

Alice #73

I can't explain how hard this was to write. It was incredibly difficult to relive and to admit that I let this happen to myself.

At 22 years I entered the relationship. I was at university doing registered nursing; drinking a lot, and partied constantly. In my third year, with 6 months to go in my course I discovered that I was pregnant so I left university.

At six months pregnant I married my partner. My family had cut me off and refused to speak to me. I didn't understand why. On the night of wedding, we argued because he wanted to go out. He hit me hard several times in stomach before going out. I was in pain, and cried, terrified I'd lose the baby. He came home for lunch the next day. Soon after, the Police turned up informing us that the car was a write-off. Partner made a statement to police that it was stolen...when he had actually taken it out with his mates drinking. They had crashed it, I said nothing.

My partner moved us to Western Sydney. I knew no one. He would go drinking with mates, spent all our money on cigarettes, alcohol and poker machines. I lived on rice custard (rice and powdered milk - they were cheap).

I learned quickly that I had no opinions. I learned not to answer back or question - or I would be belted and told over and over that it was my fault. I began to believe it. I thought I did everything wrong, and was stupid and clumsy. I started to believe I could not do anything without help or direction. I lost my independence and my self esteem was shattered. I honestly thought I was dumb, fat and ugly. I was lucky to have him as no one else would want to be seen with me, and I was too stupid to have a conversation with anyone.

Then we had our first child born, a boy. Partner stayed home with our son, I was forced to go to work. He learnt not to hit me in the face because black eyes and a busted mouth raised too many questions and caused issues in my work place. I worked in respite care for elderly and disabled.

I had to quit my job when the baby was about 7/8 months - police at door after an argument. Neighbors had phoned the police. The male police officer looked at baby, at me and stated 'we are mandatory reporters, any reports of violence around kids we report to DOCS'. 'Would you like to say anything or make a statement'? I said no - never spoke to police.

Partner would emphasise how DOCS would have my child (later children) removed, and he would constantly remind me that the police would blame me. He constantly said that I was a bad mother, I was stupid and I didn't deserve a family. The police would help DOCS take the kids, so I needed him to protect us. I needed him to keep the family together - as he was the only person I could trust because DOCS and the police would separate us.

However, after a hiding one night when he was drunk, I didn't know why. He was very angry with me. I made sure the house was clean, his dinner was cooked and served. Washing done. He was just angry. After he walked out four of his mates came in and forced themselves on me. I was scared. One of them said 'he owes us and a lot more than once with you, you dirty slut'.

I don't know how many times this happened, I would go blank, emotionless and my mind would be elsewhere. I had already learned to detach myself when required to have sex with my husband. He often would be forceful as it was a 'wife's duty to satisfy her husband, in all aspects'. I'm still not sure why his mates raped me, it was likely a drug debt - but I was never in a position to ask.

Then my daughter was born. When I went into labour, I went grocery shopping. I was frightened to leave money in account as partner would spend it. Eventually, I went to hospital, with contractions less than 10 minutes apart. Partner was really cranky as I spent most of my money on food and nappies, things for baby. He

spent what was left on grog.

When my daughter was 4 weeks old, I went back to work in food services. I worked 10 hour days, 6 days a week. I would get home, cook dinner, wash clothes, bathe kids and clean house before going to bed. About 4 months later, I was pregnant again. He was drunk, upset, and hit me repeatedly. I had heavy bleeding with bad pain. However, I didn't go to hospital, because I was terrified DOCS would take my kids. I was still really sick two weeks later, so partner went to the doctors and got antibiotics. I wasn't allowed to go to the doctor.

He would go all day on my day off from work, saying that it was his 'payday' - he said he deserved it from having hard work with kids all week. Of course, I was still doing all cooking and cleaning after work. The final fight came when I was home with the two babies as he had gone out for the day. The sheriff and a police officer knocked on the door, it was Friday afternoon. He said that we were nearly 6 months behind in rent and the Tribunal had evicted us. I had no idea. He always took my money and told me it was for rent and electricity.

