



Overcoming
CHILDHOOD
SEXUAL
TRAUMA

A Guide to
Breaking Through
the Wall of Fear
for Practitioners and Survivors

Sheri Oz
Sarah-Jane Ogiers
and Foreword by Christine A. Courtois

*Sheri Oz, MSc
Sarah-Jane Ogiers*

**Overcoming Childhood
Sexual Trauma**
*A Guide to Breaking Through
the Wall of Fear
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*Pre-publication
REVIEWS,
COMMENTARIES,
EVALUATIONS . . .*

An interesting collaborative effort between a trauma therapist and her ex-client providing hope to sexual abuse survivors regardless of where they may be on their healing journeys. The book shows that it is possible for a survivor to break through that 'Wall of Fear' and emerge a happier, healthier person, a person who is free to make choices based on her present and future, not her past."

Wanda Karriker, PhD
Retired Psychologist and Novelist

O'z's expertise and Ogiers' insights into the nature of child sexual abuse shine through the whole book. The authors, a therapist and a client, engage in a beautiful dance in their process to cross the 'Wall of Fear.' The book combines theory and practice enriched with techniques and journaling as well as questionnaires and exercises which make it an excellent tool for both therapists and survivors of trauma. Clinicians should give special attention to the chapter which deals with issues and dilemmas they face in their work with CSA survivors. It is highly recommended for CSA survivors, beginner therapists, and clinicians. A must for all health professionals!"

Andreas Orphanides, MSc
*Marriage and Family Therapist,
AAMFT Clinical Member*



More pre-publication
REVIEWS, COMMENTARIES, EVALUATIONS . . .

"Sheri Oz and Sara-Jane Ogiers have done an excellent job. They provide a very clear explanation of how children's minds react to childhood abuse and the effects of CSA on the developing child's cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal development are discussed in an accessible manner for both professional and lay persons alike. Ogiers provides a heartwarming, open, and honest depiction of the experience of traumatization from CSA and the trials and tribulations of recovery.

The authors also provide a clear and realistic description of the difficulties encountered during the therapeutic process for both client and therapist, as well as the benefits of persevering with the often difficult emotional process of recovery from CSA. This book can assist the most despairing of clients to have hope when they need it the most and to know that they are not alone in their experience. Oz's openness provides clinicians with the understanding that what they experience when treating survivors of CSA, including inevitable human error, is shared by other therapists as well. Therapists will also find the material in the Appendix to be of practical value."

Anne M. Dietrich, PhD
*Registered Psychologist,
Vancouver General Hospital
Outpatient Psychiatry*

"With a voice filled with compassion and professional expertise, Sheri Oz, a gifted clinician and an accomplished scholar, and Sarah-Jane Ogiers, a courageous and inspirational survivor, have completed one of the most powerful and moving books ever published on the subject of child sexual abuse. Together, they vividly describe the mechanisms by which the victims of child sexual abuse repress traumatic memories, shut off their feelings, and struggle to form intimate connections in their lives. They explain in rich detail the slow and painful yet hopeful and healing therapeutic process of helping people who have been sexually abused to move from the horror, shame, and fear of victimization to the self-understanding, self-acceptance, and optimism associated with survival.

Any practitioner who truly wants to know how to assist children and adults who have suffered the terror of childhood sexual abuse should read this deeply informative book. And any person who has been violated by a sexually abusive adult will find comfort, encouragement, and recovery that are chronicled in this captivating book. This is a masterpiece!"

**Mark S. Kiselica, PhD, HSPP, NCC,
LPC**
*Professor of Counselor Education,
The College of New Jersey;
Fellow, American Psychological Association*

More pre-publication

REVIEWS, COMMENTARIES, EVALUATIONS . . .

"In this beautifully written book, Sheri Oz and Sarah-Jane Ogiers set out to create a useful resource for both therapists and clients. They have succeeded! This is a book that is both intelligent and compassionate. Oz exposes the reader to the current theory, practice, and research in the area of childhood sexual abuse which is grounded in the lived experiences of both authors. Ogiers invites us to walk alongside her as she courageously penetrates the wall of fear built by traumatic experience. This book moves us further in the direction of therapy and authorship as true collaboration. I recommend this book to my clients, colleagues, and students."

