

LIGHTLY EDITED FILE

Storytelling for Social Change: Sharing Your

Childhood Story of Domestic Violence Webinar

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National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV)

Remote

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>> If participants can tell us in the public chat if they can hear us, that would be splendid.

Okay, perfect.

All right, then I will mute myself, and, Casey, you can take it away.

>> Thanks so much, Justine.

I appreciate that.

Welcome, everyone.

We're ready to get started in just a minute.

I'm Casey Keene and thank you so much for spending some time with us this afternoon.

I just want to take a moment to tell you a few things about the system itself.

So you should be able to see the full PowerPoint screen which is now displaying a slide that raided "story telling for social change: Sharing your childhood story of domestic violence.

Please feel free to send a message in the public chat on the bottom left hand side of your webinar screen, as I see many of you have been doing.

We really encourage you to introduce yourself there if you haven't already.

Keep in mind that the public chat is open and visible

to everyone who's participating in this webinar session, so you want to please be careful not to share any confidential or sensitive information.

You do have the option to send a private message to the hosts, the presenters, or to each other.

Just hover over the person's name in the attendee list, and you can access the private message options.

We have made links to the PowerPoint slides and the related materials available in the bottom right corner of your screen.

So you'll simply click on the file name listed under "Webinar links," to access those resources.

Also, closed captioning should be visible at the bottom of your screen.

Under the presentation window.

Thank you to our captioner.

Please let us know if you have difficulty seeing the captioning.

Please submit any questions or comments you may have here in the public chat, and we'll be sure to get to them at some point in our presentation if not by the end.

And thank you for being part of today's session.

So I think Justine, with that, we're ready to begin our recording.

Well, good afternoon.

Thank you for joining us today, and welcome to this webinar session entitled "Storytelling for Social Change: Sharing Your Childhood Story of Domestic Violence."

My name is Casey Keene.

I'm the director of programs and prevention here at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

I'm also cofounder of the ACE leadership forum which I'll tell you a little bit about.

So these are the many faces of our 12 current steering committee members.

All advocates and change makers in the movement to end gender-based violence who identify as having experienced domestic violence in childhood.

So we represent diverse backgrounds, diverse experiences, and perspectives, and each of us has a story that's unique and multifaceted.

Our goal with this project is to amplify the voices and the experiences of ACE-DV, or adult children exposed to domestic violence, to enhance our work to end domestic violence.

As part of our work, the ACE-DV speakers initiative was developed to help build the capacity of adult survivors exposure to share their stories publicly.

And I just am so grateful that so many of you are interested in this speakers initiative and have joined us today to learn more.

You can see the goals for this initiative on the right-hand side of this slide, around impactful storytelling, around capacity building, and connecting speakers to events that will help bring voice to the experiences of children exposed to domestic violence. So this initiative also includes the creation of a speakers bureau, and the development of capacity building tools, including this new guide that we're talking about today.

So this resource is developed as a companion piece to the NRC DV publication series from the front of the room where there are two current guides already existing around working with survivors and helping them tell their story and working with ad indicates in supporting them telling their stories.

These guides were written for adult survivors of domestic violence and have a lot of value.

This particular guide is unique in that it's specific to the experiences of adult survivors of childhood exposure to domestic violence.

And we hope that it applies to any point along the path of healing and resilience.

So today in our conversation I'm just thrilled to introduce my co-presenters and fellow members of the ACE steering committee.

So we have with us today Zulema White Starr, known as Ruby, who's the chief strategy officer for Casa de Esperanza where she serves as director of the National Latin@ Network.

As a child was I and adult victim of domestic violence with the media and to various groups throughout the country in hopes that her experiences will lead to better practices and outcomes for women, children, and families who have experienced domestic violence.

The so welcome, Ruby.

>> Thank you.

>> I also want to introduce Olga.

So Olga Trujillo is the Director of Education and Advocacy at Casa de Esperanza.

She's an attorney, speaker, author, and survivor.

Olga is an internationally sought speaker and author and is featured in the video "A Survivor's Story," a documentary and training video based on her personal experience of violence.

Her memoir for New Harbinger Publications entitled "The Sum of My Parts" was released in October 2011, and I understand she's now crowd sourcing, fundraising, to

get the book available in Spanish.

So welcome, Olga.

>> Thank you so much, Casey.

It's nice to be here.

>> Great.

Then we also have today joining us James Henderson who looks like is a little camera shy today.

He is the technical -- a Technical Assistance Provider for the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, through the Battered Women's Justice Project.

Jim has designed and conducted training on the effective interviewing of domestic violence offenders and victims.

He is on the national advisory board or acts as a consultancy team member for the Family Justice Center alliance, The Battered Women's Justice Program and the Center for Court Innovation.

Hey, Jim.

>> Hello.

Nice to be here.

>> Great.

So in today's webinar, Ruby, Olga, and Jim, will be offering thoughts, reflections, tips and strategies from their own experiences as survivor storytellers.

But before we do that, we'd like to learn a little bit more about you.

So I do want to mention that throughout this webinar, we really encourage you to share your questions, your ideas, your inside effects, your experiences as survivor speakers in the public chat because we're really hoping this will be a place where we can all learn from each other.

That said, I wonder if you can respond to the polling question that you should be seeing in your window.

So when it comes to sharing your story, where are you?

Are you thinking about it?

Are you writing it down, putting it together at this point?

