

Y'S WOMEN

The YWCA of Greater Toronto is an association of diverse and caring women dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through dynamic leadership, advocacy, and a range of unique and essential services that promote personal growth and economic independence.

Breaking Through Violence

How the Breathrough Staff Helped Mona

Y's Women

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YWCA of Greater Toronto

Improving the lives of girls & women since 1873

President Anne Sado
Executive Director Heather McGregor

Join the
YWCA of Greater Toronto
at **International Women's Day**
on March 8, 2003



Contact: 416. 961. 8100 ext. 308,
or mlivanag@ywcator.org

Youth
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able. ready. employed

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Logo design by Anja Kessler.

**YWCA Youth ARE
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invites you to an



Official Opening
March 28, 2003
3 - 5 p.m.

Giving deaf, hard of hearing and physically challenged youth 16 - 30 years employment skills and work experience. Must be on the Ontario Disability Support Program.

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YWCA Supporting Women Who Experience Violence



Photo: Helen Papas

The YWCA of Greater Toronto runs six housing and shelter programs in the city of Toronto. We offer women the opportunity for safety and independence, whatever their housing needs.

Altogether, we have 321 women at home with us every night.

YWCA of Greater Toronto improving the lives of women and girls since 1873

Stop 86 where homeless young women find hope, inspiration and practical opportunities along with a roof and a bed. **416. 922. 3271**

The **YWCA Women's Shelter**, safety and community support for women and children fleeing violence. **416-693-7342**

Humewood Drive Housing, a spacious double duplex for single women in shared permanent accommodation. **416. 923. 8454**

Pape Avenue Avenue, a safe community of supportive and affordable apartments for women-led households. **416. 469. 0774**

Woodlawn Residence, a home-like atmosphere for women travellers, women seeking emergency shelter, as well as long and short term housing for single women. **416. 923. 8454**

We hold an established place as a safe haven for women, beginning with the provision of housing for young women working in exploitative conditions in the rapidly growing factory production of Toronto in the 1870's.

Throughout our history as a service-provider and advocate for women and girls, the YWCA has confronted violence against women in all its manifestations, public and private.

Breakthrough, a non-judgemental group and counselling service for women to explore the impact of violence and abuse on their lives, share their fears and pain, express emotion without censure, and learn healthy coping strategies to move forward and thrive. **416. 487. 7151**

Choices for Living, a vital community based Life Skills group, linking women with mental health issues to community resources, mutual support, and the opportunity to rebuild lives. **416. 487. 7151**

Here to Help is an innovative new partnership program that assists children who have witnessed woman abuse and their mothers to heal together in through play, discussion and art activities. **416. 266. 1232**

Teen Mothers' Program, where young mothers and their babies get the best start possible. **416. 266. 1232**

New Harlem Productions presents

BLACK thoughts ON the BLACK experience

The renaissance returns. Experience the rebirth of urban theatre.
With visual art display by Raine Liliefeldt.

Artword Theatre 75 Portland St. (King & Bathurst)
February 20 - March 2, 2003

[YWCA benefiting from 1 night's proceeds. Call Raine Liliefeldt for ticket information at 416. 961. 8100 ext. 326.](#)

Painting: Raine Liliefeldt



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Any travel, hotel accommodation or tour packages booked through the Toronto office of Keytours will result in a donation to the YWCA of Greater Toronto. Just mention the YWCA when you book with Keytours and you can help improve the lives of women and girls thanks to this new partnership.

Call Keytours Toronto at 416. 361. 1113 to make your travel plans today.



YWCA Camp Tapawingo Bowlathon

Providing girls with the opportunity to learn to work together, build self-esteem and have fun in the outdoors.

**March 22, 2003
at Bowlerama West**

To participate, call YWCA Camping Department at 416. 961. 8100 ext. 351, or e-mail camping@ywcator.org

**The YWCA Skills
Development Centre for
Women (SDC) is now one
year old.**

SDC provides instruction, training and developmental skills for women in computer and information technology and specialized business.

Contact
416. 261. 3457
ywcatrainingcentre@ywcator.org



Moving Forward in Their Lives

“IT’S ABOUT WHAT COMES FROM THE WOMEN”

YWCA Breakthrough Staff &
MONA

When Mona married at 19, she thought it was for life. At the age of 27, she read a Time magazine article on the different types of abuse and saw herself reflected there. Suddenly she had to ask herself, 'how did I get here'.

“I had told my husband, from the time we were going out in high school at the age of 17, 'if you ever lay a hand on me, you won't see me or your children ever again'. He never did lay a hand on me. What Mona experienced in her marriage instead, was psychological abuse. Mona explains how the scars you can't see often wind up hurting the most.