Sharon Mayne Devine, MSc
*Couple and Family Therapist,
On Faculty in the Department of Family
Relations and Applied Nutrition,
The University of Guelph*



"This is one of the very few successful combinations of a book as a clinical professional guide to the understanding, knowledge, and treatment of sexual abuse, as well as a deeply mov-

ing and well reflected self-report. It treads the fine line of being compassionate and professional without being confessional. The professional data guide and knowledge and the self-report enhance each other in a complementary and illuminating way, enhancing the understanding of the effects of sexual abuse and the complex position of the therapist in the therapeutic process. The book illustrates the huge impact of CSA and the courage a sexual abuse victim needs to go through in the process of healing.

What impressed me most was the courage of the two writers to reflect on experiences, and to challenge and examine traditional roles of therapists and therapeutic techniques, especially with the need in sexual abuse work to examine the use of the self of therapists involved in victim work. The unique dialogue between patient and therapist enhances the understanding of each other's position and the complex process as a whole. This aspect makes the book an invaluable contribution to clinicians and women and men who have experienced sexual abuse themselves."

Tilman Fürniss, MD, MPhil, FRCPsych,
*Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry,
University Hospital, Muenster, Germany*



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Sarah-Jane Ogiers

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For our daughters

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sheri Oz, MSc, is founder and director of Machon Eitan, a private clinic for the treatment of sex trauma survivors and their families, located in Kiryat Motzkin in northern Israel. She is considered one of the country's top experts in the area of child sexual abuse. She writes and lectures on topics related to childhood sexual abuse and therapist sexual abuse, provides clinical training and supervision to therapists, and consults with public agencies regarding issues of mandated reporting and early intervention strategies when there is suspicion of child sexual abuse. She is one of the founding members of the newly formed Israel Association for the Treatment of Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse and is on its ethics committee.

Sarah-Jane Ogiers is employed in the hi-tech industry and is a graduate student of English literature at Haifa University and a closet fiction and poetry writer. Her contributions to projects such as this book are intended to help others learn from her experiences and gain strength in their own struggles with recovery. She has served as a "buddy" for individual survivors who do not yet have a support network of their own. She has also been invited to speak in support group meetings to answer survivors' questions as one who has "been there."

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Foreword

It is both a pleasure and an honor to write this foreword to *Overcoming Childhood Sexual Trauma* for this is an important addition to the literature, and it gets it right. This book offers both the therapist's and the survivor/client's perspectives on the process and aftermath of sexual abuse and what is required in the healing process. It admirably meets its goals of adding "another blow to the wall of denial surrounding the subject of childhood sexual abuse, creating yet another crack through which to view the horrible reality of sexual terrorism in a world that has been hesitant to accept its existence and insensitive to the needs of its many victims" and providing "a road map for victims and survivors against which they can measure their progress along the path toward healing."

Part I, "Living with the Trauma," offers one of the most compelling descriptions I've read of what it means to an individual to be sexually abused, especially when perpetrated by someone in a role that mandates protection and trust rather than exploitation. The authors' metaphors the "World of Trauma" and the "Wall of Fear" are apt descriptions of what the sexually abused child experiences. Many of the child's behaviors that may seem strange or hard to interpret by those unfamiliar with or uninformed about child abuse trauma are explained with great clarity, and from a position of empathy. The historical and contemporaneous diary entries and commentaries by co-author Sarah-Jane add first-person immediacy to the more academic description provided by therapist Sheri Oz. Their descriptions give a developmental overview of the impact of child sexual abuse and illustrate how the aftereffects can impact the victim's life in large and small ways across all life domains, ranging from the child's self-concept to her or his ability to choose a suitable partner and to adequately parent children. The material presented here is up-to-date theoretically;

however, the authors have taken great care not to just parrot the literature but to challenge some of it from a victim-sensitive position. Too often the victims of sexual abuse have been misunderstood and blamed for the reactions caused by the abuse. This book challenges this viewpoint, replacing it with cogent and well-thought-out explanations for a wide variety of reactions and behaviors.

