

to see a counselor, and she did, twice a week for a month. The counseling helped her fight the fear of letting go and convinced her that it wasn't her fault. Tracy learned that Bob's violence was just a pattern that she happened to get caught in. She knows now that people do get angry and it isn't her fault.

Hartford affirms that fighting and arguing aren't abuse. "Fighting is normal, healthy conflict resolution," she says. Power and control — critical components of abusive relationships — aren't factors in fighting.

Tracy says that Bob's dad was abusive, too. He beat Bob's mom. While Tracy knows the abuse was mostly verbal, she's aware of times Bob's dad threw his mom against the wall and hit her.

"I can see that was how he learned to deal with stress," Tracy says.

Some victims, unlike Tracy, grow up in violent homes

"I just didn't know how to get out of the situation," Julie says.

She said no. He said yes. She bled for three days and didn't have sex again until nearly two years later.

"He really, honest to God, didn't think anything was wrong. Afterward, I just laid there and cried. It hurt and I was miserable. I felt cheap. I wasn't pure and innocent anymore and it wasn't my choice not to be.

"I didn't know what the meaning of rape was." It took Julie awhile to feel comfortable with men again.

"It still makes me feel really weak."

It wasn't until a few months ago that she decided to talk with a counselor about it. One night she was with a male friend who wondered why she was so nervous when he tried to touch her.

"I broke down and told him," Julie says. He and Julie's best friend in high school were the only two people she'd told about her rape. They decided that she ought to "go see

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and watched her parents abuse each other or their brothers and sisters, come to think of violence as normal, Meredith says.

There's a strong correlation between people who were abused as children and those who become abusive in adult relationships, he says. That's how they learned to deal with anger and frustration. He says that 29 percent of abused women think the violence results from a man's love. For some people, pain can be associated with love, he says. A recent study of teen-age boys revealed that 33 percent thought it was all right for a man to hit his wife, "when she needs it."

Metzger says that victims often think, "He wouldn't hit me if he didn't love me."

Julie, a junior, was raped when she was a sophomore in high school. It was at that age when her friends talked about what sex was like. She, too, was curious, and yet she didn't think she wanted to go to bed with a boy.

She was raped by her then-boyfriend when she was 15. He had the advantage, she says. She had sneaked him into the house after her parents were asleep. They ended up in bed. Second thoughts danced in her head.

somebody" to get her feelings sorted out.

She admits that now that she has talked about it, she can understand the rape better.

Eskridge says that men and women sometimes have different perceptions of consent. Men might think that a woman who says "no" really means "yes."

Tracy — who graduates next month with a teaching degree — tries to be optimistic about her experience. It helped her realize what she really wants in a relationship.

"It made me a stronger person emotionally," Tracy says. "It made me stop and look at myself. I tried to make myself not feel like a failure."

She says she still gets scared when her current boyfriend gets angry. She's concerned about the things she has to do to make him happy.

"I know the person I want to be with isn't going to have a violent temper. It's something I look for," Tracy says she wants a relationship full of warmth and laughter.

"I try not to let myself think about it. I need to let relationships happen naturally."

The experience helped Tracy grow. "Through it I learned I can live with myself."
