

My Interview with Gregg Milligan Author of "A Beautiful World," and How He Overcame Sexual Abuse

There is Hope for Victims of Sexual Abuse and Incest: A Personal Account

By Shana Dines

This interview is with Gregg Tyler Milligan, who is the author of the book, "A Beautiful World," published in Aug 2009. His true story is about unfathomable and hideous abuse perpetrated by his mother. Mothers are supposed to be the safest people in our world. They are the nurturers and protectors. There have been many reported abuses by fathers who molest and abuse their daughters and less often their sons, but maternal abuse is not often written about. I was honored to hear Gregg speak and was amazed by his strength and recovery against all odds.

Plans are being made to have Gregg Milligan speak in the Northern Indiana area by the end of the summer. I will announce it when the plans are confirmed for those who are interested in attending.

Shana: *Gregg, it was so nice to meet you in person at Siena Heights University. I was very touched and amazed by your talk about the book that you wrote, "A Beautiful World." I understand the working title of the book was "God Must Be Sleeping." Is that true and why did you change the title of the book?*

Gregg: *Yes, this is true. The original and working title of the book was "God Must Be Sleeping." The answer leading to the reason of why I changed the title was that when I began developing the outline which would later become the book, "A Beautiful World," I was immersed in the horrors of the abuse. However, as I began to push hard against the very reason I was writing the book - to save each other - I felt a more appropriate title reflecting hope was paramount. I wanted people to see we can overcome the atrocities done unto us and become functioning members of society. To one day give back in our own way and become shining advocates of the possibilities of a Beautiful World.*

Shana: *Do you think that you will ever write another book about your life and how you were able to recover from the abuse that you survived?*

Gregg: *Yes. The second installment of A Beautiful World which encapsulates age 11 - 18 is in the first-draft form. The abuse did not end for me at 11 and continued until I was 18. I am referring to the same type of abuse I suffered at the hands of my mother - physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional - now at the hands of other family members and again sometimes strangers. All that was absent was the prostitution. I hope to complete the 2nd book by Sept 2011. I have not yet given it a title, but am leaning toward incorporating the original working title into Book II. If I stay with the current schedule, this particular book will have taken approximately 12 years to complete. Book II will again take the reader through a visceral and harrowing description of the abuse in order to establish the landscape; however it will focus more so on the opportunities in which I took full advantage in order to rise above the torment, avoid becoming an abuser myself, and thus enabling the ability to succeed and ultimately give back to the world.*

Shana: *How were you able to turn your life around and live a normal life?*

Gregg: *I will say that without a doubt I did not make it alone. There were significant individuals within my life who helped me and whom I will never forget. It was with their help, along with my tenacity for becoming a better human being. There is also my sincere belief in something bigger and better than all of us that wants us to make it; literally cheers for us to do so.*

Shana: *I know that you have a grown son that also graduated with honors from Siena Heights University. I know that you are very proud of him and he is very proud of you too. How did you learn to be the wonderful father that you are?*

Gregg: *It all began with a deep-rooted feeling inside of me when I was very young that it simply felt wonderful to love something and to be loved in return. It began with my first pet, SamBirdio where I would feel love in return. I would spend the rest of my life craving that "return" of affection. The love that presses hard against my heart and my heart is never full. I could also never bring myself to harm my son in any manner. Where this inner-sense of*

Takeaways

- What was your purpose in writing this book, "A Beautiful World?"
- Do you think that survivors ever fully recover from the abuse that they experienced?

compassion came from I do not know. But, what I do know is that this feeling of compassion for another is real. As a matter of fact, it is more real and pervasive than hate. Also, it is the only emotion that I believe will last an eternity. I will also share with you that I am equally grateful that I did love and care for my son as much I am relieved I did not abuse him. The weight of shame would have crushed me for sure and ended any chance I would have had at a good life. A deserved life.

