

# **Journeys:**

**Stories of**

**Strength,**

**Hope and**

**Healing**



**In loving memory of our mother Helen M. Ginsberg,  
Judy, Jane, Brenda and Jonathan.**

# Introduction

Within this book, you'll find a collection of unique and personal narratives, recounting the journeys of survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV). Advocates and health care providers who care for those affected by IPV also contributed reflections on their work. These journeys are fueled by a tremendous amount of strength, hope in the promise of a new day, and the countless ways in which people heal and take care of themselves. As advocates we are honored to accompany survivors on their journeys, providing solidarity, bearing witness, and offering words of encouragement along the way. Each person's path is unique to their experience, and shaped by resiliency and creativity in overcoming obstacles that may seem insurmountable at the time.

Intimate partner violence continues to plague our communities, disproportionately affecting women, and causing significant health impacts for millions. IPV transcends demographic lines and affects individuals regardless of race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, level of education, or community of origin. This book serves as both an exercise in empowerment for survivors but also as a call to action. Eradicating IPV requires a coordinated, widespread response from those within healthcare as well as other sectors. It is imperative for us to understand the varied needs and experiences of survivors as we work to develop creative solutions and interventions to address IPV.

This collection was developed through the commitment of HAVEN staff, with support from Partners Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and MGH Emergency Department colleagues. A focus group comprised of survivors was integral to informing the content of the book and in providing guidance in the development of the creative process. With input from HAVEN and EAP clients, we have incorporated activities and reflective exercises for use to the reader as stops along one's continuous journey of self care. Parts of this booklet may also feel overwhelming as you read the stories of healing from abuse. Feel free to bypass those that feel less helpful and to spend some time with the sections that feel more beneficial to you. Also, as this booklet offers you the chance to explore personal issues, please consider keeping it in a safe place where only you have access to it.

Our sincerest gratitude to the survivors who bravely contributed their stories, poems, and letters. We honor you in these pages and in the work that is done every day to support all victims and survivors of intimate partner violence.

As a committee, we worked hard to bring this vision to fruition. We could not have done this without support from Maria Guzman with MGH Social Service, the MGH Social Service Department and MGH Police and Security.

The Journeys booklet Sub Committee:

Amanda Breen, MS - MGH Emergency Dept

Gayle Hoisington, LICSW - HAVEN Advocate

Jessica Loftus, LICSW - DV Coordinator, Employee Assistance Program

Liz Speakman, LICSW - HAVEN Director

In the health care environment, it is not uncommon to hear a professional caregiver say, "our patients are our best teachers." When a staff member is commended for her dedication and commitment to patient care, she is likely to respond that she certainly gains far more from her patients than she gives to them. This is especially true when women who have experienced intimate partner violence engage with social workers and/or HAVEN advocates with strength and hope for healing. We who witness this strength and resiliency are grateful for the courage and creativity evident in the submissions that follow.

Marie Elena Gioiella, LICSW

Director, MGH Social Service Department

# Table of Contents

Hope holds up the head and the heart.....	1
The Courage to Survive .....	3
Being Good to Yourself: Creating a Self Care Plan .....	4
Gaining Confidence.....	5
Tides: High and Low .....	7
Quieting the Mind: How to Meditate .....	9
To Live Without Pain .....	10
Strength and Support When I Needed it Most.....	12
Health Impacts: Does your relationship affect your health?.....	13
Red Flags from the Start.....	14
What HAVEN has Done for Me .....	17
Three Long Years.....	18
Thanks! Reflecting on the Good.....	20
What HAVEN has Done for Me .....	21
La Fé .....	22
Faith.....	23
A Big Decision: Sharing Your Experience with Others.....	24
Letter to an Advocate .....	25
Empty Space.....	26
Building Bridges: Connecting with Others .....	27
The Social Tragedy of Domestic Violence.....	28
Legal Assistance .....	30
Puppet .....	31
Enjoyment: Practicing Fun!.....	32
“Why Does He Do That...”.....	33
Reflections from Health Care Providers .....	34
Free At Last .....	35
Positive Changes: Rediscovering Your Strength .....	36
Inspiration .....	37
Resources.....	39



# Hope holds up the head and the heart

***(Letters to a survivor from a Medical Social Worker and a HAVEN advocate)***

Dear J,

I think of you often and hope that you and your beautiful daughter are happy and well in your new life. It was such a privilege to spend time with you...

I have always been motivated and inspired by the power of hope in the world. But working with you has given a richer, stronger meaning to the word. Whenever we spoke, whatever difficult information or event we discussed, you were able to say that you "could still see the hope in the day." Even in the most difficult of days, you could look around and see the hope in some small corner. You reminded me in a rich and beautiful way that hope is part of all of us, and that it can always be found, even in the dark. And hope is bigger than your abusive husband, bigger than your daughter's illness, bigger than the terrible experiences you endured as a child, and bigger than any of the many barriers you overcame.

I am a little different from each client I meet... And I am so thankful for meeting each of you, and for the opportunity to grow from each of you. I wish you peace, health, and 'the one joyful day' that you have worked so hard to experience. And always, always, I wish you hope.

Sincerely,

N, Your Medical Social Worker

Dear J,

When I first met you, I knew instantly that you are a very courageous young woman. You were juggling so much at that time. You were caring for your ill, very young daughter in a foreign country. Yet you also didn't want to return to your home country because of the abusive man you'd left there.

I remember the stories you told me of your husband's abuse towards you. But much more than that, I remember how strong you are. You always seemed focused and you were able to make the most difficult decisions. You never neglected to make your daughter your number one priority. You are such an amazing mother to her!

I have several hopes for you. One is that you prioritize yourself as much as you do your daughter. You are capable of providing such great care towards others and I hope that you turn some of that attention towards yourself as well.

Also, because we have not spoken for awhile, I don't know how or where you are now. But wherever you are, I hope you are safe. I hope you are well. I hope you are experiencing happiness and peace.

While writing this letter to you, I remembered that although my work exposes me to the worst of human capacity, it also exposes me to the best of human capacity. You showed me that you have the latter; the ability to persevere, to care and to be strong, no matter what life deals you. Thank you, and all of my clients, for showing me that.

All the best,

Gayle, HAVEN Advocate



# The Courage to Survive

## ***Anonymous***

I am a 52 year old woman who has been married for 35 years to a man who took my soul little by little. Last year I found HAVEN. When I was in early recovery I went back with my husband. Thank God my Advocate let me keep coming. Sometimes I couldn't keep my appointments because my husband was home and I was afraid to tell him I was going out for an appointment during the week. When my Advocate asked me why I was missing appointments, I realized just how much of my life was controlled by my husband.

The first eight years of married life and my first son's life were a horrible nightmare. Beatings like no one has ever seen. I would try to sleep with my son only to be woken up by my husband pulling me by my hair. By the end of eight years I was suicidal. My husband and I went into recovery. During that time he continued to hurt me, only it became more subtle over the years. I took so much verbal abuse and I truly believed the things he told me. Why wouldn't I? That's a long time for a woman to not believe in herself. When I met my Advocate I was guided by blind faith and when I look back I'm amazed by my strength. If you are a survivor of abuse you are an unbelievably strong woman. We don't think of ourselves that way when we are in it. Please try to step back for a while and let time pass. You'll be surprised by what you see.

