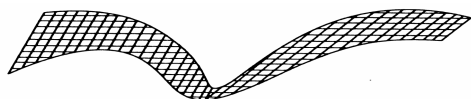


## *The Network for Women's Lives*



*A non-profit volunteer organization  
of citizens dedicated to the eradication  
of domestic violence.*

# THE SAFETY NET

*Winter 2008*

[www.networkforwomenslives.org](http://www.networkforwomenslives.org)

The holidays are for many a time of joy and connection. For others however, the holidays bring up painful childhood memories of family turmoil and violence. For adult children from violence, these memories impede their ability to experience pleasure at a time when the rest of the world is celebrating. This issue of *The Safety Net* focuses on the long-term impact on children who grew up in violent families and looks at the trauma they experienced, the legacy they carry with them into adulthood, and how they may heal.

### **Broken Promises, Lost Dreams: The Legacy of Domestic Violence**

The Network for Women's Lives was pleased to present "Broken Promises, Lost Dreams: The Legacy of Domestic Violence" on Monday, November 19. The speaker was Joan Rubin-Deutsch, LICSW, an Acton psychotherapist and author of *Why Can't I Ever Be Good Enough?* The following is an overview of this talk.

#### **The Children**

Childhood is meant to be a time of promise when children are enveloped in a nourishing environment that allows them to flourish. The family home is where they feel safe, valued and loved. Messages are clear and consistent and they are allowed to express their thoughts and feelings. In this atmosphere, their gifts and talents are encouraged so that they can become who they were meant to be.

When children are brought up in a family where they witness domestic violence and where they are abused, what they learn early on is that life is fearful, painful and crazy. How can these children internalize the concept of emotional safety when their dad is raging and their mom is crying or when they have to hide in closets to protect their siblings from seeing the violence or from being abused themselves, physically, sexually, psychologically, and/or verbally?

These children are not allowed to express their feelings, rather, they are taught to keep secrets about what is occurring in their homes. These children are hyper-vigilant, ever watchful as they anticipate upheaval to occur. Rather than focusing on play, they focus on the serious business of their lives, on surviving. Thriving is not an option. These children are often overly responsible and can become the caregivers. They may try to protect the parent, or siblings and attempt to mediate the conflict, wanting so desperately to make the craziness stop, but to no avail. These children are

*(Continued on page 2)*

#### **In This Issue**

- Broken Promises, Lost Dreams: The Legacy of Domestic Violence
- V-Day 2008 — What It Means
- Local V-Day Events: "The Vagina Monologues"; "A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer"; "V-Day—Until the Violence Stops"
- Support Group for Women With Controlling Partners
- Empowerment Workshop
- A Special Poem from a Teen Contributor

(Continued from page 1)

betrayed by the very people they most need to trust and most need to protect them. Their emotional and psychological development is jeopardized. They are living in a war zone and everyone within it is being held captive.

## The Facts

- Approximately 5 million children per year witness a domestic violence episode within their home.
- 80-90% of children living in homes where there is domestic violence are aware of the violence.
- Domestic violence affects every member of the family.
- It is impossible to live in a violent home and not sustain damage to your emotional or physical health.
- Children of battered women are up to 15 times more likely to be physically or sexually abused and neglected.
- Domestic violence is a multi-generational issue.
- Batterers and victims of abuse are more likely to have come from violent homes.

## The Trauma

Trauma refers to the wounding of the emotions, spirit, beliefs about the world, dignity, and sense of security and trust. Traumatic experiences shock the whole self. The assault on the psyche alters normal ways of thinking, feeling and being. During trauma you touch your own death or the death of others and are, or feel, helpless. There are four basic types of trauma: physical, emotional, sexual, and endurance trauma. Endurance trauma is a prolonged sense of feeling unsafe in one's world during childhood.

Unresolved trauma can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of PTSD are the aftereffects of an event or series of events that profoundly alter a person's thinking, feelings and physical reactions. *The Diagnostic Statistical Manual* put out by the American Psychiatric Association describes PTSD as the following:

The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

1. The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others.
2. The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

As a result of being exposed to trauma, children may exhibit the following:

- Depression, anxiety, intense fear, withdrawal, excitability, flashbacks, feelings of helplessness and vulnerability
- Stomachaches, headaches, psychosomatic complaints
- Acting out or withdrawing, being aggressive or passive, refusing to go to school, lying to avoid conflict, excessive attention seeking, bedwetting and nightmares, manipulating, dependency, mood swings
- Isolating, stormy relationships, difficulty trusting others, poor anger management and problem solving skills, passivity with peers or bullying, excessive social involvement to avoid home
- Drug and alcohol use and abuse, sexual promiscuity (in adolescence)

## The Legacy

When children grows up in a violent family where they don't feel safe, where they feel shame, fear, sadness or rejection, they will carry pain with them and this pain becomes their legacy. These legacies undermine their sense of self and impede their potential to develop and maintain solid, trusting, loving relationships with others. To survive the turmoil, many of these children learned to numb themselves to the pain. As a result, they lost touch with their thoughts and feelings.

