

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.

DJ Hello and welcome to journey on, the podcast for male survivors of sexual abuse and assault. Today I am speaking with Gino. Gino is here today to talk about his story of experience, strength, and hope. Gino, welcome to the show!

Gino Hi, DJ! As you know my name is Gino. I am 50. I'm from New York.

My story is that I was the middle of three boys and when I was five, my mother died. My father was not too involved. He was off self-medicating himself with alcohol. My grandparents moved in to take care of us. Most weekends, we were sent to stay with my aunts who lived in town and were only a couple of blocks away. We were there a lot. My father remarried within a year after my mother died. That marriage lasted 18 months. He started drinking again, staying out. She left. So, we ended up spending a lot more time in my aunt's house.

She was married to a drunk. This guy was what I would call weak minded. She wore the pants in the family. I guess there were reasons why he did what he did but he ended up molesting me after grooming me for a good year. I didn't know any better. I did not know what was going on. I fell for the attention that was hugs, sitting on his lap. Whenever he was around me, he always made sure he was close. You know, being a little kid to the experience so much loss, I end up in a can of attention like that.

Then it came to one day, I'm about eight years old, for some reason we were left alone, me with him and this was in their house. He raped me. He took it that much further, and that's what happened.

Unfortunately, it went on for a good two years. I tried to hide from him. I reasoned. I had to keep it a secret in my own shame and I was guilty because of it. By the time I was 11, puberty started to kick in and then it was me who actually went there looking for it. And that played a number in my head for years after. Here I am, now I am highly sexualized at 11. I was turned on and had all these kind of wacky things going on in my head. I was at a control.

By the time I was 12, a kid that was down the street that was now a friend, he was kind of socially inept and kind of an oddball. I hung out with them a couple of times and we wound up having sex at 12. It went on for years. I just used him. Like my uncle used me.

DJ That's heartbreaking.

Gino At that time, once I had this friend (an now we're in quotes, "friend I stopped going to my uncle's.

DJ And what are your thoughts about that in terms of why you started going to your uncles and why he started going to your friends more often?

Gino Oh! Because now it was readily available and it wasn't with someone old and older and drunk. It was somebody that I'd be in control of. Because that was what was robbed for me as a kid...

DJ [interjecting]

... The control?

Gino Was control. Yeah. It was my way to try to regain, you know, masculinity. Dominance or something. Let me tell you, that really messed with my head. You know, I have felt like less than a man, even as a boy, I felt less than a man. I wasn't one boy should've been.

DJ Did you know when your uncle started molesting you that it wasn't right?

Gino Instantly. It was just instinctively. I mean, the pain. The pain. The instant shame. I mean, it was... The first time it was 0 to 60 in three seconds flat. That's how went. I knew right then and there, this was... I didn't even know what sex was. But I knew this was wrong.

DJ Did he say anything to you to threaten you or to convince you question mark

Gino No. No threats. I think when he was done he kind of said something along the lines of "I love you" or like that. I mean, just to pacify me. That was it. I don't remember if I zone down or whatever or was crying at the time even when he was doing it. I was nine and he can do good shape. He halfway clean me up and I left the house. I walked home crying and trying to get my senses. I had to reason in my ear old mind that I had to keep it a secret. I can't tell anybody. If my father found out, he would kill him and then we would have nobody. You know?

I thought that I would just keep it a secret and then somehow just have to stay away from them. But every other weekend it seemed that we had to stay over there so I would try to hide myself out of the pullout sofa or barricade myself with a pillow so that my cousin my little brother was sleeping above where I was sitting on the floor. I'd be awoken in the middle of the night because he would get home probably at midnight from work and I would be awoken by him molesting me. I pretend that I was asleep during the whole thing. That's how that went.

DJ Oh, my God.

Your aunt, was she in the home as well?

Gino Oh, yeah! Yep.

DJ Where was she? Do you know?

Gino Sleeping in her room. She was sleeping in a room. He would work nights. He worked in restaurants. He'd come home at midnight or one in the morning and everybody else was asleep.

It happened in the day to, you know... She was working. She worked a regular job. He was daytime caretaker for these kids and us. He didn't go in until probably four or 5 o'clock, working in a restaurant.

DJ Do you recall what all you were thinking during these times when he was coming home or during the afternoons while your aunt was at work while he was watching you, did you have any thoughts? Can you recall any thoughts that you had during that time?

Gino It was like two times. Before I was turned on when I was scared and I'm trying to keep hidden and under the radar and all that and there is after. I don't know when that switch happened but it happened around puberty where all of the sudden, I went there looking for it.

