

Open letter to:

Young people who are growing up with domestic violence.

The past few weeks have been more difficult for you than most weeks. We are all sorry.

I grew up living with domestic violence from the time I was 5 until my late teens. I know what it feels like. I also know of millions of other people who experienced the same thing. From a young person's standpoint, domestic violence is violence between your parents or violence towards a parent – perhaps from a stepparent or a significant other. This is Childhood Domestic Violence. The violence can be physical or non physical. I can't tell you how often I hear, "there wasn't any physical violence between my parents, but the words they used – to me – I felt them physically."

When I was young this was never discussed; that wasn't good, but I can't imagine what it's like for you when something about the NFL comes up. For you, it's not another story or a reporter with a "witty" perspective. For you, it's your life. Perhaps in your home, if it's on the television, everyone just ignores it, feeling the anxiety inside, like they are walking on eggshells. Or maybe the TV gets turned off. You shouldn't have to live with this. We are sorry.

While it is good to be talking about it, what is not good is that we aren't addressing it from your perspective. We aren't offering you any answers. Well, I want to do that in this note, because there are a few things you REALLY need to know that no one is telling you. That no one told me. That no one told my mom. You see, she grew up living with domestic violence too. And it is very possible that your parents or parent grew up with domestic violence as well. You are not alone.

So you may ask yourself, "If they grew up with it, then they know how much it hurts, so why are they making me feel the same way they felt when they were young?" Well, when you grow up with domestic violence, one of the things that happens is that it often wires your brain to believe things that aren't true about yourself. I call them lies – because they are. And then those beliefs about yourself cause you to make decisions and act in ways that you otherwise wouldn't. You cannot act and feel in ways that differ from who you believe you are. Maybe you feel some of them too.

You may often feel:

- **Guilty** - you think that what is happening is your fault or that you should be able to stop it or that there is something wrong with you.
- That you are simply the type of person who is **Resentful & Angry**; "Why should I have to go through this? No one else does!"
- **Sad, hopeless & alone** because you think it will never end and there is no one you feel you can trust.
- **Fearful**, because you are afraid one of your parents will get hurt again or maybe you will, again.
- **Worthless & Unloved** or literally worth-less than other kids. "Aren't I worth keeping safe, being made to feel important? Aren't I worth loving?"

I felt a lot of these things when I was your age. So did a lot of people, even someone like former President Bill Clinton, who grew up in the same type of house that you and I grew up in. And it took us a long time to realize the TRUTH. I don't want it to take you as long as it took us.

The truth is:

- You are not guilty, because it is never a young person's job to control the actions of an adult. There is nothing wrong with you. You didn't choose the home you were born into! One day, sooner than you think, you will be **FREE** from that home, free to sleep through the night, free to have your own family and do it the way you want to do it. Most importantly, today, you will be free from thinking things about yourself that aren't true!
- While you may feel angry and resentful, and you have every right to, you are not an angry and resentful person. The truth is that you are **COMPASSIONATE and CARING**, because those who suffer can understand suffering. You want to take the pain away from others and you will do this throughout your life. Because of that, you are more special than you know.
- You may feel at times alone, sad and that all is hopeless, but the truth is that when a young person is hurting, there is something there to guide them, something bigger than themselves. As you remind yourself of these truths each day, you will be **GUIDED** out of that house. You will begin **TRUSTING** others and that will lead you to feel **GRATEFUL**.
- Fear is something you probably feel often, but you are not a fearful person. The truth is, you have already faced one of the greatest fears that any person can face. So I ask you, as you get older, what fear would you ever face that you couldn't overcome? You are **CONFIDENT**. I remind myself of this everyday and as an adult I have yet to face that fear that compares. That truth makes me confident and I know I am a confident person and so are you.
- You may feel worthless and unloved and I understand because I felt this and so many other young people feel this way. But that is not who you are. And the easiest way for you to feel the truth that you are **LOVED** and **ACCOMPLISHED** is to open up and to share what is happening and what you are feeling with an adult who you trust. By sharing with them, you will see the truths even more quickly!

This is a first step that you can take. And you can now see that you are just the type of person to do it because now you know that deep inside, you are truly **FREE, COMPASSIONATE, CARING, GUIDED, TRUSTING, GRATEFUL** and **CONFIDENT**! A person who is **ACCOMPLISHED** and worthy of all of the **LOVE** that their magnificent life deserves!

We are here for you. Open up to us. Visit us at www.cdv.org.

Love and Respect,

Brian F. Martin, Author of **INVINCIBLE** –

The 10 lies you learn growing up with domestic violence and the truths to set you free.