

Featured on Caroline Myss' website www.myss.com
as "Story of the Month" from Feb 2005 through November 2005

Silent Screams from Within...



I was about 2 or 3 when it happened. I know because I remember the house where it happened and that house was sold by the time I was 4. I remember how the room was to the right and towards the back of the house when you walked in the front door. I remember it was the master bedroom down at the end of the hallway and it had private bathroom. The house belonged to my Godparents. They had two children – a boy and a girl - much older than me. They were my second cousins and the only family I had in the United States. In fact, they were the only extended family I had ever met. My parents, my older sister and I had just arrived from Spain (where I was born). We had

fled Cuba (where I was conceived) two years prior in 1972 and were temporarily staying in their house as we settled into exile life in America. I've seen pictures of myself as a toddler out in front of this house but no pictures exist of the inside. I don't know what the inside looked like but I do know what it felt like. I can still feel how small that private bathroom was - how there was hardly enough room for the both of us. I can feel how I was just tall enough to look into the toilet bowl and how much bigger he was. My body remembers how his teenage hand guided my tiny little fingers to touch him in places I knew nothing of. I can feel the firmness of the mattress on my back as he laid me on the bed that I was too small to climb onto myself. The strange thing about the rest is that I remember it from above. This confused me for many years. I didn't know that the memory was of myself lying on that bed as he was sexual with "her" because I remembered it as a witness not a participant. I've since learned that it is very common for victims to leave their body during trauma. Above all else what I remember most vividly is feeling the fear in him as we heard voices walking down the hallway. It was my mom and Godmother heading towards the master bedroom. I can feel the sensation of their voices approaching closer and closer in my left ear. Hearing them snapped me back into my body, which was drenched in fear. I have no idea what they saw or what they know, if anything. We've never spoken about it.

In fact, the first time I ever spoke about the sexual abuse was at age 26...not a word for almost 24 years! I believe that I always knew but I specifically remember having a series of flashbacks when I was a teenager. I remember the flashbacks coming to me mostly when I was in my own bathroom. I told no one. I now know that I did all that I could possibly do to suppress and ignore what my body had not forgotten. I also now know that my body found ways to express the pain and fear that I had never verbally communicated regardless of how much I did to disconnect from it. As a child I often had dizzy spells and fainted. I had discomfort from flat feet, a broken wrist and a bunch of issues with my teeth. I suffered from debilitating menstrual cramps and killer migraine headaches. It seems like I was always at the doctor's office. As a pre-teen my knees dislocated so often and so severely that I wore a knee brace on my right knee for the next 7 years. The brace served as a "scarlet letter" of sorts. Not as a symbol of my own

crime but as the expression of the pain that his violations had left within me. I was not able to ask my parents for the safety and protection that I needed them to provide for me but I was able to communicate my physical pain to them. It was so much easier to say that my knee hurt than to reveal my "secret" pain for which I didn't even have words. The knee pain made my suppressed pain visible and palpable...it allowed me to hurt...it allowed me to cry. My father's concern and longing to ease my knee pain made me feel seen and loved. The endless trips to the orthopedic doctor with my mom made me feel taken care of and somehow gave me a sense of guaranteed protection because there were people looking out for my well-being. Interestingly, when the doctors concluded that the next time my knee dislocated they would have to operate, my knee problems disappeared and I never wore the knee brace again. I later experienced the same exact scenario with my right shoulder dislocating. Again, when it came time to operate, the shoulder healed itself. I feel it important to note that by no means was I faking this physical pain. All of this was truly happening in my body on a physical level. The thing is that the pain was about something much deeper than what these surgeries could address. My body did not need surgery...it needed an outlet for my unexpressed emotions. So, even when these pains ceased, the screams from within continued...

At age 17, I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism and by 23 I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. The doctors insisted that it must be hereditary (no one else in my family has ever had thyroid issues or cancer of any kind) or that I must have been exposed to a high dose of radiation as a baby (they especially leaned towards this since I was not born in America therefore it must have happened before I got to the U.S.). Neither of these "causes" for my cancer is accurate yet they had no other explanation. I was left with no sense of understanding for what was happening in my body as I proceeded with surgery on July 1st, 1996. During my pre-op appointment, the surgeon explained that if the tumor was found to be malignant (as the biopsy had shown) that the entire thyroid would have to be removed and I would receive radiation. During the actual surgery, they determined the tumor to be benign therefore only the right lobe (the side with the tumor) was removed and no radiation was given. I remember feeling the surgeon's touch on my right forearm as I laid semi-conscious in the recovery room and hearing his voice joyfully say to me "it wasn't cancer". My body instantly responded to this with a piercing internal scream that came straight from my gut "of course it was Cancer!" As if to say, "didn't you SEE my pain?" Because I wholeheartedly believe in Divine intervention, I took the news of the doctor's error during my surgery in good spirits. However, the recovery period was so painful and traumatizing for me that when the final pathology report came back showing that the tumor was in fact malignant, I was unable to cope with the thought of a second surgery to remove the other lobe. I just couldn't do it over again. For the next 7 years I continuously said "No" to each and every doctor and specialist that insisted a second surgery was necessary. I was especially angered when one doctor determined this without ever touching my thyroid area or speaking with me directly. He simply walked into my treatment room with his head buried in my files and delivered the news. It was our very first visit and our last. I later realized that saying "No" to the second surgery was the first time I had been able to voice "No" for myself. This second surgery dilemma had offered me the gift of protecting myself in a situation where I felt unsafe. I began to have tremendous appreciation for my thyroid.

