peace. Teach them how to rely on Him, as well as, the safe people He's brought into their life. Be willing to make the survivor a part of your life. Sit at their table, just like how Jesus sat at the table with the outcasts of Bible times.

If you live a long distance from the survivor you are working with, then take the time to invest in them through messages, phone calls, facetimes, and care packages. Show that their difficult time matters to you because they matter to you. See them, hear them, and show they are worth investing time in.

## **6. It's okay for you to say no.**

There will be times you can't answer a text or make a call. There will be times you have to say no to being with the survivor during a time when they need you. And that's okay. It's good for both you and the survivor. It may be hard for the survivor to understand at first. But it's good for him/her to see moments where they are able to get through a difficulty on their own. You might need to remind them afterwards that you had to say no, but it has nothing to do with their worth, or your love and care for them. It is simply life. They will grow to learn and understand that life happens and it's not a result of how someone feels about them. They will get to where they want you to have the freedom in the relationship to say no when you need to. But it will take time, and they will typically assume it's because something is wrong with them. It's just their traumatic way of thinking. That's when those simple reminders come in handy.

I remember years ago when I was struggling with a terrible flashback. I couldn't breathe, I was reliving the horrific details of the memory as if it was happening in real time. I was so scared and felt like I needed to run (that was one of my coping mechanisms I developed as a kid, to run away when things got scary). I remember reaching out to my close mentor desperate for help. And this particular time she told me she can't be there, she has something else going on that she needs to be doing, so this time I needed to figure it out on my own. I was crushed. I didn't know if I could handle this flashback on my own.

Obviously, I survived it and made it through, but I remember talking to her later and saying that it had really hurt that she chose not to be there for me. That I felt like metaphorically speaking, my house was on fire and no one cared to even come and help. And I remember her response was that my house is on fire almost every day. If she came to help every time my house was on fire, she would be there constantly.

That response gave me several different emotions. This can give you an insight as to

how my traumatic brain worked in this situation. I felt like she was right, and felt like it was a reminder of just how bad my life was. Just how broken I was. And that my heavy life was too much for others to deal with. I felt like I was burdening her by ever asking for help. I felt like she was better off if I just left.

It went from her saying she couldn't be there for me in that moment, to me believing I shouldn't be in her life at all. I would think in extremes. My trauma brain took her truthful response and made it to where it meant something was wrong with me. This is often how a survivor will process through things like this so be patient and work through it with them.

What my mentor had said to me wasn't wrong and it wasn't meant in a mean way. It also wasn't said with the intention of making me feel bad or with the hidden meaning that she didn't want to do this anymore. I had to learn through experiencing life with her that she doesn't have hidden meanings, she says it like it is. And I could trust that when she said things, it was how she felt. Nothing more, nothings less. I wasn't used to people who weren't being fake with their words. It took time for me to learn this. It also took time for me to understand that in order for our relationship to work in this difficult circumstance, she needed to have her life prioritized like how God wanted her to. She needed to put her time with God first, then her husband, then her kids and grand kids, and so forth. It didn't mean I was less of a person, or that I have a place that's less than others in the world like my abusers had tried to tell me. It was the way God created each us. And if we are obedient to follow God's plans of priorities then each relationship will work better and be blessed. Her life will go more smoothly if she keeps her priorities in check, but that doesn't mean she doesn't care about the fact that I was going through something hard.

It's a process that takes time for the survivor to learn. But it's sometimes just as hard for the mentor to stand by their priorities and say no. Remember it's just as important for the survivor as it is for you.

## **7. Have clear boundaries**

This is similar to being okay with saying no. You have to have clear and strong boundaries in this relationship and ministry. You need to know when to put up boundaries to protect yourself from being overwhelmed and overused. Talk with the survivor about your boundaries and make it as black and white as you can. Having those boundaries are actually helpful for the survivor, too, because like I said before, they don't want to be a burden. If they know that one of your boundaries is church. And that every Sunday morning and Wednesday night you will make church a priority and won't be near your phone during that time, then the survivor will know to expect that and respect that. Survivors are learning to ask for help and how to use their voice to express feelings. They don't want to hurt you or cross boundaries, or be a burden. But they also want to know when it's a good time to express how they are feeling or what they are going through. Again, it's a process they need to learn so make your boundaries clear because it is healthy for both sides.

