

Absence

Women in Canada wrote about the different reasons that led them to miss school. Sometimes violence led to them moving schools, getting or faking illness, or simply skipping school. Some students were suspended or expelled.

Anna:

My father also moved us around a lot and there were many times that we went to different schools mid-way through the year.

I stopped going to school when I was expelled in grade 8 and didn't return until I was 21 in an Adult Learning facility.

Fumi:

...during junior kindergarten I missed 43 days of school. When I asked my mother if she remembers me being sick at this point in my life, she said that she does not remember.

I started to have a heart problems and I began suffering from severe migraines that left me immobilized. Due to this I had to take quite a bit of time off of school, though I don't know exact number of days. The violence at home began to severely increase to the point where my mother and I spent time in the hospital due to injuries.

I really hated school and would often do whatever I could to not go. This was in grades four and five. I was often legitimately sick but I also remember pretending to be sick a lot so I could stay home with my mother to make sure my stepfather didn't hurt her.

I continued to have severe migraines that forced me to spend lots of time at home. My mother and I were taken to a shelter one night and spent some time there. I remember being scared the night the police took us there, and I did not understand why we were the ones that had to leave and my stepfather got to stay in the apartment. After spending sometime at the shelter, I never wanted to leave. Due to this I missed even more school and my grades continued to be less than satisfactory.

if any of the kids that bullied me in school were in one of my classes, I either dropped the course or had very poor attendance. I learned very young that I

Theme: Absence

could get away with just not showing up if I wanted to attempt to make a problem disappear

Priya:

I started skipping class a lot more [once the violence started] since I didn't feel as comfortable in the classroom as I once did.

I also began to skip more classes since my grades were dropping because the material had nothing to do with my life.

Sonya:

This new form of violence [verbal bullying at school] scared me much more than what was going on at home because it was *new*. I stayed home for several weeks with "migraines" and read the newspaper reports on the Paul Bernardo trial.

I participated in classes and kept up excellent grades but with a large number of absences that I couldn't explain. I couldn't bring myself to enter a classroom late and often skipped the classes I had that my friends didn't

Even after getting support and working hard, I couldn't return to my classes regularly. Now all those spaces that were supposed to be dedicated to learning were just more reminders of feeling violated, scared and alone.

I always wanted to feel safe in numbers so if my friends skipped a class I did too.

Grace:

I barely went to school, and when I did go, I was suspended and sent home. I did a lot of drugs and alcohol before I went to class.

I didn't go [to school] because the classroom was not made a safe place for me.

Leanne:

Many times because of the violence at home, my mother would have to disclose what was occurring because I would miss so much school