



WELCOME TO OUR

HW Monthly Newsletter

we're so glad you're here!

Do Clean Moral Binaries Exist?

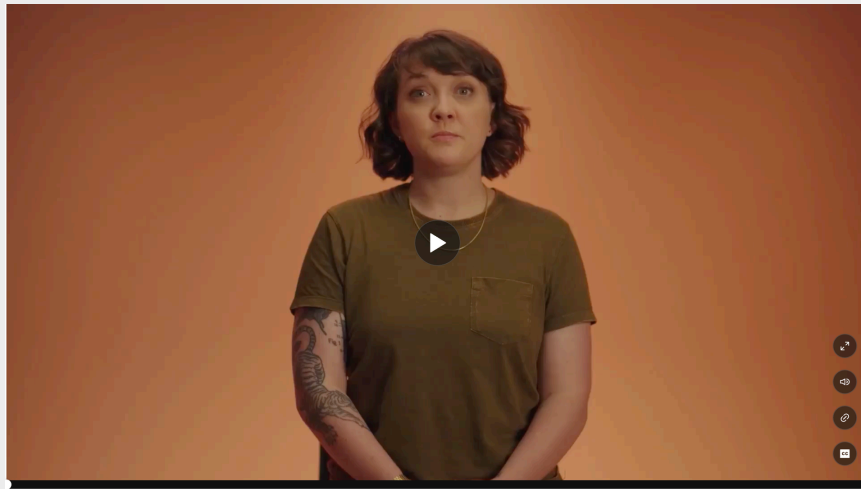


Photo credit: Screenshot from video by Amanda Mustard, Luke Malone, Josef Beeby, and Adam Westbrook.

My Grandfather Abused Countless Children

Public opinion has been intense.

[Great Photo, Lovely Life](#), filmmaker and survivor Amanda Mustard reflects on growing up in a family where sexual abuse was normalized, unnamed, and buried beneath love, fear, loyalty, and silence.

Her story challenges something many of us cling to: the idea that child sexual abuse exists in clean moral binaries. That there are monsters on one side and innocent families on the other. That if someone harms a child, we simply send them to jail and the story is over.

But it isn't over.

Amanda's grandfather went to prison. He was released. And the harm continued.

Research tells us that the vast majority of families (as many as 88%) never report child sexual abuse to authorities. And when they do, the outcomes often fail to create lasting safety. So we have to ask a harder question: What are we actually trying to accomplish?

Undoubtedly most would agree that prevention is the ultimate goal when it comes to child sexual abuse. And if that is the case, when will we realize that punishment, while deserved in many cases, cannot be the answer.

Real safety requires three things:

First, protection for those who could be at risk of being harmed in the future. This only makes sense when we offer *meaningful treatment* for the person who has caused sexual harm, or is in danger of causing sexual harm. This is not a one size fits all intervention but one crafted to the particular person and situation, informed by the latest research.

Second, healing for those already harmed, at whatever stage the disclosure occurs and the person is ready to face what they have been through. This is a survivor led winding

endeavor and takes years. This healing needs to include loved ones, especially non-offending parents who may carry their own unaddressed trauma, as Amanda's mother did.

Third, systemic accountability and a path toward repair within families and communities. Many people play a role, even if a minor one, in environments where children and young people are sexually harmed. We must all step up to take our share of responsibility if we hope for a safer environment going forward. The skills needed for repair are almost never taught and must intentionally learn.

None of this excuses abusive behavior. The grandfather's actions were clearly wrong. Children deserve protection. Full stop.

And yet families are rarely simple. People often love those who have harmed them. Intergenerational trauma complicates decisions. A single mother who needs childcare and housing may turn to her parents because there is nowhere else to go. These realities do not make the abuse acceptable but they do make the situation far more complex than "lock them up and throw away the key."

When we reduce child sexual abuse to a clean moral binary, we avoid the discomfort of that complexity. But avoiding reality is not a prevent strategy likely to work. Engaging in it might.

