

A Survivor's Story

When I was fifteen, I started at a new school, where I met a boy called George. We were friends for a couple of years, before he became my boyfriend. He was my first boyfriend and we shared a lot together. Soon into our relationship, he told me that he loved me and that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with me. We went to university together and went travelling around the world. Once we had come back, we went to London and moved in together.

George had been jealous with me about other men, but he started being very controlling and possessive, as well. He would always try to change my plans, if I was going to see my friends or family. Gradually, this got worse, he started to shout names at me, telling me that I was stupid and ugly, he would not stop being abusive until I got upset and cry. I noticed that I was going out less and less with my friends, and I also changed my behaviour to make my life easier to cope with.

When I managed to go out with my friends or family, George would text and call me repeatedly throughout the evening, asking me who I was with, where I was and what time I would be back home. If the public transport made me late, I would get stressed, as I knew once I got home, he would be angry and shove me around, until I cried. When I went to one of my friend's wedding and my graduation, George told me, on both occasions, that I was dressed like a tart and it was because I wanted all the men to notice me because that's what he said I liked when he was not with me, but this was only because he had not been able to attend both events so was angry about that.

Other times George would get cross for no apparent reason and take it out on me, calling me names, pushing me on the bed, try to push me down the stairs or even strangle me. He was getting more and more violent as time went by. I was getting increasingly unhappy, but felt stuck and scared to leave, especially as I had only known my adult life with him.

One day after we had friends round for lunch, once the friends had left, I was in the kitchen tidying up, and out of nowhere, George came shouting at me that I had not used the correct glasses. I was facing the sink and he came towards me, pushed me violently towards the sink and then punched my back, shoved me around with force hitting my arms. He punched my chest and told me that if I was a man he would have punched me in the face. Then with one hand he got hold tightly of one arm and with his other hand he did the same, he was restraining me so I could not move. Then, George slammed me to the ground, I banged my knees on the floor.

He left me in a shivering wreck on the ground, I could not move as I was in shock. He kicked me repeatedly all over my body. He smashed the glasses that were on the side, one after the other across the floor, each one shattered on the floor, while he was doing that I managed to get up and I tried to get out of the kitchen but he got hold of me and pushed me in the chest,

he was holding me with force, he picked up a piece of glass and tried to cut my arm but I managed to get away from him. I could hardly walk as I was shivering so much and in shock so I sat on the couch with a blanket round me. He went to bed. I woke up the next day, my arms and legs were bruised and my chest and back were hurting, I could hardly lift my arms either. George was as if nothing had happened and I was too scared to mention it.

I did not tell anyone at first, as I was in too much of a state to want to talk about it, a few days later, my sister noticed the bruising on my legs. She was shocked at first and wanted me to tell her all about it and was so cross with my ex for having put me through it. My sister researched by reading books on domestic abuse and found out exactly how to help me, the steps to take. My sister was by my side from then on and helped me to gain the strength to leave him. After eleven years of being with him and the life I had built with, it was extremely difficult and scary to leave but I did. I left one day and never went back, I emailed him to tell him I was breaking up with him, that might be a coward thing to do in a healthy relationship but in an abusive relationship for me it was the best thing to do as by doing this I gained back control of the situation without having him shout, not listen to me and talk over me. Although, he did spend the next year contacting me, even though I had asked him repeatedly to stop. He first started, calling, texting and emailing and then it went down to emails. George would send long loving emails one day, and then threatening emails the next. I went to a councillor to ask for guidance on how to deal with these emails. I was told, as long as I was safe, to ignore them as the abuser but if at any time, I felt unsafe to go seek help.

Leaving George was one of the hardest things I have ever done, I never thought I would ever get over what I went through but I don't think I could have done it without the help of my sister, her husband and some friends who supported me and took the time to understand what I was going through, without judging it.

After a lot of tears, I managed to rebuild my confidence, move on, rebuild my life and be happy again. I am also in a healthy relationship which I never thought I would be in and we are now planning to start a family. Every day I appreciate how lucky I am to be with him.