

The Gift of Choice

Maya's story

Maya had one phone call to make. Her life depended on it.

Maya's world had become smaller and smaller. After over 20 years in a relationship, she had grown used to putting her own needs aside. Much of what she knew and who she was had become wrapped up in the life she was living. Even when she began to recognize that things needed to change, imagining a different future felt impossible. She was raising children, navigating uncertainty and trying to survive each day.

Then someone listened.

A friend who understood some of what she was experiencing introduced Maya to resources that could help. It was the first time she had been able to share her story without feeling judged. Still, reaching out was not easy.

Calling to ask whether there was space at WIN House was one of the hardest steps she had taken. Today, she remembers just how much that small action meant.

"It's a nice feeling to be able to do something like that. Something so small. But yet for me, it's huge."

At WIN House, Maya found more than a place to stay. She found room to breathe. She remembers the space as peaceful, a room to herself and her children, somewhere she could finally "let your shoulders down." There were people willing to listen, support for her children and time to consider what she wanted her next steps to look like. No one was rushing her to have everything figured out.

For Maya, that was life-changing.

One of the greatest things she began to reclaim was something many of us take for granted: the freedom to make her own decisions. She describes this as regaining "my freedom of

choice." After years of putting her own needs and dreams aside, she could begin deciding what was right for her and her children. Her voice mattered. Her choices mattered.

“It's not just a bed to sleep in. It's so much more. It gives you that opportunity to actually take yourself out of whatever you're in and figure out what happens next.”

With support and access to resources, Maya began taking those next steps. Her children, who had been homeschooled, experienced a gentle introduction to being in a school setting through the children's programming at WIN School. Today, they are attending public school.

And Maya is looking ahead, too.

After spending much of her adult life at home raising her children, she is excited about the possibility of working. Not simply because it is a new opportunity, but because it is one she gets to choose for herself.

As she puts it, “And nobody can tell me no.”

There is something very powerful in those words. Maya has a renewed sense of possibility. Her journey is still unfolding. But today, there is more room for possibility, for her children to learn and grow, and for Maya to discover what she wants her own future to hold.

A gift of safety can become a gift of choice. It can give someone the breathing room, support and confidence to begin imagining a life beyond what they have known.

This holiday season, your gift gives women, children and gender-diverse individuals a breathing room to imagine a life beyond what they have known.

Give a Gift That Matters. Give a Future Beyond Violence.

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Maya is a pseudonym. Names and certain identifying details have been changed or withheld to protect the privacy and safety of the individuals and their families. We are grateful to her for sharing her story with us.