## **8. Have your own support system**

It's very important to have your own "team" that supports the work you are doing. This is a job that will impact your heart, pull on your feelings, and change you from the inside out. You will not be able to look at life the same again after crossing paths with a survivor.



You will probably see the world as more evil and corrupt. You will probably have your eyes opened to how broken and battered so many people are around you. You will feel small in the grand scheme of how massive the problem is, but will want to make a difference. You will be changed. And you need people around you who support what you are doing. Having a supportive spouse and friends is very important in the process. You need your support system to understand the calling God has put on your life. Sometimes this job involves situations that are dangerous and you need a support system that can stand behind you when those situations come up. You need people who will listen and care when you share what you are doing. A great example is my mentor. Her husband has stood by her helping me and she said it would've been impossible for her to minister to me like she has if he didn't support what she was doing. Another great example is at a former safe house I was in, we would have dinners and parties where the staff would bring their spouses and kids. We became like family to their families. And not only being accepted by the staff of the organization we are in, but feeling loved and accepted from their families makes a huge impact on the survivor. You need the support, but it's also a cool way to incorporate your family and friends into the ministry that you are doing.

Talk about your life and the people in your life with the survivor. Share who you are using as your support system so they know. But also because sharing your life with them makes them feel more like a person, and not just a project. They feel like they are getting to be a part of your life, and it's not just that they need you, but it's a relationship. Plus, it's healthy for them to be able to play both sides of a relationship. To learn how to listen, and even give advice. You are working toward creating a survivor who is whole, an all rounded individual, not a survivor who has to be dependent on you. Someone who can stand on their two feet and live a productive life. Plus, you might be amazed at what things the survivor can teach you in the journey.

## **9. Be prepared for harassment**

This job is not for the weak of heart. Be prepared for harassment from people who want to keep a hold on the survivor. It depends on the situation. Hopefully in most cases you won't have a survivor who is still dealing with harassment themselves, or dangerous situations, but be aware that they are coming from a background of abuse. They may still be experiencing things and have a tendency to get back into abusive situations. It's something to be mindful of, and to talk to the survivor about.

## **10. You may experience secondary trauma**

The stories, memories, and flashbacks that the survivor will share with you are going to be like nothing you could imagine. Often, survivors will share a detailed horrific trauma with you and trust that you will keep that memory to yourself. You will hear about a darkness that you didn't know existed. An evil that you didn't know was out there. It's one thing to hear that children and people are being sold, but when you hear the details of what they went through, especially after you've come to know the survivor, it will have a huge impact on you. Hearing the story itself and understanding that those things are happening in your country and have happened to someone you love, will cause a secondary trauma. You won't be the same. Make sure you have tools in place to provide you with the proper care that you will need as you experience this secondary trauma. Every person is different and will handle it differently.

This is another reason why your relationship and foundation in God is vital in the process. You will need Him more than ever during this and He will be your Rock and strength as you minister to survivors.

Be honest and open to the survivor about what you are feeling, but be mindful of how you say it. I've been told that my story has caused people to have secondary trauma. It was difficult for me to hear and made me careful about who I shared things with. It also gave me a feeling of guilt, that I caused harm to people who love me. It's okay to say things like, "**my heart breaks for you,**" "**I'm angry that these people did this to you,**" "**I wish I would've known you back then so I could've protected you.**" Things like that where you share your feelings and how the truth of their past has impacted you is healing for both sides. The survivor will watch carefully how you process their story. They will look for signs where they have told you too much, or if it's safe to share more. They will look for signs of if they are being a burden and you are annoyed at them or frustrated that they are sharing another flashback. They will pick apart what you body language says and how you respond. So be real, but don't put a guilt on them that they are the ones that have caused you pain or trauma. It's because you love them and care that you feel the way you do.

## **11. No one needs 10 mentors.**

When survivors enter this program, they are most likely feeling very alone. Not all personalities will click, and that's okay. Don't try to be something to the survivor that they don't feel comfortable with. It could be that your personality will mesh well in all areas of the survivors life, or it could be that they only feel comfortable sharing certain areas with you. Be okay with that and don't make them feel bad for not wanting to open up more. Maybe they will end up gaining confidence from their time with you that they will start to pursue other friendships too. But if the survivor doesn't mesh well or click with you, don't feel like you did something wrong. It could be that your fit is better with a different survivor. Or you are meant to mentor them in certain areas of their life but not all. Be willing to be used by God in the way that He presents.

