



## The Legacy of Domestic Abuse

I've gone back and forth on whether to write this post, I've tried writing it before, I've read a number of posts similar to it and I've also considered - many times, to leave it and not put the memories down on paper. After reading today about the positive impact that talking about Domestic Abuse in all its forms, can have, I have decided to go ahead with recounting my experience.

It is the year 2000 and I am single, I have been single for a couple of years, I have had a handful of flings and fun but in the most part I am lonely, very, very lonely. I have struck up a friendship with a guy from work. He works in a department that is supporting a project I am managing. He's charming, in a shy quiet way, he suggests going for a coffee. We do. Then we go for drinks. Then we go to the cinema. Then we go for dinner. Then we sleep together. Then we are a couple. But not a real couple, because he won't call me his girlfriend; he doesn't want "anything serious", he doesn't want to stay at my place, but we can stay at his. He doesn't want to meet my friends, and no, he doesn't want me to meet his. I ignore the tightening in my stomach, because I like the way he's so attentive, I like the company, I like the attention and I really like having something to look forward to. You see, I'm lonely. I'm very, very lonely. I also have less than no self esteem.

Roughly 2 months into our "relationship" I start to receive attention from another man at work. My "boyfriend" suddenly decides he wants to go public, he is happy for everyone to know; in fact I am actively encouraged to tell everyone. A date is made for me to meet his friends. The date is the Saturday coming. But before I can meet his friends I must do the following, get a haircut-it should be straightened, wear a dress, a tight dress, not jeans, the dress should be black and it should be short. My makeup should be subtle and my heels high. All of these suggestions are made as compliments, "you will look even more beautiful with shorter hair". "You can carry off little make up", "heels will accentuate your legs". When it came to meeting his friends, I was introduced and then the following happened. I was ignored. I was not included in a single conversation, no questions were asked of me, and all I got was a large volume of stares at my chest and arse. I was mortified, I tried to make excuses to leave, I was told I was over-reacting, to stop being such a drama-queen, why did I think I would be the centre of attention. It was humiliating. I did leave, I went back to his, too drunk to drive home, too tired to argue.

The next morning he behaved as though nothing had happened. And this became the pattern, I would be put down (but it was always delivered in a tone that sounded like he was sympathetic and just wanted to help). The attacks on my body became more frequent, my weight was criticized, one particular night before friends arrived I came downstairs in the dress he'd suggested I wear, to be told I looked like a whore. When I went upstairs and changed, in tears, he came up and asked me what I was doing, he denied he'd even said it.

He started to point out my flaws on a daily basis and would use ignoring me as a way of showing his displeasure. Amongst the hateful behaviour he would tell me how wonderful I was, how much he loved me. Even though my weight had plummeted to 7 stone he would continue



to suggest I needed to exercise more often. He hated my friends and family, actively discouraged me from seeing them and refused to have them to his house or ever meet them with me. Whilst he refused to live together, he also refused to stay at my flat, so I was constantly living out of a bag.

I tried to leave on more than one occasion, but I would always go back, lying to friends that I was seeing him again, because I knew how much they detested him. The verbal insults got worse, the cruel treatment of questioning my sanity, criticising my looks, my choices, my opinions, became unbearable and one summer morning I left and I didn't go back. He was going away for a fortnight, so I used this time to get all my stuff out of his house and ignored his calls. It was fine until he was back in the UK. That's when the harassment started.

I was texted and called at least 200 times a day. Every day. I had to unplug my landline, change my mobile number, but he'd just get the new numbers off mutual friends who didn't know what was happening. He threatened me, he threatened my family. He called me every name under the sun, he begged for me to go back, he begged for forgiveness, he cried, he sobbed. He said he hoped I got pregnant and lost the baby so I'd know even one fraction of the pain and loss he was feeling. He threatened to tell all my friend about my eating disorder. And that's when I snapped.

From somewhere deep inside I found a way to fight back-I calmly and quietly told him that if he ever called me, or texted, or tried to contact me in any way, I would take every single text and email he had written me and I would give them to the police, to his mother and father, his brother and sister, his manager at work and every single friend I could reach. He didn't call again, not for 6 months. He started calling again when he heard I'd met a new partner. But I reassured him that I would go through with my promise and the calls stopped.

I escaped, I got away, it was unbelievably difficult and it took a very long time and a number of attempts. He never physically abused me, but he destroyed my self esteem, he destroyed my self confidence, he broke my will. It took me years to fully recover, there are still shadows that remain, even now if I spill a drink I panic, it was a particular thing with him to keep everything perfect, he hated mess and I'd get screamed at or ignored if I was ever the cause of a mess.

I hope I never see him again, I gave him 3 years of my life, it's truthfully the only thing in my life that I have real regret for. But I did survive and thankfully have not experienced anything even remotely similar since. We are not a "type" we women who are abused in this way. We are not "easy targets". There is no blame to lay at the door of a woman who has been abused by a partner. None at all. We owe them nothing but support, love and empathy, it is critical to the recovery process and critical to the woman still experiencing the abuse.

We do **NOT** give permission for posts published as [personal experiences](#) to be reproduced, translated or otherwise published elsewhere. We will not contact people who submit their personal experiences on behalf of journalists, bloggers or other third sector organisations. These testimonies remain the intellectual copyright of their authors and must be treated with the



## Everyday Victim Blaming

challenging institutional disbelief around domestic & sexual violence and abuse  
<http://everydayvictimblaming.com>

---

ethical guidelines used by academics for research involving human subjects. Our full guidelines can be read [here](#).