



Interviewee Aletalyle  
Age 73  
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Location Delaware

This personal account of a true life story is offered as support and inspiration for your own healing journey. It is not presented as a definitive method of healing, or seen as encouragement to pursue a particular path

### **Standing up**

When I took the courage to disagree and stand up to my now-ex-husband Charlie, it was a biggy. It was scary for me because he used to send me to my room if I disagreed with him, and I would go! But I disagreed with him, and it surprised him (and me too). I just stood there and said, "You're wrong." It was a very small step, but it was my first step toward healing and getting out of a toxic marriage.

I knew there was something that needed to change. It was not just being abused sexually, physically and emotionally by my husband. The healing didn't start until I realized that things had to change, and it might not be the way that Charlie told me I'd better change. I had my own journey to take, and even though it was scary, I needed to do it.

Charlie moved out just after Christmas in 1979. When I finally was certain he was sleeping with other women, I asked him, "How long has this been going on?" He said, "It's none of your business and I don't think you can handle it."

### **Learning**

I suspected it was going on, but really hoped I was wrong. The kids were still home and I thought it was best to stay together and not address the subject. Looking back it might not have been a good thing, but David, my youngest of four male children, was still in high school. So that was another time I stood up. When Charlie said, "You're the one who is going to move out." I said, "No. I'm staying here. You get out." So I was, in small steps, learning to stand up to him. It was not easy. Before if I disagreed with Charlie, of course, he was right and I was wrong.

We were married for 34 years. When we married, I quit school to put Charlie through graduate school for his Ph.D., with the understanding that his career was important to us both and that it was a joint effort and it would support us throughout the rest of our lives. Many years later, when I felt that the marriage was going under, I went back to school to finish my degree. I had had a double major at the University of Colorado, Business Administration and Education. When I reapplied at the University of Delaware, I found I had lost a whole year's credits but was determined little by little to get my degree. My four boys encouraged me, and said, Mom, even if you don't make straight As, we'll still love you. Most of the time, their grades were straight As. A joke? -- or a reflection of having grown up with a chauvinist father. At the end of the first semester, the grades started coming in. All four sons got straight As. I was on pins and needles until mine came in -- All As! Now I have proven to myself and to them that yes, a woman and a mother is intelligent and can achieve high goals.

### **Just a girl**

Looking back I realize when I was growing up, that my mother and father idolized my older brother. That's the way it was in those days, male children (and males in general) were the finest. Females were second class, invisible, not to be noticed or addressed, neither intelligent nor capable. I was the only girl in the neighborhood -- the only female. I could play baseball and football and do all those things to keep up with them, determined to be just as good. My brother and the other boys in the neighborhood would say, "You're just a girl, you can't play with us." But they were my only playmates. There were no other girls living close enough.

### **Second class**

I was quite independent. But, there was no nurturing nor awareness of me or what I was doing. I could do what I wanted when I wanted. My brother and the neighborhood gang boys used to sit around talking. One of the things that was important to them was to claim loudly that the best movie was Dawn Patrol with Errol Flynn. There was not a woman even mentioned in it, and that is what made it the best. They would sit around talking with me in the background (invisible again) and say these things. And I just took it as a matter of fact. Being a girl, being female, was not good.

That was a big problem for me -- being female, and second class. When I had four male children, I was delighted (and still am that I have them) that they were male because if my babies had been girls, they might be like me. Girls are too emotional, and that's bad. That's what Charlie said. Don't cry, you're too wrought-up, you're unstable. And when the time came when we decided to have no more children, it was either a vasectomy for him or a tubel ligation for me. We decided that since a vasectomy might undermine Charlie's sexuality and his ego and perhaps make him unstable, that it would be best if I had a tubel ligation because he was the steady one. And if I went to pieces then he would be balanced and could take care of things, should I fall apart.

Isn't that dumb? But that's where I was in those days. Wanting little boys so they wouldn't be like me, emotional and unstable, not appreciating all this lovely femaleness that I had -- this gentle, intelligent, sensitive person -- who had no value for herself.

