

Alice #34

I'm a survivor. I've endured two abusive relationships and have now made the very intelligent decision to be single. I'm reading books by Lundy Bancroft and Sarah L. Brown. Whilst they are confronting, they are giving me insight. I'm willing to accept that I am also responsible for things that happened to me and I'm learning to forgive myself for my choices. I noticed triggers and red flags, but I accepted or feared them and made excuses for them. It doesn't make the abuse right and in no way makes it acceptable. It is never ok. I accept there are things about my personality and thought processes that made me stay. I am working towards change so I don't make the same mistakes again. I cannot change my exes. I can't change the past. I CAN change me and make my future something I'd like it to be. The emotional and physical scars will serve only as reminders to me of what a strong woman I am. I have Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression and I am determined to heal. I have love and support of my friends and family, a fabulous psychologist and the most amazing child.

My ex-husband is a narcissistic serial cheater who believes the world owes him everything. The blame is never his and it's everyone else's fault. During the 9 years, he would degrade me and make comparisons between myself and other female friends, "Why can't you be more like...?" "SHE would be able to get ready on time".

If I had just scrubbed the floors, he would walk through in muddy boots and say "it's not a display home". He would be elaborate and loud in front of people - projecting himself as a generous, fun person. If someone was cheating on their wife or treating their partner badly, he was the most judgmental and would be protective of the victim. I discovered he was having constant affairs. He was never faithful. When I found out about the affairs (literally stumbled across emails), he called me a "slut" and punched holes in doors and fences. He ripped the phone out of the wall to prevent me calling anyone. He said if I left him, he'd take my business and threatened to take my child.

With couples counselling, I remained for another 18 months. Something in me changed and I focused more on myself. I lost 30kgs and my self-esteem grew. He became insecure to the point he pulled the emergency stop cord on the treadmill when I was running so I nearly hit my head on the control board. I found courage to leave him, but for the first two weeks, we shared the house while I packed. He wouldn't leave our family home and demanded at least 50/50 parenting with our daughter. I was scared of him. He was so mad he picked up a timber desk and threw it towards me. He sprayed cement over my car claiming it was accidental. I locked my bedroom door at night and he smashed through. He threatened rape, throwing me face down over the ironing board and another time forced me over the kitchen bench. He didn't succeed as I fought back. I left our house with minimal items and moved in with a friend.

He starved our bird to death. Over the phone he screamed he was going to kill me and he swore he would spend the rest of his life ruining mine. Whenever my child was in my care, he would stand at the door to her school class room and create a barrier between her and I. He became president of the P & C, and befriended mothers at the school making them pity him - lying that I had left him for another man and that he was an innocent victim. I was judged by people I didn't know and the intimidation had me feeling sick every time I had to walk into that school. He'd drive past my rental and I obtained a VRO (violence restraining order) against him which he contested and breached. The magistrate upheld the VRO, but my ex dragged me through family court for three and a half years. I filed for divorce as a single applicant. He still attempts to emotionally abuse me, but our court parenting orders are very strict and communication is minimal.

I then became involved in an on again/ off again relationship for six years with a man who has BPD/ADHD/OCD (Borderline Personality Disorder / Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder / Obsessive compulsive disorder). While I have no love for my child's father, I believe I will always love this ex-boyfriend. Even though he hurt me worst of all, the trauma bond with him is strong. He could flick the switch from perfect to destroyer faster than I could blink. An "I love you" from him turned in to an "I hate you" in a single breath. For the first three years his abuse was emotional, psychological and financial. He used me to obtain a bank loan for a car he purchased

and whenever we separated, he'd refuse to pay the loan and the bank would pursue me to pay the arrears. I paid the rent and bills from my wages and his income was "play" money. For several months he was unemployed and I'd support us. I sold my jewelery and his parent's lent him money, but he spent it on DVD's and God knows what. He'd get jealous when I'd spend quality time with my child. He behaved like a child with tantrums. He wouldn't allow my child into our lounge area without HIS permission. My poor kid would have to stand at the door and request entry. It was awful. I didn't know how to stand up to him. I had to shower if I went anywhere outside. On the rare occasion my child had sleepovers or birthday parties, I would have to make arrangements with my parents to host at their house. He would not allow guests in our home. I couldn't have visitors. If we went out, he'd make me tell people that we had to leave so that they would think it was me and not him wanting to go home.