Last Christmas my Advocate asked me to make a wish list. When I arrived at my appointment she had a white garbage bag and asked me to open it. As I took out the wrapped presents I cried because they were for ME. Total strangers gave from their hearts and I began to see that I had value, something that I had lost a long time ago. Maybe I never had it. We deserve better. But it's truly amazing when we see it ourselves.

I live alone now, both my sons are grown and on their own. I doubted everything about myself. Today I know that I am a good mother. I was a good wife. I'm a cool Nanny (to my grandkids). I'm in the process of divorcing my husband with the help of HAVEN. God put (Cate, Chris, and Amy) into my life for that reason. They say life is a journey and I think mine began when I walked into HAVEN because I learned about my husband and knowledge gives you awareness. Awareness is a batterer's worst nightmare, just as they have become ours. We need to be good to ourselves first.

## Being Good to Yourself: Creating a Self Care Plan

**Self care** is devoting time and attention to taking care of yourself; it is a way in which you focus on your own well-being. It can be an activity, a habit or routine, or a way of thinking. Reading this book and taking time to read through the activities outlined within is a way of practicing self care! Many times, we may not realize when we are practicing self care because it has become a habit. Often, it also means spending time doing something you enjoy and helps you feel relaxed, at ease, and peaceful.

Self care looks different for everyone, based on our individual needs. For some people, it means reading a book for pleasure, being with friends and family or taking a walk; for someone else, it may be meditation, cooking, eating an ice cream or going for a drive on the weekend. Think about your life and ways in which you take care of yourself. What are some things that you do for self care?

---

---

---

What are some new things that you could do for self care?

(For example, have you been wanting to go to a yoga class? Call a supportive friend whom you haven't talked to in a while? Go to your place of worship?)

---

---

---

Oftentimes, self care involves being in a place where we feel safe and peaceful. Where are the safe places you go that help you to focus on your self care?

(For example, your place of worship, the beach, a certain friend or family member's house)

---

---

---

## Gaining Confidence

### *Anonymous*

HAVEN has helped my daughter and me during an abusive relationship starting in 2004 to present. The resources and assistance provided by HAVEN are one of the things that gave me the confidence and security to end this relationship and move forward.

I remember staying in the relationship for a while after knowing it wasn't healthy. I guess it was a way to wean off and to defuse the abusive partner. I felt if I left him abruptly, he would be more aggressive and he would possibly stalk me or physically harm me. I remember gradually distancing myself and hoping he would meet someone else and leave me alone, which eventually happened, unfortunately for her. One day, I remember waking up and thinking "I'm done" and I had the courage to change my phone number and move to a new apartment. The fear became anger and it gave me the power to leave and not be scared anymore.

Thinking back, I wonder why I was so scared to stand up for myself, why did I allow a man to treat me and my daughter in that way, especially a defenseless young child who looked to me as a role model and who one day would date herself. She was depending on me to protect and defend her and I couldn't even protect and defend myself. I wasn't showing her a good example at all. Now that she is a young lady and dating, I worry about her being in an abusive relationship and it hurts me so deeply to now understand how unhappy and sad she must have been, how hopeless she must have felt to witness me go through that and to put her through that as well. The things we put up with are one day the things we regret but hopefully learn from. Now, I am aware of the warning signs and the characteristics of an abusive partner and I pray, more importantly, that my daughter is too.

I learned to love myself first and never to let anyone treat me or my daughter that way ever again. I try not to be bitter or have animosity but I did feel a sense of gratification when he served time in jail for abusing the next girlfriend after me. I know that doesn't sound too nice, but what I mean is that I learned from this, it wasn't me or what I said or did to disappoint him, this was his issue and this was a cycle for him. He had previously abused prior partners and continued to do so thereafter his relationship with me. You must always know your self worth and don't let anyone break you down mentally or physically.

Abusers will look for signs of vulnerability and weakness and prey on it. Some of the things but not all of the things abusers look for are lonely woman/man, a single mother, a woman/man who doesn't have confidence, an unemployed woman/man, or even a woman/man with a good job and her/his own apartment and own car – so they can use your vulnerabilities and/or assets to their advantage. I learned to be alone, and take care of and love myself. Although this is not always easy

when you feel like you “need” a man/woman in your life, but the truth is you need to be healthy both physically and mentally to have any healthy, stable, secure relationship.

Don't blame yourself and don't think you can fix a man/woman or change him/her. A lot of abused partners think if you put up with his/her abuse or love him/her enough they will one day realize this and appreciate you and change for you BUT NO ONE can change someone else. They have to want it. You are not here to change people, teach them or force them to treat you like a human being, that's your birth right. Stay strong...

## Tides: High and Low

Finding calm amongst the chaos  
To be at peace, what a gift,  
Serenity in the midst,  
This movement of the tide, a shift?

The ocean often reminds me of experiences, achievements, big and small,

The water when it hits the wall,

Walking daily, reaching goals.

I'm strong like the force of the wind that blows,  
Yet soft as the sand between my toes.  
The feeling of nature, the sense that something bigger out there knows!  
The waves that flow in and out,  
What could all of this be about?

Some days I feel so alive again,  
Like the motion of the ocean,  
In spite of the madness.

High tide can be turbulent and rough,  
Will there come a point,  
When enough is enough?

The history is so long,  
The love so intense, so strong,  
How could it be wrong?

The sense of comfort,  
Like I've come home,  
My fear, doubt and insecurity,  
Some days, so alone!

Addiction, suicide, betrayal, abuse,  
Are these lessons of any use?

The consequences, the bind,

of staying or going,  
Never - never knowing.

Memories, families, coming together,  
Tiny miracles in between.  
Only wish *they'd* last forever!

Visits in jail,  
Prayers in church,  
Hospital stays,  
Why on Earth?  
Laughter – Tears,  
All that's shared.

Sometimes I am so scared!

Seagulls and shells,  
Heaven or Hell?

HAVEN, a program so safe,  
Support here it does exist  
Yet another gift.

Here I've found help,  
I'm understood.  
No dues or don'ts,  
No can'ts or won'ts.

The place tranquil like low tide,  
A friend with knowledge for the ride.

My journey through this life,  
Like the sound of the sea,  
Will not cease.  
My only hope the destination,  
Peace!

- I

## Quieting the Mind: How to Meditate

One part of taking care of yourself can be setting aside a few moments a day to quietly tune in to what is going on for you. This could include noticing your thoughts and feelings or it could be taking time to “smell the roses.” As you walk through your day, try to become aware of your surroundings. Spending time in this way can help you reconnect with yourself and what is going on around you. Read the paragraph below and then see if you can set aside a few minutes to quietly check in with your body.