And intelligent! My grades were excellent. I was popular at school, elected to many offices (I was elected student body vice-president, girls couldn't be president!) At my graduation my friend and I played a two-piano arrangement of Rhapsody in Blue at Baccalaureate to a standing ovation.

### **Bared my soul**

Another time of healing was during my marriage. I had been seeing a male psychiatrist. It was my last ditch attempt to save the marriage and try to change into what Charlie wanted me to be. I was embarrassed to admit that I was seeing one and I didn't tell anybody. I'd go see him every week and I bared my soul. He would say things that were not kind and I thought, "Well, this is what it has to be." One time after I'd seen him a few years, as I was leaving he grabbed me and he kissed me and he put his hands where they shouldn't be. I left and I thought, this is not right. I do not like this. I stopped going to him.

Several years later a friend of mine, whom I met in O.A. [[Overeaters Anonymous](#)], said, "I'm going to Dr. Bash." I thought, "Should I tell her what happened to me? Well, if he can be of any help to her I won't say anything." A couple months later she called me and said, "You won't

believe what he did to me." And so I said, "Oh, dear friend. I'm so sorry." And then I told her what had happened to me.

### **Speaking Out**

We decided we couldn't let him get away with this, so we each wrote letters to the State Medical and Psychiatric Boards -- and waited. Nothing happened. We heard nothing. I wrote again. By then he had hired a lawyer, who wrote to us saying that this was all entirely a figment of our imagination, that we had conspired to do this. He suggested since we were both attending O.A. , we were heavy and unattractive and it was ridiculous that Dr. Bash would want to even touch us.

Then one day at work I got a call from a doctor on the Medical Board who asked me to come in to talk with him. Although he wouldn't tell me, I was certain that now someone else had come forward, and they couldn't ignore us any longer. "Now you believe us, don't you?" And so, the Attorney General appointed a deputy to counsel me so I would be prepared when we had to state our case to the medical Board in Dover, the State Capitol.

### **There were others**

I had been looking for somebody else because I knew that we weren't the only two he had done this to. I had received anonymous letters, anonymous phone calls. I couldn't tell anybody, I felt very alone and frightened, keeping this all to myself. But when they found this third person and I realized I would have to go to the state capitol to testify, I thought, "What have I gotten myself into? But if I don't do this, he's going to continue abusing his patients, and we can't let that happen".

### **Growing courage**

The three of us talked with a lawyer who was handling a similar case that had had much publicity in the local newspaper. So we went to the newspaper for help as to what would be best for us and what was happening with this other case. I couldn't give my name, but there was a wonderful woman on the paper's staff who did the medical reporting, and a man who reported who handled legal news.

So we went to Dover and testified but heard nothing for months. I waited and wondered about what I had done, if it had all been in vain. Then late one night, the woman from the newspaper, called. "They're calling us to Dover. I think we've got him. You watch the newspaper tomorrow morning." There it was on the front page. "Bash Told Never to Treat Women Again." His license had been removed. He had been told never to treat women again. WE HAD WON!

I thought, "Okay, I did that. This is part of my healing. I stood up to this guy. He did bad things. I stuck with it, did what I had to do. We did it for other women." So I knew I had courage growing and perhaps would need that courage. I took these little steps and realized, even though it was scary and painful, that I could do it.

### **A healing mission**

The healing part was not what Dr. Bash did for me in my sessions. The healing part was that I found that I could take steps that were difficult. And that I didn't have to be beholden to these men who were not treating me well -- my husband, Dr. Bash, and other people. I'd learned that if I had a mission to do things like that, that it helped me heal. And I know it helped other people as well.

What is good, though, is that I don't hate all men. I still love men. I have four lovely sons. There are many good and honorable men in the world. But I do understand men better. I understand me. The sense of healing came not right at the moment. I just knew it was something I had to do. Looking back I see that this was part of my journey that I'm taking toward healing.

### **Something drastic**

I went into a really heavy depression. I was alone, Charlie had gone, and all four sons had left, my mother was in a nursing home in Colorado, calling me to tell me she was dying. I'd had breast surgery, and I had a new job. It was too much.