Throughout the years, I continued to monitor my remaining thyroid lobe with ultrasounds every 3 to 6 months and it was during an ultrasound in July of 2003 that once again there was a moment of Divine intervention. Suddenly, I just knew that it was time to have the second surgery in the same way that I had known all those years that the second

surgery was not right for me. I was now being offered the opportunity to do the surgery over but this time with awareness of what my body had been communicating all these years. An opportunity I would never have been granted if there had not been a misdiagnosis in my initial surgery leaving my left thyroid lobe in place. You see the first surgery was about the cancer but this one; this second surgery was about making a conscious choice for my own healing and taking an active role in it. This time around I took almost 8 months to prepare for the surgery, which in itself was a healing experience. First, my therapist assisted me with releasing the trauma from the first surgery and recovery period. The shock and fear that remained in the cells around my neck region since July 1996 soon began to soften and relax. Then I began a search for a surgeon I could trust. One to whom I could whisper "Thank you for seeing my pain" as he lifted my thyroid from my body. I also assembled a powerful team of healers- 6 intimate girlfriends from The Barbara Brennan School of Healing & my own healer who has always served as a great source of strength, courage and inspiration for me. Together they all held me in love and support as they intuitively listened to all that my body expressed during the surgical procedure. I could not have asked for better care and protection. I felt safe. Still, coming to terms with releasing the remaining thyroid lobe brought up a lot of tears and sadness for me. I felt like I was losing a great friend. I focused on connecting with my thyroid and honoring all that it had taken on for me; all of the secrets it held for me over the years; all the pain and anger that it had absorbed; all of the unspoken words that were trapped inside that tissue. It's no wonder it had slowed down with so much weighing on it. When I think about what my thyroid did for me I realize that it very much saved my life. It continued to call out to me until I was finally able to hear my own pain and to consciously deal with it. It did the work that I was unable to do for myself – it had become my caretaker. My thyroid is no longer here to take on the unexpressed for me. It is now my job to identify what I am feeling inside and to use my voice to express it. My thyroid cancer has been my greatest teacher leaving me with the gift of self-awareness and self-care.

I would not have found my way through this journey so strongly and clearly without having read "Anatomy of the Spirit" by Caroline Myss just months after my initial surgery. It must have been late 1996 when I read it. I remember my sister had it and I picked it up and looked through the pages with the charts on them. It was in this very moment that I finally felt for the first time ever that I had real insight into what I had just gone through with my cancer and what I had been experiencing in my body my entire life. There it was right on the page "thyroid problems = 5th chakra = personal expression." WOW! This was the answer the doctors had been unable to give me. Not that I knew what a chakra even was at the time but I didn't have to. What I read resonated as truth to the core of my being. It's as if there was a party going on inside my body in celebration of my newfound knowledge. Every cell in my body exploded with hope and clarity. They knew that this was the beginning of the path that would lead to my true healing - the surgery had served as a quick fix on the physical level but I had not yet begun to heal the years of accumulated unexpressed trauma and emotions. I must have shown "Anatomy of the Spirit" to everyone and anyone that would listen. I would start with my own revelations and then encourage them to check it out for themselves. I can't tell you how many copies of the book I've lent out and never seen again. This work has become my passion. It has become my life's purpose. Actually in early 1997 (just months after reading "Anatomy of the Spirit") I went to an astrology workshop and had my birth chart done for fun. The astrologer spoke of how I had come into this life to use my hands as tools in assisting people through healing. She said I would have a career change coming up in just over 5 years. I told her of the book I had just read and how much what she was

saying correlated to all that I had learned from “Anatomy of the Spirit”. She told me to find “that woman” (Caroline Myss) and to do an apprenticeship with her because this was my life’s work. Part of me laughed at the idea of approaching Caroline with this as a complete stranger but the rest of me stood with solid certainty that (in some form) I would find my way to live my life’s work.

It is now early 2005 and I am in the process of opening a healing center called “Waves” with my boyfriend Dave, who has also committed his life to this healing work. Dave came into my life right as I was preparing for my second surgery and radiation treatment. We met at The Barbara Brennan School of Healing and he too was an essential part of that powerful healing team I spoke of earlier. Together we will integrate all that we continue to learn from an abundant variety of sources into a life long passion for healing and transformation.

Finding my voice...isa

SilentScreams23C@aol.com

