

## Kari's Story

- I have always been a perfectionist and expected a lot of myself...I would obtain A's in all areas of my report card except in public speaking - in which I would normally get a C. Starting in grade four I started carrying home all my text books from school regardless if I had homework or not. I was told that I developed Scoliosis for this reason. I was afraid that somehow there would be homework due for the next day, even after the teacher would inform us that there was none...My public speaking subject topics in elementary school were my dead dog, Alzheimer's disease, depression, Anorexia Nervosa and grief.
- In grade seven I was assaulted by a male classmate in the cloak room at my school at lunch hour. I told a friend and she told the vice-principal. It became a big issue and I had to decide whether to call the police or not. I chose to not. This was my first experience of disclosing any sort of violence. Interestingly, that year I became more outgoing.
- I struggled with anorexia. After seeking medical attention and receiving therapy I was diagnosed as having depression. This is the start of my experiences of psychiatrization... The rest is history. I have a problem remembering much from those days, even up to my recent past.
- I felt like I lived a double life. Many teachers and students thought that I was a happy, bright kid however what they didn't know was what I was going through emotionally...In addition they didn't know how I dealt with the hard times. I smoked a lot of pot and since I had keys to many rooms at school because I was student council president, I would steal clothes from the drama room, steal chemicals and equipment from the chemistry room. I would easily get out of class by saying that I had to do something for the student's council. I had one teacher, my art teacher, that would see the darker half and supported me through those times by giving me space to express myself and act how I need to.
- I had terrible anxiety to the point where I started to stutter and have terrible chest pains. These feelings were dealt with through changing my

meds. Learning was difficult in this period because it was difficult to concentrate and feel grounded.

- In college I began to experience more depression and anxiety again therefore my meds were changed again. Learning was difficult in this period of time as well because of difficulties in concentration and "unstable" emotions.
- My experiences of violence made me weary of trusting myself and others... I was always very quiet and would keep to myself quite often. I realize that I was taught not to express what I was feeling and not to talk about the violence in my home, therefore I grew to not even be sure of my emotions which is something I still struggle with to this day. This has affected my confidence in how I feel that I communicate my ideas, which further ends up silencing me, particularly in the classroom.
- ...my self-esteem was greatly affected therefore I never felt good enough. This pushed me to be a perfectionist and over achiever. Being an over achiever sets me up for failure because I go into a project thinking that it needs to be the best however I become paralyzed by that thought and I procrastinate about starting it. This is especially difficult when my self-esteem is low therefore I feel like I can't produce something good but I feel that the only option is to do something "perfectly" and so therefore I am immobilized. This becomes an overwhelming task to defeat and that may be one reason why I have experienced panic and anxiety.
- ... the memory loss I experience had been something that has either been a side affect to the medication I have been prescribed or a developed coping mechanism. Regardless it affected my ability to remember things at school and therefore my concentration. I become frustrated that I can't remember something and I lose focus on what the task at hand is and it becomes a spiraling effect.
- Growing up with an alcoholic father has had some benefits too. I learnt how to be extremely intuitive and aware in my surroundings. I have learnt how to gauge people's moods and emotions and therefore I have grown to be very flexible to my surroundings and the situations in which I find

myself. I believe this is what has helped me maneuver through any hard time in school and life in general. I have found and do find happiness in being able to empathize and connect with others when detecting a common experience and school was an environment in which I was able to practice these skills and connect with others.

- [What helps me in the classroom is] teachers that make it a safe space to be honest and speak and who consistently lets their students know they are not being judged by them. Teachers that consistently confirm that there are no stupid questions. Teachers that treat you with the respect that everyone should receive regardless of age, class, race, sexual orientation, beliefs, sex, gender, size, etc... Teachers that don't place blame or shame upon their students for not doing homework, not coming to school etc.... Teachers that can look past a curriculum and to a place of where they engage each student with their words and ideas.
- [what made the classroom a negative place was ] teachers that threaten to humiliate you if you come late to class or don't do your home work. When teachers don't hold students accountable for racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, classist, sizeist remarks and/or contribute. Teachers that only focus on a certain group of people because of their privilege. Teachers that don't care.
- During one of my women's studies classes in university just days before December 6th, a male student at the school opened the door to the lecture hall and starting yelling. He said "you dykes should get back in the kitchen where you belong". That was scary - I didn't know what to expect next...
- Having the opportunity to learn from professors that challenge the systematic oppression that perpetuates violence in our schools and communities, I have been able to directly connect particular events with specific reactions, even when the experiences are spread out so far from one another. It's almost reassuring to see the affects of violence on learning just to know that it wasn't my fault.