In my situation, I have had people try to help me but I just couldn't feel comfortable around them. They weren't a safe person for me to share with, but that same person ended up being a great advocate for another survivor. I have many people who I felt comfortable with to a degree, but there has been only one person who I felt like I could trust 100%. And when I say trust, I mean that I felt 100% safe, but it's more than that. I also feel like I can trust my emotions and my heart with her. Her and I connected on both a physical level of her helping me find freedom, but in a spiritual way as well. I don't know how to explain it, we just connect in a way that's different than anyone else.

Do not be offended if you want to have that close tight trusting relationship with a survivor, but the survivor feels more comfortable with someone else. It's not a knock against you, it's simply what that particular survivor is comfortable with. You will feel led by the Spirit with the survivor. A lot of it should come naturally in order for the relationship to work. Also, if you become someone's closest mentor it's important that others don't get their feelings hurt or make you or the survivor feel bad for that. My mentor was truly a divinely orchestrated relationship that worked in a beautiful and powerful way. It's very important that others are still a part of the survivors army of healing. Each survivor needs an army. I feel like God



chooses that close mentor for each survivor, and you need to be ready and willing when God opens that door for you. But in the meantime, be a supportive and helpful friend to each survivor that enters your life.

## **12. You will make mistakes.**

You are human and will make mistakes. Show yourself grace. No matter how good you are there may still be times when the survivor takes a step backwards, or even a thousand steps backwards....don't quit. Don't give up. Don't leave. God has used you to form a foundation that is still there and He's still working. The battle might be long and hard, but God's plan is perfect. Trust His process. Keep loving and caring and trusting in Him, and the survivor will want to follow suit. There will be huge light bulb moments for the survivor. And there will be times of huge let downs. It's a roller coaster ride that is not for the weak or faint of heart. Let God be your strength, and let Him work through you. No matter what mistakes you make, or the survivor makes, God's love shining through is enough.

## **13. Don't play along with their games.**

You are dealing with a person who is extremely traumatized, and they may play games they don't even realize they are playing. I have worked with survivors who seem to get a high off of the "shock factor" of seeing people's emotions when it comes to the terrible abuse they went through. Or they put you through an emotional roller coaster. Typically it's not on purpose, but just the type of relationship they are used to. They are hurting, and something has triggered a child like behavior. The best thing you can do is not play along. Teach them a healthy way to get what they are needing from you.

## **14. It's not about you.**

I mean this in two different ways. First, it's not about you in the fact that your worth, your success is not based on how the survivor is doing. You are not a failure if the survivor has a breakdown. You have not wasted your time if the survivor is going backwards. You can't throw pity parties if you feel like the survivor has pulled away from you and has lost trust in you. The ultimate goal is making the survivor feel safe and pushing toward healing, not that they make you feel important. It can't be about you. The survivor will say mean things to you and will express their feelings in ways that feel like an attack. You can't get your feelings hurt or decide you are going to pull away because you don't feel valued for all you've done. Second, a lot of the emotions and feelings expressed to you aren't about you. Meaning, the hurt and anger and emotions come from a place of abuse and abandonment from years ago in the survivor's life. When they scream at you or yell at you, it most likely comes from something deeper that the survivor may not even realize. Be patient and show grace, and definitely don't make it about you.

## **15. Understand a trauma brain**

This is difficult for people who have never experienced trauma. Or for people who don't naturally have an empathetic spirit. Trauma brain is complicated and complex. It takes work to understand the inter workings of an individual who has experienced extreme trauma and abuse. From my experience, just because you have a degree in counseling, or you've studied

trauma, it doesn't mean you have the skills or mindset needed to work with an individual who has trauma brain.

It is important that you give them a voice, but also balance that with when you need to make an executive decision for their well-being. There have been times when I needed to go away to a safe house, or go to the police and I flat out didn't want to. I not only hated the idea of it, it felt wrong in my trauma brain. But, because of my relationship with my close mentor, she was able to explain things to me in a broken down, heart to heart way, that at least allowed me the chance to see things from an outsiders perspective as far as the help I needed. I had many times where the decision being made didn't feel right to me, but I trusted my mentor enough that I went through with the hard decision because I knew she wouldn't lead me wrong. When you are working with a survivor you need to sometimes be a voice of reason for them.