The weekends were awful. It was difficult getting up in the morning. David had finished at Syracuse and was home for a couple of days before moving to California. I realized that I had to do something drastic, and after consulting with the doctor on call who said he would meet me at the hospital, David drove me there and sat with me until I was admitted. Then with my admonition to go to California, that I would take care of myself, he left. I had admitted myself to the Psychiatric ward. I was scared to death. But I knew that's what I had to do.

### **Making connection**

There were a bunch of us who really bonded in those two weeks. I realized that being with people who cared was necessary for me to heal. Unless I was with someone, I felt invisible, unloved. I had to have a deep connection somehow. After two weeks when I was released from the hospital I drove myself directly to an OA meeting. I knew I had to lose weight. I ate when I felt bad. Dr. Bash had put me on so many different medications, one of which made me gain about 30 pounds in two months. When I told him that gaining weight was worse than the depression, he didn't listen.

### **Drama**

Another part of my healing is acting. When I read of acting classes on a Saturday when I needed something to do, I signed up. My acting teacher is very aware of people's emotions -- I could call him a drama therapist. He picks pertinent parts for me to do, humorous, angry, brave, etc. There'd be some Saturdays in the beginning where I really couldn't respond. He'd just let me sit there and he'd observe. And he gives me funny parts. He sees my sense of humor. He sees me and teaches me -- and so it's a therapy for me.

### **Finding the Humor**

I can't pray for Charlie yet. Except to keep him as far away from me as possible. If something would happen to him, I would weep. I would cry. He's my children's father. We were together for thirty-four years. And we made our mistakes together. He was my sons' role model. One time after Charlie had moved out, I heard one of my son's friend say, "Let's go over to your dad's house and get some macho lessons." Humor, all the way through, has been really healing.

### **Our rightful place**

More healing too, is working with past life regression. I'm doing this healing now with a dear friend. I think even before I was born I knew I had a mission to help women find their place -- help us find our rightful place.

### **Standing up for others**

At DuPont I had a lowly position but I had a boss who let me do things. I was for women in the workplace, for women standing up, for women against sexual harassment. Because I had been there. And I think that what happened to me with Bash was because I was meant to do this at

DuPont. I was going up to the vice president one day to try to get DuPont to change their policy on women, and my boss said, "Aleta, it's easier to change the Bible than to change DuPont, but go for it."

As I aged, my mission was to wipe out ageism and the stereotype of doddering old people who could not think and who could not remember and who could not make plans. So when the e-mails throughout the company would come: "We will have no discrimination for gender or race," I'd always say, "Remember, age." I'd write it right to the president. And pretty soon it started out that that was put in too. And so being old was an advantage.

Also being a lowly secretary -- because we were discriminated against too. When the vice president called for "people above Level 3" to be on this international committee to honor or respect people," we were not asked at Level 2. So when we were all together I said, "I would like to volunteer for your committee. I'm a Level 1 and I have a lot to tell you and you have a lot to learn from me." So he had to put me on the committee. And that was scary because I didn't know a lot of what was going on.

I would sign up for courses that were not for secretaries. They wouldn't know what level I was. But I helped break that barrier too. You can see I get all excited about it. And that was healing for me. I think it was part of my mission that I was born into. I'm not saying I'm noble. I'm just saying I learned how to do this. So that I wasn't angry. I learned from my boss, Rick, not to be angry. Diplomacy is the art of letting other people have your way. Isn't that neat?

Sometimes it was so disappointing that there were women who wanted to stay in that lowly place, who felt that it was their place. They wanted the men to take care of them. All I could do was by example and say how it was for me. But I thought, "Don't these women see they're being harassed? I did it, why can't you?" And that was "holier than thou." I know they were frightened. I understood that they were coming from -- where I had been before. But I wanted things to go so fast. I'm an Aries. Instant gratification isn't fast enough. I want it now!

### **Boarding the Ark**

A huge healing force for me is my present housemate. I knew him from Dream Group where we had shared a lot of our souls there. So, when he needed a place to live, I opened my house to him and in the first part of that time, we opened our heart to each other, counseling, and working through life's problems.

