

BEING BULLIED FOR SAYING NO, YES, NO TO SEX

THIS IS A TRUE STORY... ONE RESEMBLES
MULTIPLE THOUSANDS!

When Ashley was 10 years old she moved from her childhood home to a new town. She was shy which made it difficult to make friends at her new school. It was a painfully long lonely first year. By age 11 Ashley was on the volley ball and gymnastic team. It was in sports where she met Trent, the track team star. Ashley became part of the 'cool crowd' when she and Trent started dating. She wanted to belong and often hung out with Trent and his team at 'smoker's corner' even though she hated the smell.

At the end of her second school year at this school she had been dating Trent for 8 months. Dating consisted of hanging out at school, parks, malls and different people's homes. Trent began to feel pressure from his peers to have sex. His two best friends Jamie and

Cameron had been sexually active with their girlfriends (all 12 yrs. old). As the boys shared stories they began to pressure Trent by making fun of him being a virgin. Trent was the coolest guy in school and for him, the pressure was high. Trent began to pressure Ashley daily and touching her where she did not want to be touched. When she said no he would make comments like 'you don't love me' or 'if you love me you would let me'. Ashley would hold her breath and wait for it to be over. She would have tears rolling down her face. Trent would just ignore this accusing her of thinking too much and being too sensitive. After all, Trent was focused on his friends who were waiting for a report.

Ashley feared if she said no to Trent, she would lose him and her new friends. Especially the girls from her volley ball and gymnastic teams. Soon touching was not enough for Trent. He began to pressure Ashley for more. She was only 12 years old and physically ill and frightened every time he touched her or spoke of having sex. She avoided being alone with him but that didn't work. He tried touching her when others were around. The girls began teasing her while the boys teased Trent. As the gossip and rumours spread Ashley was labelled as being 'easy or a tramp'. Ashley felt to blame and ashamed for not wanting to be touched or have sex. She felt like a loser for she was not like the others. It was strange how those who were having sex were not being teased she like was. She felt betrayed, abandoned and labelled something she was not. It was confusing. Ashley was too young to understand what was happening so like many children, she felt to blame. Ashley was alone with her self-defeating thoughts. She had no one to talk to for her family was experiencing the unexpected passing of her newborn brother. Her mother was depressed. Everyone in her family was lost in their own world trying to survive. Ashley began to isolate and was painfully lonely once again.

One day Trent gave Ashley an ultimatum. There was a party at Cam's house on Friday. He stated "if you do not have sex with me I will just do it with Diane from the basketball team". He said Diane is older (13) experienced, cute, and already agreed. Ashley feared she would lose Trent and finally agreed. That Friday night as they party went on; Trent took Ashley to the bedroom. He removed all of his clothes as he laid down beside Ashley on the bed. She was fully clothed laying stiff as a board beside him. After 20 minutes of Trent trying to persuade she began to cry saying she was not ready. Suddenly the door burst open and 4 of Trent's friends burst and fell in the door laughing at him for being naked. They had been listening at the door. Humiliated and

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terrified Ashley jumped off the bed and ran out of the house going straight home, telling no one. She knew it was over for her – Trent and friends would now abandon her.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING

That following Monday **gossip, rumours and lies** flowed. Many girls and boys at school began spreading rumours saying Ashley was cheap and easy. They called her a tramp and more. No one knew the truth. They punished her which took the focus off of Trent and his friends. They **shamed and blamed** her. Ashley was bullied for saying no, yes, and no to sex. She was **manipulated, lied to and set up**. Trent was not truthful with his friends and as a result his group (the cool group) gossiped, lied, and spread rumours about Ashley. She was **ostracized** by her team mates, became **isolated and depressed**, and sadly failed grade 8.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is when a “variety of negative tactics” are “used over a period of time” despite the hurt and harm it causes another person(s). These abusive behaviours and tactics are used to gain something the offender is seeking.

