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In Plain Sight

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In Plain Sight

Abstract

I went through my childhood hearing these statements daily, for I lived with my abuser. While there was physical abuse, the scars from the verbal abuse are what still haunt me today. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, physical and verbal abuse, suicide, insecurity, self-doubt, self-worth, sibling abuse

Disciplines

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence | Mental and Social Health

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

IN PLAIN SIGHT

May 4, 2015

“You’re fat.”

“You’re stupid.”

“No one likes you.”

“I hope you die.”

“You should kill yourself.”



I went through my childhood hearing these statements daily, for I lived with my abuser. While there was physical abuse, the scars from the verbal abuse are what still haunt me today.

Growing up, my siblings and I always fought and bickered. After all, that is what siblings are best at: knowing exactly how to push your buttons and to annoy you to no end. Roughhousing and horseplay were part of our daily routine. However, around middle school, things began to escalate and really become a problem.

Yet, no one else saw it as a problem. It was just a part of growing up. It was what older brothers do. This is what my parents told me. And my teachers. And my school counselor. I turned to the trusted adults in my life, just like I was taught to. However, no one took my concerns seriously. Even with the bruises to show for it and having my parents and teachers witnessing both the physical and verbal abuse more than once, nothing was ever said.

The punches and kicks only amplified the worthlessness I was feeling. After years of being bullied and belittled, I began to internalize these statements and not know anything different. What was my purpose? Why should I continue living? I’m fat. I’m ugly. I’m worthless.

I continue to fight everyday to challenge these debilitating thoughts. Whenever I achieve anything, from getting an A on an exam to being accepted at an Ivy League school, I still do not feel good enough. I place unrealistic and impossible standards on myself, because maybe if I was just a little better, someone would have helped. I become uncomfortable whenever someone says anything positive about me, with the voice in my head reminding me that they are lying. No one ever countered the hurtful comments my brother made, so what he said must have been the truth. I often wonder if I were to leave, would anyone even notice my absence? Would they feel relieved that I was not in the way, having my presence bother them? After all, I became the punching bag. I became the target, so it must have been something about me that I did wrong.

Additionally, on the other side, what was told to my brother? It's okay to take your anger out on someone else. There are not consequences for physical violence. A way to make yourself feel superior is to put someone else down. Although I am not in contact with him anymore, I wonder and fear about the relationships he is in. Is he being abusive to a woman? Does he know how to handle his anger?

It is estimated that about [1 in 3 children](#) are abused by a sibling each year. Sibling abuse is more prevalent than parent-child abuse, yet, there is this deafening silence. This silence only amplified the long term consequences of the abuse I faced. Growing up in a home where money was tight, with my parents working multiple jobs and stressing about paying the bills each month, my safety took a backseat. With severe medical and mental health issues of other family members, the pain and suffering I was going through was not a priority. I was left to be raised by my siblings.

Was it because it was my brother and that's just what boys do? Would have it been different if it was my sister? Would have it been different if I was a boy? If I had not shielded my little sister, trying to take the abuse all on my own, would my parents have stepped in then? Could I have done something to not deserve this? Although, it would have been difficult for my parents to "choose sides," wasn't I worth it?

I cried out for help. I bruised, I bled, but I continue to hurt.

Anonymous