

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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The Voices of Minor Battered Women: Providing Effective Advocacy

Recommendations from young women:

- Educate young women about the dynamics of abuse.
- Educate parents about how to support their children when they have experienced violence or abuse.
- The most difficult thing for a kid is not to have parental support.
- The most important thing that an advocate can do for someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is to understand the issues facing them.
- Understand what it means to come out to a family and be disowned.
- Understand what it means to come out to friends and have them all stop talking to you.
- Understand where GLBT youth fit into society.
- Understand what the larger issues are with the workplace, with community, with school, with different kinds of hate crimes that are involved with coming out.
- I think it's very important to listen to kids.
- Educate children and young people about the dynamics of *grooming*. The person who is abusing you starts building that power and control. They make you scared and start closing in those walls. It's the same thing as with all types of violence and abuse. The abuser just closes down all your avenues for support. They cut you off from people who care about you whom you trust. Your abuser makes himself be the only person who can do anything for you. That's what *grooming* is. They build your trust first, make everything nice, so you think you're in the greatest hands ever, and then they betray you.
- It's important to educate young people early so it's preventative, instead of trying to fix the problem years down the road.
- As advocates, the best thing you can do is listen to minor battered women.
- Give them as many directions and as many avenues as you can possibly think of.
- A minor battered woman needs to be believed as woman and as a child. Absolutely, totally believe her no matter how crazy it sounds since people just don't make that stuff up.
- If you have to be that one person that is the light in her life then that is a pretty good place to be.
- My message is that we need to start telling girls when they're little that it is not okay to be called names.
- We need to start teaching children about what is abuse. Abuse is not just when you have two black eyes. By then the abuse has gone too far and the power and control is already there.
- We have to teach kids the signs of where abuse starts.
- We need to educate our parents to stand by their children. I know a lot of people whose parents have just

walked away and said, “Well, you chose to be there. You must like it! You must like to be hit and called names!”

- I wish that people had known more about abuse. I don’t blame anybody for not knowing more. Until I started speaking in high schools, it wasn’t really apparent to me how much people didn’t know about teen dating violence. I know that people are learning from me speaking because when they fill out the little comment card at the end of the day, it’s amazing how many people will say, “I wish I could talk to someone about this,” “My mom’s been in a shelter,” or “My mom’s husband abuses me,” or “My boyfriend calls me names but he’s never hit me and I didn’t know that was abuse.” I wish someone had told me that.
- I never knew what verbal abuse was. To me, it was just that my boyfriend called me a name. I didn’t know what emotional abuse was. That was just I knew that he didn’t rape me today. I wish I could have known that. I hope that people can learn that now.
- Back then, when I was first being abused, I didn’t know anything about shelters, nothing. I didn’t have the info. I didn’t know how to go about it or ask. Therefore, I stayed!
- I was tormented, mentally abused, hit and all that because I didn’t know. I didn’t ask the professionals. When I went to the doctor, I didn’t ask because I was scared.
- I met friends. Friends who were different from the people I was used to hanging around. Somehow I got the idea that there was help in this kind of stuff.
- I guess the thing that helped me the most was that I got sober. I’ve been sober for two and a half years now. I’ve learned a lot about myself since then and about the kind of stuff that happened to me that wasn’t okay. Before I was sober, I thought it was okay.
- I’ve had a lot of help from a lot of women in my life, people who aren’t really blood related to me but I claim them as aunts.
- The thing that helped me was people believing in me—not justifying what I was saying to them, not twisting it around and putting their own words into how I felt. They just validated how I felt and told me it was okay to feel that way. That there was nothing wrong with me. They let me cry if I wanted to cry and let me be mad when I wanted to be mad.
- It’s helpful to me when people stay by my side and help me on my journey, and not make choices for me. Not tell me what they think I need to do. To support me in what I think I need to do because I know what’s best for me. In my heart, I know right from wrong.
- It’s helpful when people in my life don’t look down on me for decisions I’ve made. They don’t criticize me.
- It’s helpful when people support me and be there for me, to let me know I can count on them and that there’s going to be people there because there was a time in my life when I felt like there was nobody there for me. Support from other women has helped me the most.

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women thanks the young women who shared their wisdom and experiences with us to create these recommendations.