

Alice #46

I AM READY FOR MY STORY TO BE TOLD

Recently I was summoned to be a juror. During the selection process, in the murder trial, I raised my hand (concerned about my suitability). I wrote a note and took it to the judge. My note said "domestic violence victim". I was excused.

This was my first public admission of Domestic Violence, albeit a non-verbal one. It is over twenty years since I escaped my abusive situation.

In the seventies and early eighties Domestic Violence was undercover and off the agenda for most people. As a well-educated professional woman with three small children under five years old, I lived and worked in an affluent country area. I struggled constantly with the decision as to whether I should leave my relationship for twenty years. I consistently assessed options, exit pathways, financial barriers and the emotional stability of the children.

I was entangled in a false web of hope. I was under my husband's control. What would people think? Would I be believed? So, paralysed by fear and indecision, I stayed. The twentieth wedding anniversary came and went. No celebration of course - adding to the litany of empathic failures.

Something clicked within me. I had reached critical mass and (false) hope dissolved. The children were in high school and I had a well paid job. Strong 'flight feathers' had grown, along with self-belief and a will to be happy away from constant scrutiny and control.

Fast forward a couple of decades and you'll find a happy woman with a loving partner and positive attitude - constantly in total surprise at how great life can be. I have stopped hating and stopped hurting. My story is not remarkable, but shockingly common, hiding in the insidious, secretive world of abuse within every postcode, profession, gym, sporting club, friendship group and family.

To all those still suffering in an abusive relationship, please say yes to life and no to fear. Nurture and act on your self-belief, courage, resilience and determination. Ask for help. Stay strong. Tell your story.