*Sit comfortably in a place where you feel at ease. Take a moment and scan your body. Notice where you feel tension or softness. Start at your toes and move your attention upward, checking in with each part of your body. Take your time and simply notice what is going on in your body. If you notice your mind wandering (which you will) just gently bring your mind back to the body. Try not to judge yourself for anything you notice. Don't try to relax or to change what you notice. As you are sitting, try to practice simply noticing without rushing to understand or change what you are feeling, allowing yourself to be open to whatever is there. This kind of awareness in the present moment is called mindfulness. See if you can bring this way of being to other moments throughout your day.*

What did you notice?

---

---

---

---

Is there a time of day you can set aside to practice this (or other) meditations?

---

---

---

---

## *Anonymous*

Pain is a part of me  
As a child it was my shadow  
But I needed to be strong  
My mom needed me  
My little brothers needed me  
We will be okay if I take care of them  
No one will know  
I need to be strong to keep going  
Someone will care for me someday  
But that day never comes  
In my first marriage, I was twenty-one years old  
He was strong, had lots of ideas for our life together  
His ideas, his needs  
The mental and physical abuse started before the marriage  
And lasted seven years  
The darkest moment was when I took an overdose of pills, called my best friend, and said I needed help  
My husband was cheating on me  
And of course it was my fault  
The next marriage lasted twenty years  
Again the abuse started before the marriage  
I believe I would still be a part of "it" but the abuse now involved my son  
My only son at age 18 had to endure "the pain"  
My husband actually beat him up  
Why do I still feel surprised...



I could not protect him from “the pain”  
We both went to the police station  
And proceeded to get a restraining order  
I had my husband and my son’s father arrested  
That was the day I said, Enough!  
I cannot help him anymore  
I need to start and care for me  
Be there for my son  
Learn how to live without the pain  
It has been almost two years and now divorced  
I can feel again, I can breathe  
and I’m learning what the words relaxation, hope, and survival really mean  
There are still days when I can taste, hear, smell, and feel pain  
But I know to try to put it in a drawer because  
Life beyond one day is possible.

## Strength and Support When I Needed it Most

In 2008, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It was a time of fear and shock. My daughter was only three-years-old at the time and it was hard to accept that I was facing a life-threatening illness. I expected my husband to be there for support and understanding, but he was not. He criticized the way I looked and told me my cancer was a curse of God. He was very resistant to me utilizing the support services available in the Cancer Center. I felt trapped in a horrible situation. I knew my husband's behavior would escalate if he heard I was getting help, but I also felt like I wouldn't be able to fight for my life without someone's support and understanding.

This is where I am eternally grateful: Social Services and HAVEN found ways to offer emotional and financial support during this terrifying time. Without their understanding and encouragement, I never would have found the strength and resources to get my cancer treatment and ultimately leave the relationship. At this point, I would like to mention some names such as Jocelyn (my social worker who always heard my problems, understood them and tried her best to solve them) and Elizabeth (Director of HAVEN who helped me a lot in handling my legal issues as I am separating from my husband.) I never could have dealt with my personal, medical and legal problems without the help and emotional strength I received from this organization.

I do not have the words to explain my feelings for HAVEN. I would like to pray for HAVEN and everybody who contributed to make this organization strong enough to help people in trouble like me. The bottom line is that this organization is just like a Haven for me. All credit goes to HAVEN that I am physically and emotionally stable and surviving in this wicked world. I consider HAVEN to be a part of my family. God Bless "HAVEN."

## Health Impacts: Does your relationship affect your health?

You have the right to healthy, non-abusive relationships. Relationships impact your health, for better or worse. Good relationships are good for your health! Stressful relationships can negatively impact your health.

Common health complaints from survivors of intimate partner abuse include: headaches, weight loss/gain, using drugs or alcohol to cope, depression, and unplanned pregnancies.

Take a moment and think: Do you have any medical or mental health conditions? How has your health changed since your relationship began? If you like, list any health conditions you experience in the following areas of physical and mental health.

*Physical: (such as physical injuries, tension headaches)*

---

*Emotional: (such as trouble sleeping, constant worry, thoughts of hurting yourself, feelings of sadness or stress)*

---

*Reproductive/sexual health: (such as sexually transmitted infections, family planning)*

---

*Chronic: (such as fibromyalgia diagnosis, difficulty managing long-term health care issues such as diabetes)*

---

The good news is that being aware of these issues is a step towards improving them. Many health conditions can be improved with self-care, and some may go away altogether.

Take a moment and list five steps you can take towards improving any health conditions mentioned above. For example, you could write "regular exercise" or "eating better" because both of those actions could improve conditions such as headaches and anxiety. They also can help prevent conditions such as heart disease.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Red Flags from the Start

### ***Anonymous***

This week marks four years since I left my husband, and I have not seen or talked with him since the day I left him. We were together for 30 years. For the first 15 years, he never laid a hand on me, so I was shocked one day when, out of nowhere, he pushed me down. I thought that incident was an anomaly; clearly he had never done anything like it before. However, after that first sign of physical abuse, the incidents became more frequent and increasingly more violent. He terrorized me on an almost daily basis with his words and actions. He began to choke, bite, kick, tear my hair out, and restrain me and so much more. Things got so bad that I am certain that had I not fled from him when I did, I would not be alive today to tell my story.

When we first met, “J” and I were in our early twenties and he seemed to have a lot going for him. He had an excellent job, was very handsome, extremely intelligent, he worked out, was health conscious and appeared to be on a successful path in life. From the start of our relationship, “J” was very caring and attentive towards me and had initially reached out to help me land a job. I did think he was a bit eccentric and had somewhat of an intense personality but I overlooked those qualities for what I thought was basically a good man with a few quirks. I noticed, though, that despite his best efforts to fit in, he always appeared self-conscious and uncomfortable around other people. He told me early on in our relationship that he had a troubled early family life. I think at the time, I felt bad that he had family issues as I, in turn, had been brought up in a “Leave It to Beaver” type family—one filled with much happiness, support and unconditional love. I thought I could help him put that painful part of his life behind him and show him how wonderful and inclusive a family could be by having him spend time with my family. I was young, naïve and trusting—a perfect target.

From the beginning of our relationship, all the red flags were there, I just didn’t know they were red flags. Little incidents happened that touched upon his issues with anger, jealousy and possessiveness but as they happened gradually, over time, I didn’t realize how connected they all were. I was slowly sucked into a life I never wanted, expected or knew how to handle. Certainly, “J” could be very loving and caring. He had a very boyish and innocent side which I was attracted to. He would open up and confide his most private thoughts to me which brought me closer to him. We liked to do a lot of the same things and shared a love of music. Often I think that the love of music and the depth to which we felt the intensity of the words and songs was the glue that helped bond us together. The good moments we shared only made me see him as a loving and caring husband. Over time, however, his mental health issues started to unfold. He lost his job and was never able to hold another one for any length of time, he was often depressed, became somewhat paranoid, and seemed to feel everyone else was wrong and he was always right. I spent countless

hours listening to him obsess over the smallest, most insignificant issues. I spent just as many hours trying to calm him down and work through the issues he was stuck on. Unfortunately, as time went on, he started self medicating with alcohol and drugs prescribed for him. This only exacerbated the problem. His sadness and inability to handle life began to incapacitate him and he seemed to transfer the burden of his happiness and responsibility for himself onto me. He was often ill and became unable to cope with everyday life. "J" was very private and didn't want others to know he had issues, so we kept our struggles as private as possible, always putting on an "all is well" front to others.