For survivors, healing from childhood sexual abuse is an act of courage. It is a daunting process that often lasts years and involves nothing short of rebuilding the self and developing trust in others. Survivors must be able to break the secrecy surrounding their abuse and, over time, learn to express their emotions about it. Only by identifying the Wall of Fear and the various defensive strategies that they have developed can the formerly abused adult work through the World of Trauma. The story with its attendant emotions and cognitions must be processed to the point where they are no longer impediments to the individual's freedom of body and mind. Resolution brings with it a lessening of the symptoms, defenses, and maladaptive behaviors, leaving the individual with more life options and choices that are less encumbered by the past.

The therapeutic relationship is crucial and is where many of the most salient issues are played out. It is both catalyst and context for the client's potential development and where he or she enacts relational themes from the past. The therapist must first and foremost be aware of the various relational issues that will be presented by survivor clients (along with all of the other abuse-related reactions and their various manifestations). Therapists walk a number of fine lines in doing this work: They must strive to be both emotionally open and available while maintaining appropriate boundaries. They need to be disclosing of emotions "in the moment" and "in the real time" of the session but not be too self-revelatory in a way that encourages the client to breach boundaries and roles. Therapists must present themselves as humans who make mistakes and who communicate to the point of repair when a rupture within the relationship occurs and not present themselves as unavailable "authorities on high" who have all of the answers. Finally, they must recognize and appreciate the strength and resilience of their clients and must encourage empowerment and personal responsibility. Throughout the therapeutic endeavor, they must operate from a position of empathy and compassion—qualities that are conveyed throughout this book. This book is

a gift to survivor clients and therapists alike. It helps them understand the difficult terrain of healing from sexual abuse and guides them on the journey.

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Preface

Sheri

Sarah-Jane and I were a team long before we decided to combine our efforts in writing this book. Sarah-Jane came to me for therapy and asked me to be her partner in what turned out to be a most painful journey, backward in time, to the little girl who was hurt by her father and neglected by her mother. Sarah-Jane was a most remarkable client to have—resourceful, brave, intelligent, determined, stubborn, demanding of herself and of me, and more.

Sarah-Jane kept a diary during therapy. She would read me parts of it and I was impressed with the strength of her descriptions of her mental state as she passed from one crisis to the next, never believing an end to the nightmare would come. This window into her life outside our sessions was invaluable, and it helped me to refine my growing understanding of the stages of sexual abuse therapy as depicted in the model in this book. As I worked with more and more clients who suffered childhood sexual abuse, I was witness to the validity of this schema.

When clients understand the stages of therapy and recovery it helps them endure the process with a little more confidence. Therefore, I felt it was critical for clients and their therapists to know that when survivors describe feeling crazy they are usually experiencing emotions that they had previously buried. During an abuse event, as will be explained in this book, children generally cannot let themselves feel anything, as the emotions generated are more intense than their short life experience has equipped them to handle. This usually causes them to shut their feelings off altogether. Later, in situations having nothing to do with the abuse, any kind of feeling can be a source of fear rather than a normal part of being human. In therapy, the emotions that arise are so overwhelming that the client really feels he or she is going insane.

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Sometimes therapists grow fearful as well of the seemingly uncontrollable swell of fear, pain, and rage. My clients often groan when I repeat my mantra: What you're feeling now are *just feelings*. These emotions just give you information about yourself that you have not been able to accept until now. This fear, this pain, this rage—they are *just feelings*.

“But what do I do now?” my clients ask.

I answer: “Nothing. You do nothing. Now is the time to just be, not to do. Just to feel. Just to let the feelings be there. This *doing nothing* is the hardest thing you will ever have to do.”

The meaning of this will become clear in this book as Sarah-Jane's diaries bring us into her world as an abused child and into her life during the most difficult moments of therapy. They show the way into and the way out of the nightmare her life had become. They show how she learned to just be, to just feel, to “live.”

I deeply respect and appreciate the courage of those individuals who choose to break their silence and let me into their worlds, so that I can bear witness to the horrors they have endured. Some come to me still very much the victim, while most are definitely survivors who have decided to try to heal the wounds of terror inflicted so long ago.

The most difficult wound of all is that of shame. Regardless of how much society grows aware of the rampant sexual and emotional victimization perpetrated against children and youth in their own families, schools, and neighborhoods, the victim still feels shamed. Shamed by the initiation into acts far removed from the world of children growing up in healthy environments, and shamed by the uncontrollable responsiveness of their own bodies that makes it seem as if their victimizers were right when they told them they liked it. If this book succeeds at nothing else, let it succeed at placing the shame back where it belongs: in the hands of the victimizer and in the hands of a society that refuses to take a more active part in breaking the chains of secrecy and silence.

