

Welcome to journey on. I'm D.J. Burr, the host and executive producer. I'm a licensed psychotherapist, behavioral addictions specialist, and best-selling author of, "I Just Wanted Love, Recovery of a Codependent Sex and Love addict," available on Amazon, audible, and iTunes. This podcast is for male survivors of sexual abuse and assault who want to experience a life worth living beyond a tragic past. I'm a survivor just like you and I know the complexity of healing from trauma and I also know the joy that comes from the healing process. Here are our stories and share your own. You are not alone! You two can breathe deep and journey on.

I encourage you to visit the journey on website at www.journeyonpod.com. There you will find a link to sign up for my recovery journey newsletter, learn about my day weekend recovery events for male survivors and my online recovery coaching services for male survivors.

If you have questions, concerns or comments or would like to be on the show, email me at journeyonpodcast@gmail.com. Journey on his own social media. Tweet us @journeyonpod. Find us on Instagram and Facebook at journeyonpodcast.

The month of April is national sexual assault awareness month, sponsored by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. This year, the SAAM Campaign is engaging voices. The focus will be on involving coaches, faith leaders and bystanders by preventing sexual assault. Many groups such as salt and he is same problem but they. With this year's post cards, the NSVRC hope to help these voices talk about preventing sexual assault. You can download the toolkits and postcards as well as other support tools at www.nsvrc.org/saam/getinvolved.

Look out for our social media post this month using the hashtag #SAAM and the hashtag #journeyon as we celebrate national sexual assault awareness month. I'll be looking for your posts with the same hashtags as well. You never know I might reach out to you as well and want to hear your story.

D.J. Andre, welcome to journey on. I am pleased that you had some time to talk to us about your story. Can you tell our audience where you are and how old you are and then we can go into your story?

Andre Sure thanks D.J.. My name is Andre Viscera. I live here in Honolulu, Hawaii. I was born in the state of Washington where you're currently at. I am 41 years old. I just turned 41 on Friday.

D.J. Oh, wow! Happy birthday! I hope it was fun.

Andrea Yeah it was a good day. Just surfing in gardening and relaxing.

D.J. So, Andre, I found you online because I saw you were doing work around sexual abuse support in the legal system. Can you tell us a little bit about that before you going to your story?

Andre I've been involved in some of the statute of limitations bills that have been going through the legislature here in Hawaii. Back in 2012 we passed window legislation, basically allowing for two years for survivors whose statute of limitations had lapsed to bring suit (civil suit) against their perpetrators. It took a few years. Vetoed one year. Then the next year we were able to pass it through the committees and it got signed by the governor. That lasted from 2014 and then in 2014 he got extended and that recently expired last year.

Whenever there is any other types of bills... There's another one that's related to criminal sexual assault against minors... Sorry, I don't know everything offhand, but that one was passed. Shoot! I think in 2014/15. Definitely helps survivors here in Hawaii find some, I don't know about closure, but at least some way to express themselves may be for the first time tell someone about the abuse. Bring suit. I know there was a lot of suits brought against the Catholic Church out here and other various organizations that were either complicit or not complicit in the abuse of children.

D.J. Is it your role as a... Are you an advocate of these folks who are coming forward, or are you sharing your story as well?

Andre Yeah... There's definitely a lot of folks out here that it's their job, their policy folks at sex abuse treatment center or another part of the women's Caucus or Planned Parenthood so they don't have advocates there... I just wanted to provide a voice from a survivor point of view. I think it's

important that the survivors just hear other survivors talking about it. Especially a survivor the kind of looks like them and may have gone through the same experiences of having the same Filipino family or local family that has the same values. I'm just trying to provide another example that people can look up to and know that there's a way out and that other people are suffering just as well and not to fill alone.

D.J. I'm sure they really appreciate it. I do too. We need more people to share their stories and that's why I created the Journey On Podcast for male survivors to talk about their experiences with the hope that those that are still suffering in silence will come to understand and realize and accept that they are not alone and to start the healing process.

So, Andre, can you tell us what happened and how that led you to the work you're doing now?

Andre So, like I said, I grew up in Vancouver Washington... A couple of hours south of Seattle where you're at. At some point before junior high in grade school, my dad's son from another family from the Philippines came to live with us. We didn't have a lot of bedrooms so, we didn't have a lot of bedrooms so they decided that he should share with me, the youngest son. My older brother at the time was in high school. Teenagers - they're not gonna have any of that, there can weather privacy and whatnot. Figured it would be best to put them in my room. In hindsight, not the best thing.