I knew that on the Saturday late morning that he would be alone in the house with like two cousins who would be out. And I would just go there. Specifically, for that.

Yeah, I would go there and he would open the door and grab a hold of me and that was that.

DJ My God. That must've been such a confusing time for you.

Gino Oh! Yeah! Here I am 11 years old and all of this stuff is going on in my head. I felt like even though I had this drive to do that, once the second it was over, I felt like trash. That shame came right back and slap me in the face.

When I would go on to do with this kid, I'd be so worked up and driven to do this and the second it was over it be like, I can't believe I just did this again. This kid would just leave. That's all it was about, even for him. Showed up when we did it and he would leave. And I'd be like I can't believe I did this again.

DJ Was there a time where you questioned your sexuality or sexual orientation as a result of the abuse?

Gino You know, the funny thing is that you asked that - no.

A lot of people don't understand this

DJ That's the experience of a lot of people.

Gino No. Because, I'm in New York. I grew up with two gay uncles. Actually, one died before I was born, but my other one, he was gay and I didn't and I didn't know what gay was when I was told. My older brother was like did you know uncle so-and-so is gay? I did know what that was meant. Means that he likes men. His friend, what's calling Bobby, that's his boyfriend, not just his friend.

Of course, why do? I go tell my stepmother because I'm a little kid with some news.

You know uncle so-and-so was gay? Her jaw dropped and she was like where did you hear that from?!

So the cat was out of the bag.

Everybody except my uncle. And everybody accepted this guy Bobby. I thought of him as my uncle, uncle Bobby. There was nothing like whispering know what he was saying anything you know?

I knew that's that wasn't what I wanted. I came from such a dysfunctional family and I realized that even as little kid. I knew that was living was different from what everybody else in school was living. One thing that I wanted with all my heart was to be rescued by my mother's family that never happened. But I wanted my own family to be married and have my own kids and all that. I knew, even as young kid that I wasn't going to get that. That was never my idea.

I knew what I wanted. I knew what I had to be. What I did with this kid who was not really a friend but I was acting out with him. What I did subsequently with other men once I was growing up and as an adult was never about loving or honoring or cherishing. It was just dirty. It was secretive. It was solely about me dominating and trying to build my broken masculinity on the backs and the souls of these other poor guys. It was nothing about love and that type of thing.

DJ Can you recall when you first thought about doing something different and not engaging in this type of acting out behavior? What was that like for you?

Gino Here I am 11 years old. You know, my father got into AA and he got saved any started going to church and he started dragging us to church. So here I am 11, 12 years old sitting in these pews on Sunday morning. All the stuff is going on in my head. I knew I need to change and stop what I was doing, but still this drive, I would lose control. I didn't have control of it, it had controlled me.

DJ Would you say it's an addiction?

Gino Yeah. Oh yeah! Sexualizing a kid before their mind is able to handle it is probably akin to giving them crack, I would think. You can't handle that. You can't comprehend that. You can't comprehend that it's just this one time. There's going to be a chain of events that's gonna follow this. You know, I didn't bargain for all the stuff that went on, you know?

DJ It sounds like what happened was you suffered a trauma. And born of that trauma came and addiction. You had to have more and it began to control you.

Gino Absolutely. You know, I needed my fix. That's what it was. I needed my fix and when I got it I was disgusted.

DJ Sounds like a lot of shame.

Gino Yeah. Shame, guilt, the broken masculinity, all that.

DJ Winded things in with the friend?

Gino It was after I got married and we moved away.

DJ After you got married?

Gino Yep. I was still doing it after I got married.

DJ That means that went on for several years.

Gino Oh, yeah! It went on from 12 until 24. With him.

DJ Are you still in contact with this person?

Gino I was in for a long time. I felt guilt throughout the years, especially after I started dealing with my own stuff. Did I abuse him? I was a kid. I was the same age. Obviously, if I was never in that picture this would never have happened to him. I was highly sensitive to that. I contacted him.

He didn't want to hear from you the first time, even the second time. Then, finally, I sent him a letter and he called back. He was in a better place and said he was a willing partner in all of that.

DJ Did he not want to talk to you because you had moved away?

Gino No. I'm sure it was because all the stuff we did. He was probably thinking I was looking to reestablish that. That's what I'm thinking.

DJ You were looking to heal?