In this book, in addition to Sarah-Jane, other survivors will speak for themselves. All voices here are those of clients I have worked with. However, their stories are combined and demographic details changed slightly to protect their identities. They, themselves, will probably not be able to recognize any one story as being wholly their own but will find parts here and there that fit them. This highlights that their experiences of victimization and survival are more similar

than they are different, even though they come from many kinds of families and all parts of the globe. Among them are Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Some of their families have long roots in Israel; others are the sabra children of immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Some immigrated to Israel as children, and others as young adults, from Argentina, England, India, Morocco, South Africa, Spain, and the United States.

Some are the oldest and some the youngest in families with many children, while others are the only child in a family. Some are raised in intact nuclear families with large or small extended families, and some are raised with divorced, and sometimes remarried, parents. Some have been removed from their parents' home (not always because of disclosure of sexual abuse) and grow up in boarding schools or with foster families.

Regardless of the differences, the clients have all grown up troubled, bearing a phenomenally powerful secret that those around them chose not to see. They lived secret lives of trauma in parallel with the apparently normal facades they presented to the world. They screamed silent screams underneath a mask that protected not them but both their victimizers and others around them who wanted life to run smoothly. This book seeks to add another blow to the wall of denial surrounding the subject of childhood sexual abuse, creating yet another crack through which to view the horrible reality of sexual terrorism in a world that has been hesitant to accept its existence and insensitive to the needs of its many victims.

Sarah-Jane

July 9, 1994

I owe it to myself to record this trip back into my childhood. And maybe I even owe it to other survivors. Perhaps one day I'll meet a woman like me who doesn't understand what the hell she's going through and I can show her that she's not alone.

I thought it pertinent to open my introduction with my thoughts and feelings on childhood sexual abuse in general, but each time I started to write I found that everything I wrote had already been said. Then I realized that I was using other people's words because I did not have my own. And I did not have my own because I could not re-

late to “childhood sexual abuse in general.” Well, how could I? There is nothing general about it—to me it is undoubtedly specific. It happened to me, I can’t talk about it objectively, it’s personal. In this book, you will read about my personal experience with childhood sexual abuse. So what is left to say? Just this. . .

Nothing that has ever been said or written about childhood sexual abuse can capture the horror and pain—physical and/or emotional—of a child who is being used to satisfy the distorted sexual needs of an adult he or she loves. Nothing can express the emptiness and desolation a child feels at the betrayal of his or her trust. No words can describe the legacy of shame that these children carry with them into adulthood: A man whose memories of the abuse he suffered surface during lovemaking with his partner; a woman whose string of unsuitable partners use her for sex and then walk away, while she moves on to the next in line, to a place so familiar to her that she cannot resist its magnetic pull. Many of these casualties—children and adults—spend their lives trying to hold on to their sanity.

When I decided that “holding on to my sanity” was no longer enough, I took a deep breath and began my journey, hoping to reach a place of peace with myself. I had no idea it would take so long, and even though much of it was almost unbearable, I would not take back a minute.

I was lucky to find Sheri as one of the guides for my journey, and I am grateful for her inexhaustible well of love and nurturing. I also feel privileged to have known her as a person, not just a therapist. For although she is not the only good soul helping people recover from childhood sexual abuse, the energy and unflagging determination she invests in her “mission” is something to see.

Several years after I ended therapy with Sheri I decided I wanted to give something back. In spite of all the anguish I went through, I felt blessed, blessed with good, kind, patient people who stood by my side, by no means passively, while I struggled to face a childhood that had warped my perception of reality and crushed my self-esteem. They held my hand while I healed—prodding me when I stalled, embracing me when I needed comfort, waiting when I needed space. Despite my rotten start in life and my uncertainty about the existence of a God who does not stop children from being abused, it does rather look as though someone has been looking out for me. And I am thankful for that.

