The Children Next Door

“There are one billion lives at stake. This film could make the difference.”
- Tony Robbins

“Doug Block’s searing short…attains a level of pathos as deep as any feature-length documentary.”
- Academy Award, Sundance

“Critics Score – At first look, the film is a masterpiece – smart, tough, fearless, and miraculously complete. Go see it!”
- Nick Pinkston, LA Times

“A true story about growing up with domestic violence

Film Discussion Guide

Childhood Domestic Violence Association
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**About the Issue**
- What is CDV?  
- How is CDV Different from Domestic Violence and Child Abuse?  
- How Many People Are Affected?  
- What is the Impact?  
- Why Are so few People Aware of This Issue?  
- How Do WE Help People Overcome The Negative Impact?  

**The Film**
- Synopsis  
- Creating the Film  
- Film Festivals & Accolades  

**Before the Screening**
- Preparation  

**Post-Screening Discussion Questions**
- Film-Focused Questions  
- Action-Focused Questions  

**Post-Screening Action Steps – Join the Movement**
- Learn  
- Start a Conversation  
- Join the Active Discussion  
- Take the Evidence-Based CHANGE A LIFE Online Program  
- Donate  
- Volunteer  
- Host Your Own Film Screening  
- Organize a Social Action Committee  
- Start a Chapter  

**The CHANGE A LIFE Program**
- The Positive Impact of a Caring Adult – “THE ONE”  
- Overview of CHANGE A LIFE  

**Post-Screening Evaluation Form**
Did you grow up in a home living with domestic violence?

**WHAT IS CDV?**
Childhood Domestic Violence or CDV is when you grow up living with domestic violence – which includes yelling, threatening, hurtful words, putting each other down, etc.

**HOW IS CDV DIFFERENT FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE?**
Domestic violence is when one adult at home tries to control the actions of another adult by using hurtful words, yelling, threatening, putting the other adult down, or hurting them physically. This is what happens between the ADULTS. Child abuse is any act of verbal, sexual, or physical harm to a child by a parent or caretaker. Childhood Domestic Violence is different from domestic violence, because it concerns the CHILD in that home and THEIR experience with the violence, not the experience of the adults. It is also different from child abuse, because the violence happening in the home might not be directed towards the child – they may just be seeing it, hearing it, “witnessing” it around them. But it will still have an impact on them that is just as serious as if they are the direct target of the abuse.

**HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED?**
According to one of the best known children’s organizations in the world – UNICEF – CDV is “one of the most pervasive human rights challenges of our time.” Roughly 1 billion people are impacted by it worldwide. In the U.S. alone, an estimated 40+ million adults grew up with it as children and 15+ million children are impacted by it.

**WHAT IS THE IMPACT?**
Growing up with domestic violence negatively wires a developing brain and the formation of the cognitive belief system. It encodes a series of negative beliefs – LIES – that a child grows up to believe about themselves. They may believe they’re GUILTY, RESENTFUL, SAD, ALONE, ANGRY, HOPELESS, WORTHLESS, FEARFUL, SELF-CONSCIOUS, and UNLOVED. If unchallenged early on, these LIES can last well into adulthood, often causing those impacted to struggle in one or all four key areas of their life: physical health, mental health, behavior, and relationships. This may prevent them from reaching their full potential or living the life meant for them. Those who grow up with CDV are also 6x more likely to commit suicide, 50% more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, and 74% more likely to commit a violent crime. They are also at a high risk for repeat the domestic violence as adults, because the SINGLE BEST PREDICTOR of becoming either a perpetrator or victim of domestic violence later in life is whether or not one grows up living with it.

**WHY ARE SO FEW PEOPLE AWARE OF THIS ISSUE?**
Despite its scope and impact, there is still very little awareness of CDV. One of the reasons is that many who grow up living with domestic violence struggle with what to call it. It’s not child abuse, because the violence is not directed towards the child. It isn’t domestic violence, because that’s happening between the adults. Researchers use the phrase “Child Witness to Intimate Partner Violence” or CWIPV – which has very low awareness. And the word “witness” – people who experienced CDV take issue with it, because it doesn’t adequately capture the impact.

**HOW DO WE HELP PEOPLE OVERCOME THE NEGATIVE IMPACT?**
According to research, change is driven by awareness, understanding, and sharing. Often, when a caring adult – THE ONE – steps in to help another discover the TRUTHS they’re unable to see for themselves. The brain can begin to unlearn the LIES and learn anew. To learn more about becoming THE ONE for a child in need, take a look at our UNICEF endorsed CHANGE A LIFE program at www.cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-change-a-life-program.
THE FILM

SYNOPSIS

**THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR**, directed by Doug Block, executive-produced by CDV’s Founder and CEO Brian F. Martin, and produced by Lynda A. Hansen, is the first documentary to focus exclusively on Childhood Domestic Violence. It recounts a young family’s journey to uncover the truth that lies beneath a recurring cycle of violence and the solutions to end it. In so doing, they discover the path to reaching their full potential.