Gino Yeah. I was looking to find out if he's okay and apologize, basically. That's what I did. I apologized for involving him in all of this throughout all the years. I'm sure must've change the course of his life. It turns out, we've had some serious conversation since. He was living a hell that I didn't know. From his parents. His mother was bipolar and no wonder this kid latch on to anybody who paid him any kind of attention. Like me. I did the same with my uncle.

DJ that's so unfortunate that a friendship was formed out of your individual trauma and this sounds like the two of you, in a way to care one another. But it was ultimately fueled by all of the things that were going outside of your control.

Gino Yeah... We're taking care of each other now in the last two years where we've had some serious conversation about life in general and all of the stuff that we've been through. Before us kids, before it wasn't about healing and friendship. It was about getting whatever each other needed and that was that. But apparently, he needed whatever he was getting and you know as crappy as that was.

DJ Was there a time when you told someone about your uncle?

Gino Not until after I was 31.

DJ Let's talk about you getting married and moving away and how the abuse and the sexual acting out behaviors impacted your adult life.

Gino Yeah. For one, I was a clam. I didn't say two words to anybody. My wife loved me from childhood. We were neighbors pretty much. She was alone when I could trust. So, I married her. I like girls growing up. I knew girls were sugar and spice and everything nice and us boys were the filthiest of animals. I never really approached any of them. I was locked in a shell of shame. Even today, I don't like wearing a shirt with any kind of writing your pictures on it because I don't want the attention. I don't want people looking at me. As a kid, I just blended in the wallpaper. Even as an adult, I'm fighting that, that hiding in plain sight. I've done that for my whole life. Just so not

noticed. I felt like if people looked at me they would see the shame on me. And that's a hard habit to break.

DJ That's powerful imagery. And you're saying you still deal with that to this day.

Gino Yeah, yeah! I've come a long way in healing but there's still scars. There is still scars. I should've did a lot more. I hated school. Right from the start. I hated school because I didn't fit in. The other kids mirrored everything I wasn't. I just tuned out. I took up space. I tuned out. I didn't graduate.

DJ You didn't graduate from high school?

Gino I just left. No. I just left. Where did I go? I was working.

DJ You left school and got involved in the workforce.

Gino Yeah. I was working. I went and did blue-collar jobs. That's all there was. Thank God, I'm doing okay. I should have been doing a lot more. I should've been a lawyer. I should have been a lot of things. When that all hit me, once all of the denial fell when I was 31, I went through however many layers of grieving and anger and all of that stuff. I realized how all of this affected me, all of the little thoughts and associations I made is a childhood all the way to adulthood was tainted by the abuse. I made this decision because of what happened. I made this decision because of this. It was all interconnected. I can look back throughout my whole life and pinpoint all the way back to why I made which decision. It all stemmed back from the abuse. Shame. Guilt. Hiding in all of that.

DJ Was there a point where you informed your wife of what happened to you?

Gino Yeah. When I was 31. I told her. This was after I spent a couple of months online and some support groups online. That's what I did. This is how I got a handle and, and learned everything that happened to me and started the process. I said listen, I better tell you something. And I told her.

And she says, I'm glad you told me this because I'm surprised I'm still here. I was planning to leave you. Because I'd built up. And here, talk about ignorance is bliss. I felt myself. I didn't see it coming. I always figured she would get over my wall. She always said you got these walls built

up. I said you'll get over it. And she did. She got over it. She was ready to leave. She got over me and my walls. And I was surprised. I didn't see that coming. But things change.

DJ How so?

Gino Right away. Immediately. She felt it. I let her in. I let her in. That was good.

DJ I'm glad to hear that. Sometimes it can be really hard for a spouse to hear such information. Can you talk about any particular way you told her? Did you plan it out? Did you plan out what to say and how to say? Close-up free for you?

Gino Oh yeah! I'm not a talker. I am not a talker at all. I mean, I'm surprised I'm talking to you now. But sometimes you just gotta get the stuff out. It's better to talk about it. I plan to for a long time. Half of it probably came out wrong. What I normally do, even today if there is an issue, I'll write it out. It may take me hours to write a page, and I'll sort it give that to her. And she'll go okay. That's how it's better for me. Because I've been a clam all my life and it's hard to change.

DJ But you been a clam as part of the abuse that happened to you?

Gino Yeah not partly, because of it.

It's still my voice. It robbed me of so much.

DJ You mentioned that you found online support. Can you talk to our listeners about what that looked like and how you found it and where you found it and what you got in from it?