The best way I could think of to repay this “debt” was to try and help other survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Despite the feminine gender of the survivor I refer to in my opening journal entry, I would be very pleased if I could help male survivors too. So, I started writing this book with Sheri, hoping that telling my story might make a difference to men and women whose souls were battered and bruised, hearts broken and futures snatched away from them in one fell swoop, when they were at their most vulnerable. I want my story to show them that they can nurse their souls back to health, heal their hearts, and take their lives back. They won’t be as good as new; they’ll be better. For when facing the ghosts of the past that have haunted them ever since they were first betrayed they will see that there *is* a dinosaur in the living room and realize that the only way to make it go away is to find out why it is there. Even if they sometimes fear that facing the truth will kill them, they *will* live to tell the tale.

Sheri and Sarah-Jane

This book provides a road map for victims and survivors against which they can measure their progress along the path toward healing. All too often, those attempting to find relief from the ravages of abuse—within therapy and without—have no means to assess the distance they have gone at any given point, nor do they have any clear indication of what still lies ahead. They feel lost in an unfamiliar swamp with no sight of dry land on the horizon. It is not enough, for many of them, to know that the therapist they trust and depend on is familiar with the territory; they want to be able to orient themselves. Although the therapist holds the compass, it does not mean that the client cannot see the map. So here is the map as we know it to be. We hope it helps.

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Acknowledgments

Sheri

Participants in lectures and workshops I have conducted in Israel and elsewhere raised the idea that I put my thoughts and clinical experience into print. I thank them for giving me the impetus to embark upon this project. I am very grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from friends and colleagues without whom the book would not have been carried through to fruition. I am especially indebted to Sarah-Jane and the many individuals, couples, and families who have sought out my help. Through their trust and courage they have taught me so much about trauma, resilience, hope, and patience.

A number of friends and colleagues have read this book, in part or in full. Their comments and suggestions have contributed to making this a sounder presentation of my ideas and of Sarah-Jane's experience. I list them here in alphabetic order: Haim Aharonson, for his authenticity, openness, and attention to detail; Bob Buckwald, who inspired me to write, and his wife, Sue, who lifts my spirits; Amy Cohen, for her open heart; Ruti Gavish, for her enthusiasm, her sharp mind and her caring; Annita Jones, a warm and enthusiastic teacher; Wanda Karriker, who is an inspiration and whose sensitivity and strength come out loud and clear in the written word; Mark Kiselika, a virtual colleague who has been so warm and supportive; Ivy Medeiros, an indefatigable, amazing woman whose laugh stays with me across time and the ocean; Esti Neeman, with whom I can struggle over difficult issues and ideas, both personal and professional; Yael Reiner, cheerfully supportive; Adriane Schuster, whose upbeat enthusiasm is so catchy and her husband, Richard, my good, serious, funny friend for so many years; Bonnie Simone, a true friend and unique individual; Yvonne Tauber, who supports me and challenges me; Rivka Yahav, who nudges me along persistently and makes me

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laugh. Thanks also to Shimshon Rubin and Pam Farkas for their supportive comments.

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Sarah-Jane

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PART I:
LIVING WITH THE TRAUMA

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Chapter 1

Why Is Childhood Sexual Abuse So Traumatic?

Sheri Oz

I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.

Louisa May Alcott

It is night. Thursday night. Another workweek is almost over. Somewhere in the distance I can hear a rock song playing. Maybe a high school student is studying late for an exam. A neighbor's dog barks and mine synchronizes a howl together with him. As I lay in bed drifting in the twilight zone between waking and sleeping I think of those for whom this world between worlds is a daily terror. Then I see in my mind's eye a six-year-old girl who will not let herself fall asleep before she knows for sure that her father has gone to bed in his own room, and another one who cries out in her heart, silently begging her stepfather to stop as he enters her body from behind. Yet another little girl prays to Jesus on the cross above her bed to save her from the ripping pain and the humiliation brought upon her by an uncle. I see the little boy of eight whose father is teaching him how to masturbate in the shower, and the teenager in the boarding school whose bigger roommate sodomizes him. At another boarding school in another part of the country a group of older girls molest a younger boy during lunch break. Somewhere else a brother fondles his little sister gently, partly out of curiosity but mostly as a respite from a loveless and lonely home, and she enjoys the warmth of his closeness but is wracked with guilt. Another older brother in another town is not so gentle and inflicts a great deal of shame. In a children's house in a

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kibbutz a dark shadow hovers over a little girl who is pretending to be asleep—he makes her body feel funny and then he’s gone. A community bomb shelter in a small town becomes a torture chamber for a four-year-old girl who is repeatedly abused there by six teenage boys for more than a year and a half. And on and on and on. Each of these children are the secret victims of someone else’s war—someone who was also badly hurt in some way (not necessarily sexually) but did not fight his or her own demons.