“We don't get taught enough about this”, Mona exclaims passionately. Raised by a single mother who was fiercely protective of her, Mona learned a lot about physical abuse. “My mother was raised by an alcoholic father. She never drank. She taught me to never accept physical abuse. But she didn't know that her parenting --the yelling, the severe emotional dysfunction--was setting me up to accept a different kind of abuse. By the time I was in high school, my [future] husband had me hooked up to a pager so he could keep track of me 24/7. I got told I couldn't do things, that I was incapable”.

“After we married, I was working. I made excellent money, and he controlled everything. I never had more than \$5.00 in my pocket, and he bought himself a new Grand AM. I never saw a cent. Even after I had left him I would have anxiety attacks if 5pm rolled around and I was downtown with my mother. 'I have to get home, I have to get home', I would tell her. Only later did I realize that I had been trained [by my husband] that I had to obey him and be home at a certain time every day. It was like I had been trained. You start inch by inch, and you end up giving a mile”.

Now, Mona is attending a YWCA Breakthrough counselling group for women who are experiencing or have experienced abuse. And according to the Breakthrough staff, Mona's situation is not unusual. Many women confuse control with romance, whether they are just starting out in the dating world or whether they are more mature and in life-long partnerships.

“So little challenges these dating norms in our society”, says Catharine Butler, Manager of the YWCA Breakthrough and Life Skills programs. “We really do have this idea that only physical violence is abuse. People see the smothering behaviours as protection

rather than control. We're told that 'he's only doing that because he loves you'. Popular novels and movies also reinforce this notion. It remains unchallenged. It's hard to talk about because it's all around us. We do now challenge physical violence, but we're not so good at challenging controlling behaviour that's done in the name of love.”

Mona agrees: “I didn't have the information to say no”, she explains. “I was the perfect housewife. If he said something was blue, and I saw green, I thought my eyes must be wrong. Everyone thought we were the perfect couple, that he was the perfect husband. So romantic”.

“Breakthrough changed my life, there is no question. It taught me that I have choice, that I have options”.

Mona credits Breakthrough with changing her life. “I had been looking for help for a while. The day I sat down to make calls, I had a whole sheet of



YWCA Breakthrough Staff, Keisha McQueen at YWCA Week Without Violence 2002

paper in front of me filled with places that said they could help. At the end of the day, I threw it away and said to myself, 'no one is going to help me'. If you weren't being beaten, no one seemed to want to help. Breakthrough changed my life, there is no question. It taught me that I have choice, that I have options. [Before], I didn't know there was anything else for me."

Keisha McQueen has been working with Breakthrough a year and a half. Her first impression of Breakthrough came as someone working with women abuse survivors in the criminal justice system. She says she had always heard good things about Breakthrough. "I already made referrals to the program because women always had good things to say about it. The principles of feminism that guide the conduct and thinking behind the group mean a philosophy of empowerment for women. Breakthrough sees things in an anti-oppressive framework that takes into account women's experiences of racism and homophobia for instance, while seeing the abuse in the context of sexism."

Catharine Butler explains the importance of this: "It is in the context of sexism and systemic racism that violence against women occurs. The context is important to how you respond

to an individual woman. It takes it from her feeling like it's all her fault and she's the only one, to helping her see the impact of these things on the life-choices women make."

Each group is two hours in length. Because each woman's path of healing from trauma is different, women who participate in Breakthrough may attend a maximum of three 12 week sessions.

Groups are located in two different areas of the Toronto area and at different times of the day in order to make it convenient for women with varying schedules. Each group has a maximum of 12 participants to allow for a rich exchange of strategies and experiences without being too large and overwhelming. All of the groups are facilitated by two trained and accredited Breakthrough staff, who are able to share styles of interaction, expertise and, after a long hard week of supporting women with such pressing and dangerous issues, a collegial shoulder to lean on. Amid the pain and trauma, energy comes as the process of healing and understanding is taking place.

"It's not about the facilitator sitting there preaching, it's about what comes from the women", emphasizes Keisha. "When a woman who barely spoke the first group comes to her second 12 week session of groups she starts to give another new woman the support and encouragement her group gave her, now she's giving back what she's received. To me, [this] is a symbol of her gaining back her power. You often don't realize you have that power until you hear yourself vocalize it. What ends up happening is that the new woman will build up the returning woman, and she [herself] will blossom in that moment".

"By the end of the group, they can look you in the eye and say what they mean without anger".