My housemate told me all about the ARK. I said, "do you suppose I could go?" I do things like that without even thinking of the risk or outcome. So I went, just on the stories that my housemate told. He said he'd never met anyone so loving as this group at the ARK. It was 40 days and 40 nights in a remote farm house, no radio, newspaper, television, just each other to counsel and teach and learn from.

### **Having energy**

I learned I had energy. I had more endurance than some of the younger people. My counseling, my RC counseling -- using and teaching it was helpful to most. We had dream therapy every morning at 7:00.

I was a cynic on some of things. I scoffed, but I was willing to try them: digressing to your childhood, sandplay therapy, drawing mandalas. I am no longer a scoffer!

### **Blowing the whistle**

At the ARK, we came away with intentions. And one was to "blow the whistle," when someone's taking advantage of me. I even brought the whistle home, to blow the whistle on myself and whatever is happening. One time someone had promised me something they weren't doing, and my friend Guro shoved the whistle in my mouth. She said, "Now's the time you're supposed to use it." So I keep thinking of Guro, you know, "Now, now!" What a blessing when I talk with her. And I can help her too. The healing comes from the mutual respect.

The ARK was so intense. It was a healing, and remembering, and a sad time, and a very hard time. I stayed up all night with two or three of them, Guro being one, beating the drums and chanting -- experiences I'll never have again.

### **Trees**

In my dreams I have trees. I was born in Colorado, the tall pine trees, the quaking aspen. The first time that my housemate took me back to a past life, I was in a forest. I dream of dead trees. Trees in my dreams tell me things of what I'm doing or what I need to do.

When I was at the ARK I took a picture of a tree not realizing what I was doing. One of the last days I was there I was listening to this guy who was talking just like my ex-husband used to talk. I couldn't right then express my anger. There was snow on the ground and I went outside. I was so furious I couldn't talk to him. I threw probably fifty snowballs at that tree. Just whack, whack. And pretty soon, I got to say, "Hey, Aleta, you still have your throwing arm!" And so that was healing for me too, remembering that. The whack -- it was a physical thing for me.

### **Taking Root**

In the first few years, when I was first learning how to say no, the tree was almost rootless. I think the tree was just beginning to put down those roots that are always there, those root that would hold me firm. Still lifting up, growing up above, but still having just the life in this tree and the roots going deeper and deeper. I could picture that.

My father lived with the Indians for two years and I felt very close to the southwestern Indians. I know their thoughts are that we are all one, we are all part of the earth and that we're all part of the trees, and we get our nurture from the ground. It flows up through the trees and we're all part of the universe, all the holistic part. And that is exciting for me, to think we've been here forever, and we're all part of the same. Isn't that exciting? And I'm a part of you. We're part of everything. And when I hear that no man is an island - well women, too, damn it!

### **Being a mother**

Dave's the youngest. We're helping each other change. They're all parents now and it gives them a different perspective. Looking back then, with four boys to raise, Charlie traveled a lot, I knew I could do it. It was what I was there to do, and don't ever remember resenting that. I missed them terribly when they left, but we had a good time when Charlie was not there. So I don't know if those beliefs have changed. There is the belief that I do have the strength to do some things that I didn't think I ever could.

When I was really feeling down and thought I might just end it all, the thing inside of me that kept me going was that I didn't want to put my children through that. I had read once that its more likely for a child to commit suicide if one of their parents has. I'm not going to bring that on

them. I wrote something: "The most difficult part through all this was the pain and the hurt I brought to my children." I don't want to do that now and I didn't then. David felt he had to save me. I had to say, "You can't. It's my job." He was the rescuer. He was here for a year after Charlie left. And I look back and I think, "I don't want to cause my children any pain." And I did. And I can't undo that pain.

### **Not perfect**

There were times when I should have stood up to Charlie, especially for my oldest son. That was when I made big mistakes. That's when I was still believing I was a second-class citizen and I was afraid of Charlie. And afraid that he was right. And I could see him hurting the children.

