



## Survivor Story – Domestic Abuse

After being with my ex for 13 years, gradually over the 13 years he became abusive mentally and physically. The main issue started when we moved into our first property together and I ended up with a black eye from an argument. I knew this wasn't how life was supposed to be, but he was very sorry and he even cried, so it made me feel like it was a one off and wouldn't happen again. I thought I could change him and make him a better person as he had an awful upbringing.

As time went on, things got worse, I ended up lying to my friends and family to protect him and prevent any awkward conversations. He often threatened my family, he told me what I should / shouldn't wear, who I could / couldn't see. When I saw my family and friends, we would end up with holes in the walls / doors where he had punched it from being angry over what I had cooked us for dinner or because I had done something that annoyed him. He would often punch me, lock me in the house, chuck things at me out of anger like bottles, a microwave, hit me with a lamp consistently, smash up my things... just to mention a few! I often found myself in the toilet in our home crying my eyes out, thinking I could never get away from this environment, thinking what could I do to make this stop. I often called EAP assistance or domestic abuse companies to get advice but never had the courage to leave. I felt so damaged and that he would kill me if I left, as he would often threaten me. I would walk on eggshells and do anything that would please him and try and prevent him from kicking off.

After being together for 9 years I fell pregnant in 2011 and thought things would change by having a baby. Whilst I was pregnant, I found out he was seeing someone else while we were together, I thought it was a great chance for me to get out of the relationship, but he assured me it was over and wanted to make things work with me. I believed him but the abuse continued!

One particular morning I was getting my 18-month-old daughter ready for the childminders, while I then went off to work - before I managed to leave the house, he went completely mad for no reason. He grabbed me by the throat in front of our daughter, shouting, screaming at me. Obviously our daughter was scared and crying, he told me I wasn't going to work and I was to stay at home and he said he was going to torture me, he destroyed my personal phone by smashing it so I couldn't make any calls. I was terrified as I was protecting myself and our daughter. I managed to get my work phone while he was destroying my personal phone and called the police. I didn't have any more strength to defend myself and couldn't cope anymore – this had to stop for the sake of my daughter.

Luckily the police came and rescued us, I was so relieved. The police were very good, sent him off to work and took a statement from me. I was still scared as to what he would do to me as he was fuming I had called the police but I had no other option. We ended up going to court, he was given a restraining order, community service and a fine. I knew I had support but also knew this was something only I could get out of, but couldn't find the right time to do it. During the period of waiting for court, it was very difficult as he was still threatening me and constantly abusive, he stayed with a member of his family and we ended up selling our family home. We saw him via family for a period of 6 months after and then he stopped being in contact and hasn't seen my daughter now for over 6 years.

Looking back, I can see all the signs of being controlled by him, going through hell and knowing that I didn't want my daughter to witness anymore of his behavior and think it was normal! I knew the relationship wasn't "normal" but learnt to live with it, that's why I carried on.

My only regret – not getting out earlier!

My advice to anyone in a similar situation would be to speak out to friends/family and gain advice from professionals who can give guidance. I didn't want to burden anyone or bring trouble to family/friends, in case he came looking for me, so have somewhere to go as a safe place, I even thought about checking into a hotel at one point! I'm always here too if anyone wants to safely talk or just to listen.

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