

Neglect: The Quieter Child Abuse

The following was written by a therapist who was meeting with a man who had experienced chronic psychological neglect as a child.

His name has been changed to protect anonymity.

Children who are constantly ignored, rejected, threatened, or belittled grow up without the inner resources that everyone needs to cope with difficult times. When children get little or no affection and physical comfort, they are vulnerable to anyone who will give them attention. They often become sitting ducks for people who exploit them.

Barry is trying to break a drug habit.

When did you start using? I ask.

Oh, I think I was about eight, he replies.

Eight? After 35 years in this business, it takes a lot to surprise me, but I still internally register some shock when I hear this kind of story.

Yeah. My folks never looked out for us kids. They didn't like us much. We were expected to stay out of the house and out of their sight as long as it was light. The older guys in the neighborhood thought it was funny to get the younger kids stoned. We thought being included by the big guys was cool.

Barry is now 30 and trying to get his life together. Having been stoned for over 20 years, he lacks basic social skills, has low self-esteem, and can't shake a chronic depression. In many ways, his psychological development stopped at age 8.

- PsychCentral

Visit the PsychCentral website:

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/neglect-the-quieter-child-abuse#1>