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YWCA helps women heal through art and performance

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YWCA Toronto is giving women who have experienced abuse a chance to express themselves through art and performance.

A group of women who have managed to flee violence and other forms of abuse will wear garments of their own design and take the stage as part of their healing process at the 918 Bathurst Culture, Arts, Media and Education Centre.

The performances are part of the Breakthrough Program, which helps women work through the psychological impacts of being in abusive situations. The program is offered to women throughout the GTA at two locations that are kept private to ensure the safety of those escaping violence.

Dubbed "Being at home in the body: Creating wearable art to move in the world," the initiative uses expressive arts as a means of helping women deal with the abuse they have endured.

"The participants have designed a piece (of clothing) that they'll wear that represents an element of their healing and they've designed a performance," said YWCA Toronto spokesperson Jennie McKnight.

The YWCA Breakthrough Program offers women a chance to come together and share their stories as part of the healing process.

For many, performing and interacting with a live audience will be a part of that healing process.

"It's part of extending the process of healing into the community," McKnight said. "Violence harms not only an individual; it harms the family and the entire community."

The performance will take place at the 918 Bathurst Centre at 918 Bathurst St., from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., on Tuesday, July 26. Admission is free, though the subject matter may be unsuitable for children under 12 years of age.

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