“From the Journal of a Survivor of Domestic Violence”  
By: Emily Standridge

It is so hard. It is so hard when the one who abuses you is also the one who gave birth to you. She was the one who promised to protect me, but in the end was her own worst enemy. It is also hard when the one who abuses you suffers from a mental illness and year of abuse from their mother, also abused by her mother. The violence in my family is a nasty cycle. It is cycle that consists of abusive women, damaged children, and beaten down men. My dad was beaten by his alcoholic father until he was fifteen, until he fought back. But I’ve seen this same man be emotionally beaten and controlled by my mother. Men in my family do not fight back to women.

My family history embarrasses me. It makes me ashamed because my friends cannot relate. When I tell people my story I can hear them judging me, feeling sorry for me. I do not want pity. I understand that it is hard to hear stories of violence, but all I want is support. But I do not always get it. Especially when I tell them I still love my mother and that I have forgiven her.

They ask me, “Why?” Sometimes I still cry because I want to have a healthy family. But I keep telling my story, because people need to hear it. They need to know that I know. I know what it feels like to feel weak and helpless, but I also know what it feels like to feel empowered and strong. Inside of all of us there is a strength that can enable us to overcome anything.

My biggest fear is that I will become my mother. I do not want to hurt anyone, I just want to love. That is why I want to be a social worker. I want to help those who are hurting. I just want to break the cycle of violence that controlled my life for so long and I want to know a life without fear.
All Our Community Can be aware of the dynamics of privilege and oppression in this community and how they play into abuse. Believe and support people who come forward looking for support. Support and hold accountable people in their efforts to change. Not condone abuse through language, jokes, actions, or excuses. Create a community in which people feel safe to speak out, be supported, and change. Take all forms of abuse very seriously and deal with them in an appropriate manner.

RDs, RAs, and PGLs Can intervene in situations in their residence halls or anywhere on campus. Take reports of abuse seriously, believe anyone who comes forward and tells their story. Provide advocacy and support for anyone who reaches out for help. Not pressure people to make formal reports. Ask for support right away from appropriate WWC staff when situations arise.

Public Safety Can quickly respond to any reports of fighting or abuse happening in the dorms, at parties, or around campus. Not pressure anyone to report if they do not want to. Make sure everyone is safe before leaving a situation. Not blame the victim for what is happening. Believe anyone who comes forward and reports abuse.

Health/Counseling Center Can take seriously any reports or signs of abuse. Offer medical support by providing rides to the hospital, supplying Plan B, providing affordable STI testing. Offer counseling to students in an effort to change the cycle of abuse.

Administration Can take reports of abuse seriously and deal with them in a timely manner. Uphold college policies. Create new policies, with community support, as necessary to protect the safety of all community members. Offer support to people in order to end the cycle of violence. Never condone violence at the school.

Students Can be conscious of how their language use feeds into systems of privilege and oppression. Start conversations when they hear something they believe to be hurtful or oppressive. Validate and support fellow students when they say they are/were being abused. Intervene when they see violence in their dorms, at parties, at work, and in other settings. Hold friends, community members, and themselves accountable in order to create a safer community. Support friends and community members as they make efforts to heal or change. Write and approve new policies to create a safer community.

Party Planners Can create safe, inclusive parties. Make sure there are party monitors, and no one, regardless of relationship status, is engaged in sexual/uncomfortable activities at the party against their will or if they are too intoxicated. Design party themes and advertisements to be inclusive and non-violent. Play music that acknowledges differences between people, does not alienate or make unsafe any group or individual in our community, and does not reinforce systems of privilege and oppression.

Staff/Faculty Can be conscious of how their language use feeds into systems of privilege and oppression. Have dialogues with students/colleagues about violence, and discuss how violence and actions/behavior against us may be influenced by the current social, political, and economic power structures. Address how the language we use impacts and influences the way we think and act. Not only do our words matter, but also our actions. Not blame the victim for what is happening. Believe anyone who comes forward and reports abuse.

How are we holding people accountable for their actions?

There are ongoing efforts to hold people accountable for their actions.