He started to groom me and sexually abuse me for years. There's nothing I could really do about it since we were in the same room. Culturally, you're taught to respect your elders. I think maybe my parents thought that it be a good way for someone to watch over me and raise me but that's a lot of power to be given to someone that could be abused.

D.J. How much older was he?

Andre He was like 8 to 10 years older. And there were threats of violence, like that. Not a lot of opportunity or being taught are encouraged to speak out, you know, kids, at least in my family, aren't really.... Made for being seen and not heard so to speak. You just don't pay the parents what they want.

There's not a lot of dialogue and loving interaction. Anonymous say that's all Filipino families but I'd say most.

D.J. I can relate in growing up in an African-American family. From what you describe, it sounds very similar. There's just a lot of things you just don't talk about.

Andre Yeah, definitely! You throw in some Catholic guilt and you have a recipe for a lot of stuffed down feelings for a while. Never confronting these difficult, difficult situations either with your family or yourself.

D.J. So, you were in junior high and?

Andre Before junior high...

D.J. Before junior high...

Andre I was in grade school.

D.J. Grade school. Okay.... I imagine that must've been very confusing to you and definitely had some impact in how you showed up in your social life and in your education. Can you talk about some of the things that happened?

Andre The mind and the body is pretty amazing in just how it survives and what it does, of defense mechanisms. I should say. Just force it down and never talk about it again. I felt kind of fortunate because I was involved, (I don't know if today they even have these in school systems) highly capable or gifted and talented [where you] pluck out a few kids that are smarter and put them in a different class. So, I was able to hide in my books and be a smart kid just give my A's and not get bothered. My parents pretty much

were just super busy in junior high and high school because I was a 4.0 student. I was involved in pretty much every sport in every season. I played music. I just a busy. What really kept me motivated was just knowing that when I was 18, I just need to get in college and get out of here.

D.J. So, you are staying busy and motivated about the future and that probably didn't look suspicious to those around you?

Andre Oh, no! They were happy that they had a kid who was getting straight A's, playing music and in the choir. It seemed normal. Was running tracking going to state. For me, right? I am a... One of the few kids of color in my junior high or high school. I just wanted to get along. The last thing I wanted to do was bring up... I do want to be that kid who's like, "Oh yeah! He's the guy that got abused." You know, that's not something I'm going to do. You know? As a teenager, you're just trying to get along as it is. That was the last thing is to bring up.

D.J. Had you known anyone in your life that are gone through something similar? Maybe you and seeing how the response was for them? Or did you just know to keep silent because of the perceived judgment that you might receive?

Andre Well, you know how kids are. The guy who's, you know... Had green hair. Anything different. Anyone was can call you out and bully you are just showing you. Social creatures, right? So, you just try to act just as everyone else is acting and remain in the herd so to speak.

D.J. Okay

Andre You see people, you know the outcasts. You want to be them right?

D.J. Absolutely! I can remember seeing people getting bullied and I definitely didn't want to be one of those people who were getting bullied so I kept my mouth closed about a lot of things too. I totally understand that.

It's difficult for me to really just understand how you were able to function so well in this home where you were being abused on a regular basis. It sounds like you have a very strong will to protect yourself. Would you agree?

Andre Yah. I think. I don't know if it's a nature thing but I think some people are able to handle some adversity and are able to fight through it. I just feel fortunate that I was able to functionally survive. I definitely was functional but I wasn't thriving.

D.J. What do you think that would've looked like for you if you were thriving instead of just being functional?

Andre Just being more aware of my feelings and just understanding who I was or just being able to use all my talents and what not. I felt like I was functional but operating it like 60%. I was holding back this heavy load that I was caring this heavy load that was away on you. I can't be at peak performance if you're dragging a boulder around.

D.J. That's true.

At some point did someone notice that you are dragging a boulder?

Andre Yeah. I finally told an ex-girlfriend of mine when I was living in Lake Tahoe. Yeah. It had been the first time that I told anyone. It was cathartic. But when you post something like that down for 26 or 27 years, it's tough to deal with.

D.J. She was the first person you told?

Andre Right!

D.J. Man! That's a lot to bring to a relationship. Clearly you felt safe enough to be vulnerable. I'm glad that you had that experience with someone it was safe.