Keep a balance of giving them freedoms, but also doing what is best for them. The trauma brain will be difficult to navigate and is as frustrating for the survivor as it is for you working with them. But take the time to see inside each individual survivor how their trauma brain is unique. What they struggle with the most, what triggers them, and what brings them the most joy. Realize that even though the trauma brain is complicated and complex, it is also beautiful. It's proof of an amazing God who has brought a mind through some of the most horrific trauma imaginable. Their mind is not broken, it's just changed and adapted to their surroundings and circumstances. It takes time to get their mind used to an environment that is safe and loving. For example, they no longer need to live in flight or fight if they are living in a safe environment free from their abusers. But it takes time for the trauma mind to catch up to that reality. So much will still feel unsafe.

Another beautiful thing about the trauma mind is that it can pick up on things that you can't. I have a sixth sense when it comes to some things. There are certain types of evil in people that I can pick up on just with being with them for a few minutes. There are some personalities, though, that get past my radar, and it's typically the type of personality that my very first trafficker had. For the most part I can pick up on people who have a hidden agenda.

Also, most trauma brains have adapted during their experiences to where they end up having a secret talent that they didn't know existed inside of them. Just a few years ago, during an in-house facility for eating disorders and trauma, I was given a paint brush. I was very hesitant and self-conscious about painting. I just knew what I painted would be stupid. But in that process, I found a peace in trying to create art, and then learned that I had been gifted with a way to express myself through art. I never knew I could paint until I was given the chance. The same was true for writing. Somehow, in a miraculously fashion, God has blessed me with two ways to express myself and gave me a talent to do so. Trauma brains are miracles. Each survivor will have gifts, some that they themselves don't even know about. Allow them chances to pursue different avenues of finding these talents. They will struggle greatly at first, but push them to find the hidden gems inside of themselves. It could lead to them feeling more purpose and power in their own story.

## **16. Share Jesus, but don't force it**

I've been blessed with multiple situations where I could get to know many survivors.



And I've been close to ones who were strong believers, some who were on the fence, some who had been abused by church leaders and were traumatized by the Bible, and some who were atheist. Survivors are typically desperate to find a supernatural peace. Many times they will have found a feeling of comfort and peace in things like drugs or alcohol, but it was just temporary. Deep down they are begging for a Savior, but they're skeptical to be tricked again. For some, their abuser had promised them all the same things God does, and that backfired on them once before with trusting their abuser so they are scared to try again. Some of them don't see how a God could love them because of what they've done, or because of how dirty they feel. Some don't feel like there could be a God, or if there is a God, they don't like him because he allowed them to go through so much.

Share pieces of your story when the survivor is open to listening, and in small doses explain how things worked out, mountains were moved, and how there was only one explanation for it, and it was God. Explain your own insecurities and struggles and slowly drop hints that it was God who made the difference. You have to be careful that you don't come across as having a hidden agenda. But that you truly do love God and see his goodness and power that you want to share Him with everyone. It doesn't need to be a secret, but it also doesn't need to be shoved down their throats. If you respect where they are at, then they will most likely respect where you are. For me, in literally every situation, simply by sharing the truths that I have seen with God in my life and my story, it has planted a seed in others to maybe be a bit more open to the idea of a loving God. And they began asking questions. I focused on the heart of God and the relationship He desires with us, not the rules. My heart was truly genuine. It was not about being right or wrong. It came from a place of caring so much about the survivor, and trust me, a survivor can tell the difference.

My Granny is a very strong Christian who made it clear to me that her best friend is Jesus. I knew where she stood in her faith. I watched her navigate her faith through all of the hills and valleys that her own life has taken. Even though I believed in God before I met her, I learned what a real relationship looked like with God from having watched her live her life. I ask questions often about God. I pour out to her the hurts I have and the awful memories, and she is always pointing me to Jesus as my Comforter and Peace. But she also has been His hands and feet in a way that not only told me about Jesus, but showed me about Jesus. I learned about the heart of Jesus through seeing Him live through her. Granny also surrounded me with other like minded people who love the Lord and are striving to follow Him every day. Survivors are longing for that but they have some serious walls to break down sometimes before they will let the idea of a loving God take root. Don't push them past their limits. Be respectful of their trauma and especially of any spiritual abuse they've endured. Remind them often that God felt every bit of the pain they did while it was happening because He was there with them. Remind them that their hurts and abuse come from Satan, and that God supernaturally and lovingly protected their heart or they wouldn't be here today.