I was constantly accused of cheating. I was always in trouble. I couldn't have coffee with my best friend of 30+ years without receiving continual phone calls and texts - i.e. 20 in a one hour period. It became too stressful to see people I loved and so I withdrew. The more un-happy I became the more he would attack. "No wonder your ex-husband cheated, look at you! You're always miserable! You're ugly, you're fat, etc".

I linked him to my Facebook account, allowing him open access. I was transparent to him, but it did not stop the accusations. He tried to make me quit my gym where I have friends and am safe. I refused which made him increasingly angry. I was missing myself and my confidence was growing again. He was withdrawing from me, but this is also when the physical abuse started. I broke my wrist at the gym, drove the short distance home and asked him to drive me to hospital, but he refused. He left me in the lounge-room with a blanket and he went to bed. He left for work the next morning, leaving me to drive to local doctors as the hospital was too far. I could not take my child to school and thankfully is an exceptional little helper for me. While my arm was still in a cast, he became mad and threw me across a room. I had to reach out and grab furniture to stop myself falling. He head-butted me twice. A short time later he threw me up against a wall by my neck strangling me, then threw me to the ground with my head hitting the sofa. I packed some things and moved in with my parents. I had paid for the bond in that rental property and most of the furniture. Again, I was the one to leave everything behind.

I was gullible enough to continue dating him for some months whilst living with my parents, hoping that he would "get better". He lied to me saying he was in counselling. His verbal and emotional abuse continued and he sent me photos of other girls he was supposedly seeing. These were games and not real, but it hurt. I shut him out and he became increasingly angry again. He was stalking me and posted naked photos of me on Facebook. I blocked him every which way and obtained a VRO against him. Five months later, he contacted me again pleadingly. He had become involved in a drug induced relationship, but had left her and booked himself into rehab. He was undergoing specialised medical attention and seeing a psychologist, life coach and psychiatrist. His disorders were being diagnosed and he wanted to see me. I was the bleeding heart and agreed. I worked with him towards his healing and attended numerous appointments with him. He was a broken soul and I loved him. We reconciled. I was still living with my parents.

Unfortunately, his physical abuse worsened. I was restrained by my seatbelt and repeatedly punched whilst I was driving at 80km/hour. I was punched, choked and kicked. I have a compression back injury as a result of being pulled off a sofa to the hard floor and kicked. I have scars from being attacked with a pedestal fan which was broken across me and finger nails where he's grabbed at me and forced me down. I had car doors slammed on my legs and he threatened me with a knife while I was a passenger in his car.

Over the last year I started seeing my own psychologist (who is a God send). I started healing within. I purchased a new home and began spending increased time with friends. I established a life outside of him and refused to let him move into my home. This seemed to be the breaking point for him. He attacked me as I woke up early one morning after he'd stayed over, pinning me in bed by sitting on top of me and the covers. I protected my head as he was swinging and he had to use his arms to restrain mine. He dug his knee caps into my eye sockets giving me black eyes, cuts and blood blisters. His determination to get to my face was frightening.

I shut him out of my life and had to change my phone number again. He left notes and letters and gifts at my home. He was sleeping in his car outside my house or at my front door. He was constantly at my house, he'd park in front of my garage. He was following me to the point I became too scared to train at my gym or sleep at my own house. I received hundreds of messages day and night. He smashed my security camera and repeatedly described in explicit detail how he planned to kill me. He used numerous email addresses and Facebook alter ego alias's as I continued to block him. Another VRO which he has breached dozens of times and has been to court for. His next strike puts him in prison.

I'm still reeling from it all. I'm seeing my psychologist regularly and undergoing EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) with her. My child and I are in recovery mode but contentment and happiness grows with every new day. Police, Domestic Violence Advocacy Service and the Victim Support Unit have been exceptional. I couldn't have remained this strong if it wasn't for their support and advice. I definitely recommend a good psychologist and EMDR for recovery.
