WHAT HELPED US FEEL EMPOWERED?

Several survivors of multi-abuse trauma shared stories with the authors of *Real Tools: Responding to Multi-Abuse Trauma* about advocates and other service providers who helped them feel empowered.

For one survivor, it was a willingness to explain things in understandable terms: “She was very gracious. And very clear – not giving demands, but laying out very clearly, ‘These are the steps. First you need to do this. And then you need to do this. You need to get a letter from your doctor. When you get the letter from your doctor, this is what you need to do. And then after you do that, this is what you need to do. And then I want you to call me. Let me know what happened.’ So she was not telling me what to do, but was explaining the process in very simple terms. She was not saying, ‘These are the rules and you will live by the rules.’ She was open, clear, considerate, and communicated that she cared.”

Another survivor shares how a service provider recognized that small, scared child inside: “She told me how old my inner child was. I think that was what opened up the door for me. She had all these answers that I didn’t have. Then I started feeling like a two-year-old sponge. I was soaking up everything that she said.”

Still another survivor valued the validation of her parenting skills: “There was a little magnet from Head Start that said, ‘I am my child’s teacher.’ This magnet is still in my home. With my young children during this time, we had this very patient woman from Head Start who came and did home visits with us. She’s still part of our family today. She was just wonderful. She was a big part of my realizing that I have to teach my children.”

And, of course, a willingness to listen mattered immensely: “They were willing to listen to me and it was through those conversations, I began building a community around myself. That was what was so helpful.”