As time went on and self medicating became the norm, I ended up being the breadwinner as well as cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, paying the bills, making his appointments, driving him to his appointments, picking up the mail at the post office, bringing the car for repairs, etc. In other words, I ended up doing everything for him and me. The less he was able to handle, the more I did for him and the more self destructive he became. It brought out bad moods, paranoia and possessiveness. He was also hospitalized 4 times for medical issues related to his self medicating. Needless to say, I spent my days "walking on eggshells" around him, unable and afraid to talk about things I thought might upset him. I had to be selective in what I could talk with him about and when to bring up any "controversial" subjects. He was ultimately controlling my life and me. At that point in our relationship, I was walking around like a zombie just existing but not living.

When he started becoming physically violent after our 15 years together, I was totally unprepared. Despite all his problems, this didn't seem like the man I had known and loved. Always the optimist, I was hopeful that if he stopped drinking, he would stop the violence. He knew what he was doing was wrong but I can't remember him ever apologizing. Instead he seemed to always say that I was irritating him and that if I stopped, he wouldn't hurt me any longer. I knew the things he was saying were totally off the wall and untrue but I was too worn down and exhausted to argue the point.

So FINALLY 30 years later, I had had enough. "J" was drunk and hurt me in a public place and someone called the police. Although I was bleeding from my nose and had a large bite mark on my arm from him, he had the nerve to tell the police I had hit him just to take the blame off of him. When the police told me he had said that, I was stunned beyond belief. How could this man that I love make up such a horrific lie? I had never hit him or hurt him or struck back at him in all the years we had been together. Those accusations from him hurt me more than any physical pain he had inflicted. This man I had protected and given up my life to support and help had shown no regard for me whatsoever. I suppose I should have thought "par for the course," but in reality I was shocked and devastated by his words and his betrayal.

From there I was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital, and the next day I chose to go to a

domestic violence shelter. I felt I would be safe there and it would give me time to think of my next move. It was the best decision I ever made. At the shelter, I was surrounded by women who had been through similar physical abuse. With both individual and group counseling, I was able to open up for the first time and talk about the abuse I had experienced. I had never told a soul about any issues of violence in my life so even the people I was closest to had no idea of what I had been going through. While I was at the shelter, my counselor gave me a book about domestic abuse to read. As I was reading it, I put little sticky notes on the pages I thought “yes, that’s what happened to me”. By the time I finished the book, I realized that I had put sticky notes on almost every page. My experience with domestic abuse was “classic”. I was like the poster child for an abused woman. It made me painfully aware how common abuse is and how many red flags there were from day one that I met my husband. It opened up my eyes to the manipulation and the chaos that abusers create to keep us off balance. Reading that book not only opened my eyes but I truly feel it helped to change my life. It put so much in perspective for me at a time when I needed it most.

I am also grateful to have had support from HAVEN while my life was in transition. Their counselors helped me to better understand all I had been through. They instilled confidence in me by reiterating how strong I had been and how far I had come. They also helped me to set realistic goals for myself. At our regularly scheduled meetings we discussed both my weekly progress and any setbacks or areas of concern. Their services were a positive step along the way to my feeling of wellness and a better life.

Lastly, I must say, leaving “J” was the best decision I ever made. Do I miss him—well, at times, yes; I miss the good parts of our life together. Since music was a big bond for us, I do find music is a trigger to thinking of him. Do I still love him—if I am honest, I would have to say yes, despite everything I went through we did share 30 years together and not all were bad ones. But more importantly, would I want to go back to him—NO WAY. I acknowledge there were happy moments in our many years together but I also acknowledge that there were many horrific years filled with frustration, fear, sadness and pain. I would NOT want to go back to “J”. I wouldn’t give up one minute of my freedom for one minute with him. I am happier than I have ever been in my life. I have become stronger, more independent, and able to do what I want, when I want without living in fear and sadness. I have now relocated, made new friends, reunited with old friends, have a good job, a wonderful support system and am looking into going back to school to get my Bachelors Degree. In other words, “life is good.” 😊

## What HAVEN has Done for Me

**By DM**

My advocate, Sandra, met me when I was inpatient here at MGH. I was scared to talk to anyone else about what was happening to me and the social worker strongly encouraged me to talk to someone from the HAVEN program. I was very reluctant to talk because I didn't think I was going to be understood and I felt that it was all my fault. When my advocate walked into the room, I felt so safe and opened up to her about my situation and finally felt that I was understood. I didn't feel like she was looking down on me or judging me and that's why I opened up to her. My advocate knew exactly what I was going to say and she made me feel like I was NOT alone. Once I opened up to her, I realized I was not alone and it was OK for me to feel the way I did. She is my Guardian Angel! She was perfect for me and I have felt connected to her since I could talk to her from my heart. My best memory here at MGH was the day I was scheduled for surgery and I was so terrified, I asked the surgeon to please have my advocate paged. I gave them Sandra's first name and said she was in Social Service. They found her and she came, held my hand and said everything is going to be fine. I remember feeling calmer and less afraid. I was able to have the surgery and fell asleep quickly after hearing her voice. Years later, I now volunteer at MGH and give back as a way to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. God bless HAVEN and Sandra. If it wasn't for HAVEN, I would NOT be here today!!!!

## Three Long Years...

It all, of course, starts with a friendship but before we know it, we are in love...or that's what some call it. My three years with this person were the worst that one can imagine. The more I think about it, the more it scares me and sticks with me like a nightmare every night. My only fault was that I chose him. He was jealous. He thought I would go and be with someone else. But there was no way that I could, even if I had wanted to. He isolated me from everyone, including my own family. He did not like me living a normal life because his wasn't normal, for sure.

Our relationship was a secret. I come from a very strict culture, religion, and family. If they found out about me having a boyfriend, I would have been in deep trouble. I shouldn't have any boyfriends, period! And that was my weakness that he used against me. If I asked and begged him to leave me, he threatened me that he could really make my life hell. He kept reminding me how ill my father was and if he found out about what a bad daughter he had, how he would just die right away. If there were times when I wished to stay home with my family, he would make anything up to start a fight and blame it on me staying at home. Then he would order me to leave my house as soon as possible and go meet him. If I refused, he would start calling my house with a blocked number and keep calling until I had to lie at home that "Oh, I got a call from work and I have to go" while I was forced to do everything according to him. If he didn't allow me to breathe, I wouldn't take a breath. This is how much he controlled me.

It came to a point when he started abusing me. First emotionally but then it became like a routine: if we didn't fight with him physically hurting me and bruising me, I couldn't go home. Every night I had to say sorry for things I hadn't done, for fights I hadn't started, for hands I hadn't raised, for bruises I hadn't caused. But somehow it was still my fault and I better fix the situation, otherwise he will f\*\*\* up my life.

