Remembering Dad

Talking helped us cope with memories of an abusive parent.

March 7, 2016 As told to Kate Ferguson

As a child, what I remember most about my father is the fear we felt before he arrived home from work. We listened for his footsteps and his tone of voice when he called out, “I’m home,” to gauge what kind of evening we’d have if he’d been drinking.

Most of the time, I felt nervous and exhausted. But every morning, I went to school as usual. I’d sit in class with a smile on my face that would last only as long as it took me to get home.

Finally, one day, with financial help from my older sister, my mom was able to leave my father. But leaving was bittersweet. We’d always loved our dad and the idea of family. But we also knew this was no way to live.

My mother allowed us to speak our minds about the situation. We talked about my father’s drinking problem and reasons why we had to abandon our home. Today, I consider those conversations our talk therapy.

I sometimes wonder how much harder it would have been to recover from the abuse and move on with our lives without talking about it.

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