We are grateful for Amanda's courage in showing what it looks like to step into the deep end. She shows us the lived experience of so many families in a way most will never want to see, nor understand.

Prevention requires more than outrage. It requires honesty, courage, skill, support, community and the willingness to hold multiple truths at once.

Because if our real goal is safety then we have to be brave enough to think beyond binaries.

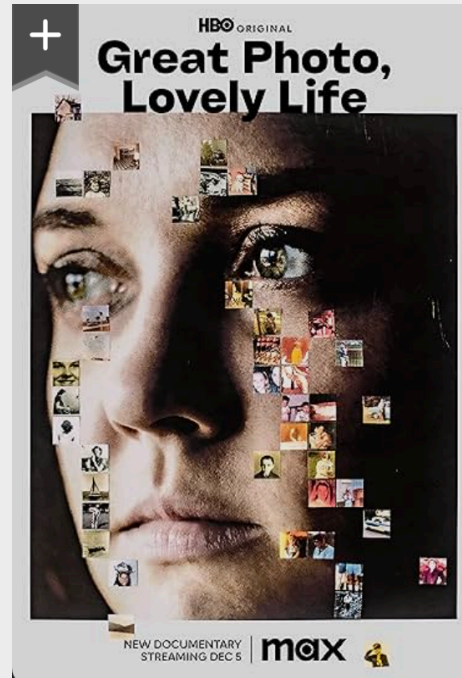


Photo credit: HBO Documentary Films, GREAT PHOTO, LOVELY LIFE: FACING A FAMILY'S SECRETS, an Ark Media Production.

Watch the
Documentary

NYT Opinion Piece

Sex Crimes Prosecutor Finds Accountability for her own Sexual Harm Outside of the Criminal System

Published in the ABA Journal: The Voice

by Brittney Frey



Photo Credit: Brittney Frey

In a recent ABA Journal essay, a former sex crimes prosecutor reflects on her own experience seeking accountability for child sexual abuse outside of the criminal legal system.

What makes the piece compelling is not simply that a survivor chose a restorative path but that she did so after years of working inside the very system most of us assume is the only option.

She describes the tension between her professional identity and her personal needs. As a prosecutor, she advocated for registries and prison sentences.

As a survivor, she found herself wanting something different: dialogue instead of testimony, a full accounting instead of an adversarial contest, community presence instead of isolation.

As Howard Zehr, one of the founders of the modern restorative justice movement, has written, the criminal system tends to ask:

- *What law was broken?*
- *Who broke it?*
- *What do they deserve?*

A restorative framework shifts the inquiry:

- *Who was harmed?*
- *What do they need?*
- *Whose obligation is it to meet those needs?*

The difference is not semantic. It reflects two fundamentally different understandings of justice: one centered on *punishment*, the other on repair and *repair and prevention*.

The piece also highlights a structural gap. When the author inquired about restorative justice through official channels, she encountered a lack of infrastructure and, in many cases, categorical exclusions for sexual harm cases. In other words, even when survivors seek alternatives, those pathways are often unavailable.

We do not read this essay as an argument to eliminate the criminal system. Rather, it is a reminder that one system cannot meet all needs. Many survivors decline to report. Others report and leave feeling unheard. The binary choice of prosecution or do nothing leaves too many without the options they want.

The larger question raised by the article is not whether restorative justice is “soft” or “hard” on crime. It is whether we are willing to expand our understanding of accountability beyond punishment alone. If our ultimate goal is prevention, stopping future harm and strengthening families and communities, then we must build processes that address relational damage, not only legal violation.

Survivors and their families deserve more than a single path.

Read Brittney's Article



The Magic of Circle

with Elizabeth Clemants and Ben Johnson

PODCAST: Listen in on Elizabeth Clemants and Green Circle Keeper Ben Johnson's conversation on what he considers to be the 'magic' of the Hidden Water circle.