Did she have any recommendations on what you should do?

Andre Yeah. It was kind of a mutual... She had told me that she was sexually abused as a kid, too.

D.J. I see. That sounds like a probably impactful conversation.

Andre Definitely.

D.J. So, you are able to trust someone enough to say this is my truth because you were hearing their truth as well. Then, what did you do after that?

Andre I started seeing some therapists. We kind of shared a shared experience that bonded us in a way. It was kind of tough. There's definitely the focus on the darker side of feelings, the suffering it all that. Which, on one way it's kind of good remote that stuff, talk about it instead of letting things just well up, actually release some of that anger. At some point, you have to move forward, in my opinion and look at the positive.

D.J. It makes sense to me that you would need to talk about those really heavy emotions because you hadn't. Most people who are abused learn to stuff their feelings.

Andre It's all secrets, right?

D.J. It's all secrets. It's toxic. You got shame, guilt, fear, sadness, which, in a normal situation, all of those are really basic things that we all experience, but we're talking about repressed feelings over an extended period of time, that's toxic in my opinion, in my opinion.

Andre Definitely!

D.J. I can see it being dark.

Andre I think the way I was able to be functional was to kinda go in my head, to really live in your head. You can lose touch with your body lose touch with those feelings. Understanding, when you feel something, how to describe that. Especially since the body was already violated, I just want to get away from all that. You have your brain, kinda creates this illusions for you to survive.

D.J. The brain is very powerful.

It sounds like your coping strategies were to suppress your feelings and also to stay busy. Did you have any others?

Andre I was very active. I used to snowboard a lot. I ran a lot. I played ultimate Frisbee is a sport. I like to run. Surfing. I won't say I was an adrenaline junkie but there is something about rock climbing or snowboarding, you're just in the moment, right? You don't have time to think about what happens to you. You just in the moment or you're gonna fall off for rocker drown.

I feel lucky that I had those outlets. I also smoked a lot of marijuana and psychedelics to kinda get that same ego-less feeling. Living in the present, not boring about past things.

D.J. Did those substances become a problem for you?

Andre A little bit. I was smoking a little too much. To the point, it wasn't... It was just a numbing of the pain.

D.J. A very deep pain.

Andre Doing a lot of therapy. I probably gone through six or seven therapists just trying to find the right person - one would pass away or I'd move around and I'd switched jobs, switch insurances.

D.J. That can be a process. As a therapist, I know how challenging it can be for people to get in the door and then stay. Then for one reason or another, you may not be able to stay for a long period of time. I deftly understand that piece.

Can you talk about a significant experience in therapy? A lot of people have misconceptions about therapy. I think that therapy can be really rewarding and also challenging. I think it's helpful to hear people's perspectives about that process.

Andre Probably one of the main things is you have to be kinda truthful. Lying to your therapist is basically lying to yourself and your pain this person.

[Both laughing]

D.J. Right.

Andre Yeah, that part.

D.J. That happens a lot.

Andre I didn't want to take it from just a pure financial standpoint but, you know? You get in what you put out. If you're bullshitting him, then you're bullshitting yourself or her. You're not getting much done.

D.J. That's true. When you went into therapy did you find that you were telling lies? Or were you always truthful?

Andre I don't want to say telling lies but maybe it's taken a while to get to the root. I think the first couple of therapists, especially in the bay area, I focused more on identity and anger issues. The symptoms. Identity I think is a big thing. Just being, like I mentioned before, I'm one of the few people of color in my junior high/high school. I'm trying to find that source of who I was as an Asian American and moving to the bay area kind of brought that to the forefront. Every minority group has a, a voice there. It's a good place to be, but I was skirting the real issue and focusing on things like that because I didn't really wanna open up the box and talk about things really hurting. I just found ways. I was addressing issues but I wasn't really addressing the main, the main source. You know?

D.J. Did something happen that prompted you to finally reveal the truth so you could start working on it?

Andre I'd always mentioned it but then I try to push the therapy in that direction. It depends on your therapist. Some will sit back and relax, listen. Some are more direct in pushing you in a direction, so. I just found that there wasn't a lot, or at least ones I found, that had a lot of experience with survivors of sex abuse. I was like, that is not your special day I'll talk about something else.

D.J. [Agrees]

it sounds like you finally found someone that could hear you, and help you.

