

Peace is not always a constant, so hope must be.

I have worked with literally HUNDREDS of rape survivors in therapy, and I've noticed a very interesting pattern that often happens when recovery really seems to be within grasp. Women reach a point in recovery where they finally feel empowered, and they are ready to move out of therapy. But shortly after doing so, their lives may hit the shredder: alcohol abuse starts again, cutting resumes, and bad boyfriends start knocking. I've known so many survivors who get sucked right back into these black holes.

And then here's what happens. She feels awful that the long-awaited "recovery" isn't blissful and peaceful. She sees the problems she's having, and she isn't sure why they're all accumulating against her again. It's too painful to conclude that her own choices are part of the process, so what she does is says "Oh, I just faked my way through therapy" or "Therapy didn't really help. It just forced me to talk about this stuff without teaching me anything about how to cope with it." If she thinks the only alternative to that is to admit that she really tried hard and yet her best efforts aren't succeeding, she opts for the less painful explanation: *she's fine*; it was the THERAPY that sucked.

The truth is that neither of these is the explanation. I've known women who worked damned hard in therapy and made incredible accomplishments, but their lives continued to be pressed by problems. This is not a form of failure unless she **CHOOSES** for it to be failure.

Recovery does not mean that problems and hardships vanish. It means that you have become convinced of your ability--and right--to overcome them anyway. You have the **RIGHT** not to put up with sleazy boyfriends. The **RIGHT** to recovery from self-injury. the **RIGHT** to a sober life. But these will continue to be fights and struggles.

It's not about perfection, it's about progress. And having a slip-up doesn't mean you lose all of the progress that has come before and have to start over again at zero.