



## “*The First Step to Reclaim Your Identity*”

by Mary Ellen Mann, LCSW

In my early twenties, as I came to terms with the misery of my life, new heartbreak set in. I had been betrayed, but the worst was realizing I had betrayed myself. As a way to operate under threat, I had developed a sympathetic drawbridge for those who did not see my worth or meaning to allow them access to my castle grounds. However, my sympathy towards those who took advantage of my compassion and sympathy ultimately manipulated me. Thus, my originally intact castle (I allude to this word picture in my book, *From Pain to Power*) began to suffer the ravages of multiple attacks by the Enemy.

Attacks came from many directions, including trusted family members; a Christian college-professor; my first husband, who was a Christian; a Christian counselor; Christian youth-group leaders; Christian bosses and managers where I worked; and even a few of my most trusted Christian friends. No wonder I began to believe the lies that I was deserving of unwanted sexualizing attention, humiliations, manipulations, and domination.

And because I kept attracting (at least the shame told me I was doing the attracting) unhealthy attention from so many Christian men in so many different settings, I thought God somehow ordained my private torment. To clarify, I thought the repetition of these events was a message from God that I was flawed and unworthy of protection, decency and honor.

I wish I could take back the time I lived with those hopeless and helpless thoughts. Satan will lie to us, saying the ruin is so significant and the repair so involved that it is too difficult to even try to overcome this.

A **Princess Warrior** (In *From Pain to Power*, I allude to survivors of sexual trauma, as Princess Warriors) can combat the lies and live in the truth. It’s a battle, but we are about to gather the weapons we need to silence the lies. First, we will fortify the boundary lines with our first question: What are my rights?

### **WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?**

I give nearly all my clients a copy of the Personal Bill of Rights, a list of assertions that spell out their rights to lives that are free of interference, abuse, trauma and insecurity:

I have the right to ask for what I want.

I have the right to say no to requests or demands.

I have the right to state my feelings and needs.

I have the right to change my mind.

I have the right to make mistakes and learn from them.

I have the right to follow my own values and standards.



I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready; it is unsafe; or it violates my values.

I have the right to determine my own priorities.

I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, choices, feelings or problems.

I have the right to expect honesty from others.

I have the right to be angry at someone I love.

I have the right to be uniquely myself.

I have the right to feel scared and say, "I'm afraid."

I have the right to say, "I don't know."

*(To learn more of these amazing rights go to the chapter: "You are Made by God, and Your Life is Sacred" in From Pain to Power)*

After considering the rights listed above, get out a pen and make your own list. View it as a living document to be revised and updated as you grow personally. If it helps, place notepads all over the house to record new rights or edit existing ones. As you commit to this exercise, you will begin to feel what it's like for your individual voice to emerge.

**Here are a few examples of some of the Princess Warriors in my practice defining their Personal Rights:**

I have the right to be interesting.

I have the right to live differently than my parents.

I have the right to save money and have financial security.

I have the right to be focused and powerful.

I have the right to earn my college degree even though I don't know how I will use it.