

MATT'S STORY

His mother, his teachers, his sisters knew something was different. The son, the eighth grader, the brother was different. *Why? What was wrong?*

Why did this lively and energetic boy suddenly seem so withdrawn and removed? Was it his parent's divorce? Or was it something hidden?

Only two people in the world knew what was happening—Matt and his uncle. This precious, innocent young boy was being sexually molested by his uncle.

Frightened by his uncle's lies and imprisoned fear, Matt stayed silent. He felt alone, responsible for dealing with the damage being done to him.

Matt dealt with his silent shame, blame and guilt by withdrawing. He began using alcohol and drugs and dropped out of high school after ninth grade. He took all his hurt, trauma and hopelessness and locked it up within his subconscious.

In order to escape his uncle-the-abuser, Matt left home, left the state and found a safe place with other relatives. Though he continued to self-medicate with alcohol, Matt proved to be resilient. He learned the building trade and eventually made his way back home to Idaho Falls.

Fast-forward 35 years. While becoming a successful founder of a large commercial construction company and being surrounded by a loving wife and three children, Matt began



to experience changes. *Dreams. Flashbacks. Disconnected images.*

Matt slowly began to uncover memories. He *knew*—his family *knew*—something was wrong. Alcoholism seemed the obvious culprit, so Matt entered rehab.

Under the watchful care of his counselors, Matt uncovered the truth. Alcohol had only masked the *real* problem. For decades he had suffered from dissociative amnesia, blocking out the memories of his trauma. Slowly, he began to recover his painful childhood memories.

Matt wanted answers, but who had them? His abuser. Matt confronted his uncle, years after the criminal statute of limitations had passed, but his uncle refused to answer.

Hungry for understanding and wanting justice, Matt ended up in civil court. The outcome of his case would become the beginning of the Building Hope Today story.

OUR FOUNDING

Matt was committed to not living his life as a victim. After 30 years, he was able to prove that his uncle had groomed him in order to sexually abuse him. A unanimous jury verdict

in his favor changed his life, and for the first time in legal history, a sexual abuse case had been won on the grounds of fraud within the legal system.

Matt and his wife, Lynne, knew they couldn't let this victory stop there. There were other victims who deserved to receive justice over their abusers. The couple wasn't sure what the next step would be.

During his trial, Matt's lifelong friend and respected law enforcement officer, Pat McKenna, had been called to testify about the timeline of Matt's abuse. After the trial, Pat was working on a sexual abuse case (Idaho v. Dunn). Mr. Dunn had previously been convicted of a child sexual abuse charge and received a life sentence, which had been reversed on a technicality. Pat began to make the connection between Matt's case and the Dunn case, noting that the same grooming behavior was present.

Pat took his thoughts to prosecutor Danny Clark. Danny was in the midst of retrying the case and on the verge of seeing Dunn walk when Pat described how grooming could be proven. From that point, Danny called in Tom Tueller, an expert in the stages and investigative practices of sexual grooming and the counselor who had helped Matt with his trauma. The men presented the evidence of grooming to the jury. It was enough to convict Dunn of the sexual abuse charges.

The investigator realized what was

going on; the prosecutor understood the implications; the counselor had educated the jury. **The team had developed a clear path to seek justice for victims of childhood sexual abuse.**

After their trial, Matt and Lynne had traveled extensively, searching for a way to help prevent the silent epidemic of childhood sexual abuse. They connected with men and women across the country who were trained experts and who shared their passion. They had been searching far and wide for an answer that was right in their back yard. Their local team of investigator, prosecutor and counselor had shown that no matter how long a child may wait to disclose sexual abuse, prosecutors can prove that it occurred when the stages of grooming are present.

When Matt decided to found Building Hope Today, the team of incredibly talented people whom he met on his travels were ready to help him start.

Building Hope Today was established to prevent other children from experiencing child sexual abuse by helping victims heal from their trauma, supporting law enforcement and prosecutors who bear the burden of investigation and prosecution, and educating those who care for children.

OUR PARTNERS

Building Hope Today is only a dream without partners. Investigators, prosecutors, victim advocates, forensic interviewers, counselors, child protective services and medical personnel are needed to carry out the mission.

Building Hope Today provides a Training Team of experts with a wealth of experience who will equip Multidisciplinary Teams with principles

and practices to hold offenders accountable. We focus on the stages of grooming and delayed disclosure cases in an effort to increase convictions.

Become a Building Hope Today partner. Together we can reduce and prevent childhood sexual abuse in your town, your region, your jurisdiction.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Building Hope Today is to prevent and reduce childhood sexual abuse.

OUR WORK

Our mission is fulfilled in four dimensions:

EQUIP: Building Hope Today provides national experts to equip Multidisciplinary Teams with principles and practices to hold offenders accountable

CARE: Building Hope Today supports child advocacy teams who care for victims

ADVOCATE: Building Hope Today stands up for the rights of victims

EDUCATE: Building Hope Today partners to provide prevention training for families and educators

OUR VALUES

Our mission and work are built on six core values:
Hope • Healing • Justice • Collaboration • Awareness • Safety

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