Do you share your story in trusted relationships?

Do you tell your story in certain public settings?

Or are you experienced in sharing with various audiences?

Or could you be facilitating this webinar?

So tell us kind of where you are on this continuum.

You can see the votes coming in.

It looks like we have some pretty experienced speakers here joining us.

And that many of you have been sharing your story with those that you love and trust.

So that you've told it in those intimate settings, but maybe not necessarily in public settings.

And that a handful of you have shared with a variety of audiences.

And a couple of you could be sitting here in my seat today.

So that's great.

I hope that you'll be offering your insights as we move through these slides as well.

Okay.

Well, thank you so much for responding.

It's so helpful to know kind of where you are.

So let's see.

PowerPoint should be coming back on.

And I do want to point out that wherever you are in this process of, you know, documenting or sharing your story, that your decision to share your story with whoever, wherever, is truly personal one.

And is a true gift to whoever is receiving it.

Just wanting to make a note about the value of your story.

And in your decision to share it.

So let's get into kind of what the guide, you know, reviews, and offering some reflections on what the content is.

So the first question that we like to pose is, why share your story?

Clearly, I want you to understand that your story matters.

There it is.

That can inspire people.

It can inspire action and hope and strength and unity even.

But more than that, more than what your story can bring to others, telling your story can be powerful to the storyteller themselves.

It's actually considered a really helpful strategy on the path to healing and resilience for survivors in that it helps you name and reclaim your experience.

It can help you fit the pieces together.

Sometimes our stories feel disjointed.

Sometimes there are big gaps and hopes.

And so sometimes it helps us to write things down and make -- make better sense of a timeline and kind of how and when things occurred.

And also, telling your story can help you realize the power that it does have to impact others.

Additionally, the stories of ACE-DV have unique values themselves in that themes and lessons from these stories can offer really valuable insights to the way

that we address and prevent domestic violence on every level of the spectrum.

So our stories can really help people understand what it's like for children.

They can highlight opportunities for helping and support.

And perhaps most importantly, they can help illuminate those strengths and assets that you've gained on the path to resilience.

So this is where I pause for a minute and ask our presenters to reflect on, you know, what have been the benefits of storytelling or you?

When you think about sharing your story and you think about how it's benefited you personally or how it's impacted change, you know, what can you offer?

So I guess I'll start with you, Olga.

I wonder if you have any reflects on the benefits of sharing your story?

>> Yeah, well, so kind of two things for me.

One is this is something that I feel like I know so much about.

That -- so sharing makes me feel like I'm doing something useful with something really awful that happened.

So it's kind of turning that experience for me.

And then the other thing that it's done for me is the process of -- like, so when we do these presentations and stuff, you know, people will come up and talk to us afterwards.

You know, they'll let me know kind of like what resonated for them either because they had a similar experience or because, as a practitioner, they responded to a home or worked with a survivor with a similar experience.

And so that -- that piece of realizing that it helps people and it makes a difference has been really powerful for me.

>> Yeah.

Great.

Thank you.

Thank you so much, Olga.

Ruby, did you have anything to offer here?

>> Sure.

I guess for me I would say -- well, one of the early ones was interesting when it said, you know, the majority of people who answer have already shared it with trusted people, and of course that tends to be who you talk to first.

And I remember, for me, the benefits when I was doing that was, not even realizing I was gonna be a

storyteller, that I was gonna tell my story, but just having those conversations and being frustrated a lot of times with, I would tell a particular story and they would say something like, oh, my God, why would your mom stay with someone like that?

Not purposefully intentional victim blaming statements, things that kind of perpetrated negative social norms, I just knew it frustrated me.

And being able to say, you know, even when I talked about where I worked, and they're like, oh, how can you do that work?

Don't you get upset when the women go back?

It was always about the women.

And I would be able to say the thing that frustrates me is that she had to get out of her bed in the middle. Night -- and we don't know how to make this violation stop.

And it was the ability to just tell somebody, no, because this is the way I see it.

And that ability to have that place to say this is how I see it is to me what was the most -- I want to say most -- the biggest benefit to me.

It was an outright for me that then, you know, was able to become something more organized and intentional and get where I am now.

But that's what it was at first.

Yeah.

>> Yeah.

Thank you, Ruby.

And that's so important too because I think that those intimate conversations and that storytelling that you share with in those intimate settings allows you to practice, you know, those kinds of responses and allows you to kind of see what their reactions are and how you might craft your story based on what you understand people's reactions to be.

>> Yeah.

>> Thanks.

Okay, how about you, Jim?

>> You know, it's interesting, the first time that I ever told my story, I had been doing trainings for a long time and not ever really talking about myself. Just talking more about policies and procedures and what corrections could do.

And I was doing training with the American prosecutors research institute, which now would be equal to Aequitas I guess.

But it was all really prosecutors talking about what they needed to do for children, how they needed to protect children, and it felt so similar to what it

felt like as a child where all of a sudden the system was saying what should be done without ever checking with how that was interpreted by the people they were doing it for or to.

And so I asked.

Like they didn't really want staff talking about their personal stories in that training and I asked for permission to do it and it felt like I actually had a voice in the system.

How I felt the system treated my family.

What they did to discourage us from participating, that were all well meaning policies and well meaning practices, but they did not have well meaning consequences or effects on our family.

So it was really, really empowering for me.

