



YOU are NOT What Happened to You

By Connie Ruth

“You may not control all of the events that happen to you, but you can decide NOT to be reduced by them.” Maya Angelou

At nine years old, she should have been twirling in her mother’s hand-sewn dresses, racing her dog across the yard, and giggling with friends on the playground. Most mornings, she leapt from bed at the first hint of sunlight. But not that morning. That morning, she stayed hidden beneath the covers, her small body heavy with the shadows of nightmares she didn’t understand.

Her mother entered quietly, laying out a white sweater and a red poodle skirt, shoes polished, and socks folded just so. The scent of bacon and eggs drifted in from the kitchen. But instead of bounding toward the table, she dressed slowly, slipped through the house without eating or grabbing her lunch, head held down the whole way. She gripped the doorknob hard before stepping into the day, her feet dragging toward school.

Mrs. Camp, her third-grade teacher, noticed immediately. The bright, curious girl who had once raised her hand eagerly now kept her head on the desk. At recess, she no longer ran to the merry-go-round but lingered at the edges, as though the joy of play was something far away. Mrs. Camp called her mother to share her concern. But her mother brushed it aside, blaming family struggles and hard times.

The truth was unspoken and unbearable: a trusted family member had stolen her sense of safety, leaving her terrified and hollow. She didn’t have the words to explain it then, and no one around her seemed to see the depth of her pain—except Mrs. Camp. Only years later, in trauma therapy, she would learn that her teacher had tried to protect her. That knowledge brought a flicker of peace, like cool water over burning skin.

The years that followed were lonely ones. In a time when such things were rarely spoken aloud, she carried her secret into adulthood. She married young, chasing the idea that someone else’s love could heal her. But her relationships unraveled, her grief deepened after a stillbirth, and infertility took away her dream of motherhood. Two husbands left her with the same haunting refrain: *I don’t know how to help you.*

It was after her second divorce that she finally turned inward. She began to see that the little girl inside her was still running the show—hurt, silent, desperate for love, and convinced she was broken. No partner could fix that. Healing, she realized, would have

to come from within, with the guidance of someone trained to walk her through the darkness.

Therapy became the turning point. She learned that self-discovery was about peeling back the layers of pain to find what had survived—her creativity, her resilience, her ability to love. She embraced self-empowerment, taking responsibility for her healing and learning to speak her truth. Each time she told her story of abuse, she reclaimed a piece of herself from the shadows.

Healing was not a single moment but an unending choice. She practiced self-compassion. She learned to face her fears. She began to hope—not a fragile, wavering hope, but one that grew stronger as she tapped into her “superpower,” the spirit inside that had endured when everything else seemed lost.

She came to understand that silence gives power to the abuser. Speaking up takes it back—not only for oneself but for every child and survivor who still believes they are alone. She carried a vision: if every adult protected just one child from abuse, the cycle could begin to break.

Her message became her mission. Every child deserves safety. Every survivor deserves a chance to heal. Healing is possible, but it takes courage, support, and a refusal to let the past define the future. The magic comes when one person’s healing sparks another’s—when protecting a child, listening to a survivor, or simply saying, *I believe you*, becomes the first step in rewriting a life.

And so, the little girl who once clung to the covers now stood in her own light. She was still on the journey, but now she walked it with purpose, her voice clear, her spirit strong, and her heart open enough to help others find their way.

Pain is a teacher. We can carry a wall in our soul, our heart, and our person. Many times, the wall of protection we surround ourselves with will often get in the way of our growth and healing.

Bravery to ask for help can catapult healing from trauma and give you freedom from the pain inside you. Pain does not dictate who you are as a person, you are not weak if you ask for professional help. What happened to you can make you feel like a different person. Your inner hurting manifests from the pain inflicted on you. It was NOT your fault. We can revisit the person we were that was changed by pain. You are still that person. Child sexual abuse was what happened to you.

I am not a therapist, counselor nor a psychiatrist.

I can say with authority I understand the little girl because she was me.

I speak and write from my experience. Many of us have a little child inside of us that has carried the pain of childhood sexual abuse too long. You must remember that you are NOT what happened to you. What happened to you did not change your inner soul. I hope to bring light to your pain, so that the wall around your soul comes down. Your soul is beautiful.