Gino Well, here's the story of how denial came down and how I first realized it. What happened, was abuse. This was 1999 and I had WebTV. This was before computers entered my world and we got WebTV. And I was trolling for porn and erotic stories. That's what I was doing. And all the sudden I started reading the story and it sounded exactly like mine. I was reading and abuse survivors personal story. And I was like, oh my God, this was me. I felt everything he felt. I couldn't believe it. That's what opened my eyes to what happened and how it affected me, that I was in denial, because I never forgot the abuse. But for some reason I convinced myself that it was just something that happens and that it didn't mean anything. It turns out in a whole lot. And it's not something that should happen. But it happens all too often unfortunately. They say one out of six, but I believe it's more than that.

DJ Yeah. Probably so.

Gino Boys generally don't tell. Too much shame all wrapped up in that.

DJ So you're reading this story that sounds very similar to yours and what did you do with that?

Gino I cried. I cried. Really? Yeah, it was like I was looking back in the mirror. I couldn't believe it. I just started reading more and you know how the Internet just starts to tumble and one thing opens up the next and I found more abuse survivors and stuff I was like wow. I found this one woman's website I started emailing her back and forth and chitchatting and it was very rudimentary little chat area and discussion forum. That's where I started healing. Then I found another one that was all male that's no longer it's been gone for many years.

I told my wife about the websites and core she was not thrilled that I couldn't go to her with all of this, that I had to use some other woman's website and talk to her so that wasn't received 100% with happiness but she was happy nonetheless that it got me out of my shell. And made me the husband that I should be.

DJ I'm glad she was able to understand why you are seeking this type of support online. And then you found the group for men. Was it a discussion forum?

Gino Yes, it was a discussion forum.

DJ Can you talk about how that was set up and maybe what that look like?

Gino It was basically just for men and you can post your stories or you could join the open discussions and it was very enlightening. Especially being other men. The first one was mostly women they were just a couple of guys and I was one of them. It helped but it wasn't the same as reading what other men went through and how we all were so much affected the same way.

So many similarities

DJ Did you connect with the men on the site and build a relationship with them individually?

Gino No. Not really. It went on for a couple of years so I felt connected but these are people across the country that you'll never meet but I have to say that I did meet, I did meet one of them. One time. The one guy was getting married and asked if anybody want to come and I just happen to be traveling to that area at that time so I said you know what, I'll go. I went. I met him and his wife. It was very cool. It was really nice. That was the last time I ever saw him, you know? That was back in probably 2000.

DJ That was a kind gesture.

Gino Yeah, for both of us. It was great.

DJ You were going to say something about that website. Is it still operational?

Gino No, no. That didn't last long because not everybody's as even keeled as everybody else and some people... The guy that ran it had some other problems as well, so he couldn't deal with the pressure and decided to do disband it. But just as he disbanded it, male survivors started. That site is professionally run and that's been going for many years and I've been a part of that as well.

DJ And that's malesurvivor.org?

Gino Yeah.

DJ Can you talk about the resources on that site that you find helpful?

Gino Just a discussion forum. that's all I deal with.

DJ That's an active discussion forum that listeners can go to today and share their stories or ask for support. That's an amazing resource.

Gino It is. It's an amazing resource. I mean, they have other things, but I didn't need them.

DJ I've been on their website. It's a really good website. It has tons of information, statistics, support links. They have the message board or discussion groups. Book resources. I think there are even movie resources. So, it's a great tool.

Gino Yeah, I think so. There is even an active chat which is good if you're into that type of thing. I can't be bothered with chatting and texting. It's too much like texting.

DJ You found support online, whereas some people are able to find support with a therapist or a support group or a face-to-face support group. Those avenues that you explored?

Gino I never explored a therapist only because I'm out in the sticks. I say New York, but I mean there's nobody around. I was able to find a face-to-face support group that wasn't necessarily about abuse but it turned out most of the people there were sexually abused. It was a mixed group both male and female. That was a lot of the conversation. That was good. That was good for everybody involved. Again, I was probably one of only two or three men out of a group of 10 or 11.

DJ So you are able to connect with people in a group and get support face-to-face. How long were you part of the group?

Gino Probably just less than two years.

DJ Are you actively involved in the other face-to-face groups now?

Gino No. I was actually hoping to start one.

DJ Oh? That would be exciting.

Gino I actually put a few things online and I've never heard anything yet.

DJ Sometimes it takes a while to get the word out but I hope people will find you and so you can create that group and help others.

Gino Yeah, because you know the need is out there. So many men are suffering in silence. They never say anything. Or if they say something they say it and they just want it back in the bottle. And try to pretend and try to go back to the Nile and everything is fine.

