

## Perla resisting abusive relationships

Perla, 15 years old

When I was 9 to 13 years old my mother had a couple of boyfriends. All three of them used to hit and all that. One of them, the second one, was hitting her outside in front of my other kids and they came and told me in school on Monday. It was embarrassing. One time my little brother called the police. It took 15 minutes. Four of us had closed the door. Me and my other brother jumped out the window. I could hear my mother screaming. My mother hit him and I was really scared. He tried to kill her. You could see it in his eyes. I swear to god I knew. Two days later they were together again. At first I felt bad but then she was choosing it. I learned from it. I'm just glad I'm not living with her. One part was his fault. One part her fault. She would time him coming home from work and if he took longer she would start a fight. I ain't worrying about it no more. I'm tired of thinking about everyone else.

She always drank. One time he was leaving and my mother hit his car with a baseball bat. I would think, "Let him go because he's abusive anyway." That was the second boyfriend. The third boyfriend did drugs. I was 11 years old. They were nice to me but they weren't nice to my mom. I don't even understand that. Their relationship is with my mom not me. It's confusing. No love or trust. Every time made me stronger. I would never stay with anyone who abused me. Once you put your hands on me it is over. I don't want children, boy children, to think they can hit. I always felt different from my family. I don't follow people. I follow myself.

I wonder why I didn't use drugs or anything. I would sit in my own corner and mind my own business. I'm shy. You have to think about what things should come out of your mouth. My whole family likes to party and drink. Well I like to party, not drink. My family thinks all black people are bad. They are Dominicans. They don't like Puerto Ricans. They won't eat Puerto Rican beans. I go by people's insides. Maybe I'm not her daughter. I happened to be in the wrong family. I lived in the Archdale projects in Roslindale with my grandmother from time I was born until I was 7 years old. I was loved and taken care of. When I was eight years old I lived with my mother and brothers in Dorchester. When I was 9 years old we moved to Brighton and that is when all the boyfriends came.

I just knew I was trapped in the wrong family. God put me in the wrong family. My family was always trying to put things in my head but I don't pick up from it. If it is like a test from 1-10. I'm doing a 9. I haven't seen my mother in 2 months. It feels good. Why should I? They (my family) are there physically but not in any other form. I don't plan to see her anytime soon. She has a chance everyday to schedule a meeting with her kids. One time she scheduled and cancelled because she was menstruating. That was in December. A five-year-old can come up with a better excuse.

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Dear Perla,

I reread your story several times and was moved by it each time. Hearing the violence you had witnessed and how strong you are touched me deeply. You never faltered in your belief in yourself. You really walk your talk and have a tremendous amount of integrity. You always stand by yourself and what you know to be true and just. You are a remarkable young woman.

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In face of the fear you experienced, the embarrassment you felt, and the lack of protection you suffered, you took care of yourself and your younger brothers. You knew that a loving relationship would not look like abuse you witnessed. You have always been an independent thinker. Even though your family taught prejudice you resisted. You will judge people only by their conduct not by race or nationality. You are disappointed, hurt and angry at your mother for not scheduling time to see you and for now you are taking the space you need from your family and focusing on your life. You are doing what you have to do for yourself. You are doing well in school and you are involved in a honest and caring relationship. You have chosen to become stronger because of the trauma you have had to endure. On a scale of 1 of 10, you may be a 10!

I feel honored to be part of your life. I am inspired by you in my work as a counselor. May you continue to gather strength and may you attain the success, contentment and peace in your life that you deserve.

Warm wishes,

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