

“Silence and shame all too often describe the struggling lives of so many male survivors of sexual abuse. In *Naming Our Abuse*, these survivors step away from the world of silence and boldly speak about their unspeakable journeys with the hope that their collective voices will empower others who are suffering in silence and shame. These powerful stories bring us that much closer to shattering the silence and shame that have choked the lives of too many for too long.”

—Boz Tchividjian, executive director, GRACE

“Surviving abuse becomes possible when you realize that others who have endured the same horror are on their way to recovery. This book will be a great help to those who have suffered in secret, not knowing if they can tell anyone their story or if they will be believed. . . .

“Please read this book so you will better understand what many men are facing; and if you have been abused, you will be glad it has been put into your hands. This book was written as an act of love by those who have a heart to reach out to others.”

—Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer, senior pastor, The Moody Church, Chicago

“This is a most important contribution to the faith-based literature on the trauma of male sexual abuse and potential resiliency and recovery. The three narratives offered are deeply moving, brutally honest, incredibly humble, and deeply humane. Those wanting to come alongside hurting persons, or those needing healing in their own lives, will find the book’s insights to be authentic, credible, and profoundly grace-filled.”

—Richard E. Butman, PhD, licensed clinical psychologist;
professor of psychology, Wheaton College

“Most books on sexual abuse are geared toward female survivors, making a book that speaks to the unique experiences of male survivors a welcome addition to the field.”

—Heather Davediuk Gingrich, PhD, professor of counseling,
Denver Seminary; author of *Restoring the Shattered Self:
A Christian Counselor’s Guide to Complex Trauma*

“In this small and extremely readable book, Andrew, Daniel, and David offer a profound gift to those of us who, like me, have yet to fully come to grips with their own sexual abuse. Through these individual stories I found comfort in knowing that, unfortunately, my experience is not so unique that I should fear sharing it openly with others. . . . It gave me hope that I may one day reencounter the little boy who was so traumatized, and that he may experience the full joy of childhood that was robbed from him the first go around.”

—Bradford McCall, childhood sexual abuse survivor

“Male survivors of sexual abuse have few opportunities to find their story on the pages of books about childhood sexual abuse. This resource provides them an opportunity both to hear stories of loss and recovery and to begin writing their own. If you are a survivor, I encourage you to find a trusted friend or counselor and to work slowly through this book, examining how you might tell your story (which has not ended!) to yourself.”

—Philip G. Monroe, PsyD, professor of psychology
and counseling, Biblical Theological Seminary

“There is a tenderness present when strong, intelligent men are willing to walk the vulnerable path of self-disclosure about their abuse. These men show us how to proceed. Through the naming of the abuse, embracing their moments of painful weakness and powerlessness, courageously coping and finding ways to fend off scars and confusion, they show us how good men can hold the polarities of abuse and weakness in one hand, and faith, courage, and resilience in the other.”

—Clark Barshinger, PhD, psychologist

“As a pastor, this book made my eyes water and my blood boil. I am both grateful for and sobered by the raw honesty of *Naming Our Abuse*. Too often, the church has aggravated the injuries of survivors of sexual abuse through pastoral negligence. Let that be said no longer. The stories of Andrew, Daniel, and David provide a framework for healing that will help any church leader begin caring for the 25 percent of their congregation who have suffered from sexual abuse. May this book lead to an increase in compassionate sermons, a decrease in spiritualized protection of abusers, and safer spaces for healing within the church.”

—Aaron Damiani, Anglican bishop, Chicago

“An extraordinary book. Though the topic is intense, there is a sense as you read and engage with it that you are able to experience progress in your own journey of healing. Reading the stories of Andrew, Daniel, and David was sometimes disturbing but always hopeful. . . . They inspire survivors to write your own story and see how God is ultimately drawing you to His light.”

—Glenn Miles, lecturer, Swansea University (UK);
child and vulnerable person advocate

“As a counselor I have longed for a resource like this. Written by men who *know*, they’ve done the hard work of healing. These stories invite brothers not to suffer alone, but to find meaning and healing through their suffering. This is a manly book that allows men to be men, to be broken, and to be little boys again.”

