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## Looking Up Times Vol 1, (September 1985)

Looking Up Staff

*Looking Up*

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# “LOOKING UP”

FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF INCEST

SEPTEMBER, 1985

"Looking Up" is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves 1) people of all ages who identify themselves as survivors of incest victimization; 2) service providers and their agencies; 3) concerned groups and individuals. "Looking Up" was founded in July, 1984 by survivors of incest and continues to be run by a majority percentage of survivors. The entire board and advisory committee represents a vast variety of professional and personal backgrounds. All "Looking Up" services are based on the philosophy that people can heal from the devastating trauma of incest. Safe and ongoing support from each other, and an understanding that the courage and strength that allowed us to survive the incest, is what can rebuild our sense of self-power and control. "Looking Up" defines incest as sexual abuse of any type between family or perceived family members. An incest victim is one for whom the abuse is still occurring. Survivors of incest are no longer being sexually abused.

## THE FIRST YEAR IN REVIEW

### Speaking Engagements

As part of program/service advancement, "Looking Up" was represented by Gayle Woodsum at a vast variety of public forum speaking engagements addressing basic incest awareness; victim/survivor advocacy and support; training for professional and volunteer service providers; response and prevention. Between November, 1984 and June, 1985 (eight months), Gayle gave 14 presentations.

### Education/Information

During this first year of existence, "Looking Up" has established a mailing list of incest survivors, service providers and concerned individuals that exceeds 400 in number. Over 25% of this list are self-identified survivors of incest. Many individuals or agencies on the list are contacts for larger groups of survivors. In addition to the established mailing list, "Looking Up" received 133 requests for information and/or support, by mail alone, since January, 1985.

To raise awareness, assist survivors, and aid prevention, the organization took part in writing and distributing a number of pieces of literature this year, including nearly 2,000 copies of The "Looking Up" Times, a literary magazine written entirely by Maine survivors of incest of all ages.

# HOW WE LEARN TO HEAL

A REPORT ON THE GATHERING FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INCEST

Held June 22, 1985 - Augusta, Maine

An all-day gathering for women survivors of incest was held at the University of Maine at Augusta on Saturday, June 22. Nearly eighty women registered for the function, exceeding the day's capacity, and forcing many onto a waiting list that could not be served. Those who attended ranged in age from nineteen to sixty and came from twenty-eight different cities and towns in Maine, covering every geographic section of the State. Fifty women actually participated in the day's activities.

"How We Learn To Heal" was the theme for the gathering that began with small-group workshops held in the morning. The first workshop discussed "How Incest Has Affected Our Lives," while the second workshop focused on "Looking At The Healing Process."

The gathering participants divided into four groups of about twelve members each, remaining in these groups for both workshops. The groups were facilitated by incest survivors who were experienced in group guidance that encouraged member participation and/or observation as each individual chose for herself. The facilitators were Gloria Jameyson, Augusta; Jade Lee, Winterport; Alice Lewis, Bangor; Martha Palmer, Portland.

After the conclusion of the morning workshops, group facilitators presented an overall view of the insights that had come out of the two hours of discussion. Following is a brief listing of some of the observations that were made by survivors:

"How Incest Has Affected Our Lives":

- inability to have intimate relationships
- lack of self-esteem
- lack of friendships
- wanting to die
- not knowing how to draw lines in behavior
- feeling isolated
- obsessed with sex - promiscuous
- avoiding sex - celibacy
- feeling required to please people
- being afraid
- settling for second best in everything
- not believing in one's own feelings
- drug/alcohol abuse
- anger and not dealing with it "appropriately"
- depression as a way of life
- nightmares
- guilt

"How Incest Has Affected Our Lives," cont'd:

remaining a child  
feeling responsible for anything that goes wrong for someone else  
covering up what we think is bad about us  
sexual dysfunction  
inability to trust anyone or anything  
food abuse  
not knowing how to be a parent  
unaware of the outside world  
blocked feelings  
being rejected by family  
strong need for control  
trapped by secrecy  
confusion  
memories - lack of, returning, confusing ones  
becoming a protector of others  
"If they only knew what I was really like, they'd hate me."  
hollow feelings  
afraid of failure - automatically feeling like a failure  
feeling less of a woman, less of a human  
powerlessness  
easily coerced  
afraid to love  
not knowing what it's like to be a child