I started feeling like I was losing my mind. I lost interest in life; I had no hopes for anything or anyone. I knew anytime that my life could end, either I would kill myself because I couldn't handle it or he would kill me because of the injuries I got from him – on my arms, legs, head, and all over my body. I got so stressed out and fell into depression. I wasn't doing well in school because I hardly had time to attend class and no time for studying because I was supposed to be with him for the whole day. I was hardly working my part time hours and he never let me work extra. I spent more money than I was making – on food, shopping, motels (all by force).

I thought so many times of getting help but I was so afraid and didn't know where to go or how to explain to someone about what was happening in my life. No one has that much time to listen to others' stories, I thought. Every day I left my house with the fear that today, again, I will be hurt by this person who is younger than me but very powerful and I can't stop him. Every day I prayed to reach home safely and on time so my parents wouldn't be suspicious about me. And somehow I



survived every single day. But it really was time for all this to stop.

Finally, a regular fight started and ended in a beating but that was the worst of all. All because I refused to have sex with him. If he wished, he raped me anytime and anywhere he wanted. And I felt so helpless and violated. I had gotten used to just letting him do anything, just as long as I got home every night. The next morning after that night, I stopped answering his calls, unplugged my house phone, and went to school to take a final exam. He showed up at my school. I was so scared and ended up failing the exam because I couldn't focus. He was standing in front of my class, staring at me, and waiting for me. When I got out, I asked why he was there and what he wanted. He told me to go with him to my car and I knew it was so all the things from the night before could be repeated again. I refused and he kicked me. A professor saw it happening and the cops were called and he was arrested. And still after the charges, he didn't change completely. He started following me around, stalking me at work, calling me from unknown numbers, until that was brought to the court as well.

In the end, he lost his job; he also lost the opportunity to become a US citizen. I started having meetings with EAP and I really appreciate their time and help. They gave me the chance to share my story and feel safe about it. They reminded me that no one can hurt me anymore. I deserve to live my life freely and make my own choices...

Today I am in school, getting closer to my dream of becoming a nurse. I spend most of my time at home with my family, doing school work, and taking care of myself. I don't have to worry about my phone ringing more than once. I don't have to listen to someone telling me every day that I can't achieve anything in life. Instead, my family is proud of me. And that's all that matters to me – my family. All of this is still in the back of my head but I try not to dwell on it. I learn and take the next steps with caution. Now I value life even more preciously.

“Just when the caterpillar thought that the world was over, it became a butterfly.”

## Thanks! Reflecting on the Good

**Gratitude** is the feeling, emotion or attitude of experiencing thanks or appreciation. Research has shown that people who experience more gratitude are happier, less depressed, less stressed, and more satisfied with their lives and relationships. Gratitude can also help us to have higher levels of control of our environments, personal growth, purpose in life, and self acceptance. Taking time to give thanks or to focus on the good things in your life is a simple way to help you feel happier and healthier.

Keeping a gratitude journal is one way to focus on self care. Consider doing this on a daily or weekly basis. Take a moment to reflect on what you are grateful for – it can be a feeling, experience, person, or anything that touches your life in some way. Examples include: “waking up this morning,” “support of a good friend,” or “my favorite song.” What are you grateful for today?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Think about 3 things that went well today and why they went well:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# What HAVEN has Done for Me

## *Anonymous*

In September, 2011 I was involved in an argument with my ex girlfriend that led to her being arrested for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. The outcome of this was in April, 2012 when the case was dismissed. This was the legal piece but the emotional and mental pieces that live in me are still healing.

Here is my story and how HAVEN has helped me.

There are a series of events for the victim that occur when someone is arrested for domestic violence. A restraining order, going to court, having to move, taking time off from work, explaining to people, finding safe places, etc. I was able to achieve all of these things with the help of some very good friends and family. It is amazing how people are really there for you when you need them. It also helps to do things for others so others do want to be there for you too.

In October, 2011 just following the incident I was at my doctor's office at MGH for my yearly physical. She noticed the bruises that were on me. She asked me and I told her what happened. My doctor has been treating the women of my family for generations. She was in tears and handed me a card for HAVEN. I called and left a message.

I am not sure how long it took me to get around to actually coming into HAVEN to speak with someone but eventually I did. I believe I was looking for a support group and ended up in a counselor's office. That is when I knew I would be OK.

Cate, the counselor with whom I met, was more than amazing to me. She was supportive, educated, had resources, listened, didn't judge me, was compassionate and allowed me to be in control of how our meeting would go. I started seeing Cate more often and attending a support group at HAVEN.

HAVEN has also made it possible for me to go back to school this fall for my Chaplaincy certificate. I was awarded a grant and it covers my tuition.

I am grateful for places like this. Being a person of clergy and being there for others in this capacity made me realize just how important being there for one another is. It also made me realize how important it is to reach out when you need the support because it is out there.

I want to thank everyone at HAVEN for what they offer. I believe this process for me would be a lot harder without this support. I would like HAVEN to know that I am willing to give back in any way I can to continue to bringing awareness to this terrible act.

## **Por Elsa**

Aquí en los Estados Unidos, llegue por mi niña que necesitó mucho tiempo en tratamiento. Sufrió quemaduras de cuarto grado en mi país, en Peru. La niña es de una sobrina que fue abandonada. Los hospitales en Peru no le podían proveer el tratamiento que necesitaba entonces tuve que venir los Estados Unidos con la niña.

Paso mucho tiempo en los Estados Unidos porque mi niña necesita seguir en tratamiento de cirujías. Estoy muy agradecida a los Shriners Hospital por tratar a mi niña.

No tenía a nadie aquí. Conocí a un hombre en mi iglesia. El me dijo que me iba a ayudar y cuidar a mi niña. Al principio, fue así y me ayudó mucho. Después de tiempo, me case con él. En este matrimonio, sufrí maltrato, muchas humillaciones y abuso físico. Tuve mucho miedo. No quise decir nada sobre mi matrimonio a nadie. Ya soy mayor y pensaba que el abuso solo le pasaban a los menores. Me sentía avergonzada.

Terminé con él pero me siguio abusando. Sabía que yo tenía que hacer algo. Hablé con algunos vecinos y me dijeron que debo llamar a la policía. Lo hice y la policía me ayudó en obtener una orden de protección.

Cuando empecé a hablar, la gente empezaron a darme numeros de organizaciones de violencia domestica. Ahora tengo apoyo de mi consejera de HAVEN. También regresé a visitar a mi familia en Peru. Me siento mejor. Sé que voy a seguir mejorando. Voy a estar bien.

Lo que les aviso a los demás que sufren como yo sufrí es que no se queden como yo, calladas. Yo sé que en muchas partes del mundo hay leyes y apoyo para mujeres maltratadas, como yo. Espero que tengan fuerza para hablar con alguien más. Yo sé que es difícil, pero hay la ayuda y el apoyo que ustedes merecen.

