

Domestic Violence across two generations.

The domestic violence in my family started before I was born, but I will begin with my own recollections.

My tormentor was (is) my [REDACTED] brother, [REDACTED] who rarely missed an opportunity to bully, intimidate, hit, punch, kick and generally do his best to humiliate me.

And yet he could lay on the charm whenever that seemed a more effective way of getting what he wanted.

These are very general statements, and I will get to specific instances shortly, but I believe that it is important to point out that the physical acts of violence did not (and do not) occur in isolation of an *attitude* of violence, belittlement and entitlement.

The first major incident occurred when I was about [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] would therefore have been [REDACTED]. My mother, [REDACTED] brother, and myself were in the living room watching television. My [REDACTED] brother ([REDACTED]) was in the next room, working on [REDACTED]. Everything was fine. One of the cats meowed at the door to be let in. Mum went to get up, but my brother jumped up faster, and opened the door. Upon seeing [REDACTED] at the door, it dashed in fear to the other side of the room, where it took cover behind the couch. [REDACTED] reaction was to dive after the cat, then pull the end of the couch away from the wall to get at her. My concern was for the cat, and I went to the *other* end of the couch, for her to run to me for rescue. She was very frightened, and briefly hesitated, but ran into my arms away from [REDACTED]. As we stood up I stuck my tongue out at [REDACTED] in a "so there!" gesture. Instantly enraged, [REDACTED] grabbed me bodily and flung me at the (closed) door to the next room. This was constructed of [REDACTED] glass. The crown of my head went through the second one up from the bottom, and stuck there. I was on my knees, with my face looking downward. I remember rolling my eyes up to see [REDACTED] looking up in surprise from where he was seated at the kitchen table. I tried, very gingerly, to move my head, but my chin was caught in the jagged glass. In the next half-minute or so, Mum manoeuvred me enough to get me out, and as soon as I was free, I ran outside in my state of fright. It was then that I could feel something tickling my skin on my chin and neck, so I put my hand there to see what it was. My hand came away covered in blood. In another state of fright I ran back into the house to seek help from Mum. She took one look at all the blood, and realised that it was a serious injury. I was given towels to hold to my face while she organised for a doctor to be available (it was night time), then she drove [REDACTED] and myself the [REDACTED] km to the doctor's surgery. Mum was angry with [REDACTED], so he was left behind. (Initially, she blamed him for the incident.) His attitude was interesting, though; he wanted to come because he was curious, and wanted to watch the doctor in action. He expressed no sympathy or remorse whatsoever then, or at any time in the future. My face was cut [REDACTED]. I required [REDACTED] stitches. I remember my mother asking the doctor, while he was stitching my face back together, his opinion as to when and how the damage had occurred: as my head entered, or when it was removed from the glass. I didn't understand why it mattered! I found out as soon as we got home, when Mum called out as soon as she got in the door, "It's alright, [REDACTED]. She did it herself!" Mum had been looking for a way to let [REDACTED] off the hook! So of course he had NO motivation at all to modify or improve his behaviour. This was an ongoing pattern throughout my life. Even a few years ago, Mum still blamed me for causing all the friction, and said that I had, "Asked for it!"

My wound healed, although not smoothly, and I have been left with a scar that for many years was the very first thing that people noticed about me, and which I see every day in the mirror.

To outsiders it was explained away as an accident, but within the family I was blamed as having caused it myself.

Years later, I witnessed [REDACTED] throw [REDACTED] through/at another doorway, which in this case was open. [REDACTED] left shoulder hit the door jamb hard, and left him in considerable pain.

However, in that moment I had a flash of insight, and I believe that what [REDACTED] was *trying* to achieve, in both instances, was to ram our **heads** into the door jamb, which would have been much worse for both of us if he had succeeded. As it was, I was lucky that the cut was [REDACTED].

