

***M**y mom was a sweet lady, but my dad was really abusive. She seemed helpless and unable to protect me. She was just as afraid of my dad as I was. I couldn't wait to leave home. I thought if I was older I could survive better so I tried to look older. I met some pretty rough guys. They introduced me to drugs, sex and the street. They weren't mentors although they protected me some. Mostly they exploited and manipulated me. During a trip to hospital for a drug overdose, I met a nurse who wanted to know how I had gotten into living the street life. Rather than berating me and urging me to go home to my parents, she asked about what I was getting out of street life. She wanted to know how my dreams of my future were being realized by being on the street. When I left the hospital we arranged to meet again and*



after that we met many times. She told me about how she had overcome a physically and sexually abusive childhood and how somebody had taken an interest in her. She encouraged me to explore other options, build on my talents, and find ways to heal the wounds inside me. With her support I got a job doing exactly what I wanted to be doing. It took some struggle and a few years, but it was worth it. I'm alive.

C.C.

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