

Breaking Free from her Chains

With her three year old daughter, twenty-four year old Lucia lived in one of the most violent neighborhoods of the Santa Cruz hills. Not only was her neighborhood extremely violent, the home she shared with her husband Osmar was a full of suffering. She was physically and emotionally abused by Osmar, who worked as a security guard in the city hall.

One day, Lucia was at home with her parents. All of a sudden, she heard angry, offensive words in the house, as a drunk Osmar burst into her room. He headed straight to her and began hitting her and kicking her so hard in the stomach that she was not able to move.

When her family heard the commotion, they were very worried and ran in to protect Lucia. However, they were shocked to see Lucia lying on the ground, unable to move. They quickly went to pick her up off the floor, ignoring Osmar's threats and insults. They called an ambulance and then reported the case to the police, seeking protection for Lucia and themselves.

The area police handed the case over to Paz y Esperanza, and, as of March 2013, Paz y Esperanza has been working with Lucia and her family. Right away, Lucia and Osmar began individual therapy sessions to look at and find solutions to their emotional problems. In the first session, Lucia could not talk for her unceasing tears. Similarly, Osmar was quiet with worry, afraid to lose his family to his drunkenness.

They also did group therapies, which emphasized the recognition of the cycle of violence, in which they had been living. They identified the different types of mistreatment suffered. Later, they worked to come up with solutions and good coping mechanisms to avoid violent conflicts.

All of the sessions were conducted by the psychology team of Paz y Esperanza, which has seen positive results in working with couples. They have been able to strengthen and equip couples, like Lucia and Osmar, in anger management, conflict resolution, and the prevention of domestic violence.

In an interview, Lucia said, "Paz y Esperanza teaches you to value yourself as a person. The therapy sessions empower you to not give up and to believe that all things are possible."

"Paz y Esperanza taught me things I did not know and thought did not have a solution. Most of all, they taught me how to defend myself and my rights as a person. Thanks to Paz y Esperanza, I now feel able to solve problems and see beyond them to a brighter future."



Lucia Jaqueline and her daughter with one of Paz y Esperanza's psychologists.