There was a time in my life where a church service alone was triggering and difficult because of the things that were done to me in my abuse that had been spiritual, but tied to pain and sexual abuse. Granny wasn't judgmental when she heard my struggles. It broke her heart that church didn't feel like a safe place for me. And she ended up breaking down the church service into 7 pieces. Explaining each phase of the service. What the purpose of it was for. And where my heart should be in each phase. It broke it down in a simplistic form that my mind could manage. I still carry that piece of paper in my Bible to this day,

remembering where I came from, and how far God has brought me. But doing those small integrations and giving the survivor a simple understanding or tools to use is helpful for them to feel more safe in the environment to where they can experience it the way God wants us to. Not letting the abuse win.

### **17. Praise them when they are doing good.**

Survivors have probably not heard a lot of praise in their life. Be genuine and real when you praise them, because they will know the difference. But notice the things that might be easy for someone else, but is a huge win for them. For example, overcoming a flashback, or seeing a difficult situation as not hopeless, or facing a fear. Praise can go a long way, and will encourage them as they learn just how strong they are. One friend of mine who is a licensed counselor said that she was taught to tell her clients, "You should be proud of yourself." Verses saying, "I am so proud of you." Simply because, we don't want the trauma survivor working to please you anymore than they were trying to please their old abuser or trafficker. They need to see that their feelings about themselves is what really matters. Giving them praise during those small victories will mean the world to them, though. They will typically be their own worst critic and will be hearing in their mind the negative words and abuse that they heard growing up.

### **18. There is a language barrier between survivors and the world.**

The number one thing in relationships is communication. Almost everyone can agree on that belief, but survivors of something like child sexual abuse or trafficking don't have a language to communicate in. Every word in our modern language comes from normal life experiences. Words have not been made to match the things they've gone through, or the feelings and emotions they have as a result.

When you are interacting with a survivor you are talking with someone who doesn't speak the same language as you. They will try. They will say things like "I feel anxious." But to be real, their anxiety and normal anxiety aren't the same thing. But there isn't a word created for what they are trying to explain. They can't communicate fully with you because there are no words that match their story. No words to match their feelings. No words to match what they need or why they need it. As a result, they feel trapped, and you feel frustrated.

Language sets you free. It gives you a place to express your experiences to where you can process and move forward. Part of the language barrier is that many survivors started being abused at a young age and their communication skills were stolen from them and stunted. But in another sense, their communication skills remained intact, they only became different than yours. They became fluent in things that are evil, unspoken of, and so detestable there isn't a word for it. They experienced things that can't be understood in our language and therefore they remain empty in their head and in their words when trying to communicate. And people on the outside trying to help them simply can't understand unless they've been told.

Imagine if you went through something today and there is absolutely no word that you can use to describe it to anyone. You are stuck with the images and the feelings and emotions but no language to express it. It's isolating and defeating. It would be similar to if



you went to hell for a day. Just like the Bible says you can't describe heaven because our world simply doesn't have the words to describe it. I believe the same is true for hell. So if you went to hell for a day and came back and started looking for a friend to explain your day to, you would probably end up sounding crazy, confused, and lost. That is exactly how a survivor feels, and often times how they are perceived.

Without a language to connect the bridge between people who want to understand and those who have lived through it, you can't really fix the barrier. When you are working with a survivor this has to be understood so that you have more compassion for the survivor when they try to share what they can in the only language they know. It helps you have more patience and hopefully pushes you to work harder to understand so that the survivor feels a little less trapped by the experiences they can't express.

A relationship with a survivor will always be more complicated. It's like having a friendship with someone who doesn't speak the same language as you, and who also has trauma brain and needs things different than most friends. On the up side, you will have a relationship with someone who can show you about a whole new world, and you will get first hand experience with seeing God work miracles in their life. You will get to be a part of moments where the light bulb turns on and they realize things for the first time like they are worthy and loved. That they have a purpose and future. Learning a new language is always difficult, but even more so is learning a language that doesn't exist. But it will be worth it to try.

