DVAM 2020 Reading List

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, The Second Step staff has compiled a list of some of our favorite books that have helped us strengthen our understanding of domestic violence and its impacts. While this list is by no means a comprehensive resource guide to understanding domestic violence in all families or communities, we have done our best to find survivor stories and informational texts that give voice to a range of people. We hope you find these works helpful in growing your understanding of the ways violence can manifest in the home and the lasting impact of domestic violence on survivors.

Some of the books on this list use gendered language to describe survivors (she/her) and abusers (he/him). As you read, we ask you to remember that anyone can find themselves in either of these roles, regardless of gender identity, race, religion, or socio-economic status.

As a general note, all of these books use personal stories of violence or trauma to illustrate survivors’ experiences. Reader discretion is advised.

1. No Visible Bruises: What We Don’t Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us by Rachel Louise Snyder

A NEW YORK TIMES TOP 10 BOOKS OF THE YEAR

“For anyone looking to learn more about domestic violence, but unsure where to start – this book is for you! Author Rachel Louise Snyder does a masterful job of weaving together the voices of leading researchers in domestic violence and everyday survivors. A must-read as COVID-19 continues to reveal the extent of the domestic violence crisis in America.” -Mimi, Volunteer & Education Coordinator

2. Written on the Body: Letters from Trans and Non-Binary Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Edited by Lexie Bean

Written by and for trans and non-binary survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, this collection of letters written to body parts weaves together narratives of gender, identity, and abuse. It is the coming together of those who have been fragmented and often met with disbelief... Written with intimacy and intelligence, this book is for those who have found power in re-shaping their bodies, families, and lives, and offers hope for those who struggle to find safety at home, in the body and other unwelcoming places.
3. **Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terrorism** by Judith Herman, MD

When *Trauma and Recovery* was first published in 1992, it was hailed as a groundbreaking work. In a new afterword, Herman explains how the issues surrounding the topic have shifted within the clinical community and the culture at large. *Trauma and Recovery* brings a new level of understanding to a set of problems usually considered individually. Meticulously documented and frequently using the victims' own words as well as those from classic literary works and prison diaries, *Trauma and Recovery* is a powerful work that will continue to profoundly impact our thinking.

4. **UN/MASKED: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour** by Donna Kaz

“Donna Kaz’s *UN/MASKED: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl* chronicles the development of a fierce feminist from enduring abuse to activism and finding her voice in theater. I found this book empowering and inspiring – being a Guerrilla Girl gives Kaz the courage and strength she needs to express the abuse she endured at the hands of her partner 20 years earlier. This book is a powerful portrayal of how one can turn their pain into purpose and how some of the most deeply impactful activists came to this work through their own history of trauma. Can’t recommend enough!” -Martina, Community Advocate

5. **Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men** by Lundy Bancroft

In this groundbreaking bestseller, Lundy Bancroft—a counselor who specializes in working with abusive men—uses his knowledge about how abusers think to help women recognize when they are being controlled or devalued, and to find ways to get free of an abusive relationship. While Bancroft’s book centers around his work with male abusers and female survivors, the insight provided in *Why Does He Do That?* is relevant across all relationships in which domestic violence is present.
6. **Educated: A Memoir by Tara Westover**

#1 NEW YORK TIMES, WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND BOSTON GLOBE BESTSELLER

“Educated is a gripping and inspiring memoir that centers around the life of Tara Westover and her journey through poverty, family trauma, independence, and achieving her educational goals. An unexpected undertone of the book is that of familial domestic violence at the hands of one of her older brothers. Tara’s experience is a heartbreaking, yet resilient example of how domestic violence can come from anyone in the home; and how cultural, educational and familial relationships affect our perception of that reality.” -Gabby, Community Advocate

7. **The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by Nadine Burke Harris, MD**

Children are often overlooked as survivors of domestic violence. With the help of researchers like Nadine Burke Harris, communities are beginning to understand the profound impact that early exposure to violence can have on children’s growth and development. The stunning news of Burke Harris’s research is just how deeply our bodies can be imprinted by ACEs—adverse childhood experiences like abuse, neglect, parental addiction, mental illness, and divorce. Childhood adversity changes our biological systems and lasts a lifetime. For anyone who has faced a difficult childhood, or who cares about the millions of children who do, the fascinating scientific insight and innovative, acclaimed health interventions in The Deepest Well represent vitally important hope for preventing lifelong illness for those we love and for generations to come.

8. **Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

The novel “Purple Hibiscus” gives us a close look at family dynamics with one of the main focuses on how domestic violence in different cultures can be extremely complex. The book also gives insight into the complicated nature of living with and dealing with violence in the home. Throughout the novel, Kimbali is constantly torn between trying to please her abusive father and leaving her family to search for a better life. Her mother is also a survivor of domestic violence and portrays the struggles of wanting to protect her family while also keeping herself safe.” -Meghan, Director of Residential Programs