

A photograph of a man in a striped shirt sitting on a wooden chair, holding a baby. They are positioned in front of a large, multi-paned window that looks out onto a wooded area with bare trees. The floor is tiled, and several colorful children's toys, including a green and blue activity center and a red toy car, are scattered on the floor. The text 'INTERVAL home HOUSE' is overlaid on the right side of the image, with 'home' underlined and 'HOUSE' in a lighter green color.

INTERVAL home HOUSE

2010 Gratitude Report



Walk with me through Interval House. My home.
Our home.

You'll find my fingerprints on the doors, my toothbrush by the sink, my sweater on the back of a dining room chair, my coffee cup in the sink. I am living here. I am parenting here. I am healing here.

And you are with me.

Put your fingerprint over my fingerprint and turn these pages with me. I'll walk you through my home, and show you that you've helped create the little moments that make Interval House a home. You'll also hear from other families living here - I'll share little things I see and hear every day in our home.





OUR PLAYROOM

This is my favourite space. Our playroom is big, bright and colourful. During the day, most kids are at school and daycare, so I cherish quiet moments with my girl watching the birds in the trees outside our window. It's like our own personal treehouse.

You can feel the energy in the house lift when the older kids get home - loud voices, coats and boots, backpacks and snacks. Today, I heard one boy say, "Simon, if you got a bad grade on your report card, show your mom when she's on the phone."

As they play with the cars, toy kitchen or costumes, I imagine my daughter putting on the princess costume in a few years in our own home. And then it hits me. If we were still with my husband, I would not be daydreaming about princesses. I would be focused on staying out of his way so I wouldn't get hurt.

We tailor our programs for kids by age. Families with kids under 5 take part in programs focused on sharing and co-operation - with lots of singing, reading and connecting through creative play. The older kids talk about bullying, defining abuse and open talk about living in a shelter. We have group and family activities like baking and gardening. And we have weekend outings in the city. You can read more about our programs at www.intervalhouse.ca.



OUR KITCHEN

The heart of our home. We take turns cooking, and everyone helps with cleaning. And we all eat together. It's busy. And noisy. And messy. And wonderful.

The other day the mom beside me was coaxing her 6-year-old boy to eat his beans. She tried "you'll grow up big and strong". Shrug. "If you eat all your beans you can have dessert". He slowly picked up his fork. She got him with "it's a cupcaaaaaake".

Outside of meal time, our kitchen is a place where moms sit with their kids over a snack and talk about their day.

I can see moms cherishing these everyday, regular-family moments — moments they likely never had in their own homes.

And every single time I touch the side of the kettle it is warm. There's always someone sitting and sipping tea in our home.

With the help of a student in Ryerson University's Nutrition and Food Program, we created a 5-week culturally diverse and healthy meal plan. We offer workshops on healthy eating on a budget and are hoping to offer cooking workshops. Each and every day we hear talking and laughter coming from the kitchen. You can read more about our programs at www.intervalhouse.ca.



OUR BEDROOM

I love, love, love our bedroom. Lily and I have the sunniest window, and the afternoon sun keeps her cheeks warm when she naps. When I'm nursing her in bed and she falls asleep in my arms I don't put her in her crib right away. I just hold her. I wish those moments could last forever.

I shudder when I think of my old bedroom. I try not to picture the colour of the walls or the pattern on the bedspread. I'm sure it wasn't always cold, but I feel cold when I think of it. Here, I feel warm. I feel happy. And I feel at home.

I whisper to Lily that when we have our own home, she will have the best bedroom on our block. It will be her space, where she can read, write in her journal or listen to music I'll probably hate. I also whisper to her that she will always be welcome in my bed for a cuddle.

There are 14 bedrooms at Interval House – some family suites and some single rooms, and a dedicated room for families with special needs. Every bedroom has a unique design and decor, painted and furnished with love and care by our caring supporters. Each family does their own laundry and keeps their bedroom tidy. You can read more about our programs at www.intervalhouse.ca.



OUR HEALING

We talk.

Sometimes I look at the walls and think about all the stories that have been told here. All the women who are finally in a safe, comfortable place and who can talk about surviving abuse. For the first few weeks, I only talked about Lily. I kept saying, over and over, "I left for her". It was easier than confronting what happened to me. But eventually, I had to.

Our counsellors are part of our home. They are just here with us, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To listen. You never know when you'll be ready to talk, so they are ready to listen.



All women at Interval House participate in our Women's Group, exploring issues like independence, self-esteem, healthy relationships and boundaries. We offer one-on-one and group counselling, and encourage women to learn from and support each other. In addition, we offer Expressive Art Groups for both women and children to express themselves in a safe and creative way. You can read more about our programs at www.intervalhouse.ca.



OUR FUTURE

I ARRIVED on the doorstep because I knew my husband was going to kill me, or Lily, or both of us. All I needed was a safe bed. But there is so much more within these walls. I receive job training, attend workshops on living on a budget, and when I'm ready, I'll get help finding my first home.

There's a Career Boutique, where we get suits for job interviews and find staples that can help us start a work wardrobe. Professional women donate clothes to us - isn't that amazing??

And in our classroom we learn about writing cover letters

and resumes, how to search for a job and prepare for interviews. We even have to do practice interviews (I'm really nervous about that). But in my heart I know that to be on my own, and take care of Lily, I need it.

Our BESS (Building Economic Self-Sufficiency) program provides women with the tools to rebuild, reinvent and transform their lives. We work with each woman one-on-one, from a skills inventory to designing and executing a career plan. We help women find both a good job and a safe home. Graduates from BESS have a 75% employment rate and a 90% job retention rate. You can read more about our programs at www.intervalhouse.ca.