

## THE MOM IN THE MIDDLE

Tim Horton M.A. LCPC  
[www.acmehalo.com](http://www.acmehalo.com)

The mom in the middle sits in the counselor's office... always in the middle. Making at the very least, a symbolic gesture of protection, a physical and emotional barricade between her daughter – the victim, and her husband – the offender.

The daughter on the left, looks at her with hope “will you protect me this time... will you read the signs this time...will it be different this time?” Even though her father has jumped through all the right hoops, served his time, doing his treatment, she counts on her mother to protect her, to make things different.

The daughter on the left looks at her through tear filled eyes... “do you really believe that I did nothing wrong?...do you really believe it wasn't my fault?...even though I know I did nothing wrong I still feel the need for your forgiveness... I promise not to flirt, I promise not to wear that short night shirt.”

The husband on the right, looks at her with hope, “will you ever forgive me?... Do you remember when I took full responsibility?... I didn't mean it when I said she was acting like a little flirt. In treatment he was a model group member, praised for his understanding of victim empathy. He said all the right things, cried all the right tears.

The husband on the right looks at her through tear filled eyes...I did real good in treatment, I paid for her therapy, I put locks in all the right places...I promise this time will be different...I promise I won't flirt... I promise I'll wear clothes under my robe.

The mom in the middle looks to the counselor with hope, do you believe them? Is it going to be better? Will it never end? She was told in treatment that her relationship with her daughter is vital to her daughter's recovery. No matter how society or the offender may blame her... it is her relationship with her daughter that will facilitate long term healing. She was told by someone that she is the foundation of the family's recovery, the hub of the wheel. She feels more like the eye of a tornado.. a circling quagmire of probation officers, DCFS workers, family aide specialists, parenting classes, and therapists . She has been walking on a tightrope for the past two years, divided by her loyalties to those on each side. She looks to each side through tear filled eyes, the protector of one, the police of the other.. roles that were given to her by the system and the man she feels victimized by. Roles she feels barely equipped to fill.

### SECRETS

They walk out of the office down the hall towards the lobby. They walk arm in arm... mom in the middle. The daughter on the left wonders if her mom will find the stash of marijuana and the prophylactics she has saved for her date Saturday night. She feels guilty for having sex with so many boys at such a young age. The mom in the middle wonders if she will tell her family that she was sexually abused as a child by her uncle. She feels guilty because she knows the trauma, the pain of sexual abuse first hand, but she was unable to protect her own daughter. She is positive her counselor already knows.

The husband on the right, as he walked down the hall, strained not to look at the eight year old girl being led into the play therapy room... another victim of innocence lost and trust betrayed. He got a good enough look at her to notice how cute she looked in her Pocahontas dress. He down-loaded her memory into his internal computer. He wonders if the others noticed.

He does not feel guilty.

He makes sure next weeks appointment is at the exact same time.