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known if I hadn't spoken up. Don't keep it to yourself or you'll be a victim."

Lizelle has become more involved in her church and teaches at Sunday school. "Believing gives meaning to my life."

Nine-year-old Thalyta was looking for her brothers when she was attacked by a man armed with a knife and raped in the bush at Olifantsfontein in Gauteng.

"I'm only nine; please don't kill me," she begged. When he finally let her go she ran home, took her clothes off, hid them and showered. Her parents didn't ask her what had happened to her or lay a charge.

Now, nearly 30 years later, she's beginning to heal thanks to her involvement as a volunteer at Tygerbear.

"As a child I thought it was

'As a child I thought it was my fault. No one corrected me'

my fault. No one corrected me. Before the incident I'd done well at school but afterwards I began to do poorly. How could my parents and teachers not have realised something was drastically wrong?"

If traumatised youngsters don't receive counselling they will make wrong choices in life, says Thalyta, who at 22 married a man who later assaulted her. She and her three-year-old son eventually ran away.

"I believed I didn't deserve anything better. It took a lot of hard work and guidance to realise if I didn't set limits no one else would."

Every small victory paved the way for greater ones. Thalyta obtained a protection order against her ex-husband but decided not to speak badly of him in their child's presence.

She has since married a man who treats her well and has given her the chance to recover.

Thalyta tells children in need, "Don't wait as long as I did to stand up for yourself. You'll save a lot of people much pain."

■ **Pseudonyms have been used and personal details changed to protect the identities of the young people.**

IF A FRIEND SUFFERS TRAUMA

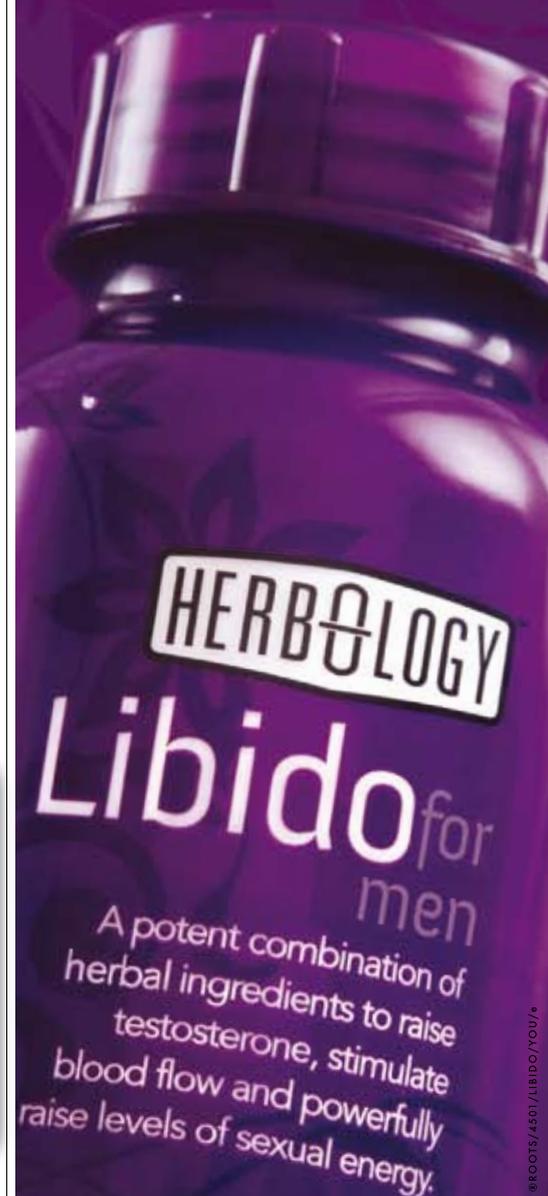
■ **Read up on trauma.** Google "trauma" on the internet so you know what to expect if any of your friends land in such a situation, says Janine Shamos of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadrag).

■ **Invite traumatised friends to accompany you on outings but choose activities carefully.** For example if they were in a store when a robbery took place they'll likely to find it frightening to go shopping.

■ **If you're concerned a pupil at your school might be traumatised ask your parents to speak to the child's teacher.** "Gaining access to a child in need is easier if you work through the school," says Anneke Putter of the TygerBear unit. For more information and advice call Sadrag on 0800-12-13-14, SMS 32312 or call the Tyger-Bear 24-hour helpline on 082-994-4301.



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