As adults, they are fearful of emotional connections that may only end in abandonment. These adult children from violent families may look good on the outside, because they were expected to present to the outside world a picture of well-being. On the inside, however, they are dealing with grief and sadness, shame and guilt, loss and fear. Fear that they are crazy, fear that they are going to be hurt. They need to be self-protective, to build walls to keep others out but keeping themselves locked away and, as a result, isolated and apart from what they really want and yearn for most – love and connection. In this way, they replicate their past experiences.

These adult children are hyper-vigilant, watching and waiting for the next crisis to occur. They carry deep wounds and are sensitive and easily triggered. They may become very defensive as a way to protect themselves when hurt. They connect love to pain. When a child hears "I'm sorry, I love you" after an

(Continued on page 3)

*(Continued from page 2)*

episode of abuse, when things go well at home and then there is a sudden eruption and all the good feelings are destroyed and all the pain returns, they confuse love with pain and grow to believe that love and pain are interconnected. As a result, these adult children may sabotage their relationships. When the fear of pain is too great, rejecting love is the only option. They reach for love, and then reject it. Then they experience the pain and as a result are actually fulfilling their own fears.

For these adult children, there may be either the need to control relationships, because they felt so powerless as children, a need to manipulate relationships and force others to jump through hoops in order to prove their love, or a tendency to give themselves away in their relationships. Their need to be loved at any cost to themselves often ends in disaster because no one could possibly fill the emptiness within. These adult children essentially believe they are unlovable. That has been their experience and they have not been allowed to internalize consistent messages and loving feelings. Thus, they don't believe they deserve love. They don't know how to take it in and hold onto it, and they are confused about what love really is about at all.

In order to give themselves some relief, adult children from violent families may become addicted to drugs, alcohol, eating/starving, exercising, working, sexual activity – whatever numbs the pain. Or they may channel their unresolved emotional pain through their bodies and develop chronic physical symptoms.

These adult children from violence have not developed a solid inner core that can sustain positive feelings about themselves and the world. They have not been allowed to develop their own strong voice that gives them messages such as, "I am loved, I am special, I am capable, I'm okay, life is okay."

## **The Healing Process**

The goals of trauma healing include:

- Acknowledging and releasing painful mind/body memories
- Giving people the belief that they can have control over their lives
- Becoming aware of emotional triggers and learning to cope with them creatively
- Learning empowerment skills
- Finding some deeper meaning in what happened. To not just be a person who survives, but to become someone who can thrive.

Steps to healing from trauma involve learning about what trauma is and does to the psyche and developing a conscious awareness and connection between thoughts and feelings. In order to do this, it is essential to accept help and begin to build a support system. In a safe, supportive environment these adult children from violence can learn to release fears, tune into and trust their feelings, discover that they have a voice and learn how to use it, live in the present and let go of the painful past, find meaning in life, bring loving connections into their world that ground, center and fulfill them, and allow themselves to maintain joy.

For children from violence, healing takes place when the connection to internal pain has been broken. The result is a coherent, connected healthy understanding of who they are. It is a process of becoming whole that requires the commitment to change, making the choice to change, and allowing change to occur. As these adult children begin to heal and become empowered, they begin to see that they can be comfortable being in their own skin. They will know that who they are is special and deserving. They will have given birth to the self they were meant to be.

### **Support Groups for Women With Controlling Partners**

The Network for Women's Lives helps sponsor a twelve-week support group for women with controlling partners. These groups encourage women to achieve safety and self-care, to understand the insidious and coercive behaviors of the abuser, and how this control affects their lives. Issues of shame, loss, and anger are addressed within a safe environment with other women in similar situations. For information, call Carol Lambert, LICSW, 978-369-0259 or 617-484-2272.

# V DAY

UNTIL THE VIOLENCE STOPS

## What Is V-Day?

V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. The “V” in V-Day stands for “Victory,” “Valentine,” and “Vagina.” V-Day is a catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money, and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation, and sexual slavery. Last year over 1,150 communities hosted V-Day benefits around the world, raising funds and awareness toward ending violence against women. In nine years, the V-Day movement has raised over \$50 million.

The Network for Women’s Lives is participating in the V-Day campaign by producing the annual benefit performance of Eve Ensler’s play *The Vagina Monologues* to raise awareness and funds for anti-violence groups within our local communities. 2008 marks V-Day’s 10-year anniversary and with it V-Day has introduced two new V-Day events: *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*, writings to stop violence against women and girls, and the V-Day documentary *V-Day—Until the Violence Stops*. The Network for Women’s Lives is presenting these events to the local communities (see the Calendar section for dates and locations).