And I think I was surprised at how much the audience appreciated it and hadn't looked at it from some of my perspectives.

You know, they kind of all came in with their own set of lenses, and so it really enriched our conversation and what we could talk about and what we could decide as far as our next steps.

>> Yeah, okay, great.

No, that makes a lot of sense.

I'm so glad that was a positive experience for you.

I know for a lot of people, there's a lot of apprehension about taking that step.

So let's talk about readiness, because, you know, the apprehension is there when you're considering sharing your story.

And for good reason.

So, you know, the guide really explores, how do you know when you're ready?

It's one of the most important considerations, and there really is no prescription for it.

Readiness is really something that can ebb and flow.

So you may feel ready today and may not feel ready at some other point in your life, or it could change, because life brings challenges that can throw you for a loop and can put you in a different place and can even change your story, even if you've been telling it for a long time.

So the good offers a series of questions to help you consider your readiness to tell your story publicly, including the potential risks to you and risks to your loved ones.

And I think, you know, the guide really suggests that if the potential risk feels too great, it may be helpful to consider other ways of sharing your story, other outlets, maybe personal journaling, maybe you

have a private blog that you can share with a discreet number of people or sharing in other closed online spaces.

What you're looking for is a balance between -- a balance where the benefits outweigh the potential for harm.

So I would love to get some input from our presenters about kind of how did you know when you were ready and what did those considerations look like for you?

So let's start with Jim.

Jim, can you reflect on that?

>> Well, I guess I knew I was ready because I had sat there and I almost felt traumatized at our training. Oh, this is what you need to do to these kids and this is how you have to handle this situation.

And none of the people in the audience and really talked to what the kids wanted and gave those kids any type of voice or vote in what was happening.

So I worked with a bunch of wonderful professionals. So I was very lucky that I got to speak to all the mentors about different options and things that we could possibly do.

And so from there, I just -- I end up asking if I could have ten minutes of time to be able to talk, and we chose to have me talk after the presentation, not

before, so that their presentations were very interactive, so if I would have told my story beforehand, people would have been much more reflective and careful about what they said because they would have realized a survivor was in the room, but because they assumed that nobody in the room was actually a survivor, people were very free to say what they felt and thought.

And so for me to come up as kind of the closing and say this has been my experience, this is what we went through in our family I think was impactful and helpful to me and to them.

>> Yeah, and it sounds like in your situation you felt compelled to share, that now was the time and you just knew toughed do it in that moment.

>> Yep, yep.

>> So how about you, Ruby?

How dawn when you were ready?

>> Yeah, it's funny because I love how we can have such different experience, because for me, it's not like I ever asked myself.

I just was not that analytical about it.

But I also started -- my trajectory was in high school, anybody who's heard my wings presentation knows that there was a teacher in high school who gave me a

feather because he saw some potential in me as a public speaker.

So I actually started telling other people's stories, because the kind of speaking I did as a sophomore in high school was expository and it was telling other people's stories it. Was exposing Martin Luther King's life or telling somebody else's story, but what it was great about it for me was I learned the structure and the mechanics and, you know, the cadence and the, you know, all the things you don't think about later on because you're not -- they're not as important.

So for me I started that way just telling other people's stories which was a blessing for me because it gave me a reason to go to college, which I might not -- other than that, I might not have.

But even then, I still wasn't thing that I was going to school to learn the communication to tell my story.

It was -- it was almost -- I feel -- like you don't have to have a plan all the time it. Was like I went -- I started doing public speaking.

I went to school.

I got my first job at a battered women's shelter in the '90s.

And then at the end when it was time, when somebody said hey, we're doing this event, would you be willing

to say something, it all came together and it's like
ah, that's exactly why I did everything.

And so it just kind of worked itself out that way.

But it wasn't like a conscious decision and I think it
doesn't necessarily have to be.

Although, for some people it does.

You have to find whichever way works -- you know,
whatever way works for you.

>> Yeah, thanks, Ruby.

And Olga?

>> Yeah, so -- so for me, you know, I've been speaking
now since -- I started speaking in 1998, and I was in
the Office for Victims of Crime at the Department of
Justice then.

And so it's a little bit like Jim where I was in
meetings and stuff where people were talking about
my -- basically, what was happening in my family.

And it got to the point -- and it would be so hard to
sit in that room and hear what people were saying.

And feeling like, they don't really know.

That's not right.

Or, you know, I don't think I would do it that way.

And then and so then I started, you know, saying those
things and saying, you know, this is my experience, I
grew up in a home like this.

And so it kind of started that way.

And then the way that -- and so then really it's Ruby's old boss a long time ago, that encouraged me and coached me, because Mary Crawford and then Susan Schecter in terms of sharing my experience.

At the same time, though, I was also, you know, doing some healing work from growing up in such a violent home.

And so I was doing a lot of kind of checking in with myself to see if what I was doing was okay for me.

So I would kind of come back and forth from it in the beginning.

And so what I would do is, I would measure, basically, how it felt.

Like, I've tried to pay really close attention to myself and -- and so these were the two things that I would feel.

I would feel an exuberance in being able to talk about what had happened, because it was such a huge thing, because I wasn't ever supposed to talk about it.

I wasn't ever supposed to say any of the things of what was happening, so it was really, really powerful to then talk about it and have people listen, believe me, and even want to know more.

And so that was on the one hand, it was that kind of

amazing feeling.

