



Film review: *Boys and Men Healing*

by Rick Belden

"It's not something that should be a secret."

"I didn't know that asking for help would make me powerful."

"I can't recall a bigger step in my own healing than when I broke my silence."

Each of the above quotes is from one of the three men whose stories are featured in the new documentary [Boys and Men Healing](#). Each man has his own history and his own path to healing. But these three men also have a lot in common. Each man was sexually abused as a child, and each has committed himself as an adult to facing his wounds, healing the damage, and putting his experience to work in service to helping others.

All of these men have found their own ways back to themselves after being profoundly injured and betrayed as children, and their stories are presented in an interwoven fashion, with quiet grace and complete respect throughout. A number of important themes are explored in the course of the film, including the search for justice, the healing power of advocacy and bearing witness for others, and the critical importance of timely, readily available support for men and boys who have been violated and are ready to seek help.

There were many deeply touching moments for me as I watched, far too many to list, but what stands out the most in my mind after viewing is the material featuring the peer support group for male survivors of childhood sexual abuse attended by one of the

three men. I know from personal experience just how powerfully healing such a group can be. The tragedy is that there are still so few of these groups available for men. The need is great, and countless opportunities for lives to be saved, quite literally, are being lost.

Toward the end of the film, all of the men share their impressions of how their relationships with others (family, friends, intimate partners) have been affected by their childhood wounds and histories. All have experienced challenges and difficulties in this area of their lives; some have made more progress than others. I was particularly affected by a comment from one man's partner, who said, "You have to be willing to walk with them through some of those dark times." I know this is true. I also know that it is very hard to find someone who understands it, and is willing and able to do it consistently. I've been on both sides of this equation; I've failed, and I've been failed. It's not easy to be in either role.

As I watched *Boys and Men Healing*, I felt awed and humbled by the strength, courage, integrity, and dignity demonstrated by the men who spoke and shared their stories with the filmmaker in the service of healing themselves and others. So many men feel so terribly alone with these wounds. Men and boys who've been injured in this way need to know that they are not alone and that healing is possible. I hope this film moves us all one step closer to a world in which sexual violation of boys and men is no longer tolerated and those who've been violated have ready access to the resources they need for healing, and feel safe enough to seek those resources out.

As one of the participants in the male survivors group says near the end of the film, "Men will tell their stories. We just have to make the space for them to tell it."

Amen, brother. Amen.

To view an extended preview clip for *Boys and Men Healing*, read more about the film, and purchase a copy go to <http://www.biqvoicepictures.com>.

Originally posted at [poetry, dreams, and the body](#) on Jan 3 2011.



Film review: *Boys and Men Healing* by Rick Belden, unless otherwise expressly stated, is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License](#).

Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of

masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive, or neglectful family systems. His second book, [*Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within*](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).