

During our lives, we had received tender touches by my mom at times; all us girls would jump in her bed and have her scratch our backs. We'd have a balance of humor from our dad and actual interaction, like when he'd play with us in the ocean or like that one time we all had a major water fight that went inside and around the outside of the house. All six of us would share beautiful moments like these that we all hold so close, but I would unfortunately, vividly, remember the horrific scenes too, like this brutal fight. What do moments like this fight say to a child, especially a girl? What would be the implications to me and my sisters in the future of learning and experiencing these mixed messages by the ones that were our first loves, our protectors, and the ones who were supposed to love us the most?

Within time, my parents let up, but my life was changed forever. A seed had been planted for a while, but now the soil had been covered and patted forcefully down. This life I had known up until that point was wrong. I hated it! I'd fight against it. The true rebellion in me was born, and the silent "Fuck you" to life, authority, and my parents began.

I continued going through periods of suicidal thoughts. I continued escaping in my room, dreaming of a life other than mine. My grades had fallen drastically. I had been an A/B student, and I was now completely failing. At fifteen, I'd begun my descent of finally dropping out of school. My parents were always those types to be too lenient with exception of their well-overdue violence, which they considered discipline. They did plead with me to go to school but did not force it. I think they knew I had depression, so they'd do anything to please me, thinking that would resolve it.

The four of us went back to being the family we had been before, never mentioning anything that had gone on. We'd try to bury our secrets, hide, and escape from the pain. Guadalupe and I began following in our sisters' footsteps, drinking and partying just to find some kind of pleasure in life. My parents went back to their ways of not enforcing anything. We'd go out and say that we'd be home by midnight but wouldn't show up until after 2:00 a.m. Our parents would tell us we were grounded, but by the following night, we'd want to go out and promise to be home on time, and they'd bend and let us go out again. And we wouldn't make it home on time again. The dysfunctional cycle continued. No rules, no discipline, no respect—just back to being normal.

"Do as I say, not as I do." That saying scares me. I heard it one too many times during my childhood. It was pretty much my parents' slogan as we grew up and the hypocrisy of my existence. My dad would later warn us of how my mother and her drinking didn't start off as what we were then witnessing. He told us time and time again about how she started socially drinking at parties. He was in fear of us picking up on that behavior—that bad trait of hers. But what about teaching a child how to deal with life and not to avoid life? And, most of all, what about the violence? This was beyond disciplining a child. When you love someone, do you on occasion hit that person? My soul told me no. My heart told me no. But the life I had been given told my mind, "Love and pain go hand in hand."

We were being taught to accept violence, but we were also being shown to escape from our problems and learning how not to deal with anything. These two were our teachers of life, and we were just following instinctively in their shoes. Do as I say, not as I do. How do children learn anything more than what they are shown? Did they expect us to guess? Why couldn't they just have shown us how to live differently? It would take decades for me to understand this.