A memory has stuck with me from my teen years, of lying on my bedroom floor one night. Staring up at the ceiling, I found myself making a wish as if I was still a little girl. I wished that my abuser would beat me. If only there were some mark left on my body—a bruise, a broken bone—then, I thought, my depression and sense of betrayal could be explained. I felt like I couldn’t justify, to myself or others, why my abuser’s emotional cruelty impacted me so deeply despite leaving no physical evidence.

But art can sometimes express the unspeakable. As a photographer, I realized that I could make visible the invisible fractures of emotional abuse visible. Through my photography, I have experienced physical violence at the hands of loved ones, but the wounds of emotional abuse have marked my life more profoundly. The emotional scars that make it hard to love, hard to trust others. And yet, I like many survivors, have also struggled to recognize that the trauma I sustained from emotional abuse was just as important as the physical trauma I suffered from physical violence. It’s hard for many people, including me, who live with trauma, to verbalize how they have felt in and have been shaped by their relationships. And when the subject is too sensitive, too deeply personal, specific questions may not be able to answer anymore.

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