Andre Out here in Hawaii, they actually have a sex abuse treatment center, it's folks that, the name, have direct experience and expertise in that area.

D.J. That's amazing! I wish that every city and every state had a resource like that.

Andre It was very surprising that I couldn't find anything like that in San Francisco. Then, of course, a lot of support especially from my wife. She's one who's been my rock and really been there for me in dealing with with all my shut.

D.J. At some point you told your family. What was the response?

Andre You know? There was kinda disbelief. They're mad and angry. Wondering why didn't say something. The usual kind of responses

D.J. Did they leave you... At some point?

Andre Yeah! They believe me.

D.J. Okay! Good.

What happened with this half-brother anger stepbrother?

Andre Half-brother. He still lives in I think Southern California. I've attempted to confront him. I wrote them a letter or whatnot. It was kind of weird. It was intercepted by his wife. So, I still don't know if he ever got at or if he knows that I know what he did and it was a right and just try to make sure that is not trying to do it to his own kids are the other kids.

I've tried multiple ways to try and get the message through but, you know?

D.J. You can only do so much because you have to continue to focus on your own healing and you made an attempt to reach out. I imagine that that was really hard for you and your family to have those types of conversations. I know that when disclosing abuse, people can be come, being disbelief. Sometimes that can seem like they don't believe you all. That can be hard to. I'm really glad to hear that your family heard you and that they believed you.

Andre I think that the biggest thing is to have low expectations. Not to think that if I do this then everything is going to be great. Or this great family again because I disclosed something. That one of that doesn't change people's lives.

D.J. It makes sense to have low expectations or even no expectations. Speak your truth.

Andre Definitely! You don't wanna think that, oh yeah this is going to make me happy. Well no. You realize just one step of many in a process.

All the work to get there seems like a lot but then there's still a lot of work after.

D.J. The always be a lot of work.

Did you use any other tools other than therapy in talking with your views? Did you go to any support groups? Or do any online meetings? Anything like that?

Andre I went to one of the male survivor weekend of recoveries.

D.J. How is that?

Andre Oh! Those are amazing. You know, your year in a weekend with 20 other guys that to some that's probably one of the first times to either disclose or even no other survivors. So is pretty powerful. To be just around. I don't how describe it, your tribe so to speak. Shared experience. You have no... When you have a disclosed, you think, you've suffered in silence, you suffered alone but just to have that bond with these other men there. It's pretty powerful. If you can do it, definitely go out and do one of their weekends.

D.J. Whatever the activities they have?

Andre I think it's 20 to 25 mn and they broke you into smaller groups. They had some smaller group therapy. There's some walks. If that was your thing you can do some artwork to kind of workouts and feelings. Then you brought back to a large group and you did your team building activities and things like that.

D.J. Sounds like an amazing experience.

Andre Yeah! It was in the Santa Cruz area so that's nice. They're all over America. I don't know if there can come to the West Coast again. It depends on funding.

D.J. It always depends on funding. That's an unfortunate part. It depends on funding.

Did you stay in contact with any of those folks?

Andre No. Unfortunately. Tried to. It's just at the time just didn't materialize.

D.J. That's all right. It sounds like it was a great weekend experience and you got to meet a lot of different people and the experience that you had while you were there, you'll probably hold on to for rest of your life even if you're not in contact with those individuals. I think that's a really good thing for people to consider that if there's an opportunity to go to a mill survivor weekend retreat or some other type of workshop or something, I support that hundred percent. I think those can be really rewarding. I'm glad to hear that you had a really good experience.

Andre It's just connecting, right that's the big take away from that.

Right now, I have a friend of mine that disclosed. We still talk. As far as I know, we are... It's interesting to have friends that you are friends before you disclose and then now kinda have a deeper relationship. You talk a bunch. You know talking about bull ship scores, right?

You not talking about the hoops. It's good to have somebody that understands.

D.J. it's good to have that experience.

I hope our listeners can have that experience as well. I strongly encourage people to share their stories. It's powerful!

The work that you're currently doing, I'm assuming that this is directly inspired by what you experienced. Can you talk about how you got started with your advocacy work?

Andre So before that I just did a lot of advocacy with the environment, working with water quality issues and beach access. I had submitted testimony and testified at other bills that it gone through the Hawaii Legislature. And knew the process. I knew that when something important like this came

up, I just knew that I had to do something. It's very cathartic. As part of the process too of recovery... Just getting out there and talking about it and getting interviewed by TV and radio getting the word out and just letting the legislatures know that survivor side.