And on the other hand, I was -- I would oftentimes be on the road, and I would go to my hotel room at night, and I would feel this profound sense of pain and loneliness because -- and I would -- I remember thinking this in the very beginning.

I kept thinking, this is a story to everybody else. But this is my life.

And so in that room at night, I would, you know, kind of basically be reliving a lot of those -- a lot of

that pain that I talked about.

So after a little while of doing it, I realized that I needed to take a step back, and then -- so I would do this periodically through my career.

I mean, I've been doing these kinds of presentations for about 20 years now.

And I would go back and forth, depending on what was happening in my life.

And I was always a balance between how good it would feel to do that kind of presentation and have really useful information from a really, you know, really awful experience, and then the measure is, again, at night, how does it feel when the day is done that I did that?

You know?

And so it's -- so now, and it's been years since I've had that really kind of lonely, profoundly, you know, painful experience, whenever I get close to it, I take breaks, because even though it's been a long time that I've been doing it, there are things that happen like around the holidays it's a little bit harder, around certain anniversaries, it's a little harder.

So I try to always keep that in mind.

So it's funny because Ruby and I are a little bit of opposites, and we work together.

And I think that's what makes it work.

>> But can I add something, Olga?

Because -- if I can add something, because it's interesting when you were telling about your story because Olga came into my life in 2000.

She had been telling her stories for two years.

She was another Latina woman that was.

Did we get any push back in the field about telling our story?

At the time, in '98, I was still working locally, but I was actually asked to speak somewhere, and I -- and the first time I spoke it was through a poem because I was actually doing a lot of writing and that's how I tell my story.

But in the times when there would be push back, even back then, I'm a Latina, and I wasn't a white mainstream organization, and so I wasn't able to talk a lot about back then, it's not about -- if you're not part of a community, they don't care what you have to say.

You're gonna sit and you're gonna be in a superior role to me, then you cannot help me.

There was all these kinds of things that I was able to articulate back then that -- that -- that -- that --

that -- I wish we had more time to talk about but we don't.

But also what I would do is those comments or -- I would ignore them a lot.

I talk about wings and I say you have to take the wings.

Ignore the messages that are trying to destroy your wings and only take the ones that are trying to give you feathers.

And Olga was one where I happened to also in different situations, at a different job in 2000, be at the job with married and Mo, we have to connect you with this other Latina who's doing the work.

And I think that, you know -- oh, you might afterwards

feel like -- but I didn't feel that.

I didn't have that.

But there was other things that she shared that I needed to hear.

There was other mentorship that she gave me and advice.

And just having another person connected, that's why to me the ACE is so important.

Having other people that you can talk to.

Because I don't know how many people out there have people pushing them together with other similar like-minded people.

I think we were fortunate.

I don't think everybody has that.

And so you have to create those opportunities and this is one of those.

>> Yeah, thank you so much, Ruby.

And so Ruby is responding directly to this question from Amanda Miller, about whether we receives push back while we were working in the field.

And one of the things that's been really important to the ACV project is about bringing our whole self to this work, recognizing the fact that we, you know, have this survivor identity and then we also have this professional identity, and that those things are not in conflict with each other.

That when we integrate those things, you know, it makes us stronger, more powerful, more effective in -- in doing this work that we do, and that we see it as an asset.

And so, yeah, I really appreciate what Ruby's talking about in, you know, just, you know, just really accepting, you know, the positives in our lives and kind of pushing, you know -- rejecting those people who say that that doesn't bring value to ourselves as professionals and to our work.

And I think absolutely connecting with others who, you know, share those experiences as a basis for support is really important.

I don't know if there were other comments directly to Amanda's question.

>> Yeah, Casey --

>> Olga, go ahead.

>> So when I first started, you know, I was a --

[Inaudible]

And I had people at the Department of Justice including mentors at the Department of Justice that told me that I should not be talking about my experience because people were then gonna -- I was gonna lose all credibility.

And I -- and that was really powerful for me, and I

took a great deal of time to think about it.

Because I was really worried about it, because as it was, I was kind of young to be in the position that I was in, and I was already having a challenge around credibility.

And ultimately I decided I didn't care.

And I think it was a good decision.

Because it was -- it felt too important to me.

Like, people were talking about stuff in a way that wasn't consistent with my experience.

And -- and I was in a position where we were funding programs where they were talking about stuff that wasn't consistent with my experience, and I thought that just doesn't make any sense so I'm just gonna tell them.

And it just kind of kept going from there.

So I did, like, hear that I was gonna ruin my credibility.

It was gonna undermine my work.

And I don't feel that it has.

>> Right.

Good.

>> Do you know, in a similar way, I kind of -- I never worried about push back in a way because my boss was very supportive of me at the courts, and then I was

doing training separate from that, so it wasn't really gonna come back and impact me as a probation officer.

But I think now when I tell my story a lot of times, I do it more as to say I come into this work with a bias and I let people know my personal experience.

And I think it's done -- I think it's done nothing but actually give me more credibility because people realize I'm really trying to help all of us look at how the system responds and how that's interpreted by the families who we're doing things for or to, right?

And -- and so -- and I tell people, don't even buy into any of the policies and practices we promote, to really stop and think, how would this be experienced by the people in your little town or your big city?

And take that back and have those discussions and dig a little deeper then, just philosophies and it goes and expectations.

So -- but, you know, I also come at this as a white male.

