

# A JOURNEY TO HEALING



**IDVAAC**  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
Institute on Domestic Violence In  
The African American Community

## A JOURNEY TO HEALING



FINDING  
THE PATH





























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Victim → Survivor → ?

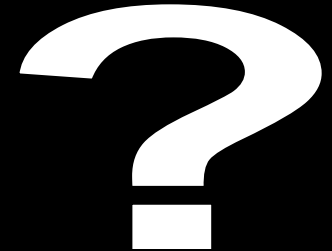


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Victim → Survivor →



- Peace
- Balance
- Restoration
- Reconciliation of the spirit



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- We realize that the violence that a battered women experiences is not her fault; she did not ask for it; she did nothing to bring it to herself nor did her children. It is male violence against women.
- We are not recommending that battered women or their children forget what happened to them or to pretend it never happened
- We are not recommending that there is only one path to healing
- We don't have an ultimate answer



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- Over the last 35 years I have heard some battered women describe an ethos to move to a place different than recovering from trauma
- I have heard adults who as children exposed to violence say “I’ve been a victim too and describe the same yearning as battered women for balance and peace
- We know there are multiple path ways to heal and that it is individual journey. However, we can report what battered women and Children exposed tell us that there are markers along the path.
- We do recommend we should listen and learn from them!

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The Merriam-Webster Dictionary ® defines healing as: to make sound or whole, to restore to health, or to cause an undesirable condition to be overcome. **For some, healing can be defined as the absence of physical or psychological abuse.** For others, it can be defined as feelings of peace that come from a heightened spiritual, awareness and the ability to create and live in a tranquil environment. Others may define it as the ability to move past the feelings, reactions, thoughts and fears that hold one back from past abuse. Consequently, healing, its definition and the pathway to it will differ and is achieved on an individual basis.



“Battered women and Adults  
who as children have been  
exposed to violence reassure  
us that victims have all they  
need inside themselves to  
heal”





# Marker for Healing

## Stage 1

- **She realizes that she does not deserve the abuse and it is not her fault**
- **Contemplation that life can be better for her and for her children; a life free of violence and abuse**

# Marker for Healing

## Stage 2

- **Her most important concern is to secure safety for herself and her children**



# Marker for Healing

## Stage 3

- In this stage the women we talked to said she starts to explore all the “why questions” about what happened to her: Why did he do this to me? What was it about me that made him choose me? Why did I choose him? How could I expose my children to his Violence? How could I have tolerated it for so long? Why did I think it was my fault? Why did I think I could change him? Why did I believe he loved me?
- She also may question her capacity and her abilities to make choices but still she develops a plan to move forward in her life.

# Makers for Healing

## Stage 4

- **She has put her plan into action and has confidence in her capacity to address most challenges, reactions and feelings that come her way**
- **Many women Journal to reflect on what she has been through**
- **Among the gifts of healing is embracing her feelings of Peace, joy and laughter when it occurs.**
- **She has a desire to share her story and to give back to women who have also lived with domestic violence and are trying to find their way out.**

# Makers for Healing

## Stage Five

- **In stage five women have described it as letting go.**
- **Many women describe this as forgiveness of self for having been a victim. Letting go of the anger and frustration they may have felt and moving forward with their life (the check metaphor). He no longer has a presence in their life. The women and children are a living testimony of their capacity to thrive, survive and heal beyond the abuse.**





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