

## LITTLE ONE

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### INTRODUCTION

The first draft of "Little One" was written during a time when I supervised play groups for children who had been abused by their parents. The play groups were held while the parents attended self-help group meetings. The conflicting feelings of terror, anger, and pain, mixed with a strong sense of love and belonging were reflected in the chaotic, sometimes frantic and sometimes withdrawn behavior of the boys and girls. As an adult member of the play group I also experienced the confusion felt by the children. I often went home feeling angry, sad and overwhelmed by the intensity of the children's attachment to their parents.

Over the years I began to recognize my own reactions to episodes of emotional victimization which I had experienced as both a child and adult. While my experiences did not involve physical or sexual abuse, I found myself in situations in which I responded to the behavior or words of others by turning over my power. As a result, I felt these common symptoms of victimization: incompetence, anxiety and anger (Garbarino, J., Guttman, E., & Seeley, J.W., 1986). I define abuse, or victimization, as giving one's power to another. During these episodes I spun in my own confused web of feelings. Finishing the story empowered me to become a warrior rather than a victim. Although I have not seen the children of the play groups for many years, I will always thank them for the many lessons in courage that I learned from them.

"Little One" has since been used by therapists working with adult children of alcoholics to assist clients in making peace with their families. I have also given the story to foster care adolescents in an independent living program. These youth are also in the process of coming to terms with their past and forgiving their parents.

"Little One" has also been a wonderful tool in changing common societal misconceptions about child abuse. Adults reading the story have gained a deeper understanding of the love existing between family members caught in the victim-victimizer cycle. "Little One" allows readers to see the strength and wisdom of children who have been abused rather than portraying them as helpless victims. My hope for "Little One" is that it empowers.

**LITTLE ONE**

Mommy and I have a lot of fun together. Sometimes we play in the park. I like it best when we laugh and she calls me her little one.

Sometimes she has grumpy days like today. Things always seem to go wrong on grumpy days. She yells a lot. I try so hard to stay out of trouble.

The house seems so quiet. The refrigerator has stopped humming. I hope it isn't broken. Mommy will be upset if it isn't working. She said not to open it.

I feel sad for mommy. I try to do nice things for her. I tell her I don't really want any milk so we won't have to open the refrigerator. I really do want some.

I don't like it when mommy is grumpy. I still need her to be the mommy who calls me her little one.

I ask her for a drink of water in my special cup.

I ask her if we can go to the park. I want it to turn into a good day!

My tries at cheering up mommy aren't working. Instead, she's getting angry.

She throws away my special cup so I won't ask for a drink anymore.

She pulls on my ear so hard that I don't want to go to the park anymore.

I run into my room.

I spin round and round. I see a little girl who looks like me. She is such a bad girl. I feel just like her.

I'm so bad I throw all my toys on the floor.

I spin some more.

Now that other girl is stomping mad. So am I.

I spin even faster. I want to spin everything away.

When I stop spinning, I crawl under my bed where it's safe.

I wish mommy would come.

My door opens. It's mommy. She holds me and tells me I'm still her little one.

I go to my friend's house. I don't feel much like playing.

His mommy notices that my ear is a little bit red. She asks me what happened.

I don't know what to do or to say.

She asks again. She wants to put some ice on it.

I start to cry. I tell her what a bad girl I've been. That I make mommy so mad sometimes.

She asks me if Mommy hurt my ear.

I'm scared. I want to run away. I just pretend that I'm a statue.

Deep down I want her to know. I slowly nod my head hoping she will notice.

She tells me not to be afraid. She says that when someone's touch hurts, the best thing to do is to tell a grownup who will believe it. She doesn't think my mommy or me are bad at all.

All mommies feel angry now and then. Sometimes mommies need to learn how to keep from getting so angry that they yell too much or hurt their kids. Your mommy loves you very much. She can learn how to love you without it hurting.

Let's go to your house. Your mommy and you both need a hug.

**REFERENCES**

Garbarino, J., Guttman, E., Seeley, J. W. (1986) *The Psychologically Battered Child*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.