

Suggestions for Helping Those You Love Through Recovery

- Be honest about your feelings. Don't lie or try to hide how you feel.
- Try to be a reflective listener. That is, pay attention and give consideration to their thoughts and feelings.
- Seek eye contact. Look at the person.
- Do whatever you can to make your loved one feel safe with you.
- Suggest regular times to talk. Everything survivors need to say won't all come out in one conversation. They might not know what they want to say, or they may be unwilling to divulge more. As they speak and you accept their words, it enables them to probe deeper into their past. As they probe, they heal.
- Accept survivors as they are. They won't be perfect at the end of their healing journey. Accept their idiosyncrasies or quirks.
- Recognize that healing won't be in one straight line. After months of progress and increasing intimacy, they may suddenly reject you or create distance. Be patient. Think of it as a time-out for them.
- Realize that you may project your attitude or values. Be careful. Your own childhood experiences may affect your attitude.
- When appropriate, remind them of your love, that you pray for them, and that God has always loved them.
- Keep your expectations realistic. Avoid keeping a mental calendar of when they should be healed or how quickly they should be able to move forward.
- Accept the pace of their progress, even if it's not as fast as you'd like. This is the painful past of survivors, and not yours.
- Forego the temptation to say what *you think* they want to hear. Speak the truth. If the truth might hurt, don't say it when they're still vulnerable.
- Avoid blaming them for relationship problems. They have probably done many things wrong. Accept that it was the best way they knew to cope.
- Live in the present, and encourage them to do so as well. They need to empty themselves of the trauma of childhood, but that doesn't have to control their thoughts so much that they hold on to resentments and anger of the past.
- Accept that you may not know what's best for them. You may, but what if you don't?

***Material is adapted from *When a Man You Love Was Abused* (by Cecil Murphey, Kregel Publications), pages 255-256.**

Veteran author Cecil (Cec) Murphey hurt for a long time because of childhood sexual abuse. Now he helps others in pain through his candid interviews, seminars, blog for male survivors (www.menshatteringthesilence.blogspot.com), and his books *When a Man You Love Was Abused: A Woman's Guide to Helping Him Overcome Childhood Sexual Molestation* and *Not Quite Healed: 40 Truths for Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. He is the author or co-author of more than 135 books, including the NYT bestseller *90 Minutes in Heaven* (with Don Piper) and *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* (with Dr. Ben Carson). Prior to becoming a professional writer, he served as a pastor in Metro Atlanta for 14 years. (www.cecilmurphey.com)