## The Vagina Monologues

Vagina.

Each year in the winter, that curiously absent anatomical word floats across the world like a fad, a discovery and then disappears from the public lexicon. However, this is the exact opposite of the mission of *The Vagina Monologues* and V-Day.

The title is representative of the fact that public discussion of the vagina is taboo in many societies worldwide. Feminist activists have encouraged women to explore their own bodies in order to develop a better understanding of themselves and to achieve the objective of better self-protection.

Eve Ensler’s play adopts the style of monologues by female actresses, delineating women’s life experiences and bringing a deeper level of discussion to gender

issues. Before writing the play, Eve Ensler had conducted interviews with more than 200 women about their sexuality, their bodies, and their stories of violence and sexual abuse.

## A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer

*A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*, writings to stop violence against women and girls, is a groundbreaking collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights, edited by Eve Ensler and Mollie Doyle.

These diverse voices rise up to break open, expose, and examine the insidiousness of violence at all levels: brutality, neglect, a punch, even a put-down. The volume features such authors and topics as: Edward Albee on S&M; Maya Angelou on women’s work; Michael Cunningham on self-mutilation; Dave Eggers on a Sudanese abduction; Edwidge Danticat on a border crossing; Carol Gilligan on a daughter witnessing her mother being hit; Susan Miller on raising a son as a single mother; Sharon Olds on a bra; Patricia Bosworth on her own physically abusive relationship; Jane Fonda on reclaiming our Mojo; and many more.

These writings are inspired, funny, angry, heartfelt, tragic, and beautiful. But above all, together they create a true and profound portrait of how violence against women affects every one of us.

## V-Day — Until the Violence Stops

*Until the Violence Stops* features playwright and activist Eve Ensler in a powerful film that documents how *The Vagina Monologues* grew into an international grassroots movement called V-Day to stop violence against women and girls. *Until The Violence Stops* shows women from Harlem to Ukiah, California; from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to the Philippines and Kenya, uniting and courageously revealing their intimate and deeply painful experiences with abuse ranging from rape to female circumcision.

Director Abby Epstein leads a poignant journey into the hearts of women and includes revealing testimonies from men, who expose social and cultural attitudes that perpetuate the pervasive violence against women. More than just testimonies and performances, *Until the Violence Stops* is a film about empowerment and the importance of dialogue in the healing process. A celebration of women reclaiming their bodies and lives, this moving documentary leaves us with hope that change can happen.

## Domestic Violence Prevention Dates of Interest

- January 11** *V-Day—Until the Violence Stops*, a documentary film about the movement that inspired a revolution, 7:30 pm, Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord, MA
- January 26** *The Vagina Monologues*, 8:00 pm, Concord-Carlisle High School Auditorium, 500 Walden Street, Concord, MA
- January 27** *The Vagina Monologues*, 2:00 pm, Concord-Carlisle High School Auditorium, 500 Walden Street, Concord, MA
- January 27** “The Homeless Child in School,” a forum on homelessness, 7:00 pm—8:45 pm, Trinitarian Congregational Church, 54 Walden Street, Concord, MA
- February 2** *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*, 7:30 pm, Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord, MA
- February 8** *V-Day—Until The Violence Stops*, a documentary film about the movement that inspired a revolution, 7:30 pm, Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord, MA
- February 9** *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*, 7:30 pm, Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord, MA
- March 2** “Creating Climates of Respect and Safety,” a workshop on bullying for junior high and high school families, 4:00 pm—7:30 pm, West Acton Baptist Church, 592 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA
- April** Clergy Symposium, sponsored by The Network for Women’s Lives, day and time to be announced

The Network for Women’s Lives holds monthly board meetings and all are welcome. Volunteers, members, and other interested persons are encouraged to attend to help work on projects and carry our mission of education throughout the community. For information about the Network for Women’s Lives board meeting times and locations, as well as other events, please refer to our web site at <http://www.networkforwomenslives.org> or contact us via email at [info@networkforwomenslives.org](mailto:info@networkforwomenslives.org).

## Please Help the Network for Women’s Lives

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. (home) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. (work) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### *I can help in the following areas:*

Education     Special Projects     Membership     Publicity  
 Newsletter     Fundraising     Grant writing     Other

### *I support the Network at the following level :*

Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Group/Agency \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ Senior/Student \$5 \_\_\_\_\_

To help even more, I’m sending an additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send your check made out to:**

Network for Women’s Lives ♦ P.O. Box 276 ♦ Concord, MA 01742

**Donations are tax deductible.**

## Empowerment Workshop

To be empowered is to believe in your ability to be who you are, who you choose to be, and who you want to be. When you feel empowered, you exude an aura of emotional and psychic strength. You exhibit an energy that is clear. You respond from your wisest self. Feeling whole inside is grounding. When you let others control you, when you ignore your own needs, when you swallow your voice and shut down, you are giving yourself away. This is disempowering. You deserve to speak, to be heard, and to be listened to. It is the best gift you can give to yourself. Come on a journey and spend a day learning, laughing and speaking with your own true voice.

