

# Questions and Answers from Amy, contributor to *INVINCIBLE: The 10 Lies You Learn Growing Up with Domestic Violence, and the Truths to Set You Free*

***What has having your story included in INVINCIBLE meant for you and/or allowed you to accomplish?***

I feel a sense of accomplishment in being a part of this book. I've wanted to write about my childhood in some fashion or speak about it for many years now. This is hopefully a gateway to becoming the advocate for children of domestic violence that I've been longing to be.

***What did you learn about childhood domestic violence (CDV) from reading INVINCIBLE that you didn't know/fully realize before?***

I learned that there was no name or terminology for growing up in homes with domestic violence. I realize even more so how much of an epidemic it is and how little support there is for the children in these homes. How unspoken it is and how silent people are. How little people know that children are affected by the violence in so many different ways.

***Does reading the book advance or shift your understanding of what you experienced in childhood and how it impacted you?***

Yes. Until I read the book, I didn't fully understand the LIES and TRUTHS. Now I realized how the majority of them apply or did apply to me. I realized how much I can relate to the LIES and TRUTHS. I realize even more how far I've come since the days of my childhood.

***Did reading the book give you a different perspective on the unlikely gifts earned from your childhood experience above and beyond the scars?***

Yes, a much more positive perspective for sure.

***In what ways has your interpretation of your childhood experience and what it means for you, your life, and your future changed after INVINCIBLE?***

I've realized how well I've done for myself after such a childhood experience. Also, how much I've improved as a person, especially over the past few years. I feel confident and proud being a part of this *INVINCIBLE* experience and look forward to contributing more.

***In what ways have your everyday feelings, beliefs, thoughts and actions changed since reading INVINCIBLE?***

I am more confident and closer to my goal of making positive changes in this world with regard to children of domestic violence. I feel more energetic and ready to be involved in any way possible for such a great cause so near and dear to my heart. I feel increased pride in speaking out, as it will not only help others, but it is really freeing, helpful, and healing for me.

***Which chapter of INVINCIBLE was your story featured in, and after reading the book, are there any other LIES you realized you've also struggled with aside from the one addressed in the chapter where your story is featured?***

Although my story was featured in the "Sad to Grateful" chapter, after reading the book, I realized I've struggled with most of the other LIES. For instance...Alone: I was famous at pushing people away. Being alone in my head was much more pleasant and safe. I wanted to end the friendship first before getting hurt. I wasn't sure how to be close to someone and accept their love. I was judging and negative most of the time. I was terrified of conflict and had no clue how to handle it. I was the "taker" in my friendships. It was easier to dump the relationship and move on to another then to trust I could express my feelings and listen to their wants/needs without getting hurt.

Angry: Anger was the easiest emotion to express. I was very quick to react, overreact and be angry. I had this overwhelming need to be heard and get my point across immediately. And also to be "right."

Fearful: I lacked confidence. I was terrified of rejection. I was scared of being “wrong” or embarrassed.  
Unloved: I was very uncomfortable using the word love or expressing the feeling.

***How did your childhood experience negatively affect you?***

I had a difficult time expressing my feelings and showing love. I was quick to anger and show my temper. I had a very negative attitude towards life and people. I suffered losses of friendships and relationships with family members. I didn't express my needs. I dropped out of college because I felt I had no support in going. I've had trouble relating to my kids and knowing what is “normal” behaviors for them. I can't handle them arguing, even in an overly joking way. Any type of loud banter back and forth gives me anxiety. I'm not as loving a mother as I thought I would be as far as hugs, kisses and saying “I love you to them” are concerned. I have to think harder to do what comes naturally to most parents.

***What was your turning point?***

My mother died suddenly in 2004. I had spoken to both my parents a few years prior to her death about our past and had some closure. I held no anger towards my mother or father. But I still felt the effects of all that had happened. I started counseling, quit my job in banking, and about a year later, I came across an article in the local paper offering volunteer training for a local DV shelter. I signed up and I've been a substitute paid resident counselor for that shelter since 2006. I thought doing this was enough, until in the fall of 2011, my daughter's HS classmate died tragically along with his mother at the hands of his father. As I read the article, I realized how easily that could have been me. Then I read the comments people put online to the article. How they were in disbelief. I watched as kids at the HS questioned how they didn't know. I could relate to this young man. I was that young man in HS. I realized the shelter I was working with didn't really target children in DV homes. I knew I could do more. One day, in 2012, while watching Dr Phil, I first heard Brian Martin speak. I contacted him immediately, and here I am today.

***Was contributing your story to and seeing it come to life in INVINCIBLE difficult or easy?***

It was difficult. Taking stuff and getting it onto paper was probably the most difficult thing about contributing my story. Also, people's reactions are sometimes difficult. They cry or want to express sorrow. I don't want that. I'm not looking to be a victim or for sympathy. I just want them to know this happened to me and still happens. And they could easily help by just being an ear to listen. A place to crash if needed. But it was also easy because I was ready. I don't have trouble retelling what happened. I feel such a sense of relief when I talk about it. Each time, I know it could be teaching someone about the realities or helping them cope. Also, I broke the cycle in my family and want others to know they can to.

***What TRUTHS do you cultivate daily to replace the LIES and how?***

Grateful: I count my blessings daily. I tell myself when I am feeling sad that someone out there has it worse off than I do.

Free: I do not live in a volatile household. I harbor no guilt and am not ashamed of my childhood. I try to stay balanced and keep my days as peaceful as I can.

Compassionate: I show compassion in my work with special needs kids daily. I put myself in other people's shoes, so to speak, and avoid judging.

Passionate: I set small goals for myself daily. I enjoy helping others. I always try to make people laugh.

Trusting: I'm learning to open up to friends and co-workers often when needed and vice versa.

Guided: Every day, I try to be a better a person. I try to give 100% to every task I'm given.

***Would you recommend INVINCIBLE to others who grew up living with domestic violence or anyone who cares about someone who did, and why?***

Yes, I would recommend it, to...

1. Let them know they are not alone
2. Show them there is hope
3. Help them see that what they are experiencing (the Lies) can be overcome.
4. Enhance their understanding of how a child is impacted when they grow up with DV
5. Spread awareness