

A PATIENT'S STORY: WHY IT'S HARD TO ASK FOR HELP

"My trauma started around the time I was about 5 or so. Always around nighttime, when the lights went out, it was a scary time. Bad things happened in the dark. I would pretend to be asleep but that didn't matter. If I closed my eyes, it would go away. But that wasn't true. I would hold onto my doll for comfort. Sometimes I would hold on so tight I thought her head would pop off.

"So why didn't I ask for help? If only I went for help, I could have stopped the whole thing. But I didn't. I did nothing; I let it all happen. Was I stupid? Or maybe I liked it? Please give me the answers—I don't have them. I feel dirty, always feeling dirty. Growing up, and even now when I think about it, it was always my fault. I didn't stop any of it. Even after the rape at 11 years old, I still didn't tell anyone. Even as an adult, I let it go on in my marriage. An adult! I should have stopped it then. But I didn't. I'm just a little girl crying for help but not doing anything about it.

"Well, yes, my trauma did happen as a little girl. That's just it—a little girl. This man was very powerful. There was no way I could stop this person who was terrifying me. No, I am not stupid, and I did not enjoy it. It sickens me when I think about it. I couldn't go for help because then my sisters would have been hurt. I was helpless. He was my father, a very powerful figure in my life. I may not have gotten help then, but I'm getting help now. It's never too late to ask for help. I will get my life in order and stand on my own two feet. If I talked then, bad things would have happened. Well, no more. I will not be hurt any more in my life."