

Living Bridges Project Transcript

Ending the Secrecy - Excerpt: Creating Boundaries

[Music]

VOICEOVER: The following audio is part of the Living Bridges Project, an anonymous story-collecting project documenting responses to child sexual abuse. For more, please visit LivingBridgesProject.com.

[Music]

LBP: Have you ever talked to your sister's husband at all about what happened?

STORYTELLER: He's dead. So, no, I did not get to and I wouldn't have. I would never have spoken to him and I have not spoken to my sister in well over a decade, maybe going onto two. I don't speak to her. And I hadn't shared any space with her either until recently, which was very difficult because she's a boundary breaker. Even to this day. So, if I'm around her, in the past at least, every time I was around her – no matter what I said to her like, "Leave me alone, don't talk to me, I want nothing to do with you," she would always come and try to put her hand on my shoulder, talk to me, try to give me a hug, send me letters, send me gifts. So, she was a big boundary breaker and so being around her was just – it was re-victimizing consistently. So, creating that boundary for myself and letting my mom in on that – letting her know that this happened was huge for me. And it really changed everything and it made me feel great because I had control over this now. And so, now I know my mom would always, you know, call me and "Your sister's coming into town and she'll be here from this day to this day" and I'm like "Thanks, mom." Now I got it. So I'm like, "So, I'll see you two days after that" [laughs] you know? Or "I'll visit you then" or "I'm not calling the house. I'll just call your cell phone." So, making those clear boundaries and things really work for me and it made me feel empowered to ask for what I wanted.

It took a long time to get there. I think therapy [laughs] – lots of therapy, lots of art therapy, talking to other people – it took a while. It took a good while – lots of crying, lots of nightmares, lots of everything. Getting to the point where you sit back and you examine your life and you get to see the pattern. And I was sick of the pattern. And so I was like, how do I break this pattern and how do I not feel completely helpless? And so, ok, I don't want to be around her. How do I make that happen? [laughs] So, I need to tell my mom so she could get it and she could get that this was not a silly fight. This was something deeper. So, yeah, it was just sitting back and examining and rethinking everything. What do I need? How do I stay sane? And that was what I needed.

And creating boundaries around my own child. When my daughter was young I was able to clearly tell my mother, "She will not be here when my sister's visiting and if ever she were in the same space where my daughter is she cannot have any access to her, she cannot take her to the bathroom, she cannot bathe her, she cannot do the..." So I was able

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to be very specific with my boundaries. It was not a negotiation. It was what I wanted. And I was happy that I could frame that for myself and convey that to someone else and them knowing why I was conveying that.

[Music]

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