

## What is Domestic Violence?

I didn't know I was in a violent relationship for 10 years. I thought Domestic Violence was only when you are physically harmed by another person purposely. It wasn't until I met a friend who survived Domestic Violence and she shared with me her story. Through her experiences I was able to relate to the violence I had been enduring, the control, the put down. It was because of her that I was made aware of what domestic violence is, that it wasn't just physical abuse, it was also emotional, psychological, and financial abuse.

In my 10 years of marriage I lived in fear. I adapted and evolved to a person he wanted me to be, a loner, low self esteem, no friends, no money. Then when we had our son in [REDACTED], my husband became the Father who physically abused his child to discipline him. At [REDACTED] months old my son started experiencing the physical abuse from his father which I had to endure and accept as part of his disciplinary action. I didn't stand up for my son, I wasn't allowed to, and I was afraid. I stood back and simply watched for 6 years.

In [REDACTED] we had our daughter, she was Daddy's little Princess. I became obsolete in my husbands eyes, our daughter was the main priority. As she got older she started to bully her older brother, her Dad would even tell her to hit her brother.

In early [REDACTED], I had an anxiety attack at work and was referred to see counselling. When I told him about my life and the cause of my stress, he confirmed that I was in a domestic violent relationship. A few weeks later he exploded once again, but this time I stood up for myself and my children. I called the police. My husband told me to get off the phone and he left to go to the [REDACTED] Police station. I then called my friend and she came, helped me packed some belongings and took me and my children to her house. The Police then called me back to check how I was going, they asked if I wanted an intervention order against my husband, I said no because I didn't know what it was.

The very next morning my friend took me to [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] who comforted me, gave me professional advise and what actions to take. They explained what's an intervention order, and assisted me on what to do. I was assigned a social worker and was in contact with DHS. My kids and I moved in with my sister for 2 weeks with just minimal clothes and no money.

Centrelink helped us with the crisis payment, and other assistance. My friend helped me every step of the way, from the intervention order, to contacting [REDACTED] for support, to getting me and the kids back to our home. I'm very fortunate to have a friend who have been through my situation and was aware of what steps to take.

I served my husband a full intervention order for one year. He attended men's behavioural program and I attended [REDACTED] Women's support group. After 6 months my husband and I started attending Family counselling through a mediator. Shortly after I reduced the intervention order to partial, and at the end of the intervention the family was reunited. I am one of very few women who goes back to their husband after experiencing domestic violence. I know I am very fortunate, but wounds don't heal that quickly. I'm just very grateful to have people around me continuously supporting me.

Everyone needs a friend who has the knowledge to provide the support necessary. Everyone needs to be aware and have the understanding of what Domestic Violence is. Everyone who are living in family violence needs help and it is up to individuals like me and the government bodies to provide them that assurance that they have the support, that they are not alone. Everyone deserves to live happily and safely, especially the children.