The second incident I will describe happened about [REDACTED] months later, on Christmas morning. I was still in my pyjamas, and we had just opened our Christmas presents. [REDACTED] was apparently unhappy about his gifts, anyway he was in a bad mood. I was dancing around, and [REDACTED] took his bad temper out on me by kicking me **hard** up the backside. His boot caught me right [REDACTED] and hurt like blazes. I couldn't [REDACTED] without pain for many days, and still occasionally get twinges.

X-rays now show my [REDACTED], but at the time there was no medical attention at all.

The next summer, [REDACTED] employed his charm to tempt me with a 'treat', and I thought, 'Yay, he's being nice to me!' So I went along with it. However, it was only a ploy to get me alone, away from home, completely helpless and totally vulnerable, so that he could sexually abuse me. Although he did not hit me, he threatened me with violence if I didn't comply, and I remember shaking with fear until it was all over, and I could get dressed again. I think this has been the most terrifying time of my entire life. It certainly destroyed any chance that I was **ever** going to trust him again.

By this time, I was fully aware of the futility of going to Mum for any comfort or justice. She had seen me go off happily in [REDACTED] company, and he had made sure that there were absolutely no witnesses. So I had to get through this with no support whatsoever. The friction which had existed between [REDACTED] and myself developed into open hostility. I have hated him from that moment, whereas before, I just disliked him.

The last time he physically hurt me was in [REDACTED] just before Christmas, when he was back home for a visit for [REDACTED] weeks. He was only a week or two short of turning [REDACTED]. I also lived away from home at this stage, but had a [REDACTED] with Mum, and agreed to come over [REDACTED]. In this episode I ended up with a [REDACTED] from a punch to the side of my head, and very nearly throttled to death. With his hands around my throat, I screamed to find out if I could still breathe. There were [REDACTED] where his fingernails stripped off the skin. I then ended up on the floor on my back, with [REDACTED] standing over me with a chair in his hands, ready to smash down on me. Mum was hysterical, and was screaming at [REDACTED] to stop. When she saw him about to smash the chair over me, she cried out, "No, not the chair, you'll break it!" This actually got through to [REDACTED] and he lowered the chair, saying, "No, we don't want to break the chair on *that thing*, do we!"

I was of less value than the chair! (To [REDACTED] I think Mum only said what she said to try to get him to stop.) Once [REDACTED] put the chair down, he put his arms around Mum to comfort her, as she was very distressed. I was still on the floor, about to get up, when he snarled at me, "Look what you have done to her!", and Mum, sagging into his arms, accepted the comfort he was giving her. I was hurt, but *very* angry, so I took the phone into my room, locked the door, and rang the police.

My mother, however, was horrified by *my* action, and asked, "How can you go to the police against your own brother?!?"

I ended up driving myself to the police station, where the young officer, who was the same one who had received my earlier call, took me straight around to get medical treatment. I had fully intended to have [REDACTED] charged with assault, but the doctor talked me out of it, saying it would be a very bad idea. He suggested instead that I ask that [REDACTED] be given a police warning, as he felt it would be more effective in the long run, and cause less disruption to our lives. The young officer wasn't too happy about it, but agreed with the plan, and duly turned up the next morning to do this. Unfortunately, this meant that there was no record of the incident, as I found out some years later.

When Mum was given the news that I might need an operation to repair [REDACTED], she tersely told [REDACTED] that he could jolly well pay for it. However, once it healed over on its own, Mum behaved as if the incident had never happened, and even lied about it in order to protect [REDACTED] from any repercussions.

These are the events which I consider to be the "main" ones. The conflict occurred on an almost daily basis as I was growing up, particularly after the sexual abuse episode. He was physically powerful and intimidating, and I would NOT accept that he had any authority over me.

My bedroom door was lockable; if I made it to this refuge in time, and was able to lock the door, the door handle got ripped off. If I was too slow, I got hit a few times, usually in the head. The door handle got pulled off often enough that the screws became too loose to hold it in place. A couple of times I had black

eyes, and once I had a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] bedroom was accessed by a staircase to the 'Dungeon'. There was a curtain across the stairs about a third of the way down. Past this was a 'no-go' zone ([REDACTED] territory) and it was a rule in our house that [REDACTED] *was allowed to enforce this*. I didn't often trespass, but got thumped if I did. And that was just the stairs; not even his bedroom.

