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Predator/Seducer – How Do You Work Through Sexual Abuse When the Perpetrator was Kind and Loving?

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I was visiting friends in the UK and came across a (print!) magazine article in the October 2026 *Byline Times*¹, an interview by journalist Hardeep Matharu of Dan Reed, producer and director of *Leaving Neverland 2: Surviving Michael Jackson*, the 2025 documentary discussing the challenging legal process related to (allegations of) sexual abuse by Michael Jackson. Reading the article really made me reflect about the complexities some of my clients have described in sorting through their understanding of just what precisely was harmful to them in their experience of sexualized abuse and how layered that has been for them.

In particular the article made me think about what both culturally and in the psychotherapy field, we have come to call predators. This is a helpful descriptor in many ways because it quite literally captures what has happened, predation, but the word conjures an image of monsters like Red Riding Hood's Big Bad Wolf and many of my clients have not described their perpetrators that way. The author uses a quote from an Oprah Winfrey show where she referenced the large numbers of episodes of her show she had devoted to sexual abuse and said that she had, "tried and tried and tried to get the message across that sexual abuse was" <not always only> "abuse. It was also sexual seduction"². Similarly, many of my clients have spoken of their perpetrators as people who used friendship, kindness, love, support, care, praise and positive feedback in order to draw them into the abusive situation whether at the time they were children, young people or mature adults. Their confusion at the time and in later months and years is framed as "Well, I consented to this – what happened is the consequence of my choice that I regretted later".

But these predator-seducers have a Mephistophelean gift for trickery and shape-shiftery. An actor's gift for portraying the character the victim/survivor wants at that time of their life. A magician's gift of sleight of hand – you think one thing is happening but really it's something else. A political strategist's gift for spin because your perception (which is objectively accurate) is reinterpreted to serve the predator-seducer's needs and you are gaslit to believe your own innate knowing is off-kilter.

¹ The Human Interview: 'You Want to Love his Music. Without Thinking This Guy Raped Kids Year After Year', *Byline Times*, October 2026, pp. 44-51.

² The Human Interview, October 2026, pp.48



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For many survivors at the point of doing psychotherapy around these experiences, there is a part of them grounded in the present that knows that what happened was wrong and damaging to them emotionally, psychologically, sexually, spiritually, possibly physically, and another part of them that is stuck in the past, to their child/youth/younger self who felt loved and special and chosen. This can evoke a soup of feelings that may include loyalty/disloyalty, heartbreak, nostalgia, betrayal, love, wonder at being seen or chosen, relief at finally receiving care or attention after not receiving it from neglectful parents, guilt, shame, a sense of worthiness and/or lack of self-worth.

How Can Psychotherapy Help?

What will be initially important is for the therapist to hold space with curiosity and compassion to explore your experiences without presuppositions, how you feel now, how you react now. To listen and ask questions without judgement about how you recall experiencing then and how you make sense of it now. Your feelings about it are yours and therefore valid. Also some of those experiences may feel askew with the values you hold now and the information you have acquired since your encounters with the predator-seducer which may feel complicated, complex and/or incongruent. These approaches to therapy in combination could help:

Narrative Therapy is an approach that allows the story to unfold. It allows an unwrapping and a new view of what you have been carrying. By exploring your memory of the history and in tandem your current views, it allows you to build alternative perspectives and alternative possibilities.

EMDR is based on the AIP Model (Adaptive Information Processing) which suggests that when something upsetting or traumatizing happens, the incident or period of time can feel overwhelming and get stored or stuck in the body (non-adaptively stored). The EMDR history-taking process helps locate these incidents and after some work in stabilization with the therapist, the incidents can be 'metabolized' or digested, essentially neutralizing the upsetting components of the memory.

[EMDR Therapy](#)

[What to Expect in the First Few EMDR Sessions](#)

[What to Expect in an EMDR Processing Session](#)

DBR is a somatic approach that similarly works to free the body of tension and emotion around upsetting or traumatizing incidents. It is especially helpful where shock or overwhelm are the primary reaction.

[Deep Brain Reorienting](#)

In acknowledging the confusion and mixed feelings while also recognizing who was responsible and accountable, we can move forward feeling more settled.