—Chad Griffin, MA, licensed professional counselor,
Stenzel Clinical Services

“Rarely has a book about a subject so difficult and taboo left me feeling so encouraged and hopeful. . . . Honest, difficult to read at times, but in the end, affirming. We’ll include this book in our online library.”

—Steve LePore, founder and executive director of lin6

“I cannot overstate this: *Naming Our Abuse* is a rare and important book! For those of us who are survivors of abuse, there is only one path to a flourishing life on the other side of the damage of abuse, and this book provides the road map. What I’ve discovered in my own story is that *what is not named is not healed*. Naming our abuse in its shamefully graphic detail and grieving its consequences in the context of a safe and kind community, whether in therapy or a recovery group, is the *only* path to healing. *Naming Our Abuse* not only provides guidance in getting there, but its three authors show us the combination of courage and kindness it takes to experience a level of healing on this side of the fullness of God’s new creation.”

—Joel Willitts, PhD, professor of biblical and theological studies, North Park University

“The stories and writing therapy activities in *Naming Our Abuse* allow wounded men to engage with their stories authentically and are tools of grace that God will use to bring healing and move them forward in their journeys.”

—James Gould, professor of philosophy, McHenry County College

“An insightful, sensitive, and helpful work on the devastating epidemic of male sexual abuse. This often neglected trauma is in dire need of accessible and clear resources like this. I look forward to sharing *Naming Our Abuse* with counselees, colleagues, and ministry partners as we seek to come alongside men who have been devastated by the trauma of sexual abuse.”

—Stephen Brasel, MA, licensed clinical professional counselor

“Gripping stories of redemptive transformation, these stories of terrible pain and tragedy are hard to read, but I am so glad that Andrew, Daniel, and David have invited us in to witness the agony, lament, and transformation that have shaped each of their lives. As you partake of this book, you also will be changed.”

—Raul Mock, editor, PneumaReview.com

“In *Naming Our Abuse*, Andrew, Daniel, and David have not only performed outstanding healing work on their own behalf but have provided a clear pathway for anyone with a traumatic background who reads their stories. . . . As a therapist to trauma victims, I look forward to getting this book into the hands of many.”

—Ken Taylor, psychotherapist and missionary

“Once you begin reading you will not want to put this book down. Those who have experienced the horrors of sexual abuse will be inspired to face their own journey or to help someone they love face theirs.”

—Nancy Kane, MS, licensed clinical professional counselor;
associate professor, Moody Bible Institute

“Not only do Andrew, Daniel, and David demonstrate a model for healing through storytelling, they also courageously speak to the unique journey of being a son, husband, father, *and* survivor. Valuable theological reflection combined with insightful therapeutic techniques are woven through their stories and questions, making this a vital resource for pastors, therapists, survivors, and spouses.”

—Andrew Nutt, MA, adjunct professor and speaker

“Sexual abuse is an unspeakable crime, but the evangelical church has been too silent, too unhelpful, for too long. By God’s grace, Andrew, Daniel, and David are making a kingdom difference for abused men. The three stories in this book will sober you but they will also thrill you as they point to the way forward: the power of the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus to transform broken, shattered lives through both Christ-centered professional care and safe, supportive healing relationships within the body of Christ. May God use this book to stir the church to be the gospel solution.”

—Rob Bugh, senior pastor, Wheaton Bible Church

“I pray that this book makes it into every seminary curriculum, onto the shelf of every pastor, and most importantly, into the hands of every survivor of sexual abuse who feels crazy and alone and dirty, never more than when he is in church. Lord, have mercy.”

—Paul Maxwell, PhD candidate, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“As a counselor, I recommend this book for male survivors who have been greatly wounded by unspeakable horrors. I also recommend this book to clinicians who wish to help. This is a wake-up call for our society to take the blinders off and to understand these atrocities. Most of all, this book is meant to be a story of stories for those who are struggling with how to speak and integrate their memories and feelings into their own healing story and to make peace with the God of the universe.”

