



A White Paper: ABUSE – A Costly Mistake

**By Gregg Tyler Milligan, Author & Abuse Prevention Advocate
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<http://www.godmustbesleeping.com/>

Abuse has been with society since the beginning. And, from the beginning – I have brought emphasis to the economic cost of abuse of ‘any’ kind. Specifically, the funds spent each year on services designed to prevent abuse (pre-direct costs) as well as the vast amounts of sums allocated in order to treat abuse (post-indirect costs).

Before writing my first book, *A Beautiful World* in 2009, I wanted to do more than just write a heart-wrenching memoir. The main reason was that I knew for a fact that the memoir itself would not be ‘my’ story, but ‘our’ story. Therefore, I wanted to fully understand all aspects of abuse and how it not only affected several aspects of my life, but everyone’s life who has been abused. The more I researched the subject of abuse, the more I came to realize that abuse is not only emotional, mentally, and physically costly; it is economically costly as well. This last associated cost is often overlooked. My research took me to several studies which have examined the long-term effects of childhood and adult abuse with regard to both genders.

This statement I’ve come to know as yet another fact regarding abuse needs to be taken extremely seriously: Abuse is and will forever be – a preventable health problem. Yes, I used the word {Preventable}. Furthermore, the only realistic answer I could surmise after all my research into the subject of abuse – including my own – was that it is allowed to spread unabated due to scientific and social neglect. In other words, *Looking the Other Way*.

I began poring over mountains of data regarding abuse long before I decided to write my first book (and 2nd). There were several woeful realizations along the way. For example, I came to the conclusion that if abuse was [any] form of cancer, there would be billions of dollars poured into research for prevention (pre-direct costs) and treatment (post-direct costs). As of 2013, the U.S., along with other developed nations have come nowhere close to spending this amount of money with regard to abuse and neglect. To qualify another form of abuse: Hunger. There are staggering numbers of children alone in the United States that go to bed hungry every night. In America today, nearly 17 million children don’t have access to enough food. I cannot find just one realistic reason for this to occur. At the very least, and as a tax-funded system which has been in place since 1979, children in all American schools are to be provided both breakfast and lunch. It was only on Feb 12, 2013 Feed The Children and World Neighbors announced that World Neighbors would become a subsidiary of Feed The Children; effective Mar 1, 2013. The move will expand Feed The Children’s worldwide reach to 21 countries. (source: Feed The Children Organization <http://www.feedthechildren.org/>). {Effective Mar 1, 2013 ... only 24-days ago)! Why can’t we take abuse seriously?

I found this particular study during my research, and it was incredibly well documented. Please note the year, 2001, which indicates to me that we as a country and world, are backsliding concerning the issue of abuse. Please note: *“The incidence rate of child abuse and neglect in this country is about ten times as high (40 children per thousand children per year) as the incidence rate for all forms of cancer (3.9 individuals per thousand individuals per year). Yet the federal fiscal year 2001 budget for the National Cancer Institute is \$3.74 billion, while funding for CAPTA state grants, CAPTA discretionary grants, and CAPTA Community Based Grants combined totals only \$72 million.”* ---Frank Putnam, M.D., researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health.

I will add my own opinion: If the world tackled national and international emergencies with the same lackluster approach as abuse ... abuse itself would no longer cease to be an issue due to the fact the world have ended long ago.

Abuse is a disease. It has all of the medical, social, mental, and emotional adverse effects of any classification of diseases; including death. “Imagine a childhood disease that affects one in five girls and one in seven boys before they reach 18 (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994).”

Abuse is also a disease which repeats itself if unchecked for future generations. Humanity has fallen far short with regard to preventing and treating abuse. I cringe when I hear people refer to [traditional] diseases and not hear abuse as part of the list. As if to say, abuse is in a category all its own even though it mimics precisely every [traditional] disease known to science. I cringe, yet again, when the general response to reading my book(s) is the same as the perception of abuse – “*It is just so sad ... too discomfoting.*” This myopic and dangerous. No one is safe and/or insulated from this problem. Depending upon my mood and level of frustration ... at my worst, I reply to these people, “*The life-ending hit most often comes when you are looking the other way.*”

Because of abuse our quality of life is vanishing. My research, along with being a victim –now survivor, has led me to know for sure that..., so severe is this disease –there is a direct correlation between emotional experiences during childhood and physical and mental health during adulthood. According to an Issue Briefings for Health Reporters, Vol. 4, No. 2., presented to the U.S. Senate (1999), “[...] *abuse has a direct and powerful relationship to the major causes of adult mortality in the United States.*”

The undisputable fact is: Either due to short-lived or long-suffering –one’s quality of life due to abuse is diminished greatly.

This disease will last a lifetime.

“Adult survivors of childhood physical, emotional, or sexual abuse are not only at increased risk for depression and other mental health disorders, but new evidence suggests they are increasingly more likely to suffer from heart disease, obesity, and other potentially fatal physical conditions. Although it appears that trauma survivors frequently smoke, drink, and overeat as a way to cope with their emotional turmoil, other evidence suggests that the trauma itself may have profound effects on the body that leave it increasingly vulnerable to disease. Researchers, for example, have found that childhood abuse survivors show changes in brain structure and in their physiological responses to stress.” Anda, R.F., Brown, D.W., Felitti, V.J., Dube, S.R., & Giles, W.H. (2008). Adverse childhood experiences and prescription drug use in a cohort study of adult HMO patients. *BMC Public Health*, 8, 198. (2002).

In my home-state of Michigan, an examination of the long-term health care utilization and costs associated with physical, sexual, or both physical and sexual childhood abuse in 3,333 women (mean age, 47 years) randomly selected from the membership files of a large integrated health care delivery system; yielded significantly higher annual health care use and costs. Caldwell, R. A. (1992). *The Costs of Child Abuse vs. Child Abuse Prevention: Michigan's Experience*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan Children's Trust Fund. The study further demonstrated that consideration of child abuse alone cost the State of Michigan \$823 million. Please keep in mind the study was concluded in 1992. Fast-forward to 2013 and it is obvious we have an epic problem.

When I am delivering a keynote or lecturing at a workshop, I narrow my discussion down to an economic meltdown due to abuse while rattling some of the main areas affected off the ‘top of my head’: Protective Services, Foster Care, Health/Medical, Education (including Special Education), Psychological Treatment, Prescription Medication, Legal/Penal System, and (the eye-opener if my audience was fast asleep by this time), is always Increased Taxes.

Even with an abstract argument that no reliable estimates exist of the overall costs to society pertaining to abuse that could withstand serious examination, even conservative estimates of government spending on behalf of the abused and neglected, illustrate that this 'disease' costs society a great deal.

Arguably some of the most important human costs of abuse are unquantifiable, unjustifiable, and unexplainable. What disease is?

Gregg Tyler Milligan is an internationally-known author and child abuse prevention advocate. He has written two books, *A Beautiful World*, detailing his childhood and the horrific suffering Milligan endured at the hands of his mother and strangers. Milligan later completed the continuation to *A Beautiful World*, describing his next eleven years. Both books are published under the same volume, titled *God Must be Sleeping*. Milligan is a member of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) Speakers Bureau and continues to spread his message of hope.

In his words, "Please remember, the reason we are here is to save one another – Break the cycle." More information can be found at godmustbesleeping.com/.