DJ So how does the abuse continue to affect you today?

Gino Well, I got up make it a point to put myself out there. If I have to do something work wise or businesswise, it takes me... If I have to get in front of people, I have to really psyched myself out... To get out there, to do that to have eyes on me.

DJ Because they'll know you? They might since that shame that you talked about? Is that why?

Gino Yeah. Maybe I still do carry some of that shame, but it's not like it was. Is just been... I'm just about 50 years old. As been with me a long time. It's part of me.

DJ I think I can understand what you're talking about. They be carrying it a little bit. As a survivor myself, it's been maybe 16 or 17 years ago. I still have that shame that kind of creeps up every now and again. I'm not sure that ever goes away, but it does decrease

Gino I'll tell you what's going on, I've told the few close friends and family members but I wouldn't want out and general public. I wouldn't become the poster boy for it. I don't want my kids to know.

DJ So there's still a lot of people that maybe don't know all of you. Would you say that's accurate?

Gino Oh, yeah! Yeah.

I'm like an onion.

DJ How's that for you today, still holding onto several pieces of yourself?

Gino That's the way I like it. I'm an extreme, extremely private person. And it's because of that.

DJ And, see I have had the opposite effect. Once I was able to start telling my story, I didn't want to stop telling my story. I've written a book, written articles, I stood up in front of people I talked about it. Now I've greeted this podcast. For me, it's really important to who I am and my own identity to keep talking about it. Because I hid it for so long as a kid and because I hid it, a lot of bad things continue to happen. It's just super important for me to talk.

I'm grateful that you've made yourself available to talk to us about your story, I mean, it's a heartbreaking story, but I can sense a lot of compassion that you have for yourself and to other sufferers because you still want to give back. You still want to help people.

Gino If I can make a bright spot out of this, I want that. I'd rather not keep it secret and have other people suffer forever like I have. Get it out. Get out there. It's so great that so much has come out of this wickedness with like Penn State was in the news. I know a lot of people that showed up at mail survivor because of that. They were triggered because of that. They were doing fine in denial and then all the sudden then something in the news just brought it to the forefront of their minds. That's when they needed to look for help and they found it. I'd rather be there for those people that needed, so I'll still pop in and check and on male survivor once in a while.

DJ I'm glad to hear that.

Gino Like I said, I'd like to start a face-to-face support group, peer support group. But I'm on the country. There's not that many people. They're out there, but they're hidden.

DJ Right! They're out there.

I'm thing about doing the same thing. I'm out in Seattle and I'm thinking about doing a peer support group as well. I think I could, I think there a lot of people out here who could benefit from that.

Gino Yeah.

DJ So what's life like for you now?

Gino Pretty good. I have the family always wanted. I have my kids, I have my wife, I have my home. You know, I didn't finish high school. I did a lot of other things. I had my own businesses. Some are successful, some weren't. You know, I lead a comfortable life. It's not in control of me anymore.

DJ How many kids you have if you don't mind my asking?

Gino Three.

DJ Beautiful. Good.

I'm really glad to hear that things are going well for you and that's what I'm hearing from most of the people I have worked with on the podcasts, is that, they've continued on with their lives. They've been building the life that they always wanted. That's important. The message is on this podcast is to journey on.

Gino It does get better!

DJ It does get better! I love that. It does get better. And so I want to continue to encourage people to tell someone. Share your story. Ask for help. Because we don't have to do this alone.

Gino No you don't. You can do it anonymously online. That's the beauty part of it. When you're ready to come out to your family and friends or to whoever, then you can do it when you're ready. You can get the help you need right now.

DJ That's why it was important for me to talk to you because other people have been able to reach out, face-to-face and gets a support but there is a huge online community. I'm grateful that you have some firsthand knowledge about the online community. The resources are there.

Gino Yes

DJ Well, Gino, anything that you would like to leave our listeners with, any sage advice or words of wisdom?

Gino Don't keep it in. You gotta get it out. You gotta work through it. It's not a quick fix. It took me a good year or year and a half before I was okay. It may take some longer, it may take some shorter. But you can get there.

DJ But you can get there.

Well, thank you, sir, for taking time in your Friday afternoon to speak with me and to share your story. It has been an amazing time for me to sit here and listen to your story. It's inspiring.

Gino Well, thanks. You're certainly welcome - any time.

DJ Thank you, thank you!

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/journeyonesurvivors. I'll be on the group to answer any questions or to provide support. Check us out. bitly/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.

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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.