Feeling "Stupid"

Several women[1] wrote about feeling stupid. Some saw others judge them as stupid and blame them for their problems learning. This led to more fear, more failure, and a lasting difficulty believing they could learn.

Joanne[2]:

Grade 2 was when I can recall feeling "stupid" in school. I had just moved to town from the reserve with my mom, sister and brother. We moved in with my mom's new boyfriend who ended up being my stepfather. I was terrified of this man.

I had to go [in grade 3] to special education class and continued on until grade 6. This had a negative effect on my learning ability. I was a shy, insecure child as it was and this only perpetuated my insecurity as being a stupid little Indian girl.

I went through elementary school thinking I was stupid and that there was something wrong with me

When I started school [in the AWCCA program] and waiting for my first assignments to come back I would wake in nightmarish tears because I'd dream everything I got back would be wrong and that I was really stupid and that I couldn't learn. It surprised me that I still carried the fear of being stupid all these years. But I know better.

Fumi:

Violence absolutely hindered my learning in the classroom. It took a big toll on my self-esteem and for a good portion of my life I felt worthless and 'stupid'. Continuously being told I was 'stupid' played a big part in why I thought so poorly of myself. I heard it at home, it was reinforced at school and then I just began believing it and reinforcing it on to myself. I stayed away from school for ten years because I honestly believed that I was unable to learn.

I thought my teachers [in the AWCCA program] were 'crazy' for giving me A's. I was convinced that they were just marking me easy. I soon realized that thinking like this not only discredited me it was also discrediting my teachers.

Theme: Feeling 'Stupid'

Amina:

Everyone looked so happy and perfect, I felt different because I wasn't happy like them, didn't dress like them, act like them. I thought what are they so happy about?

The teachers made me and my mom believe that I was not a good student. They made me feel like I was not smart enough because I did not get good marks.

I have been told so many great things about our schools and never experienced it. I always thought that there was something wrong with me because I never felt like I belonged.

Priya:

When my marks dropped instead of helping me learn they made me feel like there was something wrong with me and that I was the real problem.

Sonya:

I spent most of public school sure that I was the only one who was scared to go home at night.

Asha:

I was terrified of being called stupid and often was because I was so nervous when he would call on me that I was unable to say anything

It wasn't until I entered this program that I really realized that my behavior in the classroom was largely due to the sexist behaviors of administrators in educational institutions, and that I had been "beaten down" to believe that was not as capable as my male peers. And in many other ways, I felt this in terms of class, I was not as good as my best friend because I was poor and she was wealthy, I believe she was just more intelligent because of this background, not because of her family's access to resources.

…because of the abuse I experienced from the psychiatric system, believing that there was something wrong with my brain, so how could what I thought/said be a valid contribution is?

Theme: Feeling 'Stupid'

Anna:

Male teacher made fun of me in class; made me look stupid

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[1] In 2007 some students in the Assaulted Women and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program at George Brown College took part in a research study where they reflected on the ways they could now recognize that violence had had an impact on their own learning. This research was carried out as part of the Weaving a Web project to develop www.learningandviolence.net The rest of the themes identified can be found in other sections of The Impact of Violence on Learning.

[2] All names are fictional.