

## Alice #7

I come from a foreign country, and my ex is an Australian citizen. I came to this country believing he was the perfect man that I had been waiting for. To me, he was perfect on all sides. We got married in Australia, and in just a few weeks his (perfect) mask started to fade. The man inside the walls of our home was cruel, using humiliation, mind games and dangerous manipulation against me.

In a short time, I found myself cut out of contact with my family and friends. I fell into high anxiety while I was pregnant of our first child. The medical staff became aware of my distress, and I started attending counseling. When I emerged from the deep cloud of sadness that was floating on top of my head, I learned to identify the violence cycle and started to be aware of the situation that I was trapped in. In a foreign country, with no financial support, no family, no friends, he had all the power over me and he abused it. He had episodes of rage, used physical force against me; I saw him throwing away my personal stuff outside late one night while I was heavily pregnant. He did all in his power to destroy my wellbeing and balance.

I used an interpreter and started to regularly call the Domestic Violence (DV) hotline.

One day, I had to go to the local shop for nappies, but he did not want to let me go, threatening to leave the children on their own if I went out the door. I didn't believe he would do that, as our children were under one year old. I went to buy the nappies and he left them alone. I returned home, and how I found the children was terribly distressing. This was the trigger for me to say stop.

The DV hotline helped me organise leaving the family home. I went escorted by the police to a women refuge with my young children. Then, I had to cancel my spouse visa linked to him, I was not sure that I would be able to stay with my children in Australia. I did not even have Medicare for them, I had nothing, but two young lives to protect from harm.

I walked on the path of uncertain days, one day at a time, and now three years later, I've rebuilt my life. I received huge support from women in community services, they helped me to find a start with safety and stability to raise my children in a happy life. I am deeply grateful to each of these people that have crossed my path.

I am developing a software program, to help women and mothers who go through domestic violence. This program is the resume of my DV experience: from how to plan a budget when you start from point 0 up to how to protect your children from harm. I hope that my experience will help.

Thanks for reading.

---