

Survivor Story

My name is Dawn and I am a daughter, sister, mother and contributing member of society. I am also an abused and molested child, former drug addict and prostitute. My life started out fairly normally up until my parents divorced when I was six years. My mother and I came to Edmonton, her birthplace. In Edmonton, my life changed forever...my mom became an alcoholic and began to severely mentally, emotionally and physically abuse me. Looking back I feel as though I was trained or groomed to be a prostitute by my circumstances. I was routinely left with men who would rape me while my mother worked 12-hour shifts as a waitress in an inner city bar because my father refused to pay child support. There were 3 different men who molested me from the ages of 6 to 10 orally, digitally, vaginally and anally then at the age of 14 I was gang raped by 2 men I knew as acquaintances at a party I was deathly afraid to tell my mother as she always blamed me for everything so I kept it a secret, remember my mother beat me unmercifully as if I was a punching bag and she a boxer.... I was close fist punched, kicked, burnt, cut with a knife, locked in a room for hours on end and humiliated on a daily basis not too mention the verbal abuse.

My mother kicked me out of my home at the age of 12. I spent the first few weeks couch surfing and trying to go back home. Often it would last just a few days and then soon I would be back out. I had to quit school and try to make my way in the world with no support. I had no place to go and as far as choices I had 2...live on the streets or die. When I left I went straight to the only place I knew to go, a local hangout for all various types of problem kids....Beaver Hill Park.

I have often heard men say that I had a choice, and I did, it was either work as a prostitute or starve to death because it is illegal in Canada to work at 12, not to mention that no one will hire you if you have no address and are only 13 or 14.

After about a month or so I met the man with whom I would spend the next 10 years in a blur of drug addiction and crime. I did not immediately become a prostitute but almost immediately I began to use cocaine and any other drug I could get my hands on to kill the pain of knowing that no one loves you. My boyfriend and I slept on the street and lived by petty crime and panhandling. My life began to spiral out of control.

I got into prostitution when at 16 when my girlfriend told me she could help me make enough money for a hotel room and living money. She had an older friend who liked to have "parties" with several young girls and I could come if I wanted too. I would make a few bucks. The "parties" involved several older men looking for sex with young girls.... at the first one I slept with 4 men and made \$400.00 but I felt ashamed and remember crying while these men had sex with me. These "parties" continued for a long time. Soon I was working about 16 hours a day 7 days a week. During my life on the street as a prostitute I was raped in every possible way many times, thrown from a moving car, strangled to the point of unconsciousness as well as assaulted and robbed.

I have had 11 friends die while I was on the streets and since I have left either through murder, suicide or drug addiction and have tried suicide myself on 4 separate occasions. I even had my hair chopped off by a John on one occasion.

I could not believe that I had sunk so low.... I tried several times over the years to return home but it would never last more than a couple of days before my Mom would throw me out again. My soul was being systematically murdered. At no point in my street life did I enjoy on any level being a prostitute. I did not enjoy sleeping with strange men in fact I often tried to project myself to another place while we were in the act.

A victimless crime....I think not

The road back has been long and hard for me. I have had many defeats and some pretty nice victories as well. It has taken me close to 11 years to really feel as though I have come through the majority of the fire. And on the really hard days I miss my former friend...cocaine. But I know that is not the way. I have so much to lose, a wonderful family, good job, academic career and so many other things. For the first time in my life the good out weighs the bad. I feel proud and lucky that I am still alive today to tell you my story. So the next time you see a woman on the street try to think of where she has come from before you judge.