—Mary Hockett, licensed clinical professional counselor

NAMING
OUR
ABUSE

NAMING OUR ABUSE

GOD'S PATHWAYS TO HEALING FOR
MALE SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

Andrew J. Schmutzer
Daniel A. Gorski
David Carlson

 Kregel
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© 2016 by Andrew J. Schmutzer, Daniel A. Gorski, and David Carlson

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*To all the nameless men who need the dignity of
understanding and telling their own story.*

May you embrace your “little boy”

. . . for the first time.

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FOREWORD

Abuse. What an ugly word. Child abuse is so odious to our society that we rightly demand intervention to protect children from further harm. And child *sexual* abuse is an almost unspeakable crime. Yet sadly, for far too long, child sexual abuse and its long-term effects have been left unspoken. Survivors, and notably *male* survivors, remain largely invisible and left to deal with the consequences of sexual abuse on their own.

Christian individuals and churches have done incredible work in addressing serious social issues from world hunger to orphanages and, more recently, human trafficking. But the gospel should also be heard in the prophetic call to help survivors of abuse. Survivors are not only in Calcutta; they are in your congregation too.

That is why the book you are holding is so important. In the pages that follow, you will encounter the stories of three men: Andrew Schmutzer, Daniel Gorski, and David Carlson. Their stories and experiences are as unique as the way they share them. As each story unfolds, you will be moved, as I was, to shed a tear or wrestle with a plethora of emotions. But these men's stories serve a redemptive purpose: to help you learn to tell your own story with your own voice. And to find peace both with the God of the universe and with the little boy inside you who was harmed in years past.

This book is also for the families who love their husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers. If that's you, you are invited to come alongside, to empathize, to grieve, and to join in the healing journey. You serve on the front line, standing with your loved one through seasons of PTSD, times of self-doubt and personal anguish, seemingly endless tears, and the gnawing sense of loss. You are the crucial and long-suffering support team, providing spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22–23) to minister healing to this grown man and to the frightened and wounded little boy that still resides within

him. These stories will give you a glimpse into the mind and heart and struggles of the man you love.

And this book is for health care professionals. There are many books that address the clinical aspects of child sexual abuse. But the clinical library is sorely lacking in works by male survivors for male survivors. Use this book as a tool with your patient/client to help both of you better understand what happened, what is happening, and how to make room for God to reconcile the grown man and his inner child.

In over fifty years of ministry, I have engaged millions of young people around the world, relating parts of my story as a skeptic of Christianity. Challenged in college to defend my skepticism with evidence, I engaged in a quest to examine the historical record to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the end, I became convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus was raised from the dead. By God's grace, I have been able to share this incredible news through the emerging issues facing young people. In 1982, I was fortunate to be used to lead one of this book's authors, Daniel, to Christ. Little did I know that God's grace would be demonstrated in the complex healing that Daniel and so many like him need because of sexual abuse.

Most recently, I have been able to share my own story of child sexual abuse. In *Undaunted* I relate how I had to face the reality of my sexual abuse as a young boy. I had to endure the pain and the shame alone. This helped to fuel my anger at God. I felt betrayed and confused: God knew and seemingly did not care. Or did he?

The stories in *Naming Our Abuse* show that my experience is shared by many other male survivors. I commend them for their courage. If you are one of them, I urge you to allow this book to minister to you and challenge you. As you struggle to attach words to your experiences, you will find strength to face the horrible past and grace to emerge as a new creation. In the telling of your story, I pray you will find that God was there with you, and that he cared so much that he identified with you personally through the public humiliation of his own Son, Jesus. God has told his story; he has named his abuse. He now invites you to do the same.