## ***By Elsa***

I came here to the USA because my daughter needed a lot of medical attention. She was badly burned in my home country of Peru, she suffered fourth degree burns on much of her head and face. My daughter is actually my niece's daughter but my niece abandoned her daughter after the burn and I took her in. There are not hospitals in Peru that offer the treatment she needs so I had to come to the United States with her.

I have spent a lot of time in the United States because of all the treatment my daughter needs. I'm very grateful to Shriners Hospital for caring for my daughter.

In the US, I didn't know anyone. I met a man here through my church and he promised to help me and help care for my daughter. At first, he did just that and after awhile, I married him. In the marriage I suffered mistreatment, humiliation and physical abuse. I was so scared. I did not want to say anything to anyone. I was older and I thought abuse only happened to young women. I was ashamed.

I separated from him but he kept abusing me. I knew I had to do something. I spoke with some neighbors and they told me to call the police. I did that and the police helped me obtain a restraining order.

When I began to talk, people began to give me numbers for Domestic Violence agencies. Now, I have support from my HAVEN counselor. Also, I went back to Peru to visit with my family. I feel better. I know I will keep getting better. I am going to be okay.

What I recommend to others who suffer as I did is to not be like me, quiet. I know that in many parts of the world there are laws and support for mistreated women like me. I hope you have the strength to talk with someone else. I know it's difficult but the help and support you deserve is out there.

## A Big Decision: Sharing Your Experience with Others

You probably have considered telling someone what is happening in your relationship. But you may feel too scared to. Or you may have tried to talk to someone and felt judged or misunderstood by them. Many people do not understand abuse or they feel overwhelmed by it. As a result, they may say things that feel unsupportive even though they mean well.

There are people in your life who really care about you. You may be thinking of telling a friend, family member, colleague or health care provider. How do you know who you can really trust? As you decide who is the right person for you to talk to about your relationship, considering the following-

1. Does this person make me feel good about myself? Do I feel supported by this person in general?
2. Have I told this person anything that was difficult to discuss before? How did she or he respond then? Did I feel supported then?
3. Does this person show me that she or he really listens to me?
4. Can I trust this person to safeguard what I tell them? Has this person shown me she or he is a safe person who can be trusted and who respects me?
5. Does this person have any connection to my current/former partner? Could it get back to my former/current partner that I told this person? How would my current/former partner respond?
6. Does this person seem open-minded and willing to hear me out?

Think about the people in your life. Are there any for whom you can answer “yes” to all or most of the above questions? If so, he or she may be a good person for you to talk to about your relationship. If you are unsure, come back to this list from time to time and reconsider your supports. You can always contact your local domestic violence program for an immediate, free and confidential support. And if you like, use the blank space below to list anyone you trust to talk to about your current/former partner.

---

---

---

## Letter to an Advocate

Dear Advocate,

I came into the HAVEN program as a broken vessel, having endured many years of physical, verbal and emotional abuse. I would like to thank you and group members for your encouragement, validation and support. Most importantly through your program, I have discovered that I am not alone and that I should not be embarrassed to have been a victim of domestic violence.

YH

## ***Anonymous***

I look out the window and there is an empty space in the driveway.

Empty spaces – my marriage was made up of so many.

There was always hope of a loving relationship.

I was 40 years old and having our first child – so filled with happiness.

My family gave us a wonderful baby shower – so much love.

It was also our first prenatal class that evening. But we never made it there.

My husband got very angry on the way there and as he was driving, he started hitting me.

Of course, it was not the first time.

I thought, “Oh, he must have felt left out at the baby shower – all the attention was on me. I was so excited I may have ignored him.”

I tried to apologize – I honestly do not remember what he was screaming at me.

Instead of going to our first prenatal class, we went home.

I went to bed and slept beside an empty space.

He went to his alcohol.

I had a beautiful baby boy, who is now an amazing 20 year old man.

So now after many disheartening years, I am coming to peace with myself, finding new hope, and welcoming the empty space.

I would sincerely like to thank HAVEN and EAP. My counselor has given me the strength to see who I am and has taught me how to breathe. I pray that we can all find our inner strength.



## Building Bridges: Connecting with Others

Isolation occurs when your partner separates you from your support system; family, friends, and/or work colleagues. Your partner may make you feel like you are doing something wrong if you make decisions on your own. Your partner might insist on knowing about and approving of your daily activities and plans, including your work schedule and how you spend your free time. This can impact your sense of worth, resulting in low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness.

In what ways have you felt disconnected from family and/or friends?

---

How has this impacted you? Has it impacted your emotions, your feelings about yourself or your decisions about school or career?

---

### Suggestions:

- Reach out to supportive family members and/or friends, by use of safe communication.
- Speak with a therapist or counselor.
- Connect with a domestic violence support agency. The agency can help you, whether you decide to remain in your current relationship or not. The agency can provide counseling, survivor groups, safety planning, and/or advocacy services. See the back of this booklet for resources

### Reflect:

Who or what has been your biggest support in the past?

---

What are some of your favorite memories with family members and/or friends?

---

What are some activities you enjoy doing with family and/or friends?

---

# The Social Tragedy of Domestic Violence

First and foremost, I must admit that it took me SEVERAL years to recognize even the possibility that I was in an abusive relationship, and then several MORE years before I overcame that denial and accepted the reality that I was indeed in one. The abuse was rather insidious, and manifested itself in disguise. Perhaps if I had initially been physically beaten it would have been obviously and undeniably apparent, but the abuse was predominantly psychological. There were no outward bruises. There seemed to be no logical explanation for the emotional pain I was suffering. A physical injury provides a tangible reason for pain. For example, my arm hurts, and this is why - because there is a cut, bruise, broken bone, etc. but emotional injuries are far more nebulous.

I once read something about Nicole Brown Simpson that I found to contain a very powerful statement about the devastation of domestic violence and abuse. It read: "Simpson was killing Nicole for years - she finally died on June twelfth." The reason that statement particularly struck me was the sentiment that the abuser systematically destroys the spirit of their victim, leaving them an empty shell of the person they once were.

Thinking of Ms. Simpson also leads me to another revelation - that society consistently makes assumptions about the lives of others. Prior to her death, and the knowledge that she was an abused woman, I am sure many people envied her - the beautiful, wealthy wife of a celebrity football star. Externally, she appeared to have an ideal life.

I remember going to my first HAVEN support group and looking about the room - surely these women were not abused!!! - they all looked so "normal". I say this, of course, quite facetiously because it reflects societies' concept of what an abused woman looks like - we envision the face of a woman on a poster/brochure/billboard - bruised and broken - with an eerie sadness blatantly displayed in her expression - but in gazing about the room, I saw a group of women that I "see" everyday - in line at the grocery store, at school functions, doctors, accountants, waitresses, receptionists, wealthy suburban housewives, etc. Yes - representing all walks of life regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status, etc. Their faces displayed little of their internal pain, disappointment and the underlying horror of abuse.

Having been in an abusive relationship myself, I am in awe of these women because I recognize the courage and strength it requires to get up each day and attempt to function under such extreme duress - the obstacles they have overcome...the smile and facade they must display to the outside world that masks their true existence. Yes - appearances can indeed be quite deceiving.