Shana: *Was parenting hard for you? Were you afraid that you might be abusive to your son?*

Gregg: *Extremely difficult. I lived in fear each and every day that I would turn out like my parents and harm my son. This fear plagued me every waking moment, so I would take great care in not allowing my actions to be anything but compassionate. Other than losing my son to illness or death, fear of abusing him was equally exhausting and grueling. It was so difficult, it was years before I was able to relax and allow myself to feel I had accomplished something grand.*

Shana: *You said that you were married before and I am assuming that your first wife was the mother of your son, how did the effects of the abuse affect your marriage?*

Gregg: *I met my son's mother in college where she became pregnant my junior year. We were married eight years before I filed for divorce. The affects of the abuse were a leading cause for our marital problems. I was riddled with anxiety I did not understand and was uncomfortable with therapy at that time. It was also difficult for me to be touched and therefore any intimacy between my son's mother and me was rare. In addition, she herself was abused and suffered from many of the same issues. Without the proper counseling our marriage suffered and thus ended. I ended the marriage because I did not want my son to learn this was acceptable behavior. I did not want him to be afraid of relationships and it was obvious his mother and I were teaching him these things.*

Shana: *Was it through counseling that you were able to learn how to be a good husband and father?*

Gregg: *No. I already had a very good sense of right and wrong before I became a husband and father. A sense that told me to love instead of hate and never harm anyone. I had seen this far too often growing up and could not bring myself to hurt my wife or my son. Counseling, therapy, and lots of reading certainly helped raise my awareness. Education! Feed the head with knowledge and the heart with love. I had the heart part down pretty well by the time I would be a husband and father.*

Shana: *Are all of your siblings supportive? Did any of your siblings or family give you a hard time when you came out about the abuse from your mother and father?*

Gregg: *No. There is a great divide between all of my siblings and me except for only two; April and Tina. The others have become addicts and abusers themselves. Because they do not want to accept responsibility for their actions and develop themselves into better human beings, I keep my distance. They find me to be quite an oddity to say the least. Yes, the siblings in which I am estranged were quite angry with me for writing the book. Although, they have never denied the abuse took place, they feel I have told a story that should have been kept private. Three of my siblings have actually come to our mother's defense. Not her actions, but stating it was a terrible thing for me to tell the world what she had done. For whatever reason; hatred, ignorance, or shame on their part...they defended her.*

Shana: *Why did you decide to write this book?*

Gregg: *For no other reason than to save someone else and me in the process.*

Shana: *Have there been any negative repercussions from writing this book?*

Gregg: *Yes, a backlash of hatred from many of my siblings and my nightmares worsened.*

Shana: *Were you ever sorry that you wrote this book?*

Gregg: *Yes, during the worst of my panic attacks or when a family member was cruel about me writing it.*

Shana: *What were the positive repercussions from writing this book?*

Gregg: *The touching responses I have received through several mediums like blogs, websites, eMail, snail mail, etc. Meeting wonderful people like you and knowing we are saving each other.*

Shana: *Was it a healing experience for you writing, "A Beautiful World?" Do you suggest that other abuse survivors write a book about their abuse and how they overcame it?*

Gregg: *No, it was not a healing process. Quite literally a very painful experience where I would have to relive the*

abuse. Making it worse was the editorial process where very little emotion went into making suggestions regarding the book by the editor(s). Then on to publication where you have to put yourself in the public eye and absorb much criticism. However, yes it was worth it and is for anyone who has suffered abuse. And that is because in the midst of all that pain and adversity, you will save someone in the end. That is all that matters and it is so worth the process.

Shana: Are your siblings recovering too from the abuse?

Gregg: Not all of them. Only two and those two struggle with their own demons. The others are far too gone to ever recover due to an absolute refusal to accept responsibility for their own actions. A deep sense of hatred and rage they cannot seem to work through.

Shana: Would you tell us about your career and occupation today?

