

Robert
Duluth Men's Group

What it's like to have a family?

Prior to moving back here I was always locked up, I was confined, I was institutionalized. I didn't have a chance to be out long enough to have any kids. You know and, and, sitting in prison and in your five by nine cell, you really begin to wonder, you know what it's like to have that family aside from being in a gang where I found my family. You know having a child to raise or someone to look up to you, you know and someone to set an example for and I never had that. When I met my wife when I moved back here, and she was a single mother of three and I just fell in love with her kids...You know and, I come from a broken home, and I was raised by a man that wasn't my father, and I guess I reflect on that and I guess I learned a thing or two from that.

Rebelling

She started what I called rebelling. You know when she got sick of me telling her what to do and trying to stop her from doing things. In my eyes you just don't disrespect your husband like that, you don't talk him down, you don't talk back to him or your going to get cracked. You know I mean, that's what I've seen growing up. You know I mean there was one time I had my dad ask me, "what are you doing hitting her like that for?" I said, "well it worked when you did it to mom didn't it? It shut her up." What you see as a child it reflects you in the long run. You know in my mind, that was okay.

Controlling behavior

Fighting over a cell phone because of, because of my controlling behavior, that she's always talking to some other guy or screwing around on me or you know always something negative. I figured she was up to something with my insecurity issues. I went to grab her phone, she had a razor flip phone, and she held on the top half, and I grabbed on the bottom, and it snapped, and cut the palm of her hand. And we happened to be staying at Black Bear hotel at the time and security was called, and she needed stitches, and I got thrown in jail. And from that moment, that was the turning point in my life. That was last summer, 2007, and I put off coming to the domestic abuse program. I was supposed to go to it in 2007, and I did everything to avoid it. I knew I was on probation as soon as I was out. You know, got it done or started before I was done with that, and wouldn't have no worries, but the more I avoided it the bigger hole I dug for myself.

Class or jail?

One day the judge said, "you get to Duluth, and go to that class or you go to jail." And I didn't want to be here, I didn't want to partake in this group, I didn't want to listen to

anything they had to say because who knows me better than myself? You know. But after I sat and listened to a lot of guys in the group, and denied ever having a domestic issue, or ever putting their hands on their significant other, or whatever, and it just seemed like a lot of bull. It was like I was talking to myself in the mirror. Because I was the same person that I was now judging that would say the same thing. You know, I mean, I never hit her, it was always her fault, I'm never wrong about anything you know. I thank my wife to this day, well recently I started thanking her for actually pressing charges. It has changed my life.

A man's world?

You have to be the one who wants to change. We still have a lot of guys, I don't want to talk about our group, but that don't even comprehend the reason why they're here. A lot of them want to still argue, that, "oh well this is a man's world. You know women are supposed to live to this order, and that order, they cook, they clean, they do the dishes and all that, boy if we all thought like that we'd all be screwed cause it doesn't work that way. I took her for granted for too many years and I can't take none of it back, but all I can do is continue to come to this class and, and partake in it and take it all in and absorb it. Not sit there and let it come in this ear and go out the other, and not give a shit about it, you know because otherwise I wouldn't change at all.

The laughter goes away

At first when I started here it was hard because I wanted to be so defiant, I wanted to say well, "the hell with you guys you don't know anything," but I'm able to go home now after 14 weeks of being in this program to have a peace of mind at home with the family. I mean because a lot of time it'd be, they knew when I get home from work or whatever, you know rough housing is over or laughter in the house just goes away. I, I, I put that into them, I put that, not a fear, but "oh shit dad's home," you know? That type of thing into them. And you know I talk to my kids about that, our youngest, she'll give me shit when I raise my voice, "well you better go back to your class cause you obviously 'aint learn nothing." You know what I mean? Kids will say the craziest shit. But, you know, it's a slap of reality, because it's true. I haven't mastered it yet, I have a little slips here and there and I'll raise my tone or whatever, but I catch myself, but before I'd just blow up over the stupidest little things, cause the dumbest little arguments, even my kids. You know, if my dog could talk back I'd probably cause an argument with him. You know, but I can go home now and see the difference, feel the difference.