One of the things that was a setback was Charlie claimed I was not a good wife -- but I always held in my heart that I was a good mother. In fact, my friends would call me Mother Superior. And that can also be my downfall. I know I didn't do everything perfect, although David says I gave them unconditional love. It's hard for me to hear that I didn't do everything all right. I know I didn't. So, I'm learning from Dave to hear the things that I did that weren't quite good. And he said, "But that doesn't make you a bad mother." He's in therapy himself, you know, so he's way ahead of me with terms and all. What is good is that all four of those sons are in therapy at times for their marriages.

### **My 70th birthday**

At my 70th birthday my four sons arranged a party for me, a Dinner Theater for Celebrating Mom. I think so much had healed at that point. They remembered the good times and put them in the skit. They could see me, that I was healed and I had so many friends. And they could see how my friends love me. My four sons did that for me.

### **Religion and God**

Church had been a big thing for me, but Charlie also belonged there and he stayed around. So I quit going just so I wouldn't have to be in his presence. I quit singing in choir because I didn't want to stand up there and see him sitting in the congregation.

When we were first married we started teaching Sunday school together. I was an Episcopalian; he was a Presbyterian. So, I joined the Presbyterian Church. He said it's a lot easier to cool down an Episcopalian than to warm up a Presbyterian. So, we went there and we were in groups together. We prayed together every night. And then one day when we weren't getting along he just said, "I don't want to pray anymore." You know, "That's all over, there's nothing in it." I think at that point I thought he was sort of God. He was a pedestal placed person and stayed there. And I realized, I almost equated him and when he fell, so did God for me. So, I'm still building that up. Charlie is not God, but, he was my idol for a long time. He was handsome and we were in church together and I sort of equated him. So, I'm over that, you know. But, I'm still seeking.

### **Music is healing**

Music is where it is spiritual for me. I can sing it and feel the presence of God. It's like praying with somebody. It's hard for me to do that alone too. Yet I know, I know that God is here and surrounds me and lives in me. And that is she and he in all things that's fleeting.

Other people pray for me. I can't pray for myself sometimes and I know that's a power. I know that God speaks to me through music. If I can sing it's part of my healing. It's part of God in me.

We were singing one thing and I had a waking vision seven times. Every time we came to this certain place it was there, which was a little scary, but it was God talking to me.

In my dreams, God is there. In love between friends, that is God. It's just all for me. Mainly in music. Not the words, mainly, it's the music. You know, the way the notes come together. I go to choir, and when we're warming up and there is a moving chord I can close my eyes and everything goes back into place. And if that's not God, what is God?

I had that when I was little too. I played the organ. Music has been a healing for me and a delight and a presence of God. I do have a sense that some things were completely healed.

Writing seems to get things in perspective for me. At times, when I wrote things, it brought understanding to me. And when I read those, then I realize the healing is there. Sometimes there's just a little bit of leakage, or whatever, that has to be stopped.

### **Reflection**

I don't think I regret things I have done because I can learn from all of them. I don't think my ego is blown up too much. But I think I have to sit back and look sometimes at what's going on here, what have I learned and what I have to accept was not good. That's hard for me and sometimes I'll shut that down because I'm afraid. I was put down so much and I don't want to do that to myself. But sometimes I have to learn I wasn't a perfect mother. And I have to sit back and reflect sometimes rather than just going ahead, not thinking what I'm doing.

As I look back at my healing process I think of layers of things. Things just happened as the time came up and then the strength within me came. So it would build up, almost to a crisis, and then I'd make a turning point. And then, I'd make one step, and another step, realizing I could make one step and build on the next. And having people around who cared about me. And the humor. I couldn't have done it alone.

### **The importance of sharing**

When I was depressed and I knew I was hitting bottom, I needed companionship. I needed not to be invisible. I needed someone who cared about me, which I hadn't had. You know, someone who really cared about ME. And it's probably too late now. I don't want to remarry. It would just be nice to have someone look at me as if they really cherished me, who isn't gay! You know, even at 73 I still have my desires and my lack of all that stuff that could go on.