Today, I am a Certified Trauma-informed Practitioner. This certification represents more than training; it's a sacred responsibility. As a survivor, stepping into advocacy was my breakthrough moment: the realization that my healing could help others find theirs. It means I've been equipped with the tools to support victims of trauma with empathy, safety, and informed care.

Being certified allows me to walk alongside survivors, validating their experiences, helping them navigate resources, and reminding them they are not alone. I offer trauma-informed support, emotional guidance, and advocacy that honors each person's pace and story.

This work matters deeply to me because I know what it's like to feel silenced. Now, I help others reclaim their voice.

Our pain can also stop our creativity. We all have creativity we can tap into, knowingly and unknowingly. When I began to write, it was methodical and task oriented. It began to change when I worked with a writing mentor. Unknowingly, there were many, many, many words inside of me that I had not tapped into until I began to "free write". We all have many experiences worth writing about that are tucked away in an ever-changing mind full of thoughts, distractions, and experiences.

My childhood experience of having my innocence taken away was tucked away in my pain. True healing began when I began to write from my heart not my pain. When your heart opens, you begin to see the "beautiful" in your writing and how it can help others. My writing journey began late in life, I discovered it was the right time to tell my story. I cherish my writing time! I know that I am writing for souls that need my message.

My message is that we can "Mend Our Broken Pieces." It is in the broken pieces that our true self lies. We can use our broken pieces to gain the strength to heal. Hope occurs when we choose to mend our broken pieces. My healing experience occurred when I sought professional help. Let me be clear that everyone's healing journey is specific to their own needs. Talking to someone like a trusted friend about your pain may help you move forward.

If you want to love your life, learn to love yourself and it will open the doors for you to blossom and put the pain of your childhood behind you. We never forget about the hurt little child. We can keep nurturing them to heal and be who they were meant to be. You were silenced once, now the wall of your soul dissipates when healing begins. You no longer have to be silent about your pain. Your story is your story. Tell it, heal yourself and others. Your breakthrough is coming.

I hope my story has been helpful for you. Whether or not you were abused like I was, if you want to learn more about how to achieve any of your healing goals, reach out to me. You are not alone; you can experience healing, and you can have the life you want.

It has taken many years to get to this place in my writing. It has been worth every tear and every success. The working title of my solo book, *Memo to Your Soul*, is in progress. A lifetime of pain and recovery for the world to see. I am no longer afraid to tell my story, and I will no longer be silenced. I am flooded with emotions that my work has meaning. Meaning in life ensures a legacy must ensue. Wow! Is this really me writing these words?

Life can bring us powerful messages if we open the confined box in our mind and listen to our inner voice. Truly listen to our inner voice that I believe comes from God. Listen to all our inner voices, even the ones that are full of fear. If we acknowledge our fear, we can learn lessons about ourselves and move forward past the fear. It's OKAY to take chances. We are all brave souls.

Use Maya Angelou words to empower you on your healing journey: *"You may not control all of the events that happen to you, but you can decide NOT to be reduced by them."*

I was not reduced by the events of my past. I am no longer that hurt little girl. I am the woman who took a long look in the mirror and realized that her inner hope ignited her amazing inner soul thoughts to reemerge.

The events of your past are just that, events in your past. Take back your power. You have the superpower to choose your future.

We are your own Wonder Woman embarking on a rewarding journey of healing.

Readers I hope you will be inspired to embrace your own legacy of courage, compassion, and unshakable hope.

I would love to connect with you and learn how your story impacted you!

About the Author



Connie Ruth is a survivor advocate and founder of *Mend Your Broken Pieces, LLC*, a trauma-informed brand dedicated to healing and awareness around child sexual abuse. Through emotional storytelling, visual design, and community-building, she creates safe spaces for survivors to reclaim their voices and find strength in vulnerability.

Connie's work blends soulful branding with strategic impact, offering workshops, digital resources, and advocacy campaigns that challenge silence and foster resilience. Her speaking is rooted in transformation and empowerment. She teaches survivors to honor every scar as a symbol of strength.

Connie is committed to systemic change, prevention education, and building a world where survivors are seen, heard, supported and found healing resources.