For more, see [https://cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-children-next-door](https://cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-children-next-door) or [www.TheChildrenNextDoor.com](http://www.TheChildrenNextDoor.com)

CREATING THE FILM

In January 2012, the Waldroup Family appeared on the *Dr. Phil* show to share their story of domestic violence that culminated with a horrific incident. During the show, the family met and forged a relationship with Brian F. Martin, the Founder of the Childhood Domestic Violence Association, who himself grew up living with domestic violence. The connection between Brian and the Waldroups was instantaneous, and Brian was so moved by their story that he invited them to share it in a documentary film. Taking the first step and sharing their experience gave the Waldroups an opportunity to help others while also benefiting themselves, as opening up helped transform the meaning of their own experience.

The filming began with the family’s visit to New York City in March 2012 and continued with two subsequent visits by the filmmakers to the Waldroup hometown. There, the family opened up their home and lives to the camera, speaking honestly about the violence in their household and their journey to heal. Throughout the filming, Brian continued to actively mentor and support the children, sharing with them some core TRUTHS to replace the LIES they had learned growing up in that home. This exemplifies one of the Association’s key programs – the CHANGE A LIFE program – built around the key premise that at least ONE caring, supportive adult (THE ONE) stepping into the life of an impacted child with some simple support and messages of hope can deliver the TRUTHS they are unable to see for themselves and help change their life.

All three children, along with their mother, were also featured in the Emmy-Nominated *Nick News* segment **FAMILY SECRETS: WHEN VIOLENCE HITS HOME**, created collaboratively by the Association and Nickelodeon. Chelsea Waldroup, the eldest child featured in the documentary, also shared her story in our Bestseller, **INVINCIBLE: The 10 Lies You Learn Growing Up with Domestic Violence, and the Truths to Set You Free**, published by Penguin Random House in 2014 alongside 21 other stories, leading research, and simple steps that anyone who grows up living with domestic violence can apply to reclaim their life and future.

FILM FESTIVALS & ACCOLADES

Following its release, **THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR** was screened at 26 leading film festivals nationwide and overseas (listed below) – including the Hamptons, DOC NYC, Hollywood, and Seattle True Independent film festivals. It has garnered praise by multiple critics and received 4 awards, including the Special Jury Prize at DOC NYC.

- **World Premiere**, Hamptons International Film Festival
- **Winner**, DOC NYC
- **Winner**, Seattle True Independent Film Festival
- **Winner**, St. Louis International Film Festival
- Hollywood Film Festival
- Athens International Film and Video Festival
- Indianapolis Film Festival
- Starz Denver Film Festival
- Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival
- Louisiana International Film Festival
- Nashville Film Festival
- **Winner**, Paterson Falls Film Festival
- Chicago International Social Change Film Festival
- Bahamas International Film Festival
- Knoxville Film Festival
- Breckenridge Festival of Film
- Little Rock Film Festival
- Columbia Gorge International Film Festival
- **Winner**, Council on Social Work Education Film Festival
- **Winner**, Golden Door International Film Festival
- Thessaloniki Documentary Festival
- Camerimage International Film Festival
- Rainier Independent Film Festival
- Peace on Earth Film Festival
- **Winner**, Film Festival for Women’s Rights Korea
- Film Festival for Women’s Rights Korea
- **Winner**, Council on Social Work Education Film Festival
- **Winner**, Golden Door International Film Festival
- **Winner**, Thessaloniki Documentary Festival
- Camerimage International Film Festival
- Rainier Independent Film Festival
- Peace on Earth Film Festival
- **Winner**, Cinetarium Film Festival
BEFORE THE SCREENING

PREPARATION

As you prepare to screen the film, you may wish to alert your audience to be on the lookout for the following:

1st Theme: **A Unique Perspective on DV** – Domestic violence is addressed from a unique perspective – that of a person in childhood. This is Childhood Domestic Violence.

2nd Theme: **Never a Child’s Fault** – Chelsea believed it was her fault, but she came to realize it was not.

3rd Theme: **Repeating What Was Learned** – Penny and Brad experienced CDV as children, then repeated as adults what they learned in childhood, because no one stepped in to help them to unlearn.

4th Theme: **Sharing Is Key** – Sharing, between siblings and parent, or with another, opens up pathways to unlearning what was learned growing up with CDV and discovering the TRUTH.

