

Anonymous (52 years)

*“You have to concentrate on the perpetrator too”*

I was born to a single parent. When my mother came home with me, my grandparents took care of me. I grew up in their home and under their supervision. My mother worked in Namibia. I never had any contact with my biological father. My grandparents took very good care of me and I had everything that I needed. But it was like there was always a void. I always wondered who my father was and why he wasn't part of my life. I used to think that I could be sitting next to him in the train or walk past him in the street and not even knowing that he is my father...

I went to primary school and then to Steenberg high school and then I got married to a taxi driver. Oh my God, that is where all the trouble started! I was twenty-one. But I had my first child when I turned seventeen, which was from the taxi driver also. The marriage was abusive. After twenty years I had to let go. I divorced my husband in 2002. Then I started going for counseling. That was also when I started going to the Community Police Forum meetings at the police station. They were looking for volunteers, to work at the police station. I did my training with NICRO here at New World Foundation. When I finished my training I started working at Steenberg police station, as a counselor. I mainly work on cases of domestic violence and abuse. But we receive any victim of crime at the Trauma Room. That was like my specialty. I think it was because I walked that road, I had that life, so I could sort of relate to what women were saying. I could relate to what clients were coming with and I had that intuition where I could assist and sort of walk the road with them. And maybe that is why I was doing the job so good. Eleven years later I am still there. The only thing that I am not happy with is that I don't get a salary for that.

After some time, I moved on and I forgave him for what happened, I think we became like friends. At the moment we stay next to each other on the same plot of land but in separate houses. He is remarried now. I went to a workshop one day and there was a lady that said to me the only way I am going to be able to heal is when I forgive this man. I thought I would never be able to do it. But one day he came to my house, he was so drunk and I said to him I forgive you and you must also forgive me for anything that I might have done wrong. And that is how it was.

*“I see cases of abuse on a daily basis”*

I see cases of abuse and domestic violence on a daily basis at the trauma center. I'm hoping one day it's gonna get better. As early as yesterday I saw a 15-year old girl who was raped by her

stepfather. Yesterday she took an overdose of pills and she ate rattax at school. It's sad, very sad. Another case, that had an impact on me was a 13-year old girl that was a witness on the case of her father wanting to rape her friend. Just before that case went to court, I'm not sure if he raped this girl, but he slit his daughter's throat. I was at that scene, when I opened the blanket that she was in. After he killed her, he put her in a room, he locked the room and just left the house. But he got something like fifty years. It was in Retreat.

Yet another case was of a three-year old girl. The first time I saw this little girl was when the grandmother came in, complaining about physical abuse of the girl by the mother's boyfriend. But this was such a vibrant little girl! We have a table with some things that children can play with, and I put her on the table and she was dancing. I asked her who beat her because she had blue marks. She gave us his name, the boyfriend's name. She was removed and placed with the grandmother. Then this case went to the children's court and the commissioner gives the girl back to the mother. Two months later, the boyfriend kills this child. The sad part of it, that same day the child's biological father was stabbed to death. As his body was getting out of the mortuary her body went in. That made me sick. I was angry. And I went to him when this guy was arrested, I went to his cell and asked him how do you sleep? He said he sleeps okay. One day it will get back at you, I told him. One day when the case went to the High Court the docket disappeared. So they released the guy. But I heard it is now found again. That is what I have to deal with.

You know what, most of the time, it is men on drugs that does that. I don't know. I can't explain what is happening in their mind. But most of the times, it's guys that is on drugs, and they don't, they've got that extra possessiveness over their daughter and that is what they do.

*"Some of these men also come out of abused homes"*

I'm still going on. Do I've got hope? I don't know. I just need people to become more vigilant of what is happening around here. People out there, they are not bad people, they just make bad choices, and that is the result of things like this happening. I don't know how we are gonna change the mindsets and educate them, but something needs to be done. Maybe with better resources, education, better housing and jobs. Better facilities for the mentally challenged people. With all of that, we will get somewhere. The government and the law should also be more strict with mothers who just abandon their children because of drugs. Because I feel I went through hell, but not one day did I turn to drugs, not one day did I turn to alcohol, so why should other people do that? Because my children was important to me, it was for my children.

I won't say it's mainly the men who are to blame for domestic violence. Some of these men also come out of abused homes. That is why it's important for children also to go to counseling. If that's the way you grew up, you think that is the way it should be.

What I have realized, is that we are all concentrating on the women and children. We are not dealing with the perpetrator. But I ask myself, if you don't work with the perpetrator, how are

you gonna eliminate domestic violence? You have to concentrate on the perpetrator too, because he is also sitting with baggage. At the moment I'm just seeing victims, but I'm considering working with perpetrators. Like I say, there is hope for them as well, but somebody needs to work on it. They are also human.

I don't know where I get my strength but somebody up there is looking after me. I'm being blessed. Although I don't get paid, I just continue. I have a son that is married and stays with me, he gives me like a small amount. And I cope. What is so beautiful is when someone comes into your office and is so down, but by the time they leave they have a smile on their face. That is blessing me.