



## #StoptheHurt- LEAVE

### “A Long, Hard Road of Healing”

**By an anonymous  
survivor of family  
violence**

My father would say, “turn the light off” in a cold, empty room upstairs removed from everyone. I was to touch and let him touch. His friends could do it too. I was not to tell because I was Daddy’s girl, the only one. Fast forward, age 14, my first real steady boyfriend. I grew up in NYC. I was small and tough as nails, but He had a hold on me. We were arguing on the subway platform. He put his hands around my neck, cornered me against the subway column inches from the edge. But I forgave Him. Little did I know I had just given Him permission over the next fifteen years of my life.

He would steal from me. Guilt me into doing things. Isolate me from my family and friends. Push me; punch me; call me names. Hearing Him call me those names solidified who I was always told I was.

Within a couple of months I got pregnant with his baby. At age 19, I saw Sunshine for the first time in my life. Not even Sunshine changed Him. He still yelled, cursed, called me names, hit me, kicked me, spit on me, head butted me, pushed me, choked me.

***And I’d take it. I was so unsure about what life was supposed to feel like. But this felt familiar.***

I was back in the subway, Sunshine now 4 years old, watched from the top as He shoved me down a flight of stairs. I saw her see me, and I still forgave Him. He’d leave our apartment for days at a time, come back drunk and high. She didn’t miss Him, I did. I would believe in Him again. I’d forgive Him again.

***Ten years had come and gone. I worked like a dog, He beat me like one.***

There were moments, what I thought were good moments. Good enough. He’d be calm and sweet. He’d speak deeply and apologetically. He’d get a job and be home with us. He’d wash the dishes and make pancakes. I believed Him again.

I got pregnant again. He nearly killed me four different times.

***He punched me like a man punches another man.***

He kicked my face, arms, back and ribs. I didn’t feel a thing until I remembered Sunshine lived in my home. I called the cops. They said, “We’ll have to write it in as just a domestic disturbance, not assault, since you have no marks on you.” But the adrenaline wore off, and my “marks” began to appear -- finally enough of them for someone to notice.

I still didn’t leave. He held me down by the arms, his legs strapped around my pregnant belly, hands around my neck, choking me, I couldn’t breathe. I thought I’d die on this day. I could feel myself letting go.

***He began to yell in my face, “Why do you do this to me?! Why do you do this to us?”***

He began to sob in my face, slowly letting go his grip from my neck.

Sunshine came bursting in. My head throbbed from all the crying and screaming. He lifted the stick, whacked it across my calves, bringing me down to the floor. He lifted it again, this time charging at my head.

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When I was 28 years old, Joy was born. He came tiny but making his big presence known. He was not just my Joy, he was Sunshine's Joy. Holding Joy in my arms, tiny and small, only 10 weeks after his arrival, He was in my face spitting words with the names I'd grown tired of being called. I attacked fearlessly and tirelessly, my Joy would not be harmed by anyone. He had to go. He would not leave. He shoved me and my Joy down for the last time.

Several months later I had saved enough money, gotten full custody of both my Sunshine and my Joy,

***and I was ready to leave.***

Completely alone, knowing no one, no job, and only a few hundred dollars left to my name. I came to Texas with Sunshine and Joy in tow.

***Here, I found freedom and safety.***

I found Jimmy and Evans Family Law who changed jurisdiction over my custody case to our now home state.

***I found Hays-Caldwell Women's Center, where I got my voice and the courage to use it.***

At HCWC, even Sunshine got to tell her story. We could finally speak. Finally talking about my life, with the help of my counselor at HCWC, I began to see how uncomfortable I was with even saying the word--abuse. I couldn't even say it. That became my goal. With my hearing only a few months away, I had to find strength to talk about all of it. And call it what it was.

My time at HCWC was not only a dress rehearsal for court, it was the start of a long, hard road of healing, and my invitation to life. I didn't get the strength from HCWC, I had that all along, I just didn't know it. Until one day sitting on that couch at HCWC, my feet grounded into the floor. I finally learned to call my abuse by its name. 