

I am a survivor of domestic violence. I have experienced violence in my personal relationships. I didn't understand what was happening to me as not being acceptable. I knew it hurt but when you've experienced pain as I had at such a young age, you tend to acclimate to the situation at hand. My mother was an alcoholic and so was my stepfather. I was removed from her care because of DV and her drinking. I witnessed very violent fights, some that included, poles, bottles being thrown and even an ax being swung. After it all me having to help clean blood from the floors and walls. Then the house was full of snuggling, kisses and hugs. I was removed from the home because of DV and of course alcohol was involved so that became the root cause of our removal. I did address my mother later in life asking her why she just didn't stop drinking. She told me she didn't like to drink but it was the only thing that would allow her to not think about the things she went through growing up. She was a victim of DV in her home by her mother my grandmother who also was a victim to her husband and father my great grandfather. This is generational or intergenerational violence. You don't just wake up one day and decide that your going to hurt the people you love. There are hidden traumas in peoples lives that if they are not dealt with they reared they ugly heads.

The foster homes that I was placed in were home that also had issues with DV. I witnessed fighting and of course drinking. I became the outlet for one of my guardians to release her own traumas upon. I was beaten on many occasions and one time I ducked taped and placed in a crawl pit while my sister was taken to hospital for being hit over the head with a cast iron pan. In my personal research of my past guardians, I found that each one of them had trauma in their lives. Whether it was domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, each had traumas that were hidden away that were left undealt with and later came out negatively as adults.

As an adult I made poor choices in relationships, well 2 relationships. First one I was only 18 and was with him for 10 years of hell. I ran with my kids the second I had a chance back to my foster father who was a police officer. He helped me and I got back on my feet and went back to school. I was considering transferring to UND and met another guy. He seemed sweet of course (eye roll) but he liked to drink and I occasionally go with him but end up leaving him since I did have 2 children to care for and school. I became pregnant for him and then he moved in with me. He was a great dad and worked, I felt secure in having him there. While I was pregnant, he began drinking excessively and became violent. I addressed him about it he start pushing me, small things, eventually in relationship I wake up to him hitting me cause I had hid my wallet and he wanted money to drink. My children would wake hearing him yelling or me trying to fight him off. I had him removed from my home by the police and then had a protection order in place, per my dad of course, despite the order he kicked my door in I was sleeping on the couch and he came straight for me. So much anger in his eyes he started punching and threw me across the kitchen floor, mind you I'm about 8 months pregnant, I got up as fast as I could and grabbed the phone and called 911. He ripped the phone out the wall and threw me to the floor. He began kicking my unborn child saying he didn't want me to be its mother. I was protected my baby the best I could he then processed to wrap the phone cord around my throat. My then 6 yr old daughter is behind him hitting him with her fist and 9 year old son has a bat. He began pushing, hitting them and my daughters head goes through the wall. Police rush in and he is put in handcuffs and taken away. I'm at hospital with children and baby is okay we spend the night there. And we go home. I had to submit a new order because the order in place didn't apply off the reservation. I relocated to Grand Forks thinking I could start over, while long story short I had stockholms and took him back. He had convinced me he had changed and I needed the help. I started working and took a break from college so I had 12 hr shift. I'd

come home in the morning or evening depending on the shift and finding him drunk or past out. You get the idea, I had felt so down about myself and seeing other relationships that seemed happy and loving definitely nothing like mine. I was so beaten not only physically but also spiritually. I was done, life had won and I attempted my own life. Obviously I'm still here. After seeking God and knowing I had an outlet I packed what I could and took my kid out while he was passed out. We went to CVIC I rang the bell and said We need help. The door buzzed, and The children and I were escorted inside into a room. They were given toys, coloring books and snacks to busy them while another worker took me to another room to talk to me. It was the exact same building in grand forks, same rooms different faces. Shelter house they had was full, but I was helped with a hotel for a few nights, protection order, they referred me for housing, I met a few times for counseling, but I was referred out to another agency later. They had a donation closet where we were able to help me with diapers, wipes, clothing and personal items. Its amazing to see the number of programs that are offered at the present versus when I went for help almost 18 years ago. I have referred a number of people that are in the same saturation to CVIC.

He on the other hand is still struggling. He also did not just wake up and decide to be a bully. He was a product of DV and was abused as a child and hasn't to this dealt with it but now has an alcohol addiction. . I was empowered so much by CVIC that I was completely done. I had found the person you see before you today. I am strong, outspoken, a business owner, an author and more importantly advocate for those who need a voice. If we can stop interpersonal violence before it starts can you imagine the kind of world or at least communities we would have. Love is not supposed to hurt. Thank you for taking the time to hear me. Questions?