So people may hear me differently.

I think some people are surprised to hear a man talk about it.

You know, they're used to hearing women talk about victimization.

Not so much men talk about it.

And especially men talking about it from another male, another talking about it, you know, like as, you know, some man trying to say women do it too, or something like that.

>> Right.

Thank you, Jim.

That's so important.

And I thank everybody for sharing those experiences.

So I do want to shift gears a little bit to talk about how to identify the themes of your story.

Because each of us has a story that has common threads, and that's something that we've found in the ACE-DV group as we've kind of shared our stories together is that there are common threads and things that make our stories similar, but each of us has a truly unique story, and so thinking through the themes of your story can really help you find your niche which can really help you position yourself with particular audiences and in particular settings.

So when you have a good sense of the themes of your story, then you can gain better clarity on how that message may fit into new speaking opportunities or how your storytelling may be tailored to best meet an audience's needs.

So I just wanted to talk a little bit about identifying

the themes of your story.

I didn't know if any of our presenters had reflections on what are the themes of your particular story and how you learned to center your story around those themes.

So I want to start with Ruby because I feel like your story really does have a very pure intentional theme to it, so, Ruby?

>> Yeah, you know, it was interesting.

I said I was a writer first and I used to do poetry.

But when I was 17 year old, it was an acronym.

I knew that I was going through bad stuff and I think we tend to focus on that, especially when we're 17.

But at that time I was like -- I feeling grateful and I felt like there's so many people in my life who have done so many amazing things and I was imagining -- because I read this story how they resist captivity and their feathers were really strong and treasured because they were so beautiful and so I had that image my mind and so I thought of wings and feathers.

[Inaudible]

Part of my culture.

So when I thought of wings and feathers, the wings became an acronym for me.

And so I thought of all the ways people gave me wisdom -- and this is a funny part because back then I

called the "I" independence.

I changed that when I grew up to interdependence.

Because at the time grew growing up in American culture, they teach you you got to take care of yourself.

And interdependence is really what's gonna give us meaning.

Then I -- it was natural like, you know, having the right to safety and the right to -- all of these meant something very tangible in my mind, and then G being great, all these people who didn't judge me.

And then strength, all those horrible things like being sexually molested by my father but finding my voice.

I knew those were -- I call them feathers, all the different feathers I got for each of those different areas.

So the first time I had to pull something together it was easy to pull back those wings because my theme was gonna be that about resilience.

My theme was gonna be that we focus so much on the impact of harm, and the 30% of children who are so negatively affected, I wanted to instead, what do children need?

And you find that from the 70% of children who had a different trajectory and how do we look at those

things?

And so for me it was easy to build my story around that.

What -- and how do these wings keep me from falling into those -- that path.

And that -- I took it from there.

>> Thanks, and I think that it's a really helpful storytelling device that's kind of, you know, it's a metaphor and it's something that people.

How about you, Olga.

Do you have any reflections on themes?

>> Yeah, it's funny.

I have so much in common with Ruby.

So resilience was a big theme.

And, again, in similar reasons.

To Ruby.

Two themes that I would walk away from the presentation kind of feeling bad about.

One is that people thought -- and this is again, almost 20 years ago.

People thought it was Latino culture that was violent.

And that was really hard.

To hear.

And then I started talking about my next door neighbor and how -- what a big impact she had in my life.

And then the other piece that was really hard is the -- the kind of the blaming -- blaming my mom.

For what had happened.

And so then it was -- so when I would hear those kinds of questions or comments, I realized that I needed to start telling people what I knew about trauma.

But when I was first starting to do this, it didn't seem like people thought that they needed to know about trauma.

So I would weave it into the story.

So people could get an understanding of how that kind of violence could impact someone.

And then when someone has experienced that level of psychological trauma, then what does that mean for how they might sound when they talk about something, how they might look.

What are they doing?

Like, what might be happening in their head that makes sense for surviving for those kinds of things.

And then the last piece for me, and this came as I felt more comfortable with letting people know, I was diagnosed with DID, which is what people used to think of as multiple personality disorder.

And I wanted to let people know that it wasn't what we think of when we, you know, see portrayals of it on TV

and stuff.

So I wanted to talk about disassociation and in particular DID.

And so those are the themes kind of as I evolved.

>> Thank you so much.

How about you, Jim?

>> I think it takes a lot of energy for battered women to stay safe.

And for our family, once we engaged the system, my mom has to spend just as much energy trying to protect herself from the system as she did from the batterer. So it's a system that should have been there to help our family really created a lot of the trauma that was experienced by our family.

I would say from us kids, we have more PTSD results from how the system responded to keep us safe than we even did from our father's battering.

My little sister, she had huge separation anxiety disorder.

Could not be pulled away from my mom at all after going to foster care.

And all of this was a direct result of how the system dealt with our family.

So when I do work, I try to look at systems work which falls in place with social work, anyway, falls in place

with Allen Pence's work, but also realizing just how damaging a system can be to families and how do we better empower people who have been victimized, meaning both the identified victim of the case, the children who -- or other family members who live in that household, and how we could better put more of the policies and practices around the person causing the damage and supportive things around the people who were experiencing it.

I guess it would be energy, PTSD, and systems work would be the themes.

>> Okay, thanks so much for sharing, Jim.

So let's move to the next kind of section of the guide or piece that the guide I think really addresses which is around clarifying your message.