JOSH D. MCDOWELL
Author and Speaker

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to thank a cherished group of people. Without their support and talent, this project could not have happened. Our wives grew with us and were willing to enter into new, painful realities that even we hadn't fully understood. Thanks for giving us survivors some late nights and safe places in living rooms and basements where we could be real. Whatever we've redeemed in our stories, your pilgrim steps with us have enabled us to walk this far.

Tabitha McDuffee, your assistance with the manuscript is deeply appreciated, allowing our energy to be placed in story-making. Kelly Grace Collins, your creative and empathetic drawings brought the humanizing touch our stories needed. You are a healer.

INTRODUCTION: HOW THIS BEGAN

After our church-based support group had formally run its course, several of us male survivors of sexual abuse continued to meet. We'd known each other for a few years and realized we wanted to *explore* our stories, not just *identify* them. With over fifteen years of counseling between us, we didn't need more psychological profiles, social statistics, or spiritual generalizations. What we needed now was to delve into our stories. Some programs help uncover the damage, but we wanted to actually investigate "the wreck." So a unique project was born.

At this point, it was not about sharing the latest blogs and books we'd read on abuse; that was easy. In order to aid our personal healing journeys, we decided to dig deep and write about the contour of our individual stories. We hoped that ultimately our writing could help other male survivors just like us. So, using the metaphor of a car accident, we drew up four basic phases in which we could explore the story of our journey. These stages are (1) The Wreck, (2) Accident Report, (3) Rehabilitation, and (4) Driving Again. We committed to writing four entries for each section. As "sacred trinkets" of our lives were unearthed and dusted off, the complexity of our personal stories began to emerge. Beyond facts, we explored how we felt and how relationships of faith and family were affected. We read our entries to each other, and the insights we gained from one another as we did so were invaluable. Through reflecting, writing, and talking, we came to know ourselves at a whole new level. And through much reading and weeping, we gave each other the gift of words.

An Example of Writing Therapy

Why engage the messiness of our stories? Because, as we suspected, writing helped us to “name our abuse” in far richer ways. Writing is *reflective therapy*. Through it, a person encounters the fragments of a life strewn across the landscape of many painful years. Counselors know this; there’s significant research behind what the three of us have done. For survivors, the drama of expressive writing enables deep reflection and processing of scattered emotions and memories. Significantly, reflective writing of our feelings also helps ease emotional trauma and reconnect the “pieces.” The long-term benefits of expressive writing include these:

- Improved immune system
- Reduced blood pressure
- Improved lung function
- Improved mood/affect
- Greater psychological well-being
- Fewer post-traumatic intrusions and avoidance behaviors
- Improved working memory
- Altered social and linguistic performance

We sensed there were both short- and long-term benefits in writing our stories. At great cost, we poured ourselves into this adventure, relying primarily on our own testimonies, backing these up with personal documents in our possession and public documents such as newspaper accounts and legal filings. What emerged were stories that *translated* our trauma. While we did not hide horrific experiences, neither did we write to titillate readers with sordid details. We set a limit of PG-13. Raw emotion is naturally written in a minor key, but further details aren’t required for empathetic readers.

Writing about many layers of our stories gave us permission to *re-member* events and emotions we didn’t even know were related. In our stories, we collect and identify life pieces that are isolated, denied, and otherwise inaccessible. Stories enable us to visit haunted places, own personal issues, bring fears out of the shadows, and restore dignity to many unnamed pains. So re-membering was more than merely recalling events; *it was also reconnecting entire pieces of our lives*. Our therapists were glad we did this!

As people of faith, we now have a greater understanding of how God uses stories. They are powerful utterances. Stories

bind lives together and memorialize lost ones.

teach us how to feel, moving us into laughter, anger, and tears.

illustrate patterns, decisions, choices, and complex family traditions.

honor the work of time, evident in a life's healing journey.

supply hope for the future by connecting the past and present.

offer a context for pain that feels "untethered" and so difficult to describe.

speak when we can't, and even build bridges where we couldn't go.

humanize people, even abusers, and help us admit our faults.

guide us by pointing out which voices are really worth listening to.

demand action from those prone to indifference or lost in confusion.

train us in lessons of empathy, both for ourselves and others.