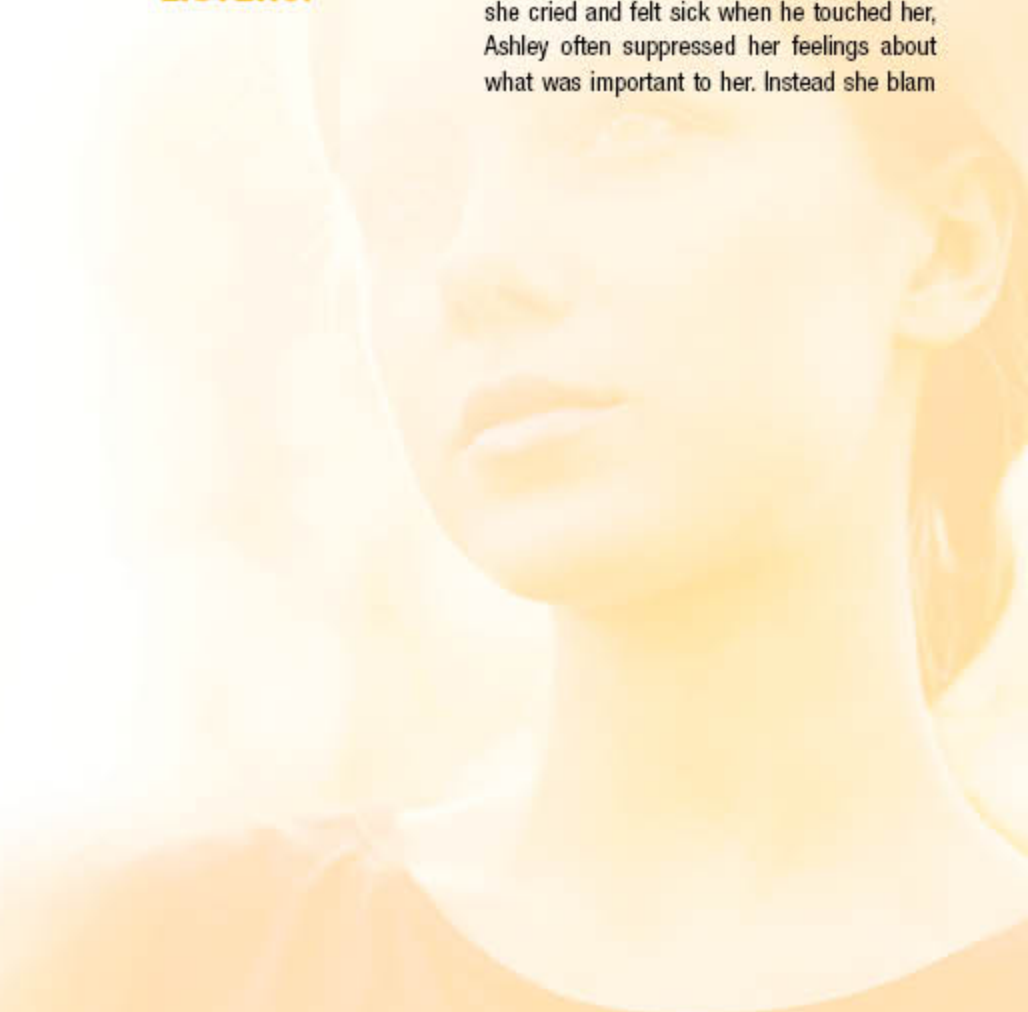
The dysfunctional behaviour may be a plea for attention, recognition, popularity, personal or financial gain, sex, and/or a need to avoid something that is going wrong in their lives. Every person involved in the scenario has a story that needs to be heard to understand the full experience that occurs. This is when we can fully resolve bullying and stop the cycle of abuse. L. Crockett.

**TRUST YOURSELF,
TAKE CARE OF
YOURSELF,
AND DON'T STOP
ASKING FOR HELP
UNTIL SOMEONE
LISTENS.**

PERSONAL STORIES

Trent felt pressured by his friends. They teased him daily making fun of him being a virgin. His father is an alcoholic and his mother was not someone he could talk to. His friends actions were immature and each a story of their own. Trent was the school jock which impressed his father. He desperately wanted his father's approval and attention. He also feared his peers would find out that he was not as cool as Cam and Jamie. He began to feel like a loser and decided to prove himself. This may help people understand Trent's motivation to offend Ashley, but it does not excuse his reactions, actions, or behaviours towards her, or anyone else.

Ashley wanted to belong like everyone else. She was new to the area and shy. She liked Trent and the feeling of belonging to the cool teams at school. This and her family's recent loss of her baby brother made Ashley vulnerable to Trent's pressure for sex. **Sexual abuse is when someone forces you to do something you do not want to do.** Though she cried and felt sick when he touched her, Ashley often suppressed her feelings about what was important to her. Instead she blam



ed herself. Ashley was constantly reminded by gossip, rumours, name calling and lies, that she would not fit in if she said yes, or if she said no.

Sexual abuse and bullying slowly depleted Ashley's self-esteem and self-confidence. She suffered what many victims of sexual abuse and targets of bullying experience: isolation, betrayal, sense of belonging, and self-doubt. With her family suffering the loss of a family member, she had no one to turn to. By the time Ashley was 13 she suffered a year of depression and failed her grade. She would self-harm by refusing to eat or cutting her skin. After a suicide attempt her painful depression gained the attention of health care providers. With therapy recovery came quickly.

WHAT HAPPENED TO TRENT AND DIANE?

Several years later, Trent contacted Ashley from a drug addiction rehabilitation centre, in treatment for alcoholism, and apologized for what he did to her. He shared about his story trying to explain his actions and self-destruction. Though he requested to see her Ashley refused and has never spoken to Trent again. Prior to this call from Trent, while in high school, Diane, the girl on the basketball team who did have sex with Trent (12 and 13 yrs old), apologised to Ashley stating her actions were a mistake. Diane explained that her parents were divorcing. Her father left her mother and abandoned Diane and her 2 younger siblings. Diane explained her life had fallen apart and that she regretted hurting Ashley.

IT IS A HAPPY ENDING! In time with help from a therapist and her family, Ashley was able to gain clarity over her thoughts, feelings, actions and reactions. Her recovery work strengthened her self-esteem and confidence even more than ever. She was able to address her shyness, depression, anxiety, grief, and more. Ashley is doing great in her first year of college.

ABRC RECOMMENDATIONS

If someone is pressuring you, teasing, lying or gossiping about you, tell someone who cares about you. Ask for support. It is best to listen to your gut feelings and take your own reactions seriously. Don't dismiss what is right for you. Your feelings can sometimes be more truthful and reliable than your thoughts. Thoughts can become clouded with stress, anxiety, self-doubt, confusion, or lack of experience. Trust yourself, take care of yourself, and don't stop asking for help until someone listens. Never give up.

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