By attending this one-day workshop, you will learn skills and tools that will teach you how you can:

- Release what is limiting you
- Listen to and develop your own strong voice
- Tune into and trust your own inner wisdom
- Envision and create the life you want to be living

**Date:** Saturday, January 12, 2008

**Time:** 10:00 am—4:30 pm

**Where:** 11 Meadowbrook Road, Acton, MA

**Workshop Leader:** Joan Rubin-Deutsch, LICSW, author of *Why Can't I Ever Be Good Enough?*

**For fees and further information, contact Joan at:** 978-263-1214

### V-Day 2008 Local Events

**Celebrating 10 years raising funds and awareness to end violence against women and girls!**

#### *The Vagina Monologues*

Saturday, January 26 at 8:00 pm and Sunday, January 27 at 2:00 pm, \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door  
Concord-Carlisle High School Auditorium, 500 Walden Street, Concord

#### *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*

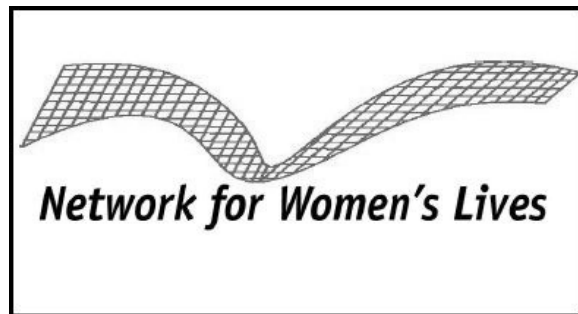
Saturday, February 2 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, February 9 at 7:30 pm, \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door  
Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord

#### *V-Day — Until the Violence Stops*

Friday, January 11 at 7:30 pm and Friday, February 8 at 7:30 pm, \$5 in advance, \$10 at the door  
Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel Street, Concord

Proceeds will be used locally to support The Network for Women's Lives' educational programs to promote healthy relationships and to end domestic violence, and to V-Day support of women in New Orleans.

**For ticket information,** go to The Network for Women's Lives' web site at [www.networkforwomenslives.org](http://www.networkforwomenslives.org).



The Network for Women's Lives is a volunteer organization dedicated to ending domestic violence and promoting healthy relationships. Our goal is prevention; our vehicle is education.

The Network for Women's Lives serves the communities of Acton, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Lexington, Lincoln, Maynard, and Stow.

For more information about The Network for Women's Lives, our programs, and events, visit our web site at [www.networkforwomenslives.org](http://www.networkforwomenslives.org).

## Was It Me? Or Was It You?

Anger is darkness,  
It comes in flavors of hate,  
Shades of its color, decide your fate.

Clenched fists fly by,  
Colliding with your eye,  
Tears are cried,  
But still...no goodbye.

Hateful words exchanged,  
Concealer carefully arranged,  
Pain echoes through your body,  
Traveling like a drum's beat.

The depression gets mixed with the  
obsession.  
Making it impossible to survive,  
In a world where a hero must stay silent,  
Where strength is measured in pain,  
In a world where love,  
leaves an everlasting print.

That world surrounds you,  
That world has you,  
Has its grips,  
Its takes you.

Where the answer "no,"  
Is followed by a contusion,  
Where "I love you,"  
Comes after a burning hand  
makes contact with your skin.  
Where what is wrong is right,  
Where what you want,  
Doesn't matter.

In a world,  
where love leaves a hateful mark,  
Scarring you for life.

Unpredictable danger,  
Unprecedented aggression,  
Your fear is great,  
You have not slept or ate,  
You cringe, you cry,  
You wish, that you could fly,  
Fly away from it all,  
Hopefully they will hear your call.

Anger is darkness,  
It comes in flavors of hate,  
Willing upon you, your own fate.

What happened to being strong?  
What happened to who we are?  
What happened to me?  
To who I used to be.

Was it me?  
Or was it you?

—An anonymous teen author

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in part by grants from:*

*Concord-Carlisle Community Chest,  
Maynard Community Chest,  
Stow Community Chest,  
And  
Private Donations from Individuals,  
Churches, and Local Organizations.*

*Thank you for helping make our  
community a safe place.*

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violence and promoting healthy  
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our vehicle is education.*

***Network for Women's Lives  
Prevention through Education, Safety and  
Respect for All***

*The Network for Women's Lives serves the  
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Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Lexington,  
Lincoln, Maynard, and Stow.*

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*The Network  
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