When Ben received the welcome call for his first circle (Elizabeth was his first Keeper), he asked Elizabeth with a good deal of suspicion "*When is the healing supposed to happen?*"

She laughed and said it was a good question, and all she could say was that if he came to the circle he might come up

Shifts: A Healing & Accountability Group for Men

WHO THIS GROUP IS FOR
This group is for people who identify as men who have committed physical harm or violence against another person. It is a supportive space to sit with others who share similar experiences to process what led to their behavior, the ways it has impacted others and themselves, and to work towards being accountable for the harm they caused. This is a group for men above the age of 18 who are not currently involved in the criminal legal system. This group draws on transformative and restorative justice approaches and does not engage with the criminal legal system.

WHAT THIS GROUP OFFERS
We believe that healing and accountability are an active and ongoing series of shifts in how one feels, thinks and behaves. This group provides an opportunity for those who are seeking it, to have a dedicated and supportive space to process and learn, and to deepen one's own journey towards healing and accountability for harm and violence.
The groups' themes include exploring experiences of trauma, engaging the complex experiences of shame, helping to recognize harm and its impacts, support in feeling into remorse, understanding apology, and work towards repair. The group will also address identity, belonging, masculinity, and other intersectional experiences. Prior to the start of the group we will have a brief introductory 1-1 meeting.

| FACILITATORS | DETAILS |
|---|---|
| Kenton Kirby Kenton Kirby is a social worker, mental health practitioner, and consultant with over 20 years of experience focused on restorative justice and community healing through a grounded, relational approach to harm responses. | Cameron W. Rasmussen Cameron is a social worker, mediator, educator, and facilitator and works with people who have caused harm in engaging in non-punitive accountability practices and processes. |

Register: bit.ly/shiftsgroup

When: Wednesdays 6-8pm
March 4th - May 6, 2026
Where: Virtually (links provided upon registration)
Cost: Sliding Scale Registration

Shifts: Healing & Accountability Group Registration

This group is for people who identify as men who have committed physical harm or violence against another person. It is a

with his own answer. He did come to circle, and he still doesn't know for sure when the healing happened. All he knows for sure is that he was a different man when it ended, and the transformation was magical.

This podcast can be found on, @trailtothewesternlands, which is Ben's YouTube and TikTok channels. He speaks often about his own experiences with sexual harm and recovery. For those who ask often about spending time with men who are in recovery from being sexually harmed as young people, Ben's show is a great resource.

He speaks about life as a *Pilgrim on the Trail to the Western Lands*, a place of peace and wholeness where we learn and become what we are.

Ourselves.

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When: Wednesday Evenings 6-8pm EST (March 5th - May 6th)

Where: Virtual

Cost: This group is available at sliding scale. More information on the different cost scales are towards the end of this form.

Facilitators: Kenton Kirby and Cameron Rasmussen

[Watch on YouTube](#)

[Register](#)

Hidden Water Is Now on Reddit

Hidden Water has started a subreddit. If you don't know what that is, truly — carry on and keep living your best life.

For those of you who spend time on Reddit, we'd love for you to join us at [r/HiddenWater](#) to read, post, and weigh in on the conversations happening there.

Over time, we plan to host "Ask Me Anything" sessions with Keepers from all four circles. Several of our Keepers see this as a powerful way for people to ask difficult questions anonymously and receive thoughtful, non-judgmental responses. Our hope is to create a space that reflects the spirit of our work: steady, grounded, and supportive.

If you're already part of the Reddit world, we'd love your participation and if you're interested in helping moderate, please let us know.

[Follow Us](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

April and May: [New Safe\(r\) Adult Training Dates](#)

February 23: Winter 2026 Healing Circles Began

March 6-8: Spring In-Person Circle Training with Kay Pranis | [REGISTER](#)

June - August: Summer Workshop Series

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