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THE BARNABAS

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IN FOCUS

This issue of the Barnabas Letter is a continuation of our series on a personal account of Domestic Violence. In July, we focused on the mother's unique story. This month, we are concentrating on how the children have been affected. We will conclude the series in November with how the church can respond. As you contemplate your response, we pray that you are encouraged, enriched, and equipped to reach God's children with His love and hope!

[Serving Him Together,](#)

[Amy Wilson, Director of Education](#)



MY JOURNEY: DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MY CHILDREN (PART 2)

Author anonymous for security purposes

[*Continuation of the story begun in the July Edition of the Barnabas Letter](#)

Domestic Abuse doesn't just impact the person who the abuse is directed towards. If there are children present in the home where the abuse is occurring, then that domestic abuse affects and touches these children personally, as well. Please read below to find out how domestic abuse directly impacted the children in the below personal account.

Since the abuse began before my first pregnancy, all four of my children were impacted even in the womb. These babies in utero could feel the stress and anxiety that I was struggling with [during my pregnancy](#).



Early Warning Signs With My First Born

I noticed that my first child showed significant signs of depression and anxiety at three years of age. My husband refused to acknowledge any of our son's issues and was against counseling for our son. As the years went on, my oldest was significantly affected in his self-worth, academics, and ability to make friends. He experienced drunken explosions, horrific name-calling from his Dad to his Mom, riding in the car during moments of road rage, etc. As the years progressed, my son greatly struggled with his identity and who Christ created him to be. His earthly father was degrading him frequently, and I was constantly trying to intervene. My son had dreams of how he wanted his relationship with his father, so any attention from his Dad would make my son act as if no one else mattered.

Continued...

MY JOURNEY: DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MY CHILDREN (PART 2)

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Unfortunately, as my son grew older, he endured more abuse from his father and witnessed more abuse between my husband and me. There were also times where my son would act out upon his sisters, calling them derogatory names. I would ask him if he knew what they meant. He would answer no, but that he had heard Daddy call me those names when he yelled at me.

You can see how early the cycle of violence can begin when this is the environment in which the children grow up. As soon as we could flee and be on our own, I took my son to the pediatrician, where he was diagnosed with high anxiety. Thankfully, he is now receiving the help he desperately needed through antidepressants, seeing a counselor, and participating in equine therapy at [Hope Reins](#). I have seen him become a different person, coming out of his hiding shell, his anxiety has lessened, and he has been more open and willing to share.

Further Evidence of Effects on My Daughters

Unfortunately, during this time, I learned my father-in-law had sexually abused my oldest daughter. After a lengthy investigation that resulted in his sentence to life in prison, my daughter was finally able to receive counseling for her own PTSD, anxiety, and behavioral concerns. Because she came forward with her abuse, her father's abuse escalated toward her and her sister. My youngest daughter lived with her father from birth through age four. Once, when she was four, she accidentally spilled her cup of water, and my husband unleashed his verbal abuse upon her. While he screamed at her, she sat frozen in fear, crying and having difficulty breathing. My husband was screaming at her to clean up her mess, but she could not move. I was able to intervene, and my husband stormed out of the house. My daughters' often felt the need to come to my defense when their father verbally attacked me. Despite treatment like this, my youngest daughter has the gift of empathy and continued to pray for her Daddy's heart almost every night.

My two daughters are currently being evaluated for anxiety medications. Additionally, my three oldest have received phenomenal support from their school (which they have been able to stay in the same school despite our many moves). The school counselor has become like family and regularly meets with my children. She often even greets the children at drop-off in the mornings and helps them get started with their day, which helps them with their separation anxiety. Unfortunately, my youngest has not been allowed to have any of the therapies that my three oldest are in until he turns five years old (next year), but he has greatly benefited from the sessions Amy has done with him and his siblings together through the [There is Hope for Me](#) booklet (see next article in this issue).