Through my own personal experiences and my experiences at HAVEN, I have learned so much about life, compassion, human suffering, resiliency and survival.

Prior to being in an abusive relationship, I had little comprehension of it – it didn't make sense... but now I realize – it is so random and illogical – it DOESN'T make sense – and it never will – it isn't about trying to make sense of it – I tried for years to analyze my situation – attempting to find some logic to it. The bottom line is – it happened. I don't know why, or how, but that doesn't much matter to me anymore.

Domestic violence is such a social tragedy. I think the reality that animal cruelty and abuse has harsher penalties than the crimes committed to humans is indicative of the necessity for continuous work regarding societies' treatment of domestic violence perpetrators. In the situation of abuse and cruelty to animals, the abused are removed from the household and provided with shelter. The criminals are punished and held accountable for their crimes. In the situation of domestic violence to humans – the abused individual is not sufficiently protected and the perpetrator is not punished or held accountable unless they are guilty of MURDER!!!

...yet they are already guilty of murdering the human spirit and violating basic human rights!!

***The following was written by Laura Maslow-Armand, a civil rights attorney who provides legal services to patients and families as part of a medical-legal partnership at the MGH Chelsea Health Center. The program is called LINC-- Legal Initiative for Children.***

I have worked closely with the advocates in the HAVEN program over the past nine years. The program has referred victims of domestic violence for legal assistance with housing, child support, disability claims and other public benefits.

Two examples are chosen among many to illustrate this collaboration.

A 48 year old woman of Puerto Rican origin was the victim of a lifetime of family abuse and sexual violence. She was hobbled by depression, post-traumatic stress, and anxiety and was on the verge of a voluntary commitment in a psychiatric ward. Her goal was to move to a subsidized one-bedroom unit in East Boston so that she could be geographically remote from her former abuser but within walking distance of MGH/Chelsea. She was not able to use public transportation because it provoked panic attacks. With a referral from the HAVEN program, I represented the client at a February 2012 hearing before the Department of Grievances and Appeals at the Boston Housing Authority (BHA). Then, over a period of six weeks, I repeatedly petitioned the BHA Occupancy department, seeking a reasonable accommodation. In April, the client was offered a renovated unit in the very development that she had chosen.

HAVEN referred a young mother, victim of domestic violence and abuse, to the LINC program. Her husband had repeatedly violated the restraining order. LINC was asked to represent the family in appealing a denial of eligibility for an emergency Section 8 preference. While waiting to obtain a Section 8 voucher, the mother moved into a shelter with her children. Collaborating closely with the HAVEN counselors, with the Economic Development Coordinator at HarborCov, with CAPIC (Community Action Programs Inter-City, Inc) and with two MGH/Chelsea pediatricians, LINC gathered the requisite evidence to show that the family had, in fact, been displaced because of domestic violence and, therefore, was eligible for Section 8 on an emergency basis. Letters were obtained from friends and relatives to provide a rental history. Despite all that evidence, the Section 8 program director wanted to deny the appeal because the family was not living in a domestic violence shelter. LINC was able to provide a satisfactory explanation for that situation because it was LINC that had obtained that particular shelter placement in the first place. LINC had previously represented the family at a Department of Transitional Assistance hearing, arguing for a shelter in the Greater Boston area so that the mother could continue attending classes to become a dental assistant. Finally, LINC won the appeal and the family obtained a voucher.

Over the past nine years, my advocacy efforts at MGH/Chelsea have been facilitated by the excellent reputation of the HAVEN program. At appeal hearings, I have been fortunate to have had the support of the HAVEN advocates who have attended in person or provided affidavits documenting the history of abuse. In my experience, not one social service provider or social agency has ever called into question the credibility and professional skill of the HAVEN counselors.

## ***Anonymous***

He said I was like a ball of clay, that with his help I had potential to become something great. I always wondered if he knew that this was also a fitting metaphor for his ability to manipulate and control me. I knew I was being controlled the whole time. I would often visualize myself as a marionette puppet with my strings being pulled by my puppet master. It just seemed that no matter what I did to get away, my strings were somehow back in the hands of the puppet master.

There was always something in his bag of tricks that would lure me back in to a state of powerlessness.

The most powerful trick was the one that played on my hope that this was someone who loved me and so I always ended up feeling guilty. If he was the mean one, how could I be so heartless as to not reciprocate his affection?

I just couldn't say no to any of his appeals.

Through the support I received at HAVEN and my friends and family I slowly developed more confidence and insight into what was happening to me. Over time, as my sense of self and perception of my situation grew, his grandeur and might seemed to diminish. He was not the same powerful and foreboding presence I had seen before. By the time I left the relationship, he was only a fraction of the size he had been before. Even then I was still afraid, but surprised that I had been fooled so well. I would never have known how vulnerable he really was beneath all those superficial layers he covered himself in to make himself appear larger. I had pulled out the one block from the tower he had built around me, which made it fall without even realizing I was doing so.

It was still very painful, but at least I was no longer afraid the way I had been before. I had more power than I realized. I think it was so hard for me to realize the power I had because I didn't want to accept the pain that comes with acceptance that this wasn't the truly loving relationship that I aspired it to be. Now that I no longer lived in fear, I would begin the second part of journey to freedom, which involved breaking free of the barriers existing in my mind. I may be free of my partner, but as I am still discovering, the healing process takes some time, but at least I no longer feel my strings being pulled.

## Enjoyment: Practicing Fun!

Your partner may try to control aspects of your life, including how you spend your time, what you do, who you engage with, and how much money you can spend. This may make you feel helpless. Also, you might have been criticized or put down for things that you thought you were good at and slowly stopped doing these things due to feeling inadequate or embarrassed. It is possible that you may feel like you are missing out on activities that you are good at and/or enjoy doing.

Note: An important part of self care is doing things that you enjoy!

### Reflect:

Describe any talents or interests that you have:

---

---

---

---

Make a list of activities that you enjoy or have enjoyed participating in. What do you need in order to do these activities?

---

---

---

---

Come up with three things that you have always wanted to do or have not done in awhile for fun:

---

---

---

## “Why Does He Do That...”

### *Anonymous*

yes, I have the book...it is certainly very helpful and informative -the ability to profile an abuser. but then what- what is one supposed to do with that information?

it is all well and good to try to understand why someone does the things they do, but it doesn't change their behavior. we only know how that behavior affects us

i'd like to see a book called

WHY SHE STAYS and HOW TO GET OUT

because that issue seemed to be a very confusing part of my abuse experience.

not only trying to answer that question to others, but also to myself.

better yet, I'd like to write a book myself!! and would title my book “Why Don't You Just Leave?”

because that was the question that I found most frustrating.

“just” implies ease...and leaving is certainly no easy task. for a multitude of reasons.

however, the reasons why I couldn't leave were next to impossible to explain to anyone

and the question seemed to generate a lot of perplexity, anger and dissatisfaction from both the interrogator and the interrogated.