God is the Storied One; biblical stories plug us into his grand theodrama. It's comforting to know the stories in that drama include horrific accounts of incest, slander, rape, betrayal, false accusations, and also forgiveness. Through stories, we become members of a far larger community, all of whom are looking to God for strength and guidance.

How to Use This Book

Using the metaphor of a car accident, these journal-type entries invite you to find solidarity with other abuse survivors and develop an understanding with other male survivors. In this format, survivors and support groups are given raw testimonials to *activate* thinking, *validate* experiences, and *illustrate* the complexities of their own abuse stories—stories that never conform to programmed books or spiritual expectations.

Notice that each part of the book begins with a picture that humanizes the story. The first two pictures highlight the damage of abuse through the image of a broken picture of a boy with its shattered glass and frame (The Wreck and Accident Report). The delicate process of restoring his picture and placing it among safe relationships is the emphasis of the final two pictures (Rehabilitation and Driving Again). There is also meaningful symbolism in the form of a gem, cut in diamond shape, which symbolizes the trust that is shaken loose but then restored.

This book is a tool to help you as a survivor explore the ups and downs of your own story. Reading stories written by other male survivors can encourage you to start addressing your own abuse in constructive ways. In this case, the brief entries allow you to pause and contemplate your own abuse or the enormous struggles of other survivors you may know. This is real stuff.

This is not passive reading—it's active engagement. We encourage you to *read at your own pace*, teasing out the similar fears, experiences, relational fallout, and emotional pain in your own life. You may also identify with the long stretches of time in these stories.

After reading through each stage, you will be prompted to (1) *reflect* on your own experience—so try writing down pieces of your story; (2) consider *some next steps*—here are questions you can answer and some specific action points to engage; and finally, (3) benefit from some *coping tips* to help you in your healing journey. This format encourages you to tap into the power of writing for healing, drawing from your own story. You may wish to lean on the help of a trusted friend, spouse, or counselor as you interact with the four parts of the book. When specific connections are made to real-life events of other survivors, then needed insight and progress can be found for your own healing. At the very end, we wrote letters to our “little boys.” These only make sense when you have followed us through our larger stories. In personal terms, we wrote these letters to help *reintegrate* the abused child with the much older man, husband, and father. This meeting was very difficult, but life-changing and long overdue!

While survivors are the primary audience, a secondary audience is persons who are in significant relationships with male survivors: parents, spouses, siblings, spiritual mentors, and even survivors' own children. The people in these various relationships also have much to learn from the profound struggles that male survivors are trying to communicate. Moreover, not just survivors but those close to them also suffer. Such relational systems are prone to abuse and excuse, and the persons in them therefore need to heal and learn new ways of communicating.

With this book, therapists, church leaders, school counselors, teachers, spouses, and mature survivors have a creative tool to strengthen the emerging voice of the one-in-six men¹ who are still learning to find words for what happened to them. So come. Sit on a quiet park bench or gather some other survivors in a safe place. Read—and consider doing the “write thing.”

P A R T I

THE WRECK



Part 1 of this book is about the truth, the horrific beginning of a painful journey that we—Andrew, Daniel, and David—never asked to take. “The Wreck” recounts the initial stages of how our abuse began for each of us. It is wave after wave of childhood catastrophe. This season of our lives saw the most malicious acts conceivable enacted against us. Writing these entries barely captures the layers of betrayal we endured as boys. These layers involved the physical, relational, emotional, and spiritual: in short, all areas of our lives. In part 1, we revisit that painful wreck, which in so many ways is like the scene of a bad car accident. Old memories can bring fresh tears. Indeed, they did.

Here’s where the car lost control, flipped end-over-end, and then slid into oncoming traffic. How our abuse began draws on this metaphor of a car wreck. The rest of our lives have been, in many ways, picking through the broken glass, mangled steel, and burned-out seatbelts that didn’t seem to do their job.