

I am a [REDACTED] year old woman who grew up in a family marked by domestic violence but I did not see it that way until much later in life. This was a gradual process as, having lived in it all my growing years, what was happening was just the way it was, much as I didn't like it.

Both my Mum and Dad were immigrants from [REDACTED] and I was the eldest of [REDACTED] children. They both lived through WWII and Dad particularly remembered much of the horrors and so I believe he was traumatized by this. He never physically abused Mum but he was a very controlling man with set ideas about the place of a wife. My Mum is a strong woman who survived this time with him (about [REDACTED] years worth) but I witnessed for myself what I now know is abuse....perhaps mild compared to some of the stories that I hear, but nevertheless needs to be seen for what it is.

Dad's controlling behavior meant that I feared him much of the time. He only needed to look at me in a stern way and I would be shaking. Mum and Dad were often 'at war' – a very cold war so that the bulk of my childhood I would describe as tension-filled. I was well cared for with no doubts of my parents' love for me but Dad's controlling behavior left me with soul-scars I have been working with for a long time.

Some of the things I can look back at and can now identify as abuse are things like:

- shouting at my Mum to "just shut up" when she was expressing an opinion. This was reinforced by Dad when he demanded Mum to read stories that reinforced this idea that wives need to be happy with whatever their husbands say or do (Dad had an [REDACTED] book of such stories), the scary stares, stone-walling with no response from Dad for weeks – Dad sleeping on the couch for all this time, carping at mum for going to work. Wives (this wife in particular) should be happy to be dependent on whatever Dad brought home
- threatening mum with committing suicide if she ever left him
- controlling mum's outings and getting snide remarks or cold treatment if she came home even a bit later than was expected

It is clear that Dad had a personality disorder that had its impacts....and continues to. It was, and still is, unhelpful when people just dismiss it as "that's just his cultural background." Dad's behavior was abusive and I believe it needs to be named as so even though he didn't lay a hand on Mum. My Mum was/is strong and survived, although she never left because of Dad's threats of suicide, but I know other family members did not survive reasonably intact as she did.

My father's older brother was abusive also and physically so as well. My aunt suffered a mental breakdown because of it. Some of my cousins, including their children, also suffer mental illness because of it. Abusive behavior has ramifications that go far beyond the immediate two people involved. The social implications of not attending to this issue are huge, let alone the economic impact.

I don't know what would have helped in my childhood with this situation. Because of the way Dad was we remained fairly isolated, and among my friends (mostly from European backgrounds as well) it was not unusual for fathers to be this way. Public campaigns that highlight the issues around domestic violence would at least bring it to the fore. The 'milder' forms of abuse need to be highlighted also. This needs to be somehow adapted for children to understand as well, and of course in many languages (including in the many Aboriginal languages as I know how bad it is in their communities).

The culture we live in also needs to be looked at and attended to as it permeates all we do and how we perceive...it's the air we breathe. Australia doesn't treat people, especially and including women and children, well – eg refugees, those in boats and those in detention centres. There's violence in this. Dropping bombs, firing guns, wielding knives and fists are only the tip of what violence is all about.