## **19. You can't do the work for them**

There is a lot you can do to encourage them, support them, stand by them, and pray with them, but when it comes down to doing the work, that's on the survivor. You can't do it for them. They will have to learn the hard way of what happens when they don't do the work at healing and getting better. It's not your job to babysit them to make sure they are getting things done.

You are human, and can absolutely show frustrations. Survivors need to understand that their actions don't just effect them, but those who love them too. You need to be able to trust the survivor just like the survivor needs you to be trustworthy. Communicate the hard things as much as possible. Explain as much as you can about how friendships work, and that it's not your responsibility to do the work. They need to learn to take responsibility for their healing, but have the comfort and encouragement to know that you will be there every step of the way.

## **20. When a survivor is deprogramming their brain, they must replace what was taken out with something new.**

Deprogramming sounds like a big word, but essentially, that is what you are doing. You are trying to teach the survivor that they are worth more than abuse. That they deserve to live a thriving life. They deserve to dream. But when you remove something from a brain, you must replace it with something else. That's just how it works. This was explained to me and Granny in counseling, and it made a lot of sense. If Granny wasn't careful, I would go from following orders of my abuser, to following orders from Granny. And that's not a good thing. Even though Granny is a healthy individual for me, she doesn't want to be the person I

take orders from. One of the best things Granny did for me was show me that nobody owes me. I don't need to take orders from anybody. I am my own person, and I make my decisions. Because, if you make all the decisions for them, you become their next trafficker without meaning to.

You need to encourage the survivor to spread their wings and learn to fly. To figure out who they are, not who someone else wants them to be. To experience their own faith in God, and to think for themselves. You can encourage and support and give wisdom, but be mindful that the survivor will have instincts to just let you lead them. It would quickly become an unhealthy relationship that is codependent. At times this may feel like tough love with the survivor, or they may feel scared or incapable of making their own decisions. But they will be thankful in the long run.

Rebecca Bender (a survivor and now a leading expert in the efforts to end sex trafficking) said it really well.

*“We must choose to encourage and point out the potential we see, allowing them to drive their own destinies. When we cross the line, trying to make healing happen, we do no good at all. In fact, we harm. Humbly, I submit to you that when anyone tries to control another, even for apparent good reason, they have slipped into the same tactics the survivor experienced with the trafficker. Freedom and control cannot co-exist.”*

Use this part of the journey as a chance to remind them that no matter what they do, you're not going anywhere. They may fear that if they make a wrong decision, that it won't make you happy and you will leave them. Teach them what real love looks like, and that mistakes happen. It's part of life. Be their biggest fan, but don't do it all for them. Don't control them or tell them what to do. Remind them that they are in control of their life, as they should be.

## **21. Pray, Pray, Pray**

This battle against abuse is difficult beyond words. It's an intense form of evil that cannot be beat by just human power alone. Remember where your strength and wisdom come from and pray for that often. Rely on the Holy Spirit to guide you with each survivor you encounter. Work to know the true spirit of the survivor and don't caste labels or assumptions on them. See them for how Jesus sees them, and pass on His love to them. Pray for the survivor to find hope, healing, and a purpose for their future. Pray for safety and protection over the survivors but the organization as a whole. Satan will attack. He has plans in place already to try and cause disaster on your relationship as you try to do God's work. Armor up. Don't work in fear. Pray for guidance, wisdom, and perseverance. Pray for discernment. Think outside of the box. Each survivor is different, each case is different. Let God lead you and simply be His hands and feet.

*“Lose expectations...and let God lead.” - Rebecca Bender*

Don't just pray on your own, but pray with your survivor. Show them through your actions and heart what prayer looks like in your life. Give them chances to share prayer requests and



to also pray out loud with you if they are comfortable doing so.

Remember to praise God for blessings. Praise Him for each beautiful spirit that comes into your life. Praise Him for how He is changing you and changing our country to see the reality of abuse, sexual abuse, trauma, and trafficking. Praise Him for open doors and open minds and open hearts.

Involve God in each decision. And watch God work wonders and miracles in the lives you come in contact with.

This is a broad outline of how to interact and work with survivors of extreme abuse, trafficking, etc. It barely scratches the surface but hopefully provides you with some key things to focus on and remember as you go through this journey. What you are doing is beautiful and I pray blessings on you as God uses you to go out and change the world one survivor at a time.