

Long Term Effects of Abuse

Jonathan is an old friend of mine when I was a child; he was a very innocent boy, raised by a poor family in Sao Paulo- Brazil. He was my next door neighbor, and we pretty much grew up together and became really good friends throughout our childhood. Jonny's father died when he was 5 years old, and his mother Teresa remarried 3 months later with a man named Cleber. Jonny's mother had a very violent temperament and commonly considered an alcoholic by others neighbors. Teresa had two daughters as well, Kelly and Luciana. Over time I realized that the abuse that was going on in their home would affect Jonny and his sisters forever.

Every week there was a party at Jonny's house, really weird, loud and incredibly strange people were there. The cops were there every week as well. Sometimes Jonny would come to my house and watch movies with me and my family because he did not like to stay there while his mother's friends were partying, drinking and we later found out, abusing drugs. Pretty much every time after he got back to his house, he was beaten by his mother with whatever she could find, asking him where he was. Sometimes just for the relief of taking her own frustration of her life out on him. Jonny would come to my house every time she passed out and would spend the night with my family. My mother, a quiet humble woman knew what was going on and though she did not say anything she always took care of him just like he was one of her own. We always had a good time together, but I do remember always being so afraid when time came for him to go back to his home. I remember seeing in his eyes that he knew he would suffer the consequences. It has always made me so sad and sick for him because this type of thing

would happen most of the time for no reason at all, or no reason that had anything to do with him but he would be beaten for being in his friend's house she would say. He simply wanted to have something to eat, watch TV, listen to music, and play with toys in the field out back of our house because we were both poor families and his mom would spend what little they had on alcohol, he would always come to my house and ask my mom what she was making for dinner. I remember sometimes he would ask my mom to go take him home in hopes she would not hurt him when he got there.

During the parties at Jonny's house the gossip in our neighborhood was that Jonny's mother Teresa would prostitute her two daughters as well as herself in order to get money Kelly and Luciana were just 14 and 16 years old. Teresa once broke Kelly's arm in a fight. I still remember seeing Kelly's face with bruises on her legs with belt marks what now I envision as finger prints, and not 2 weeks later she had a broken arm. It seems to me that Luciana was Teresa favorite daughter, I don't know if it was for the fact that she was older and more willing to do what her mother wanted her to do, or something else but I am pretty sure she would see what she would do to her brother and her other sister and would just do what her mom said so that she would not hurt her.

Jonny would come to my house always very dirty his mother would never take the time to bath him properly, or make sure his needs was satisfied. He was just a child trying to learn on his own how to deal with life. The years were passing by and I remember sometimes in school he would show up in dirty clothes, never had lunch, and when he was around other people he was always very quiet and reserved. I remember always sharing my lunch with him, I would give him clothes to wear and my mom would wash

his. When we were kids I didn't understand much about what was going on, I was just 7 years old, I could not do much, just be his friend.

One night I woke up and I heard police sirens, a lot of them and loud conversation outside on the street, there was an ambulance a fire truck and many police cars, so all the neighborhood was outside looking. I went outside and asked my mom who was already out there what was going on... My mom just asked me to go inside the house. Later I figure out what really happened.

Jonny was taken to the hospital, bleeding badly. That night Cleber, Teresa's husband was babysitting him. Jonny's sister Kelly got home and found Jonny's crying and bleeding, Cleber was drunk sleeping and apparently under the influence of narcotics. Kelly asked Jonny what happened. He refuses to tell her, he was very scared. He just told her he could not go to the bathroom and he was in pain. Kelly called the cops and an ambulance. Later we figured out that Jonny has been severely raped by his step father. Cleber was taken to jail and into questioning, after a couple of days Cleber was free and living back home with Teresa. The law in Brazil is very different than here and at that time Jonny would not talk to the police, he was too embarrassed.

Years went by and I noticed a very smart and beautiful child become a bully at school. Jonny was always involved in fights, he would beat others children, be very disrespectful to teachers, and stopped speaking with me. Jonny was smoking and hanging out with really bad teenagers at school.

Jonny sister Kelly got pregnant; Luciana went to live with an older man, a drug dealer from what I have been told, and whom Jonny was working for, likely selling drugs. Jonny was always being chased by the cops, once he was sent to Juvie. I totally

distanced myself from Jonny, because we didn't have much in common anymore, and we both chose different paths in life, he would talk once in a while to me but not very often he would always be nice and we would always have something to talk about and laugh but our relationship was never the same.

On New Years 2002 my mom through a phone call told me that Jonny had been murdered, a drug dealer put 5 bullets in his chest. I guess it was something over money and drugs. Teresa and her husband Cleber were diagnosed HIV positive, the whole family moved to another state, that was the last thing I heard about Jonny's family.

When learning in class about the Long Term Effects of Abuse, Jonny's family came to my mind. It made me think that all the experience of maltreatment that Jonny and his sisters went through was a fatal fact that increased the risk for their adverse health effects and behaviors as adults. I noticed that violence in their home was something constant, and it was something that led Jonny to the same path, because I think it was all he knew. In his adolescent years he became more and more aggressive and isolated from others. Jonny engaged in his self-destructive behaviors that in the end would cost his life. He did not have a safe place to live or play, he had a lack of good care, a lack of education, the same goes for his sisters, drugs, prostitution, undesirable pregnancy.

Sometimes I imagine if everything in Jonny's life could be different, maybe if he had good parents that were there for him, I think things would have turned out in good way for him or at the very least he might still be alive. As we learned in class, education is Vital, and nature and nurture are always going to play a big whole in someone's life and upbringing. So it depends on us to make the definition of life and who we are as people in this world, what we do and how we behave tell others everything about us.

Let's take care of our children, given them the opportunity to have a tomorrow. Let's teach them well so that they can recognize the ways to have happy life so that they can do the same for future generation. This is my hope and I pray every day we can become better so that we may be able to make a difference, make a better place.