

My children and I are survivors of family violence.

The following are the factors that helped us, and those that did not help us:

In the early stages of my fourth pregnancy I was hospitalised for excessive vomiting. During my stay one of the nursing staff made note of the fact that we were new to the area, that there were three other children aged five and under, and that my husband was a bit aggressive towards us. She took the initiative and asked me if I would like her to arrange some Family Day Care for us. Through Family Day Care we got to have regular contact with another family who were very kind and understanding.

The actions of this one staff member were in marked contrast to the behaviour of other staff at this small country hospital. One was inclined to make loud comments to other patients inferring that I was weak in some way. Another could not refrain from expressing her opinion that my sickness was self-induced.

Two years on I was experiencing an emotional break down and I rang our GP. As it happened his surgery wasn't open that day but he had just popped in to pick up some things when the phone rang so he answered it. On hearing how distressed I was he asked me to come in immediately even though he was meant to be enjoying some leisure activities that day. Upon hearing my story he urged me to insist that my husband leave the family home. He reminded me of how strong and competent I was in reality and he presented me with the evidence for this in the way I had been caring for my children's health.

That was all that I needed to begin the process of putting things right.

The worst problem in the difficult road ahead for us was that too many people like to indulge in gossip and judgement.

There were only a few people in the community who actually wanted to be helpful and inclusive.

Unfortunately the worst people were those being paid to help people like me. It was as if they were just acting out roles and were in actuality blind and indifferent to our realities.

The people who helped us were those who recognised what they were seeing and acted from their own initiative and understanding of what was needed.

A long way from that now I see how it still works the same. There is generally a lack of respect for people who find themselves in difficult circumstances as if they are to blame and they really don't deserve better.

Meanwhile the perpetrator goes through life oblivious to the damage he caused and still involved in trying to manipulate us and withhold what we need from us. It doesn't matter to us anymore as we have grown beyond that and fortunately he didn't find a new set of victims.

The solution to these problems is the creation of a more sharing and caring community that is powerful and pervasive and positive.