D.J. That's how I found you, through the media, that interviewed you. It's definitely working.

Andre Through the whole legislation, there's people who'd reached out and usually I just refer them to the sex abuse treatment center, you know not a therapist. And it's one thing if you are kind of years into it and we can talk about it and we can talk story but if you just disclosed, probably should some find some help. I'm there to be a shoulder but there's a lot of issues that are connected, but you're going to want to have some professional help.

D.J. I agree. You'll need more support and services in the beginning. I'm glad that those resources are there.

Do you think this is working you'll continue to do?

Andre Yes. Definitely. Depending on what's going on with legislation, when the opportunity presents to talk about it.

D.J. What if you learn through this journey, on this path you've been on?

Andre Hmm... Just a lot. Does China think about the change that I've been through. Definitely one thing would be, it's not about me. Just so stuck in my head for so long that's, you just get really focused on yourself, right? Thinking that that you are this pain. You identify with it it's really not. It's just something that happened to you. The brain's pretty powerful attaches itself these things.

D.J. But you can move through it.

It is a journey.

Andre It takes a while. The acceptance, the acceptance of what happened, the acceptance of learning that ability that or capability that your parents had to protect you. Everything.

D.J. I always say acceptances solution. I have found that to be true in my life. And someone had to tell me that. Because I didn't always know that. I have come to understand the world perfectly imperfect. We make mistakes. We don't always get the information that we need to show up for our families or our children or friends or our partners. So if we have the opportunity to learn something different, my hope is that will take it, will take that opportunity. It sounds like you've taken the opportunities to grow and to Journey On and to have a life worth living. It sounds like that's exactly what you're doing.

Andre Recently, I've been doing a lot of, I think you asked about tools. I forgot about I've started doing some Rolfing which is starting to work with the fascia in the body. It's how the body can store a lot of emotion get you on the whack, get sure spine all out of whack. It's kind of painful but it's definitely getting me back in order. Definitely first survivors, I'd say do a lot of bodywork, yoga, massages. I know that can be kind of frightening just getting used to maybe someone else's touch, but it's very healing.

I have a Reiki Practitioner which helps with the energy and everything, keeping the flow, positive flow going. I'm staying active, surfing, and then meditating is pretty key. Being present. If you truly present, then you can't truly worry about what happened to you in the past, these horrible things and you can't really be stressed out about the future because you're here right now.

D.J. Be here now.

Well, Andre, I'm so grateful for taking the time out of your busy work day to talk to me and our audience about your experience and I think that your story is very impactful and inspiring and I know that people will be helped

by your experience. I want to thank you for being a part of the Journey On mission which is to help people to tell their stories.

Andre Thank you, D.J.! It's been great talking. Let me know if you need or want to talk store again.

There is a new tool available to all of you Journey On followers, it's Journey On Survivors, a private Facebook group for survivors to network, build support, and discuss all things Journey On. You can find the link on our homepage, at journeyonpod.com or going directly to it at bitly.com/journeyonesurvivors. I'll be on the group to answer any questions or to provide support. Check us out. bitly.com/journeyonesurvivors or search Journey On Survivors on Facebook.

Journey On is looking to hear from you. If you're interested in sharing your experience, strength and hope, email us at journeyonpodcast@gmail.com for details.

Journey On's production is currently funded in whole by me as part of my desire to provide support for those who are still suffering. Production costs fluctuate and can be prohibitive in terms of what I can offer our audience. You can help support Journey On's mission by supporting the production. There are two options. You can donate the amount of your choice directly from your cell phone by texting the word journey to 855-735-2437, that's Journey to 855-735-2437 or you can become a patron of the show by setting up a monthly contribution by going to patreon.com/journeyon - that's patreon.com/journeyon. Once there, you can select a contribution level of your choice. Thank you for considering.

Don't forget to visit journeyonpod.com and sign up for my recovery journey newsletter. Once you have subscribed, you will get more information about my weekend mail survivor retreats and my online coaching services for male survivors.

Journey On is produced by D.J. Burr and Recovery Legacy Network, bringing you recovery on all fronts. Learn more at www.recoverylegacynetwork.com.

Today's music features tracks by CDK and Airtone. You can learn more about the tracks from our website at journeyonpod.com.

Until next time, breath deep [inhales] [exhales] and Journey On.