

Sharing Your Childhood Story of Domestic Violence

The Messenger Matters

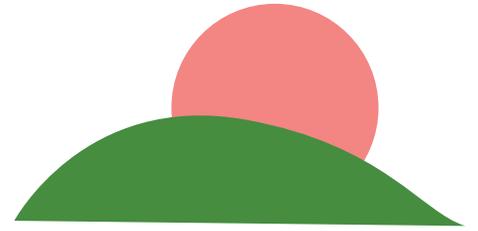
Your voice is powerful, and your story meaningful. By sharing your story you can:



Paint a picture about the complex and multifaceted experience of living with a batterer



Reflect on key opportunities for intervention and support along your journey



Share your path to resilience, noting the assets and strengths you have gained

Assessing Readiness

Your decision to share, in whatever venue and with whomever, is one that is personal, and a true gift to those who receive it.

- What is motivating you to go public with your story?
- Does it feel safe to share your story publicly?
- Who is supporting you in doing so?
- Might your story put your loved ones at risk of harm or jeopardize relationships that are important to you?
- How might telling your story impact your emotional well-being?
- How will you respond to victim-blaming questions or statements from your audience?
- What support system is available to you before, during, and after speaking engagements?
- Do you have sufficient time for self-care practices before and after speaking engagements?
- In what circles are you comfortable or uncomfortable identifying as a trauma survivor?
- If you have told your story before, how did it feel?



Finding Your Voice

The wisdom you have gained from your unique experience is valuable.

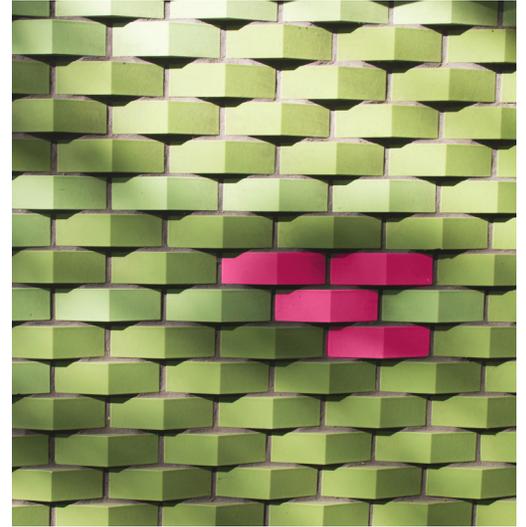
- What factor(s) helped to foster your resilience?
- What helped you to deem someone a trusted adult?
- What systems did you interact with on your journey?
- Were there specific trauma outcomes for you or your family that are particularly powerful?
- What are the most important lessons for you?



Shifting the Paradigm

Speaking your truth can bring a greater understanding to the experiences of children exposed to domestic violence.

1. **Children exposed to domestic violence can heal and thrive.** Your story is much more than a tale of adversity.
2. **Each of us should be allowed and encouraged to name our own experience.** Reclaiming ownership over your narrative is an important step in incorporating this part of you into your whole self.
3. **There is a difference between loving a person who abuses and condoning their behavior.** Your story can emphasize that people who choose to abuse are human.
4. **Violence is learned and reinforced by societal norms, yet accountability and commitment to change can create a new path.** Your story may help your audience to envision a world free of violence and abuse.
5. **Non-abusive parents are faced with limited and complex choices.** Your story can demonstrate the power and strength of survival, shedding light on the importance of family bonds in navigating abuse.
6. **Our unique experiences bring added value to the movement.** By sharing your experiences, you can enhance and transform individual, organizational, community and systemic approaches to intervention and prevention.



These 6 principles are the core beliefs of the Adult Children Exposed to Domestic Violence (ACE-DV) Leadership Forum.

Impacting Change

While your voice is unique, and your message is critical, what gives your story the most value is you. By bringing your whole self to this work, you are demonstrating bravery, power, and strength. You are a catalyst for change.

For more information and resources to support survivors' storytelling, see the NRCDV's *From the Front of the Room* publication series, available at vawnet.org.

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**Family Violence Prevention
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