

CHANGING FROM VICTIM TO SURVIVOR

It is natural to view yourself as a victim and to experience all of the feelings and attitudes that accompany that victim status when the abuse has only recently occurred or there has been no opportunity for working through the emotions and thoughts connected to the abuse. It takes time and effort to move from the status of being a victim to becoming a survivor. The feelings and thoughts associated with being a victim are overwhelmingly negative and self-defeating. The feelings and thoughts associated with being a survivor, on the other hand, are more positive, forward looking, and confident. While it is natural and expected that everyone who has been exposed to abuse starts with feeling like a victim, realization of the potential of this person can only be realized if their status changes to that of becoming a survivor. This exercise will help you understand the differences between victims and survivors and help you define your own current status.

1. The following words or phrases describe either a victim or a survivor, but they are presented to you in a jumbled and mixed-up order. Your task is to look at each word or phrase and rewrite it under the column labeled “Victim” or the column labeled “Survivor.” You will have to sort through the list to finally end up with a profile of words that describe the victim and words that describe a survivor.

List of Descriptors

Depressed	Preoccupied with trauma
Has overcome pain	Enjoys living
Blames perpetrator	Lives in the past
Pessimistic	Wants understanding
Hopeless	Enjoys people
Empowered	Letting go of anger
Trauma is in perspective	Growing in trust
Defeated	No energy
Lives in the present and future	Dominated by fear
Helpless	More smiles than tears
Hopeful	Distrustful
Withdrawn socially	Bitter
Optimistic	Confident
Ashamed	Renewed energy
Needs sympathy	Focused on the pain

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your degree of feeling like a victim (1) or a survivor (5).



7. What has helped you the most in moving from being a victim to becoming a survivor?