After many years in a quandary, I think I finally understand some of the reasons.

there is actually one MAIN reason: FEAR.

fear of hurting their abuser's feelings

fear of not being able to support self without their abuser (dependence)

fear of change (insecurity)

fear that the abuser will change

fear of retribution -either to victim, abuser (suicide), family or friends

and, ironically, that is the very same reason why abusers are abusive: FEAR

fear of losing their “possession”

fear of not having power + control

fear that their own insecurities will be exposed

fear that they are not powerful, etc.

but I honestly don't know ANY person who is being abused who doesn't want to be FREE!!!

I have always loved the adage: “where there's a will, there's a way”

-We all have the WILL, but finding a WAY can be tricky!...and what we need the most is a way - ACTION - getting out and staying out. learning to protect ourselves - reclaiming our lives and moving forward

I am inspired by all the domestic violence survivors I have encountered through the HAVEN program.

-continuously trying to improve the quality of their lives despite the pain and obstacles -gathering strength, recovering and moving forward.

I have tremendous appreciation for all the opportunities, support, empowerment and inspiration HAVEN has provided, and all the incredible people I have encountered there along my journey to freedom.

### ***Anonymous***

I am a Social Work clinician. I am also a mother of daughters.

I turn to HAVEN for support--for myself, for my daughter, or her sisters and her brother. I sought their clinical wisdom on what to say to her, when and how to say it, and picked their brains about legal issues. They worried with me, and offered solutions around the things they could fix, and understanding around the things they could not.

I thank and honor them by celebrating their successes.

---

---

**H**ope  
**A**cceptance  
**V**ehicle towards help  
**E**mpathy  
**N**ice to know someone is “there for you”

By,

Debra A. Mahoney LPN  
Nurse Practice Manager  
MGH Revere Health Center



### ***Anonymous***

Seven long years of my life I gave to you.

Now, what do I have to show?

You took me for granted.

My God, how long did you think this would last!

My pride, my dignity, my power – you name it, you took it.

Now it is time for me to take back all that you have stolen from me.

Now I am free, free, free as a bird.

Free to think, free to walk, free to talk.

Free to do as I very well please!

No more chains, no more in bondage.

No, I will not be your prisoner!

Thank God for my sanity, now I can be of help to humanity.

I can see clearly now.

Yes, now I will look for my silver lining and yes I will now take my slice of the pie.

Yum, yum, yes, life is good.

See you later alligator.

Remember, life is full of lessons.

Some bitter, some sweet.

The bitter ones we must try our hardest not to repeat.

The sky is the limit.

I must now go forth and reach for my goal.

With the help of God, I will lift up my head and walk with pride.

Free, free, free, at last thank God almighty, I am now free at last.

## Positive Changes: Rediscovering Your Strength

You may have had times in your life when you decided to make a positive change. Maybe you decided to quit smoking, eat healthier or pursue an education. You likely faced barriers to making these changes. Some barriers may have been inside you, for example you might have felt unsure of yourself or been worried about how these changes would go. Some of the barriers might have been outside you, for example the financial cost of education or lack of transportation.

Think about a time in your life that you set your mind to making a change.

What were some of the barriers?

---

---

---

---

---

Were the barriers inside or outside of you? Or both? List them here:

---

---

---

---

---

Were you able to overcome those barriers? If so, how?

---

---

---

---

---

***By Elizabeth Speakman, LICSW  
Director, HAVEN at MGH***

You are an inspiration to me. You open up and share the most difficult experiences of your life. You trust me with your vulnerable heart. You test me and I don't always pass. You allow me to see you with tears in your eyes and then sobbing with desperation. You show me your amazing combination of vulnerability and strength, all at once. You say that I saved you but I know that is not true. You do all the hard work, I am simply a witness. I bear witness to your pain and suffering and offer you an open heart. I see you fall and I know you will get back up. You have been through so much and have a long road ahead of you. You question yourself and wonder if it's worth all this hard work. You feel worn down and exhausted, I know. You have remarkable reserves of energy and strength that have gotten you through. You are not alone. You are not broken. This is not your fault. You did not create this; you are simply trying to survive in the midst of it. Your healing is painful and joyful. You stop coming to see me. You come back years later with shame in your eyes and I welcome you with open arms. You find a safe space here. You reconnect with yourself. You are an inspiration.



## Resources

### **Hotlines:**

**National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-7233 [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

**National Teen Dating Violence Hotline:** 1-866-331-9474 [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

**Massachusetts Domestic Violence Hotline (SafeLink):** 1-877-785-2020

SafeLink is the Massachusetts statewide 24/7 toll-free domestic violence hotline providing support, safety planning, information on appropriate resources and assistance connecting with shelters.

**Boston Area Rape Crisis Center Hotline:** 1-800-841-8371 [www.barcc.org](http://www.barcc.org)

Rape crisis hotline providing support, help with understanding options and access to resources

### **Websites:**

**Jane Doe, Inc** is the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence  
[www.janedoe.org](http://www.janedoe.org) 617-248-0922

**Futures Without Violence** is a national resource center on health and domestic violence  
[www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org) 415-678-5500

### **Massachusetts General Hospital Resources:**

**HAVEN at MGH** provides direct services including counseling, advocacy, safety planning and accompaniment for survivors of domestic violence. HAVEN also offers training, consultation and protocol development for MGH providers.

[www.havenatmgh.org](http://www.havenatmgh.org) 617-724-0054

**MGH Police and Security** delivers protective and supportive services to the MGH community in order to provide a welcoming, accessible and safe environment.

[www.massgeneral.org/police](http://www.massgeneral.org/police) 617-726-2121

**Partners Employee Assistance Program** provides free, confidential consultation, short term counseling, resources and referrals for any work/life, family or personal concerns.

[www.eap.partners.org](http://www.eap.partners.org) 617-726-6976

### **Self Care Resources:**

**Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society** 508-856-2656

<http://www.umassmed.edu/content.aspx?id=41252>

**Benson Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine** 617-643-6090

<http://www.massgeneral.org/bhi/>

**Cambridge Insight Meditation Center** 617-441-9038

<http://www.cimc.info>

***Other useful websites:***

[www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)

<http://www.mindfulness-solution.com>

***Books to support your practice:***

- “Full Catastrophe Living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain and illness.” By Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.
- “The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness.” By Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn
- “The Miracle of Mindfulness” by Thich Nhat Hanh
- “Happiness” Mathieu Ricard



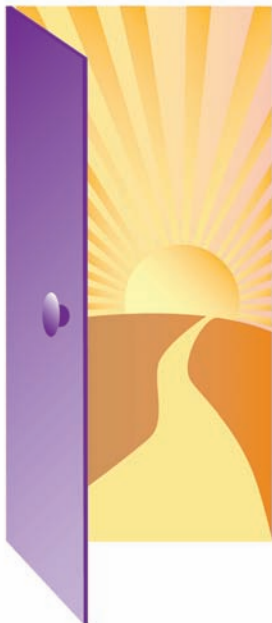
*15 years of accompanying survivors on their journeys...*



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL

---

**SOCIAL SERVICE**



**HAVEN**

**Helping Abuse and Violence End Now**

**617-724-0054**