There were also near-misses. Once I was at the kitchen sink looking back to the nearby table where the rest of my family were seated. In reaction to a comment of mine, [REDACTED] picked up a glass tumbler and threw it at my head. It whizzed past my left ear, but hit the hefty [REDACTED] beside me, and smashed it to pieces.

A lot of his violent outbursts were spontaneous, but other malicious acts were planned ahead of time. Usually I only saw the trap as it was being sprung, but on one occasion I got to see the planning and effort that he would use to achieve his ends. [REDACTED] lived next door, and were often my playmates. [REDACTED] planned a 'game' which was primarily "Follow The Leader"; earlier in the day he, assisted by [REDACTED] and myself, dug a pit trap to use during the game. The whole point of the exercise was to lure these [REDACTED] unwittingly into falling into this pit trap. He got pleasure from other people's pain. I was always on my guard against other set-ups of his, but was often not able to see them until it was too late.

The best thing Mum ever did to protect [REDACTED] or myself against [REDACTED] was to have him live at the [REDACTED] when he went to university. We lived close enough that he could have managed a daily commute, but "for the safety of the younger children" it was decided that he move out for the majority of the time. By this time, he had beat up on [REDACTED] a few times, too. Unfortunately, by this time he had waged his rule of terror for [REDACTED] years. He did, of course, still come home for holidays, which I did not appreciate, but I kept out of his way as much as possible.

Where did all this violence spring from? And why was [REDACTED] protected, rather than held accountable?

When Mum was pregnant with me, Dad became very violent with her. She told me that she was afraid of suffering a miscarriage, she was hurt so badly. I believe she sought refuge elsewhere at this time, but my parents decided to 'try to make the marriage work' after I was safely born. So Mum went back. Over the next [REDACTED] years the episodes of violence continued, and Mum naturally wanted to leave/get a divorce. She was unable to get support from her parents, thier response being, "You married him!" Legal avenues were also unavailable, as a man apparently had the right to beat his wife back then. So the violence continued, except now my father would use my brothers as punching bags as leverage to force Mum to comply with his wishes. It has never been stated to me explicitly what she meant by this, but my interpretation is that he raped her, immediately after hurting my brothers. This implies that they would have witnessed Dad's violent treatment of our mother.

She did leave then, and was able to file for divorce on account of child battery. It was then that she dicovered that she wasn't legally married to him after all, as he had forged divorce papers relating to his first marriage [REDACTED]. So she was not eligible for alimony, and not able to claim child support. She had been beaten by the man she married for love, and left virtually destitute in the process, with three young children to care for. My understanding is that she found support at this critical time from the local [REDACTED] minister. Her resilience must have been phenomenal, but a huge amount of damage had of course been done. She was an intelligent, well educated woman, from an upper middle-class family, and who had **not** had to suffer through the privations of the Depression that many had to. Some years later, when she successfully sued my father for child maintenance, his reponse was to sell up and move to [REDACTED] where the court order could not be enforced. I think I was about [REDACTED] at this time. Mum had a career as a [REDACTED] for a number of years before she met Dad, and fortunately had been able to go back to this career in order to support us as we were growing up. All the same, things were pretty tough financially for quite some time.

In the snippets that she told me over the years, one piece can add a little further insight into the situation re [REDACTED] and her willingness to make excuses for him: My mother fell pregnant within [REDACTED] months of her

wedding. So, still a bride, when she shared the "happy" news with her husband, was instead told to, "Get rid of it!"

As a child, and suffering at the hands of my brother, I could never understand why Mum took his side so much, and basically blamed me for "asking for it". I understood even less when I realised that she had been beaten herself, by my father.

The only explanation that makes sense to me, is that from the outset, her firstborn's safety has been threatened, and she has done all within her power to keep him safe. My mother and eldest brother formed a very strong bond, as they survived an extremely difficult time.