"Looking At The Healing Process":

How The Healing Process Gets Started -

when things get so bad they can't get any worse  
when someone else cares  
when something similar happens to someone else

Thoughts On Healing -

learning how to nurture oneself in little ways  
learning the right to take control and make choices  
learning how to trust/love something, even if it's a stuffed animal  
love inside as well as outside oneself  
owning the incest - it really did happen  
meditation  
sharing groups  
therapy  
speaking out to people or one person who cares - talking about the incest  
recognizing one's courage  
giving up the responsibility for the incest  
doing physically challenged activities  
empowerment and healing go together  
sharing with other incest survivors  
writing - journals, diaries, tape recording - for an objective perspective  
reading about incest

sorting out problems into priorities -taking one small thing at a time  
trusting oneself - following the "gut"  
defining own pace and own methods  
saying it out loud - talk, talk, talk  
allowing self to relive feelings, even though it's frightening  
crying  
being alone and safe  
learning to take risks - to grow

The issue of whether or not to confront the perpetrator or the family about past incest was also a topic for discussion. Some felt it was helpful, others felt it was potentially harmful. Some of the reasons given for confrontation were:

a desire for revenge  
wanting to help other family members  
needing to break open the secret  
wanting to know what the response from the family will be  
looking for an apology

The afternoon was devoted to free-time sharing and a presentation by Karin Spitfire, entitled "Moving Matters." The presentation was structured to include participation by all those who desired to be part of it. Karin, a survivor of incest and author/performer of the renowned "Incest: It's All Relative," designed special body movement as a means of healing work for incest survivors. The movements were gentle and slow, allowing each participant to rate her own level of comfort and to identify any movement that pushed her beyond what she felt ready for (at which point she was able to withdraw to observe for a while or for the remainder of the program). At the conclusion of the body movement, the women were each asked to identify the single emotion they were experiencing most strongly at that particular moment. Some of the identified emotions were:

sadness, anger, fear, exhilaration, isolation

Once these basic emotions were identified, the women divided into groups as labeled by the feelings. Each group then created a movement that expressed its particular emotion, shared that movement with the entire gathering, and finally taught that movement for everyone at the gathering to try.

A "Safe Room" was offered at the gathering as a quiet place for participants to take a "break" from stirred-up emotions that needed one-on-one assistance or just some rest time away from the group. The room was staffed by Dr. Noel Sherwin of Georgetown. The day concluded with a large catered dinner and a closing ceremony in which participants were given a red ribbon to symbolize their courage in surviving having been held hostage in their own homes, at the hands of those they loved and trusted.

The Evaluations

Those who attended the gathering were asked to evaluate the day in order to assist "Looking Up" in planning future functions.

When asked what part of the day was most liked, those who responded were equally divided between the "talking workshops" and the "body movement." Some said the body movement was least appreciated because "I was not ready for it," "it didn't make sense," "it was the best part, but also the most difficult part." Most people expressed the belief that there was not enough time devoted to the two one-hour "talking" workshops, although some also felt that the morning was too long and had "too much to cover in a short period of time."

Most of the women said they especially appreciated the fact that the gathering was open only to survivors and excluded coverage by the media, both of which helped to make them feel comfortable and "safe." However, a couple of participants did not see the need to close the gathering to non-survivors and would like to have had friends and others included. Most of the women felt they could not have participated in the body movement if there had been men present, while a few of the women mentioned they would like to have seen men survivors included in the day.

Most of the women said they felt less alone as a result of the day, most wished there had been more literature available (there was one table of books for sale, one of items free of charge, and two tables for browsing and copying addresses), and most of the participants were pleased by what they called the "positive attitude of the day, with its emphasis on healing." Women also mentioned that "new stuff has surfaced" as a result of the gathering.