Mona noticed a similar thing in her own group: "You see fear and anger in people's eyes when they first come to the group. By the end of the group, they can look you in the eye and say what they mean without anger".

Woman abuse is a terrifying reality for hundreds of thousands of women from all walks of life. Breakthrough is the place where women can explore the impact of abuse and/or violence on their lives, share their fears and pain, express emotion without judgement, and learn healthy coping strategies that allow them to move forward in their lives.

Amanda Dale



Amanda Dale is the Director of Advocacy & Communications Department and Editor of Y's Women.

Photo: Anja Kessler



The YWCA Breakthrough Program will benefit from the funds raised during the First Annual YWCA Women's Play Day, to be held on Saturday February 22, 2003 (see advertisement on page 7).

The YWCA Breakthrough program offers support, education and counselling groups to women who have experienced or are experiencing violence or abuse.

The YWCA Women's Play Day a light-hearted event that addresses a serious issue for women. Please join us to support women like Mona.

Woman Abuse: The Facts

Canadian girls are victims in **84%** of reported cases of sexual abuse (Thomlinson, Stephens, Cunes & Grinnel, 1991).

50% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16 (Source: Statistics Canada. The Daily, Thursday, November 18, 1993)

1 in 4 women in Canada experiences abuse from an intimate in her lifetime (ibid).

Children witnessed violence against their mothers in almost **40%** of violent marriages (Violence Against Women Survey 1993, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics).

In **88%** of all violent incidents, males are identified as suspects (The Daily, Statistics Canada, Wednesday September 25, 2002, Homicides).

A September 2002 Stats Can report police classified a total of **183** homicides in 2001 as family related (The Daily, Statistics Canada, Wednesday September 25, 2002, Homicides).

The number of men accused of killing their current wife or ex wife rose from **52** in 2000 to **60** in 2001, with almost all of this increase occurring in Ontario (The Daily, Statistics Canada, Wednesday September 25, 2002, Homicides).

Young women under **25** are at greatest risk of spousal homicide (Family Violence in Canada: Statistical Profile, 1999, Statistics Canada).

20% of women who leave an abusive partner experience continued (and often more severe) violence during or after the separation (Canadian Social Trends, Statistics Canada, Autumn 1997).

More women experience emotional abuse than physical violence. **35%** of all women who are or have been in married or common-law relationships have experienced emotional abuse. In comparison, **29%** of women have been physically assaulted by their male partners (Statistics Canada. Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile. (1998:15, 9)

Woman Abuse - A Definition

A term that refers to the power and control exerted in an adult intimate relationship, usually by a man over a woman, but also possible within same sex relationships.

It includes one or many of the following characteristics: physical assault, psychological or emotional control or intimidation, financial control, attacking or destroying personal objects or pets.

The term specifically refers to the basis of power and control exerted over women within a society that does not value women as truly equal to men, and in which the conditions for abuse are perpetuated in widespread attitudes and systems that underpin that inequality and the devaluing of women as a group.



Photos: Helen Papas

Improving the lives of women & girls since 1873

For the latest YWCA advocacy and media interventions on the issue of violence against women and homelessness, visit www.ywcator.org/index2.htm

Tactics of Emotional Abuse

- Isolate a woman from her friends, family, cultural or faith community, care providers, and prevent her from having independent activities such as work, English as a Second Language classes or other education
- Act overly jealous or possessive; accuse a woman of having affairs if she talks to another man; coerce her into sexual activity to prove her love
- Criticize a woman constantly - her actions, size and appearance, and abilities
- Use a woman's disability or deafness to demean or control her
- Threaten, intimidate, harass, or punish a woman if she does not comply with her abusive partner's demands
- Use the children to control a woman, for example undermine her authority as a parent or threaten to take them if she

should leave

- Make all of the decisions in the family, withhold information and refuse to consult her or about important matters such as where they live, or the family's finances
- Control the money - what is spent, how it is spent, not allow a woman access to financial resources, or conversely not contribute to any of the household expenses

Source: www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/emotional_abuse.html

If you are a woman in crisis contact:

Assaulted Women's Helpline
416. 863. 0511

YWCA of Greater Toronto services see advertisement on page 2



YWCA

women's PLAYDay

all play no work

You can join the
YWCA of Greater Toronto



Contact 416. 961. 8100 ext. 352,
or e-mail wquick@ywator.org

YWCA 24th Annual
Women of Distinction Awards
May 28th, 2003

2003 Recipients to be announced
Tables & Individual
Tickets on Sale

Contact 416. 961. 8100
ext. 344, or e-mail
events@ywcator.org

Visit www.ywcator.org

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