

DC IMPACT

Self Defense

The Writer Behind "Daughter of the Drunk at the Bar," Excerpt from the blog, *Leah's Thoughts*, San Diego, CA

Every so often I read a book that sticks with me for days (and weeks) after I finish. *Daughter of the Drunk at the Bar* was the first book I read in 2012 and it was exactly that type of book. Michelle O'Neil [former student at DCSDKA] writes a gripping, personal, sad, yet hopeful memoir, about growing up as the daughter of an alcoholic and the effects of the disease on the entire family. Michelle took the time to answer a few questions about *Daughter of the Drunk at the Bar*.

1. What made you decide to write such a personal story? Has it been a healing process?

Writing my story was a way to make sense of it. I felt a great deal of shame growing up and it was a way to really look at my childhood and disown the parts that were out of my power. Writing about it definitely gave me more compassion for myself and others. I think writing the story has been part of a much bigger healing process. The healing was well underway before I began writing about it. If it hadn't been it would have been a very different book. Not to say I'm all healed. I think it's a lifelong thing; choice by choice, moment by moment. I hope sharing it helps others who were raised in similar circumstances to let go of some of their shame.

2. How do you find time to write with two children? What does your writing schedule look like?

My freelance and blog writing is very patchwork. A couple of hours here, a couple of hours there. But when I was writing my manuscript I was very disciplined. I woke up each day at 5 a.m. and got in a couple of hours before my family woke up. It took about nine months of that to finish my first draft.

3. Tell us a few of the healing mechanisms you learned to help deal with your childhood.

In my early twenties I wound up living in the DC area for a few years where I attended a wonderfully empowering martial arts school [DC Self Defense Karate Association]. I worked out my anger four or five days a week through sweat therapy! I became an assistant teacher of a full contact self-defense class [DC IMPACT Self Defense] and was immersed in a very therapeutic community where I could stand up to my demons in a big way (kicking them and knocking them out) on the mat. My father suffered horrible abuse as a child and no one protected him. When my son was born, I could not deny my father had once been just as innocent. Something lifted in me and I could no longer hate him. The more I found out about his life as a kid the more I was able to see his behavior wasn't about me. Although feelings of unworthiness come up from time to time as they do for most people, especially for those raised in homes where addiction rules, I have a lot of tools to deal with them.

[Leah's Thoughts](#)

Children's Self Defense Starts Friday

Part I: Parents' Training: Friday, February 3 2012, 6:30-8:30pm

Part II: Saturday February 4, 2012; 1:30-3:30pm

Length: 4 Hours

Fee: \$59 pre-registration and parent/guardian attendance required

Open to: All children ages 4-12

In this workshop, children along with their parents, will learn how to act aware, calm and confident; how to take charge and get help. In addition, children will learn how to set clear and appropriate boundaries, how to stop unwanted touching and teasing and how to protect themselves from name calling and hurtful words. This workshop will include physical self-defense and will begin with extensive practice in many other skills that can prevent, avoid, leave or de-escalate problems before they become physical. Our goal is to empower young children with the full range of skills they deserve in order to escape from emergency situations as quickly as possible.

[To Register](#)

Self Defense in the News

[Girl-age 9, Escapes Captor](#)

[Woman Fights Off Attacker After Being Punched in the Face](#)

[Teen Fights off Abductor](#)

[Good Samaritan Helps 77-year Old Fight Attacker](#)

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this. I can take the next thing that comes along'." Eleanor Roosevelt