5th Theme: **Discovering the TRUTH** – Consequently, Chelsea’s beliefs about herself and her future shift, as does her perception of her parents

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FILM-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

- What is the film really about?
- How is it different from what you expected or imagined?
- How has the film changed your knowledge and understanding of or perspective on domestic violence?
- Why do you think it is important that people know about Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV)?
- Which statistics or facts about CDV captured in the film surprised you most?
- What specific themes and key messages did the film successfully portray or get across?
- What specific scenes or moments in the film really struck you or stood out? Why?
- Which character in the film do you most strongly identify with and why? What do you believe you and this person share in common?
- What do you think is unique about this family’s experience with domestic violence? What do you think is not unique about this family’s experience, but is rather common among most who experience CDV?
- What do you think are some feelings the children felt when their mother was nearly murdered?
- How was each of the Waldroup children impacted differently by their experience with CDV?
- How did Chelsea handle the violence in her family? What did she do well when the violence would erupt?
- Why do you think Chelsea is so torn with respect to her feelings for her father? Do you think this is common amongst children of domestic violence?
- How do the graphic depictions of the brutal incident add to or take away from your understanding of the issue?
- If the impact of their CDV experience is left unaddressed, what do you think could happen with the Waldroup children later in life, as relates to their health, emotions, behaviors and relationships?
- At the conclusion of the film, do you feel despair or hope for the Waldroup children and their future? Why?
• Have the filmmakers done a good job of presenting the subject matter in a transparent, unbiased, insightful, and compelling way? What are some ways they have achieved this? Or what could they have done better?

• When the filmmakers present controversial issues, do they do a good job of giving all sides of the issue proper consideration?

• How has the film changed your interest in the issue of CDV?

• Did viewing the film lead to a new level of awareness / understanding of an aspect of or a past experience in your own life...or the life of someone else you care about?

• Have any of your beliefs, values, or perspectives on your life, relationships, family, choices, or our own potential shifted as a result? How?

• What other person or people in your life would you like to share this film with?

ACTION-FOCUSED QUESTIONS

• What needs to happen for Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) to be recognized and understood as the huge and very critical issue it is?

• What part might we (perhaps unwittingly) be playing individually and as a community in reinforcing the cycle of violence from one generation to the next?

• What steps can we individually and collectively take to contribute to fostering positive change on this issue?

• What are some actions/efforts each of us can take/pursue individually to help make a difference?

• If you were to do one thing today to help make a difference, what would you do and why?

• Are you interested in getting further involved, in a small or large way, to contribute to the solution? If yes, read Appendix 2 below and/or visit cdv.org to find out how.
POST-SCREENING ACTIONS STEPS – JOIN THE MOVEMENT

After the film has been screened, audience members are often left with the burning questions, “What next?” and “What can I do to make a difference?”

On our website (cdv.org) at www.cdv.org/get-involved, you can find a variety of ways to get involved and help make a difference. The best ways are often the simplest and some take only a couple of minutes of your time.

LEARN
Because this problem remains largely silent, with limited awareness and understanding, becoming educated and educating others to fully understand it and talk about it is crucial. Visit www.cdv.org/what-is-cdv to learn all about the issue, its scope and its impact.

START A CONVERSATION
One of the most effective ways to combat CDV is to talk about it. This global issue remains largely unspoken about, despite the staggering statistics. Without awareness, which is < 15%, there can be no change. Simply starting a conversation about CDV and its impact with others – family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, or acquaintances – and directing them to our homepage where they can learn more, can help dispel the myths and misconceptions, while building greater awareness and a deeper understanding of the scale and impact of CDV.

JOIN THE ACTIVE DISCUSSION
Take advantage of the online platforms that spotlight CDV and spread the word. You can:

- Like the Childhood Domestic Violence Association FB page, share posts, and take part in the discussion – www.facebook.com/CDV
- Follow the Association on Twitter, comment, and retweet – www.twitter.com/CDVorg
- Share the film trailer with others to help build awareness – http://cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-children-next-door
- Share your story for posting to our site to help empower and heal others – email us at info@cdv.org

TAKE THE EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE A LIFE ONLINE PROGRAM
40 minutes of your time can help change a life. By taking our CHANGE A LIFE online program, you can learn how a few simple actions and key messages can help change the life of a child impacted by CDV. Refer to the CHANGE A LIFE tear-sheet on page 10 or visit www.cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-change-a-life-program for more.

DONATE
Make a donation to help us deploy the award-winning tools we’ve created as widely as possible to help those impacted by CDV across the nation and around the world. Your donation can also help us build and customize more programs and tools to fit the needs of those impacted, as well as raise the level of awareness and further our advocacy to inform sound legislative and policy choices. A portion of your donation is tax-deductible and 100% will go towards the creation and/or deployment of programs and services. Visit www.cdv.org/get-involved/donate.

