

In my last story, I wrote about how going through prolonged exposure therapy to deal with something traumatic from my past was emotionally draining. I didn't know when I started with it how it would go, but I decided I needed to get it out. I decided maybe it was time that I did share my story.

When I was seven years old and living in New Um, my dad dropped me off at school. I had missed the bus that morning for some reason, and my dad had to drive me into school. After my dad drove away, I stopped and knelt to look in my bookbag to see if I had a book I needed that day for school. As I was looking through my bookbag, a man drove up behind me. He asked me for directions on how to get to the hospital. At the time, I lived in the country, and I didn't know the City of New Ulm that well. It was rather cold out that morning, and he asked me if I wanted to come into his car to warm up. I blamed myself for years for what happened; next, I got into his car. This situation occurred when schools didn't teach their students not to go with strangers. As soon as I got into his car, he took off quickly. As soon as he took off, I knew I was in trouble. I asked him where he was going, and he sternly told me to shut up. I quickly tried to think of things on what to do. I couldn't jump out of the car because it was going too fast. I couldn't even see over the dashboard to see where he was taking me.

He took me to what I believed was an abandoned farm site and assaulted me. At the time, I just went out of my body and didn't have much memory of what happened next. He then took me back to school and told me to get out. I quickly got out of the car, and he told me I'd better not say anything to anyone because he knew where my parents and I lived, and then he drove off. I stood there in shock for a while and then walked into school. When I came into the classroom, my teacher asked me where I had been, and I replied that I missed the bus. Some people are probably wondering if I reported the assault, and the answer is no, I didn't. I was too scared because he said he knew where I lived, and I was afraid he would come back and do it again. I didn't realize until years later that he didn't know where I lived because I think I was just a target of opportunity for him.

I decided to share my story because keeping my emotions in all these years definitely affected my mental health. I realized after working with clients at Northway that maybe they can benefit from my experience. Hopefully, by sharing my story, it can help others cope with whatever pain they may be going through and show others that whatever trauma they may have gone through in their past, they don't have to let it affect their future.