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MY JOURNEY: DOMESTIC ABUSE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MY CHILDREN (PART 2)

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The Long-Lasting Effects Even After

Since our fleeing nine months ago, my children have moved to a hotel room for five weeks, with another family temporarily, and then into a donated home for transitional housing as we await being able to get our own home. I have been able to get a domestic violence protective order to my children's school so that my husband cannot visit them there. We have security walk around with us at church, and my husband is not allowed to be at the same services as we are. I told the children that we had to leave Daddy due to his anger and behavior. They never questioned it and almost seemed relieved.



Throughout our living transitions, there has been one comment that has continuously upset me that has come from several well-meaning people; "The kids will be fine; kids are resilient." Do not be fooled by this comment. Children living in domestic violence are not resilient. It is traumatic. They live in constant fear, walking on eggshells in the very place they should feel free to relax. They become devastated by the continuous lies and degrading words. Unless the cycle is broken and they are restored, they will

most likely enter toxic relationships when they mature and become adults. I pray for my children that God heals them and ultimately uses this for good in their lives.

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH



October was first declared as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989. Since then, October has been a time to acknowledge domestic violence survivors and be a voice for its victims. Domestic violence is prevalent in every community, and affects all people regardless of age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. Physical violence is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior as part of a much larger, systematic pattern of dominance and control.

First-Hand Observations of *There is Hope for Me*

By Amy Wilson

I heard over my nine years with CCTI how effective our handbook, *There Is Hope for Me*, had been for many. We have had many individuals and organizations contact us, asking permission to use and translate this into their language, which is why we now have it available in nine languages. I had looked over the booklet and its use and development over many years. However, I had never personally experienced its vast reach and impact until the opportunity I had to use it with the children featured in this series on Domestic Abuse.

I began working through the 15 activities booklet in mid-May. I held each session with the four children (ages four through nine) and spent 1 ½ to 2 hours per session. I had a behavior system built into my schedule so that the children would earn varying levels of rewards based on how many stars they earned. With this format, it took us about eight weeks to work through the book. A sample schedule was as follows:

- 6:00** Star for arriving calmly and coming to Circle Time after being asked the first time
- 6:10** Listened to book quietly
- 6:20** Circle Time Discussion-everyone sits and talks, no getting up
- 6:35** Complete page 19 of *There is Hope for Me* with at least two of your examples discussed with Amy
- 6:50** Snack
- 7:00** Complete page 20 of *There is Hope for Me* with practicing Memory Verse and each person shares one thing they have learned and will practice since we've been together
- 7:20** Clean-up and Playground
- 7:45** Come in from playground after first time told and prize bag

Before our time together, the children had only met me briefly. The book I chose to read each session (see Resource List at the end of this Barnabas Letter) and the open transparency about our lives quickly opened discussions and built a bond between us. There were many initial behavior problems, but they dissolved soon after the first two sessions as they were motivated by their enjoyment of the activities and the reward system. Some of the discussions were very hard, and I gave them chances to "walk away" when it became too much, never forcing them to finish, but I would always come back to whatever the issue was that came up in our next session.

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First-Hand Observations of *There is Hope for Me*

By Amy Wilson

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Our discussions revealed that this was the first time the four of them had talked together formally about how they felt concerning what had occurred in their lives, their losses, and their gains. There was always pointing to Jesus, and how He can use the bad for good, it just may not be as quickly as we like sometimes.

By the end of our time, the children's mother was sharing with me how much more quickly they were opening up and talking than they ever had individually with their separate counselors. Their mother shared that it was leading to some challenging yet terrific conversations at home. Through working through the booklet, I learned always to make sure a session ends positively, not negatively. The negatives do need to be discussed, but keeping the good in mind is the best way to end. I am grateful that the children are now asking for more time with me and want to do more on their own. God is good and brings restoration in His time!



Description

An Interactive Trauma Recovery Workbook for Children
By: Dr. Phyllis Kilbourn



Websites:

<https://ncadv.org/2021DVAM>

<https://www.rescue.org/announcement/october-domestic-violence-awareness-month>