VOLUNTEER
You could volunteer with the Childhood Domestic Violence Association to help expand our work and reach. There are many ways, big or small, to volunteer. For more information, please email us at info@cdv.org.
HOST YOUR OWN FILM SCREENING
You could host your own screening, at your home, civic club, organization, education facility, or government institution…or in your community at large. To find out how, contact us at film@cdv.org

ORGANIZE A SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE
If you are eager to put the spotlight on CDV in your community and keep the dialogue going, you could start or join a CDV membership group or Social Action Committee and invite others who are impacted or local administrators, policymakers, and activists with an interest in this issue to join. Hold monthly meetings with action items clearly outlined – from learning about the issue and its impact to reaching out to local officials with a CDV message, to connecting with press, or planning community events to break the silence and build awareness. These are effective ways to elevate CDV as a critical issue in the community’s consciousness and keep it top-of-mind, fostering a deeper understanding of the problem and collective commitment to the solutions.

START A CHAPTER
If you are really moved by this cause and would like to do more on a regular, even more engaged level in your local community, you can start a Childhood Domestic Violence Association chapter. We will support you in this effort and provide the steps, tools and resources you need to help you start the chapter and have a significant impact in your community and region.
THE CHANGE A LIFE PROGRAM
(Print out and share with attendees)

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF A CARING ADULT – “THE ONE”
The turning point in many of the lives of children impacted by CDV is when a trusted adult – THE ONE – steps in and they are finally able to open up to that adult about their situation. When you approach children as a safe and caring adult, offering them the opportunity to talk, they can feel safe, cared for, understood, and encouraged to share about what is happening at home. This provides you with a unique opportunity to share a new perspective that can introduce them to the TRUTHS they may not be able to see for themselves, help them unlearn the LIES of CDV, and shift their understanding and interpretation of their reality. Through some very simple steps, you can help change their life.

OVERVIEW OF CHANGE A LIFE
The groundbreaking CHANGE A LIFE program, developed by the leading researcher in the world and endorsed by the U.S. Fund for UNICEF and Children’s Mercy Hospitals, is the first of its kind. It is designed to train any caring adult to be a protective factor in the life of a child growing up with domestic violence. By taking some simple actions and sharing some key messages, you can guide a child to see the TRUTH they may otherwise be unable to see for themselves and help change their life.

CHANGE A LIFE is a simple, free, interactive, cutting-edge, self-administered 40-minute online program that prepares, empowers, and guides any caring adult – THE ONE – to step into the life of a child experiencing domestic violence with simple support and messages of hope that can help change their life. The program was built using the best and most promising practices in working with those impacted, with feedback from leading national organizations committed to the well-being of children, plus contributions from multiple experts in the field. There is no other program like it in the world today.

This evidence-based program was recently tested in a 2-year randomized university study and findings of its efficacy were published in the Journal of Family Violence.

In addition, the award-winning documentary, THE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR, sponsored and produced by the Childhood Domestic Violence Association, is an organic case study of the CHANGE A LIFE program in action. It captures how a caring adult steps into the lives of the Waldroup children – as is the leading premise of the program – to help them unlearn what they learned growing up in a home with domestic violence and discover the TRUTH.

Find out more and take the program at www.cdv.org/tools-and-resources/the-change-a-life-program.
POST-SCREENING EVALUATION FORM
(Print out and share with attendees)

1. For what reason did you watch the film?
   a. Personal desire
   b. For a class
   c. Community Screening
   d. Other _______________________

2. How would you rate this film overall in relevance, artistic merit, representation of the issue, and overall impact (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Would you recommend this film to others? Why?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Not sure

4. Did you grow up living with domestic violence?
   a. No
   b. Yes
   c. Still not sure

5. Prior to this film, how well did you understand the issue of CDV?
   a. I was completely uninformed
   b. I was somewhat informed
   c. I understood it well

6. If you did grow up living with domestic violence, were you aware you experienced *Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV)* before this film screening and discussion?
   a. No
   b. Somewhat – I realized I experienced something but didn’t know what or what to call it
   c. Yes, I knew exactly what I experienced

7. Did the film increase your awareness and understanding of CDV?
   a. Yes, a lot
   b. Yes, somewhat
   c. Not sure
   d. Not really
   e. Not at all
8. Did the film change your personal perspective or beliefs about domestic violence and specifically its impact on children? How?

9. What characters or moments in this film did you most identify with?

10. What specific themes did the film successfully portray?

11. What are the key messages and overall take-aways from this film?

12. What questions do you have that were not answered in the film?

13. Has the film inspired or motivated you to become more involved in this cause to help make a difference?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Undecided

14. Would you recommend this film to others? Explain.
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Undecided