So I want to share with you the ECB steering committee identified six core beliefs statements, and these belief statements resonate with I'm offering you to these today and in this guide because they I think can serve as a basis for developing your key message.

So what we want to do is invite you to consider how your story might help to illuminate some of these important points.

So these points are around just what Ruby and Olga were emphasizing when they talked about their theme around

resilience, is that your story is much more than a tale of adversity.

Children exposed to domestic violence can heal and thrive.

Also that each of us should be allowed and encouraged to name our own experience, that there's a difference between loving a person who abuses and condoning their behavior.

Four, that violence is learned and reinforced by societal norms, yet accountability and commitment to change can create a new path.

That non-abusive parents are faced with limits and complex choices.

And that our unique experiences bring added value to the movement.

So these are some, as I said, just belief statements that really resonated with the ACV identified survivors in our group and we hope that they find they resonate with you and that they apply to your stories as well.

So I wonder if our presenters can reflect on how their story might shed light on some of these core belief statements.

So I don't know, Jim, if anything stands out to you.

>> No, no, I'll pass right now.

>> Okay.

How about you, Ruby?

>> I think I'll say, I remember when we were going through these -- was really hard because when we were putting them together because there's so many diverse perspectives and thoughts about what happened and what we should say and not say and should we mention the batter remember or not?

It was just a lot.

And to me they're so powerful and beautiful.

And because of a story that's not so beautiful, but I remember one of the first early times when I spoke, and you have to have a thick skin to some degree.

Because you're not gonna please everybody, right?

And somebody's gonna have some comment that's gonna be like, oh, my God and make you not want to do this anymore.

But I remember back then somebody wrote a comment that said, I'm so tired of hearing these stories.

Get over it.

Stop being a victim.

You know, something like that.

And -- and it's easy to disregard it.

Right?

And say, I'm gonna remove my emotions, not that you should do that, but just happens to be the way I think.

And I thought to myself, there are people that are thinking this, and I want to catch them too, I do not want to speak to the choir.

So what do I need to do to make sure that that's not what's coming off?

And so I think at that time I had been given ten or 15 minutes to talk, talk about all the problems, because that's what I was asked to do.

Here's what the system did and here's that.

And people can -- they can receive that I think only if you -- you give them something else, like here's what you can do with this.

Here's -- if you inspire them in some way.

And I've also been at other presentations where it is a space to be able to share your experience.

But then you also, it's a mutual relationship.

You also have to be able to give something back so to speak.

And so to me, that's what is so powerful about these particular principles is that if you keep these in mind and then you can share something that contains the paradigm for the people listening.

Because unfortunately, they are seeing those horrible situations where they are seeing terrible things happen, where maybe they are working in the system, and

you can see how difficult it is for them.

So if you can't demonstrate that you see how difficult it is, and if you can't demonstrate how important all of these principles are or that you're giving them -- because they don't usually think that way.

They think batterer, horrible monster, or good father.

There's nothing in the middle.

And that's not how we experience life.

And so if you can't -- if we can give them that ability, you know, to see the full picture, then we've done something really powerful I think.

>> Yeah, thanks, Ruby.

Olga, did you have any additional reflections?

>> Yeah, I'll just add to what Ruby said.

You know, so the thing that I found the hardest is how -- go really quickly to demonizing members of my family.

And it was really, you know -- like, I don't have a relationship with my family.

And that's by my choice.

But I don't think they're like, you know, awful people.

Or, you know, how people kind of demonize my mom and it's -- it's been, you know, it's kind of -- it's tricky because I try to lay out the complexity of what was happening and what I know about my experience, what

was happening in our home.

And I tried to lay out for people.

And I think this stuff is just super, super complex.

And we like to take short cuts in our head, you know, A equals B or, you know, and it's really hard for people to kind of sit with that kind of complexity and think,

okay, so what do I do with this?

So, yeah, so I just wanted to add a little bit more to what Ruby had to say.

>> And if I could add onto too to that, obviously just by fact of us being up there shows that children can heal and thrive.

Because I think each of us did a lot of work on ourselves before we got to the position where we were presenting.

And I think when we talk about demonizing victims we also have to be careful not to demonize the perpetrator too.

Advocate for my mother who was a victim, but also advocate appropriate justice response to the perpetrator who for many of us still stayed in our families, right?

Maybe for me he wasn't.

He was divorced from my mother.

Was my step father.

But yet he is the father to my little sister, the grandfather to my nieces and nephews, so engaged.

So how we respond to him long term had a huge impact on our family.

And I think most of my training is done with probation or parole or people who don't have firsthand experience with children, so being able to bring that conversation in there, how does your policies around practices impact the children of the families you're working with is a unique perspective for them, because they're not thinking about that.

They're not looking at collateral consequences for their policies.

They're looking at their policies and how it impacts that particular offender maybe or how it impacts that particular victim but not looking at the broader picture of how it impacts the whole family unit.

>> Right, and related to this, we've got a question in the text chat from Keely, she says, how do you say that your abuser also had good qualities without coming off as someone with Stockholm syndrome?

She said I wouldn't want storytellers to come across as identifying with their abuser instead of seeing all the facets of person.

I think you've all done a great job at kind of addressing that question already in just that it's important to get the point is a cross-examination that people are not, you know, one dimensional, right?

And so -- and it's important that we don't portray batterers as monsters because it actually has the impact of removing accountability.