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WHERE WE ARE HEADED FOR YEAR #2

"Looking Up" has established its goals for the coming year. Most of these goals carry a price tag and depend upon the receipt of contributions or grants to be completed. They include the following:

- The "Looking Up" Times - literary magazine written by survivors - 2 issues
- General Informational/Resource Newsletters - 4 issues
- Educational Literature - 3 pieces
- Survivors' Gathering - 1
- Speaking Engagements - 6, minimum
- Volunteer Training For Survivor Support Network - year-long implementation
- Challenge Activities For Survivors - year-long organization
- Tailored Program Services For Groups/Agencies - year-long implementation

## A Few Words About Money

"Looking Up" received grants and donations amounting to less than \$1,000 last year. As an infant organization with such a small amount of financial support, "Looking Up" made an enormous impact. It did so on a great deal of faith and by also relying on over 2,000 hours of volunteer labor and by accruing another \$1,000 in liabilities (for paper, postage and telephone bills).

### WE CANNOT CONTINUE WITHOUT YOUR HELP

We will continue to pursue a solid funding base, but it currently does not exist, and "Looking Up," in order to remain independent and strong, must have the financial help of the general public. Please send the donation amount that you can afford, today. (See donation form at the end of this newsletter.)

## The Latest News

### THE "LOOKING UP" TIMES - BY SURVIVORS OF INCEST

#### The Second Issue

The May, 1985 issue of The "Looking Up" Times was a tremendous success. Reviewed with high praise by two national incest survivor newsletters, and requested as a possible addition to the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliffe College, it promises to make its mark as a collection of important literature.

The "Times" is important because it is written by incest survivors from all over Maine, of all ages, in words that speak the truths that must be spoken.

### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR ISSUE #2: September 15, 1985

(Projected Printing Date By Mid-November)

#### What Should Be Submitted?

Short essays, poems, comments, letters: on what it's like to be incested and how we learn to heal.

Also drawings - must be black ink on white paper

If your submission is not used and you would like it returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (Published pieces will not be returned.)

Please include your age and how you want to have your name signed. If you do not let us know how your submission is to be signed, it will be published anonymously.

Submissions will be edited for length and clarity.

The "Times" is FREE TO ALL SURVIVORS OF INCEST, with a suggested donation of \$2.00/issue if you can afford it.  
It is available to the general public at \$2./issue  
Bulk rate (10 or more issues) \$1/issue

## "LOOKING UP" INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTERS

By And For All People Concerned About Sexual Abuse Issues

"Looking Up" is instituting a second publication to address news of importance to issues confronting incest victims and survivors in Maine and all who want to help. In addition to informational articles, interviews, book reviews, these newsletters will publish listings of resources available to victims and survivors.

In accordance with the "Looking Up" philosophy that survivors know best what type of assistance will be most helpful to their individual needs, resource listings are to make people aware of what is available, leaving the judgment of quality or appropriateness up to those who are interested in the possibilities. "Looking Up," in listing resources, will not be endorsing them in any way.

"Looking Up" Informational Newsletters will be distributed FREE OF CHARGE to our mailing list and anyone requesting the newsletter (donations greatly appreciated).

### To Be Listed As A Resource:

Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope requesting our resource questionnaire. This questionnaire must be completed for your resource to be listed with us.

Payment for resource listing:

If your resource does not charge a fee for services, we will list you free of charge.

If your resource charges a fee for services, \$5/listing/newsletter must accompany your completed questionnaire.

These newsletters will reach an estimated minimum of 1,000 readers/issue. Submissions of articles, book reviews, etc. on themes relating to the issues of incest survivors are invited.

DEADLINE FOR FIRST ISSUE: NOVEMBER 15, 1985 (Projected publication is late December.)

Dates For Subsequent Issues: Deadline: January 1, 1986  
Publication: February, 1986

Deadline: March 1, 1986  
Publication: April, 1986

