

Alice #45

My story started at 16 when I met my first husband, we married the following year when I became pregnant. I delivered our son at 18 and I thought life was pretty good - looking back it was a delusion of youth and ignorance.

With the wisdom of hind sight, I now see that what I thought was caring was in fact controlling. He had not liked my friends, so I did not see them anymore. I was at home with a baby so he controlled the finances. He would not allow a phone at home so contact with anyone was very limited. One day while shopping I bumped into a school friend and we had coffee, innocently I told my husband about the meeting, that turned into a huge rampage and I was forbidden to go out alone. I was allowed to go shopping with my mum, that was all. He used to call in home while out working at random times. I thought it was to see me, but I later realised he had been checking on me.

When my son was 6 months old I noticed there was something wrong. I took him to the doctors and he wrote referrals for tests and made some specialist appointments. My husband did not cope well with the news his son was "not normal", refused to accept it, forbade me to take him to doctors anymore (I lied and took him while saying I was shopping with my mum). He resorted to drinking excessively, unfortunately he became more aggressive when drunk and our arguments escalated. Of course he turned it around blaming me: it was my fault for not doing what he wanted, for being a bad wife, spoiling our son....the fights became physical but I made excuses for the bruises to my family and pretended that all was okay.

My mother-in-law told me more than once, "can't you see he is just like his father, don't make the same mistake I did, get out while you still can" but I stayed. I believed him when he was sober and he apologized and said it would not happen again.....but it did. The neighbours came a few times to check on me after he had left after loud arguments....and still I stayed.

The straw that broke the camel's back was one day during an argument. Instead of hitting me he went to punch my son.....I stopped him and he jumped on his bike and left to cool off (which was what he usually did). All I had was \$20, however, I got the neighbours to ring me a cab, packed as much as I could fit in the nappy bag and left. I was fortunate in that I had my parents to go to and they took us in. He did come looking for me but my dad answered his threats with a call to the police and "you better leave."

I stayed with my parents until my son died some 18 months later. We no longer had to see each other. At 21, divorced, alone ... I began building a new life for myself. The road has not been easy and I made some pretty questionable choices along the way.

I am now in my 50's and have sorted and repacked the baggage I carry, as the P!NK song says "change the voices in your head and make them like you instead"....only took me about 30 years. I love my job as a nurse in a busy emergency department. A friend of mine has said that's where I belong, my presence is calming and I have lived what a lot of people are going through which is true, I like to think I offer a safe place and non-judgemental caring for people every day when they need it the most. While I would make different choices if I had it to do over, I am thankful for the lessons learned in my journey, my experiences have made me who I am and I am proud of the strong independent woman I have become.

I am Happy.