

## Chapter 2

# TRUST

It was dark. It was the middle of a winter's night. I was snuggled in my bed with the blankets up around my neck and my arms intertwined, curled up like a pretzel. My knees were bent and up against my stomach; in the fetal position. Although my sister was in the bed next to me, I still felt very much alone. As I lay awake in my bed, as I had many nights before, the nightly fear once again continued to inundate my entire being. Was it going to happen again? Would I survive this time? Would anyone hear my screams? Would anyone come to rescue me?

I heard the rattling of the door. I started to shake. My body began to quiver. It was dark, there were no night lights in my bedroom. I got out of my bed, barefoot and cold. I hoped that he would not find me again, that he would not catch me again, that I would survive another night. I am suddenly alone in a place that I do not recognize. I started to run. I ran for my life.

There was a man chasing me. This man was a stranger, but all I was focused on was finding a place to hide. I had to escape. I started to pick up the pace and my tiny feet were moving as fast as they could. I was small, a young

child, and had the advantage of escaping, hiding in small spaces, crevices, in the hope that I would not be found. But I knew how this would end because I had never escaped in the past. I was always found. I was shivering, and I was unaware if this was from fright or the cold of not being in bed on this wintery night.

I hid and hoped he would not find me again. Unfortunately, I saw his shadow. He found me. He caught me. He stabbed me in the back, and I could feel my back arching as the knife was embedded deep within me. I could feel the warmth of my blood trickling down my body. I started to scream. No one heard me. No one came to help me. And then my body relaxed, and I, once again, rescued myself. I felt relieved. I woke up.

These nightmares were almost a nightly occurrence that continued for decades, way into adulthood. I was very young when the nightmares began, maybe four years old. I have no recollection of ever telling my parents about these nightmares. What I find interesting is that even at a young age, I realized my parents would not have been concerned about my nightmares.

The healthier I became as a result of therapy, the more I noticed the content of my nightmares changed. The nightmares morphed into something different. I was able to escape the man who was chasing me and stabbing me. I was no longer caught by this man who was going to annihilate me. The nightmares changed at a point when my anxiety and anger decreased. They changed when I started to have more trust in the world. Additionally, the nightmares ended

when I divorced the father of my children, as he had several behavioral traits that my mother had.

A young child doesn't always have the capacity to verbalize feelings or even recognize what those feelings are about. But my nightmares came from a feeling that I was unable to rely on and trust that my parents would emotionally care for and support me. Dreams are a way of suppressing emotion. In my case the brain was protecting me from the reality of trauma. That trauma of knowing my parents' true feelings about me. I was unwanted.

Recurring dreams/nightmares can be a sign of anxiety. It is difficult for me to acknowledge how old I was when I became aware that I was unwanted. I believe I experienced the feeling of not being wanted very early on. The man in my nightmare could have been either my mother or my father, as dreams are always camouflaged. The nightmare was not far from the truth, as I became consciously aware of this fact many years later. I was alone in my family forever. I was anxious, fearful, and mistrusting of everyone. I often wonder if the stabbing was my mother's desire to abort me. This nightmare had lasting effects on me. Even today, my initial response when the power goes out and I am in the dark is to panic.

For as long as I could remember, I experienced a relationship with my parents in which I did not feel safe and protected. I had no sense of trust in the universe. Failure to develop trust can result in fear and the belief that the world is inconsistent and unpredictable. When caregivers provide reliability, care, and affection, one develops a sense of trust.

In the absence of this, I felt there was nothing I could trust. This led to decades of dysfunctional relationships, anger, and anxiety. It left me feeling that the world is unsafe and no one could ever be trusted. A feeling of emptiness.