Gregg: Upon graduating with my bachelor's degree from Siena Heights University I immediately went into the United States Air Force and was commissioned a flight officer. I served four years active duty and upon receiving an honorable discharge I took my first civilian position as a network engineer. Afterwards, I continued to advance and took executive management positions in the last twelve years. Today, I am a senior director of technology.

Shana: Do you consider yourself over the abuse or will it be an ongoing process? Does it still affect your life today?

Gregg: The after-effects of abuse are life-long. We will never get over them completely; however, we will and can learn to work past the worst of it. For me, I still suffer panic attacks, anxiety even during safe periods, and chronic nightmares. Yes, it does affect my daily life, but I will not allow it to hamper any opportunities of which I may be able to take advantage. This does not have to end us. If we do not allow the abuse to take over, we will have very good lives and rank ourselves among the better human beings. This is because we are more loving and sensitive due to what we have gone through.

Shana: What is the most important thing that you think that victims of sexual abuse should know?

Gregg: Tell someone and keep telling them until they help you. You will be able to triumph over what was done to you. It takes you wanting to be a better person and better people who want you to make it. Remember, it is not what you do, but what you do 'afterwards' that counts. Lastly, never ever quit, because you are most definitely not alone. This is a beautiful world.

Shana: Do you think that forgiveness is necessary to recover from abuse? If so or if not, how do you define forgiveness?

Gregg: No, this is a huge misunderstanding. Remember the love you have another -even if it was not returned, was still love that came from a very special place in your heart. It is not your fault they could not receive love nor give it back in return. Leave them to their demise. This is the life "they" chose for themselves. You can love another and another until one day, that love you freely give falls upon the right person. I define forgiveness as a grand and amazing feat of courage that is "earned" and not given unless it is given back. A symbiotic relationship consists of both parties giving equally to one another. The same pertains to forgiveness. If you are not loved and forgiven in return, then you have no reason to forgive another. Remember, we are capable of so much before it tears us into little pieces. Again, forgiveness is an act of reciprocity - not one-sided and it must be earned. The act of forgiving for the sake of forgiving is empty and without substance or meaning.

Shana: Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview?

Gregg: You and I are not alone. We have each other. We are kindred spirits forged in anguish. Our hopes and dreams may have been unfulfilled at one time and seemingly passed us by. But they are replaced by another. Our faith twirls around in our souls and we give love to each other. We pour it out and sometimes push it hard against the heart of our companion; unyielding, unending, unrelenting. Sometimes, this love returns to the same place and we pour it out again into the same heart for a lifetime: and the heart is never full. This is exactly why we are here. To save one another.

Shana: Thank you so much for taking the time to let me interview you. I cannot tell you how much this has meant to me. I am sure that your book will impact many people's lives. It is so important for survivors of abuse to know that they can live happy healthy lives and that they can stop the cycle of abuse. Your book has surely proven that it is possible.

I want to thank you again so much for this interview and the hope that you will and have given to others. I envy you that you are able to say that you never were abusive to you son. I was not as healthy as you were. I spanked my sons in my first marriage and didn't find recovery until they were older. I have had to try to forgive myself for not being as loving, being abusive, with spankings and yelling. I know that I did the best with what I had, but I don't

think I will ever be able to forgive myself for not doing better. I know that God forgives me and my youngest son never experienced any corporal punishment, thanks to learning a better way through recovery, counseling, God and a healthy husband to help parent.

Gregg: The pleasure has been all mine. You are a kind and gentle soul. It is apparent you have taken what was done to you and turned it into the greatest of all things: Hope.

You can find Gregg Milligan's book, "A Beautiful World," at Amazon.com. You can also read a review of his book [here](#), and also about my visit to hear him speak at Siena University in Adrian, Michigan, [here](#).

More resources

- "A Beautiful World," sexual abuse, incest, mother/son incest, parenting, interview, books, mental health,, counseling
- Gregg Milligan, recovery, mother/son incest

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