

## Alice #29

I want to share my story, not because of the abuse, but because of where it bought me to, on that final day.

I had been in a marriage of verbal, emotional & financially abuse, with occasional physical abuse and frequent marital rape, for 17 yrs. When I finally left, to the surprise of both myself & my husband, I really had learnt nothing about my own worth. With seven children, I had little time to do more than survive. There was no support network, other than my Pastor. He unfortunately convinced me that it was sinful to be a single woman alone with children. He pressed home the idea that my home was without a 'Head'.

He recommended I accept the advances of a gentleman.

Three years later, I was in an even more abusive marriage, this time with constant physical violence. The stigma of having been divorced once, in a Christian environment, was crippling and I knew I could not leave again. My husband walked out on me on our wedding night. I waited at the motel for three days, before he returned. The writing was on the wall. What I had put down to stress and adapting to a large family, became patently obvious as something worse. It was months before he admitted he had medically-treated bipolar disorder and had stopped taking his meds the day we married. The cyclic episodes became shorter and shorter and the violence to myself and the children escalated.

On the last day of my second husband's presence in my home, he was in a jealous rage. One of my daughters had been raped, so it was not a time for pandering to his attention tantrums.

He beat me, and threw me to the floor. I got up. He beat me again, throwing me down again saying 'that's your problem, if you would just stay down, I wouldn't have to keep hitting you'.

That was the trigger. That was what turned things around. After 10 years, I finally realised that I not only had to get up, I had to stay up. I launched myself at him with such ferocity, that he staggered backwards to the top of a 38 step stairwell. I reached out to him, a very tall and heavy man, but for a split second, I thought, 'if I let you fall, this will all be over', and then I caught him. He must have seen that thought in my eyes, because he turned, left and never came back.

You see, in that moment, only for a moment, I became him. I became the one capable of terrible abuse. I knew it, and so did he. He knew there would be no next time. I knew there could never be a next time, because I could not risk facing that split second decision again. In the end, it was not knowing that I deserved better, that took me out of abusive relationships. It was knowing, that potentially, I could be no better. I saw my inner self, and it was frightening. Yes, I then chose the higher ground, by catching him. But would I again? My utter vulnerability, my human weakness, in that moment, was what in the end gave me the strength to never enter an abusive relationship again.

I am a victor, but not over the abuse from others, I am a victor over my own potential to be just as inhuman. It's the memory of my fragility that protects now, not my strength, which has also come.

I have never allowed another man into a close relationship with me - I do not feel a need to. I am strong. I am worthy. I do not need someone else to fulfil me or protect me. I am my own person. But I never forget my own vulnerability to mortal choices. I will never allow myself to be in that position again. Life is good. I am not lonely even though some consider me alone.

No one can tell a victim when or how to leave. You have to know that for yourself. Just don't wait too long, you may not like the you you get to meet, when you stay on the abuse road too long.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak out, in honesty. We are only Victims when the Abuser keeps us Silent. We become Victors when find the courage to Speak.