It had started raining lightly, I was holding the baby and the toddler was holding onto my leg trying to walk. The sheriff stated he understood I was upset, and while he wasn't supposed to, but would give until Monday to vacate. I thanked him and promised we would be out and the house would be clean.

My partner came home, drunk and I questioned him about the real estate and rent. He screamed at me that he deals with that s*** as I was too dumb to do it. I gave him the notice from the sheriff. He hit me in the face and said 'you dumb slut, you f***** let him in you stupid bitch'. 'It's your fault we have nowhere to live'. The toddler started crying, he picked him up and threw him into the wall yelling 'shut up'.

I was horrified. He had only ever hit me before. I was horrified and revolted. I picked up my boy, pushing him out in front of me as I carried the baby and went to walk out. My partner was still screaming 'you're a dumb ugly fat c***, where the f*** are you going?

As I walked past him he picked up the house phone and smashed it over my head - Intense pain. I stumbled to door and something hit me hard in the back of the head, more pain. I remember falling out the door and down the steps. I vaguely remember his cousin was there and she grabbed the baby as I fell down the steps past her, I remember thinking that she was okay.

Later, with no idea how long, I was sitting out the front of the yard when the police arrived (the cousin had phoned them). Meanwhile partner had smashed stuff in the house and taken my car even though he didn't have a license, and he had been drinking. I was too scared to give the police a statement. They rang my mother in a town in regional NSW and organised for me to go back with her. I cleaned the house and packed up. My parents rented a truck and we packed my house into it, gave some stuff away to neighbors. I remember that the little girls next door were so excited to get a fish tank and fish.

So I moved. I was depressed. Partner took 6 months to leave the house. He kept ringing and telling me what a dumb c*** I was, and that I had destroyed the family. He would threaten us, was going to cut my throat so I could bleed out slowly and watch him kill the kids before I died. Apparently, that was more than I deserved as a 'useless backstabbing dumb bitch that I was'. That was 14 years ago. I still struggle with my self esteem and believe I ruin everything I touch.

My next relationship ended when I finally realised that mind games and control is as bad as physical violence. He handled all the money, controlled who I talked to, but I excused it as he never hit me. It's okay, he doesn't hit me. He's good to me, we have food in the cupboard, clothes and he doesn't hit me. It's not okay.

I was severely depressed, suicidal, and drove in front of a truck. I thought I was the problem, thought I failed at everything and am useless. One night when he came home drunk, he pulled a gun on me. Looking down the barrel of the double-barrel shotgun made me realise that my four kids were asleep in the room next door. This

man was willing to shoot me with my four babies in the same house. While I convinced him to have another beer and give me the gun so he could open the beer, I knew it was over. It took a few days, but I left and the kids came with me.

I now work in social work as a family support worker for a non-government organisation. I would never admit to most of what has happened to me to anyone and it is a struggle to even put on paper. I don't think about this stuff and deny it most of the time. I will talk about being hit, and smacked around as a third person. Everything is detached and factual, to the point. There is no emotion and I struggle not to react. I am now trying to relearn to trust, relearn to love and relearn life is worth living.

I am learning there are places to go for help and that the view in society has changed. Women can now seek help, can talk about domestic violence and are now empowered to leave their violent partners. You have a voice, so don't believe you are weak or stupid or ugly or dumb or anything other bad thing your partner has forced you to believe about yourself. The reality is, you as a person are important in this world to someone. You are a mother, sister, aunt, niece, grandmother or friend to someone. You are a valued member of society and no one wants to see you dead. It proves nothing and is a waste for you to lose your life because one very selfish partner thinks they own you. You are not personal property, you are a human being with rights, feelings and you belong in this world. Believe in yourself. It is a hard road to travel, a lot of heartache and hard work, but you deserve to own your own life and to live how you choose. And to live free from violence.

Ask for help, accept help, don't deny yourself the right to improve your situation and believe in yourself.