I think [REDACTED] perceived me as a) competition for Mum's attention, b) vulnerable and an easy target, c) a child and a female (two types of victims that Dad had hit), and d) someone who did not acknowledge his authority. (I was never one to suffer in silence; if nobody else was going to stand up for me, then I would do it myself!)

Looking back, I now see Mum as being terribly damaged by her experiences, and programmed to protect [REDACTED] from any threat, which unfortunately included me. Between them, my parents created a monster: Dad from his awful treatment of Mum and him (and [REDACTED]); and Mum by defending him so blindly, that he basically had *Carte Blanche* to behave atrociously towards me.

A couple of extra points regarding [REDACTED]:

* [REDACTED] has [REDACTED]. Mum thought it likely that this may have arisen from the [REDACTED]. Whilst I agree that this may be possible, I would not be surprised if it was a blow from Dad's fist that caused the damage. (There may also be Frontal Lobe damage - [REDACTED], and would also be a further contributing factor to his behaviour)

* I remember [REDACTED] still carting around a [REDACTED] (I think it had once been Mum's [REDACTED]) even when he was a teenager. It eventually disintegrated. This indicates to me that [REDACTED] had (has) a *deep* insecurity. He certainly never wanted to share Mum with anyone.

In summary:

My mother was a victim of ongoing domestic violence, and the law at the time permitted this.

The mental and emotional scars inflicted on my mother by my father affected her for the rest of her life.

[REDACTED] was a victim of, and witness to, ongoing domestic violence.

As a result of his experiences, and encouraged by an environment of maternal protection, [REDACTED] himself was a perpetrator of ongoing domestic violence, where his younger sister was the principal victim.

I was a victim of ongoing domestic violence at the hands of my brother, and I also have been permanently affected by this. I was unable to escape from it, even though I desperately wanted to.

Some reasons why domestic violence occurs: CONTROL is the key word

- * Men believe they **own** their wives/children, and can treat them in whatever way suits them. A sense of entitlement.
- * Children are used as pawns, to either hurt partners, or to get compliance.
- * Men expect total obedience (it was part of all wedding vows until recently) and will use fear & violence to enforce it. Any challenge to their authority is unacceptable.
This can be due to basic insecurity, poor example of upbringing, etc. Threat to their 'masculinity'.
- * Men see 'punch-ups' as a normal method of conflict resolution. Unable (?) to resolve conflict in non-violent ways.
- * Bullies use violence to feel superior to others they see as 'lesser beings'. For some men, lesser beings are/include women, children, foreigners.
- * Violence is sometimes an (unacceptable) outlet for extreme stress, guilt.
- * Lack of impulse control. (Exacerbated by drugs, alcohol) Mental health issues.
- * Blame the victim - They 'asked for it'
- * Dismissive of minor injuries as being insignificant. e.g. storm in a teacup, exaggeration, all siblings fight/argue etc.

Things have improved since my mother was beaten in the late 1960s, and when I was a child in the 1970s and 1980s. Women now at least have a voice, and legal avenues to pursue. But it is the attitudes of our society in general that must improve. Well done Rosie Battie for bringing this issue into greater prominence. Thank you to Daniel Andrews for setting up the Royal Commission. Please keep this high profile, until society KNOWS that domestic violence is unacceptable.

A generational mindset will take TIME to redirect. People don't change a life-time of attitudes easily.

Some women put 'keeping the family together' ahead of their own well being and safety. Abuse of the mother also abuses the rest of the family. Early intervention is important. Women often go back to abusive homes/husbands. This rarely works out well for anyone. But splitting a family up is also disruptive.

The alternative is to allow families to continue to be destroyed, with individuals being physically and emotionally damaged, sometimes to the extent of death.

No one in authority (parent, teacher, police, medical) EVER stepped in to prevent the abuse that I suffered, until I did it myself, as an adult. Most people would have been UNAWARE of what was going on. How do you make the invisible become visible?

Once the police became involved, they were excellent.

I still live in fear of the possibility of my brother reappearing in my life. I have severed all ties with my family, in order to maintain my distance from him. It still doesn't feel like it's enough.