

## Alice #39

When did it start? When does anything start? Why did it happen?

The hardest question I can't answer is 'Why did I stay?'. These questions bring me much angst so I avoid them altogether.

Meeting someone when you are not quite 18, young, naïve, and not the way young people are today with information at their fingertips. Getting in too deep , way too fast. Being caught up with new friends, moments. The excitement of it all. Thinking you are in LOVE and this is FOREVER.

Going out one night, and being hit- but it was accidental and I moved on.

Then at our wedding and momentarily thinking I don't want to do this, but everyone was here and happening.

Fast forward, money issues, regular arguing, infidelities (only acknowledged much later) and then the children, family issues, ongoing 'issues'.

I don't remember a lot. My good friends and my children mention things occasionally and I struggle to remember. It pains me. The hurt I have inflicted on my children; their anxieties, emotional struggles caused by our relationship of secrets and pain and deceit...and I don't remember half of it. Blocked.

Some comes back in waves, like the heat creeping up your face of embarrassment.

I remember my rainbow 'black' eye , which my youngest thought was beautiful. My Ex described it to his mates as me being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I stayed inside.

I remember fighting back at times. I remember feeling like dirt afterwards.

I remember the absolute terror I felt and shared with my children by locking us all inside when he had left and threatened to take the children.

I remember the pain of not seeing my son for years, even though he lived within 10 minutes of my house. The pain of his siblings missing him. The anxieties living and alive in my children today.

I didn't leave. He did. But he wouldn't let go. It was worse than when living with him as I had no way of gauging his emotional states. He started in on the children to get through to me. Still does in a roundabout way. He has never fully left.

I don't feel anything much anymore. No fear, no anger, no hate. I do feel sad for my children. They truly suffered and still have all the effects. He now harasses them in their lives but he is their father and they chose the level of contact, but I hear the outcomes.

I don't like to think or talk about it. I just focus on myself, enjoying every moment , the little things in life that give me absolute joy- the flower in the garden, a sunset, my car drive to work, my children and my dog.

But I survived. My children are moving on, we are all getting there. Has taken over 13 years. My journey is not over but we are alive and well. More than others ever will be.

Be strong, you can be. Reach out. Take help. Cry, yell, throw and smash those plates, walk away and start again. Life is everything.

It still hurts...but I am ME. I am free.

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