As can be seen, many different behaviors fall under the heading of childhood sexual abuse (CSA), but what makes CSA so traumatic? This chapter will address this question by (1) defining CSA, looking at issues concerning gender and age of victim and perpetrator, children’s natural needs for love and protection, informed consent, the abuse of power, and secrecy, and by (2) describing the child’s experience of the sexual abuse event.

DEFINING CSA

Among professionals in the field, no absolute agreement exists regarding what exactly constitutes CSA (Haugaard, 2000). In some studies, only those behaviors that include some kind of physical contact with the sex organs are considered sexually abusive (Finklehor, 1984; Fleming, 1997). Most workers in the field, however, are of the opinion that sexual abuse includes a wide range of behaviors along a continuum from milder to more severe: inappropriate sexual remarks made to a minor by an adult; ogling of a child or teenager by an adult; an adult’s exposure of his or her sexual organs in view of a minor; peeping at a child or teen who is dressing, using the toilet, in the bath, etc.; kissing; fondling; mutual masturbation; and penetration (SgROI et al., 1982; Halperin et al., 1996).

The extent of the resulting harm is not merely a factor of where the offending behavior is on the continuum, but is a combination of the sexual inappropriateness and other aspects of family relationships (DiLillo, 2001; Nelson et al., 2000). In fact, my clinical experience shows that serious consequences can occur from a single abuse event when the family environment is toxic and unsupportive. On the other hand, the potential serious negative impact of ongoing abuse can, in some cases, be mitigated by an appropriate response to a child’s disclosure of abuse, leaving the victim relatively unaffected in the long term.

Furthermore, some professionals contend that abuse without any form of touching is not necessarily less damaging than abuse that includes penetration (Courtois, 1988; Dolan, 1991; Halperin et al., 1996). Survivors' experiences, such as those of Ronit and Benny described in the following case study, support this contention.

Ronit's father considered himself to be a modern, open person. He always used to say he wanted his children to receive a liberal sex education. For this reason, he forbade members of the family to close the doors to their rooms when changing their clothes. He allowed them to shut the bathroom door, but not to lock it. Ronit remembers how she expended a great deal of energy trying to avoid the piercing eyes of her father and brothers. In addition, her father would walk around the house in underpants that were too loose and that did not cover his genitals. He would make a point, it seemed to her, of calling her to bring him something he "forgot" to take into the shower with him. She would often find him masturbating when she opened the curtain to give him what he had requested. At age thirteen, Ronit tried to get her mother to support her in her need for privacy, but her mother stood by the wishes of her father.

When she married, Ronit was unable to undress in front of her husband. She was overcome with apparently inexplicable rage when he changed clothes beside her. The couple developed an elaborate ritual around undressing and going to bed at night so that Ronit did not have to be exposed to her husband's naked body. Furthermore, she found the motherly tasks that involved contact with her children's bodies to be particularly distasteful and today feels guilty about any negative messages she may have imparted to them over the years. With time, the issues of sexuality with her husband became so complex and burdened with guilt that she became totally unresponsive sexually to avoid the pain and confusion she felt.

As opposed to Ronit, who felt emotionally isolated from both her parents, Benny was particularly close to his mother. His father was absent from home much of the time and Benny became his mother's companion, giving her advice with regard to his younger siblings and also providing emotional support when she was depressed. During their evening talks, after the younger children had gone to bed, she would sit opposite him with her legs slightly apart, just enough for Benny to be able to see her underwear. Occasionally, she would leave her housecoat unbuttoned. She would always ask him to fasten her bra or zip up a dress or skirt. At the age of sixteen, Benny began to distance himself from his mother in order to avoid situations such as these.

Approaching adulthood, Benny was plagued by memories of his mother's seductive behavior toward him: while masturbating and even after he had become sexually involved with women he was troubled by the erotic fantasies that included images of his mother. Both his marriages were troubled by sexual difficulties.