A couple years ago I was going to fly out to California to see the guys, and I saw this couple. It was a woman looking up, she wasn't particularly pretty, and a man looking down. And I thought, he's just doing that because he wants sex, you know. Just looking at her. And then off she went on the airplane, and he took the kids home. And I thought, "No, that was devotion. He really cared about her." And I told Dave, "I just wish someone would look at me like that." Our sex was good. But he was never satisfied. Never. Never. Well, that's then. So, that's what I would like someday, before I die. I will die, you know, eventually.

### **Stronger and stronger**

My beliefs that had been challenged were that I was going to be that way forever, that I could not change, that I did not have the strength. That has changed. Even though I feel down I know there is something I can do and that I am stronger and stronger. I need encouragement, but I can keep on. I'm not going to sink that way again. My belief now is that I'm stronger than I think; that



women are just dandy; and that I can help my sons appreciate themselves and me; that it's all right to talk about some things with them.

### **Feelings**

Even in my depression I could still laugh. But it was pretty heavy. I was tired and draggy a lot which depression does. The obstacles were the medication that somehow changed my metabolism so that I stayed heavy. And trying to do these things, like getting to acting class, when I had to drag myself out of bed.

Being alone is almost the worst poverty I can think of. I'd get to O.A. meeting an hour early, at least, just because I was there and I might see somebody. I'm gregarious although, even yet, I have to talk myself into things. To me, being alone is not that I'm not loved, or invisible, but I get my energy from being with people.

### **Just wail out**

People who are alone, people who might read my story, might reach out to other people and not try to do it alone.

The first year that my housemate and I were together we counseled almost every day. He was really in a lot of pain and I learned I could give, even through my pain. And now I can ask for a session when things get bad -- and he has time -- just wail out loud for awhile. I can't do that alone, but need somebody with me. He seems to be able to do it alone. Seldom does he ask for a session. I've opened myself and made myself the vulnerable one -- the one who spills my guts. That's not RC -- Re-evaluation CO-Counseling. For it to work as designed, both parties must counsel and be counseled. Both parties need to let themselves be vulnerable, not one thinking he/she can help but not need help.

### **Celebrate!**

You know how I would define true healing? My acting teacher would put some music on and we'd do abstract poses with each other. I would say, "It's a celebration! and a little bit back; and a celebration! and a little bit back; and then roll all over with humor!"

I think the healing process is daily, with knowing my housemate is going to be here and can say, "Was it a good sleep? Did you dream?" And a bonk on the head. We're members of that odd bonking cult!

### **Decisions**

I am concerned. I need to be strong enough so that when my housemate changes his place of dwelling I will be strong enough to go on my own. Have you heard of co-housing? I have a couple books here. I don't know if they will accept my age, although I know they look for the whole spectrum. When I see what my housemate is doing with his parents I know I have to make some sort of decision. My David has written a lovely letter to me about the need to do these things for their love, and they don't want to have to make decisions that they're going to resent. And that I could respond to that letter or not and if I didn't, then that was my response. That was just after my housemate moved in, about two years ago. So, I've been working on it, about when I can't take care of myself.

### **Take that first little step**

For someone going through an especially challenging part of their healing process, I would say to them, "even though you think you can't do it, if you take that first little, little step, it's the first one, and it gives you the confidence in yourself. It did for me. It gave me the confidence in myself that I could take a little step and the next and the next and the next. And that this isn't going to last forever. But don't try to do it alone. There's help out there in all places." Amen.

I know there's these two things I have to work on, my stomach and my house. That's ahead. So I have to listen to my own preaching there.

*Oh, daughter, never-to-be-born,  
would you have moved beyond my  
struggles to unfold a natural woman?*

*You would have run and climbed trees.*

*I imagine you a gymnast, strong and supple,  
a wise woman, a warrior.*

*Chasing dragons over quiet forest floors,  
we would have laughed together against fear.*

*I would have taught you bravery and poetry,  
how to stare right at the moon,  
how to make good soup.*

*As my mothering years have drawn to a close,  
I dream of who might have been and  
celebrate my four sons.*