YOU'RE NOT ALONE

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High atop a grassy hill sat the picture of a perfect family. A rich, red-brick home full of solid cherry furniture and snapshots with happy smiles. The neighbors saw a wife who was always present at PTA meetings and soccer games and a husband who worked long hours at the insurance agency so his family could win exotic trips to China, Switzerland and Hawaii. The children wore beautiful clothes and attended church every time the doors were open.

But, if you looked more closely at those photos, you would see tired eyes, forced smiles and the pain of hiding a shameful secret.

The sound of ice clanking against the inside of my father's bourbon glass is as loud in my ears today as it was when I wore pigtails. And even as I write this, even more than 10 years after his death, the fear and pain of what that sound meant smothers me like a laden blanket.

My dad was a good man. He worked hard, he feared God and he took more pride in his family than any man I know. But he suffered from alcoholism that had begun in college. And he was never a sleepy drunk.

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In this business, every good article includes a personal anecdote — a story that drives home the importance of the topic. As I interviewed officers and advocates for the domestic violence feature, I realized there were few stories I could tell better than my own.

I am a victim of domestic violence. That's a hard sentence to swallow. No one likes to consider herself a victim, and I am no different. Ironically, I never considered myself one until I began