They don't have to be accountable for their actions because they're a monster and of course they're gonna behave in monstrous ways.

Yeah, so I think there's a lot of to consider here.

I know we've got -- we're running short on time.

But does anybody have anything they wanted to add related to that question?

Okay.

So, yeah, thank you, Keely.

It's a really good question.

Certainly something that we've all really thought about.

So the -- one of the most important pieces of this guide, and I appreciate Olga for kind of touching on this earlier when thinking about her level of readiness to share her story is about attending to your wellness. And it's a very real component about, you know, making this decision to be a storyteller and to share those

stories of your trauma history, that no matter how much experience one may have in telling their story publicly, it can still take a tremendous toll on your wellness and probably will.

And that it's important to do a temperature check with yourself at key points throughout the process as you're preparing to do it, how long you're doing it, and then after you've done it to identify what are the feelings that are coming up for you?

What are the opportunities that I have to practice self-care?

Who can I -- who can I ask to be there as a support, kind of things like that.

So I would love it if you all could reflect on ways that lessons you've learned about how to take care of yourself in the process of telling your story.

And I'm gonna ask Ruby go first because I know Ruby's got another commitment coming up.

>> Thank you, because I have to get off five minutes early.

I will say, I think I want to speak a little bit in answering the question to that question about how do you not come off as having Stockholm and all that and not identifying as the batterer.

I think one of the questions I post in my presentation,

and one of the things I pose is what do you believe?

You know, when a battered woman won't leave her abuser?

Is she choosing him over her children?

Or is she choosing her abuse over homelessness for herself and her children.

When a man uses violence, what do you believe?

That he should, you know, be nowhere -- he should be anywhere except in front of his children like you can make him invisible and nobody will ever have to deal with him again.

I pose all this gauge the thing about Grace is that you can't have people -- you can't teach people Grace and then ask them to only use it in the times when you think they should be able to see a more complex picture.

So if you want them to care about you as a victim and the fact that maybe you didn't always make the best choices, it requires an ability to be able to see a huge picture, to have compassion.

To think about what are the things that didn't work in the system that were as a result of a oppression and the system and all these other bearers, not the monstrosity of a human being.

And so that's part of our work is to get them to see that Fuller picture.

And so that's what I would say in terms of before, maybe thinking, you know, when you'd say -- because you -- if you want them to understand trauma, then they have to understand -- happens, right, for perpetrators as well.

Perpetrators were victims first, right?

But there were people who were people who hurt people. During, because I've been speaking now for 20 years and people think, oh, you got it down.

You don't care.

It's like it doesn't bother you.

It's all good.

But it's still really nerve wrecking.

Yesterday, my Keynote, I did it at 4:00 in the afternoon.

I could not eat before.

I love speaking at 9:00 a.m. because then I can go eat.

There's just a lot of little things that I can't do.

I still get nervous and all this, but one of the things that I do during and every single time until this day, and even yesterday, there's always one person that's so engaged, smiling, that's nodding their head, that's going amen sometimes, you know, because you don't know how the crowd is gonna take you.

You're always sharing something there.

This is not my people.

You know, I'm not a association on justice involved females and organizations.

It's all wardens and, you know, it's all criminal justice, but there's still that one woman that's there that saying good job.

So find that person because there will always be that person.

And as you're looking around -- that's the during.

And like I Saturday, after 20 years, I still do that.

And they are a mirror to how you're touching a whole bunch of people in the audience.

>> Thank you.

Thank you, Ruby.

Sorry you got to leave early but we were so glad to have you.

>> Thank you.

>> Bye.

>> So, Olga, what would you say about self-care?

>> Well, so I could say a lot about self-care, so I'll try to taken my thought -- contain my thoughts.

So it's really -- so I feel like when I can present my material a certain way, then I'm good.

Then I can keep doing it.

But then when it's challenging to do it that way, then

I take a step back.

So this is the way I try to do it.

I would feel a lot of emotions when I was presenting.

And I didn't feel like I was effective.

And I felt like people were -- because when they could feel that level of emotion, I felt like they were protecting themselves from my emotions.

So I stopped presenting for a while, and then came back to it when I felt like I wasn't doing that, when I felt like I can talk about this experience as something that happens to me without having a lot of emotions so that people can feel what they feel rather than be guarded.

And so that's generally how I do it.

And the reason I do it that way and the reason that feels so important to me is because it's really, really hard to do.

As rewarding as it is, as powerful as it is, it's still really hard to go up and I show pictures of myself at the same time and then I refer to the pictures and I talk about what was happening in our home and what was happening outside of our home and what was happening in my head.

The pieces of trauma and association and stuff.

So you have to be really vulnerable.

You have make yourself vulnerable to be able to do that

in a way that people feel connected to you.

And so if I have -- if when somebody asks me to do an event, I pay like really close attention to how my body feels, because I'm always really mumbled by the fact that somebody wants to hear me, you know, talk about my experience and the things that I have, you know, to talk about and particularly about trauma.

I feel really humbled by it and I always want to say yes, I'm gonna do that.

Totally, I'm gonna can come.

But if there's anything in me, like I pay really close attention to my gut.

If there's anything that makes me just a little bit nervous about it, I take a little bit of time to sit with it.

I try really hard not to talk myself into it, and then that'll be my response.

So I either can or I can't, and if I can, then should I?

