

Alice #51

Just after my 24th birthday, I invited a friend and her partner to a BBQ at my place. They brought their housemate with them. Long story short, we ended up together that night. The next day, my friend left, but their housemate didn't leave. He wouldn't go home and I was too timid to tell him to leave. He didn't even go home to get his stuff, he just moved in. As it turned out, I fell pregnant that first night. He saw it as a way in to my life and then the abuse started.

After my second child was born, the abuse got worse. He would beat me and my four year old (from another relationship) regularly. He refused to work, but also refused to get a payment from Centrelink - so we lived off my wages only, which he controlled. Things got worse and worse.

I have heard that with some DV relationships, there was a 'honeymoon period', between beatings. This was not the case with him. The beatings were daily. He isolated me from my family and friends. He controlled every aspect of our lives. My older child was terrified and I was too terrified to leave him. I did my best in standing up for my children, but it just made him worse towards them.

He would choke me every morning when he woke up, for no reason, just because he wanted to. He broke my nose by head butting me, my bone was sticking out of the top of my nose. He would rape me regularly, while I would lay there crying. He even put dirty magazines over my face while he was raping me. I had to work and my children were so scared of him. He starved the oldest one for months once, just because the child didn't want to eat their cereal one day. I would sneak food into them when I could. One day, he beat the oldest so badly that he couldn't walk - he made them bend over, while he kicked them in between the legs repeatedly. I decided it was time to leave.

I went to a friend and she helped me hide. I got into a refuge and there was a woman there who hit me. Because there was a conflict, they kicked us both out. My family and friends were isolated and I couldn't go back to the other friend, so I had no choice but to go back to my abusive partner. A few years later and everything was worse, but at least I was talking to my family again. He tried to drown me in the bath after a particularly bad beating. I felt the life leaving me. I left him three weeks later.

It was hard because every time I went out, he would keep one of the kids with him because he knew I wouldn't leave without them. It was a fluke that I managed to get both of them that day. I knew I had to leave the state to go into hiding, so a relative paid for my kids and I, and we went to his state. I left my whole family and absolutely everything I owned, except for one bag of clothes. I had ten dollars in my pocket. I was terrified. We went to my relative's house, where his wife was horrible to us.

As a result, I called the DV connect line and they put me into a refuge a few towns away. That was nearly ten years ago. In that time, my kids and I have started a new life in this town and we have all flourished. I suffer from complex PTSD and I still have nightmares and flashbacks about the abuse. I see a regular counsellor now and things have really settled down. My struggles with the PTSD have lessened, and even though I still struggle with it sometimes, it's a lot better than it was.

My advice to anyone in that situation is: to not think about material possessions or worry about starting over again. Even though it was the hardest thing I've ever been through, leaving was the best choice I could have made for my kids and I. It was scary, but it was worth it. I didn't want to end up dead or worse yet, with my beautiful children dead. It has taken a lot of healing and therapy to get where I am today, but I am proud to be the strong woman I am now.

Thank you for letting me have my say. I hope it helps people.