So that's a big part of it because if I'm gonna put in the effort that it takes to do it, I want to do it in a way where the people that are there are gonna get something out of it.

And that's gonna happen if I don't have a lot of emotions that make them feel guarded.

So I don't know if that's answering your question,
but --

>> Oh, yeah, no, that makes a lot of sense and I do a
similar thing actually myself.

So I appreciate hearing that.

Jim, did you have anything to offer when it comes to
tending to your wellness?

>> I would say, a mistake that I made, I think you have
to tend to your wellness prior and after.

In the beginning, the first time I was very excited
about doing, and wanted to speak and finally I was
going to be able to speak and I had so much support
afterwards.

At one time I felt like I was attacking the audience,
not you personally, and they knew I wasn't attacking
them.

I was just kind of talking about things that happened
wrong.

And I had a really good response.

Probably the time that was the toughest for me was I
was foolish enough, for some reason I decided a half
hour before I was speaking I decided to take the aces
exam.

I think I should have just gone in there, kind of
knowing these are the points I want to discuss.

This is the level of intimacy I will have with this group and I decide exactly what they need to know about what happened and what the message is.

But it's great if you have supportive colleagues there that you feel you can talk to afterwards.

And I've been blessed in that area.

But most of the people I think in our movement are there to support one another and help us.

>> Yeah.

No, thank you, so yeah, it really is paying attention to how your day looks leading up to this thing and how it looks afterwards.

I know that I've noticed that I tend to kind of emotionally crash afterwards for a little bit, so making space for myself to do that and building it in has become a really helpful strategy.

So I really want to close by just emphasizing the importance of each of your stories, on noting that what brings your story value is you.

And in this group, we've come to realize that bringing your whole self to this work, so incorporating all of those different pieces of you is difficult to do but it's worthwhile, and in doing that, you can really effectively impact change.

So I know we are at time.

To conclude our webinar.

I would encourage you to continue to pose your questions in the chat because we definitely are looking to having more conversations around this topic.

Continuing to engage in, you know, skill building, capacity building, and exploring this topic with each of you.

So, you know, if you pose your questions, we'll find a way to get back with you.

And I also would encourage you to please give us your feedback in your evaluation that you'll get at the conclusion of this webinar.

So I do want to ask our presenters, though, if you have any final words or advice or tidbits or things that you just want to make sure you say before we end.

So, Jim, did you have anything you wanted to offer?

>> You know, I just think for me it's been helpful, you know, just to feel like I had a voice even though it was 20 years later or 30 years after the fact.

But thanks, and I really wish I could have said then, I still feel that I had an opportunity to say.

And I think that was healing.

And I think just knowing that you're ready.

You know, I wouldn't have done this without having talked to some people beforehand.

Who were doing it, kind of thought about what I was going to do.

I don't do elaborate PowerPoints on that.

When I have to do a PowerPoint it's just like a few pictures that kind of really keep me on track.

Okay, I'm gonna talk about this, this, this.

And so the pictures kind of reflect maybe the energy or the emotion or the point that I want to do and really no words because it's my story and I don't feel like it needs to be in a written format.

But I've appreciated the opportunity to do it.

I hope that other people have appreciated it as well.

>> Thank you so much, Jim.

How about you, Olga?

>> I'll say just a couple things.

One is, if you're thinking about doing this or if you already do it and you want to kind of evaluate how you're doing and are there things that you're not thinking about, take a look at this guide.

It's a really great guide.

I mean, Casey's had a lot of experience with this.

The people who were part of this forum have had a lot of experience with this.

It has a lot of really good information.

And then the other thing is, when you think, oh,

there's all these people that are already doing it, there's no reason for me to do it, or I don't have anything to say, there's always room for you.

When I was writing my memoir, the editor that I was working with said to me, there is always room for people's stories.

It didn't matter whether there were other people who had written about this or not.

I was gonna have a different viewpoint or a different experience or a different connection that other people hadn't made.

And then the last thing that I'll say is, if you have any doubts about a presentation that you're being asked to do or about to do, take a step back, and think, you know, think it through.

Don't make yourself do something.

Don't be talked into doing something, because it can be really hard if you aren't at a good place when you're doing it.

And I still have to do that and I've been doing this for 20 years.

>> Thank you, Olga.

That's beautiful advice.

I'm so appreciative.

And I know people are asking in the chat, how can I get

involved in the speaker's bureau?

Please contact us.

You'll see on this slide your email address where you can reach us.

We'd love to get you involved in the project.

You can also follow us on Facebook.

And if you follow us there, you can be part of our ongoing conversation where we highlight asset-based approaches serving children exposed to domestic violence, and fostering strategies for healing across the lifespan.

So you can stay connected to us there.

We have so loved, you know, talking with all of you today.

We loved being able to share the guide.

And we're very excited to build this community with you.

So thank you so much for attending.

I want to thank everybody behind the scenes here at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

Justine and Patty and Bracken, you've been wonderful.

And I want to especially thank our captioner Kristi for capturing the conversation so beautifully.

So thank you to you, Olga.

Thanks, Jim, and I know, Ruby, I appreciate her being part of this.

Your inside effects just bring so much value to this project and I'm forever grateful.

So thanks, everybody.

And that concludes the webinar.

So have a wonderful afternoon and a great holiday season.

>> Thank you.

>> Great.

>> Yep.

>> Bye.

>> Bye.

>> Bye.

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