

I was married for nearly [REDACTED] years before I had the confidence and support to leave my abuser. My husband started the emotional abuse even before we were married but it definitely escalated once we were married, then again when my [REDACTED] was born and I was dependent on him financially. Many times he promised he would change, he would stop for short periods of time then it would begin again only worse than before. The psychological and emotional abuse occurred in front of the kids, which means they were exposed to the abuse. My [REDACTED] in particular was also psychologically and emotionally abused. The sexual abuse was more subtle and behind closed doors but the groping and possessive kissing happened in public, my body was not my own.

I decided to leave after many threats of divorce and suicide by my husband. The problem was I was and still am studying to get my [REDACTED] degree in the hope to create a better life for my kids and myself. One night the fighting had gone on too long so I went to sleep on the couch, my husband prowled around the kitchen for at least half an hour, I lay on the couch hyper vigilant, listening, worried he was going to get a kitchen knife out and stab me as he was so angry that I refused to have sex with him, refused to give up study.

My husband's way of controlling me was to agree to something then deny he had, or later give me a hard time constantly until he wore me down. He did this with a job I had the year we separated. Agreed to me working on a Saturday, then complained and accused me of putting it before the children and him, not being a good mother. He did this with my study, I also started the same year, he constantly complained that I was studying instead of paying attention to him.

The day we separated I went to a friend's house with the kids, when my husband returned home to find us not there he called me. I told him our marriage was over, then listened to a half hour tirade of verbal abuse until I hung up. We had to stay at our friends house as he did not know where they lived and it was the only place I felt safe and provided a distraction for the kids as there were other kids for them to play with. My husband agreed to move out after a number of days so I could get my [REDACTED] to school. He continued to harass me each time he saw the children, intimidating me at school events, letting himself into the house and not leaving unless I asked him to in front of the children. He was watching the house as he would go into the house when we were not home. Due to this the children and I had to leave the family home and move in with my parents as there was no way I could afford to move out.

The harassment and abuse continued for a year from when we separated, my lawyer would send a letter saying we would get an IVO if it did not cease so it would stop for a while, then begin again. Eventually, on my lawyer's advice I got an IVO. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We had our first court date in [REDACTED] my husband only submitted his affidavit the week before stating he had been made redundant. We have since had our conciliation conference, at this conference we found out my now ex-husband had only applied for two jobs in three months in an attempt to make his needs look greater than mine even though I have the children 90% of the time and have not received child support in [REDACTED] months. My ex-husband refused to negotiate at the conciliation conference, insisting he is entitled to 50% of the funds from the sale of the family home. This means we now have to go to a final hearing. This now means I have to find a job and

may have to give up my studies in order to pay for the court fees. This feels like he is getting his way and winning as I have to sacrifice my and my children's future due to him still trying to control everything. The conciliation conference felt like an opportunity for him to continue the financial abuse. Having to supply financials including all banks statements feels like such an invasion of privacy. I have an IVO yet he can track my regular transactions and see my regular routine through these transactions, he is able to query my transactions and what I spend my money on, just as he did throughout the marriage, every cent I spent was questioned. If an IVO is in place I believe the client should not have access to these bank statements and other financials, it should only be viewed by their lawyer and I would hope that lawyers would have enough integrity to ensure this happens. It was so stressful in the lead up to the conciliation conference and afterwards, that I was unable to study for two weeks affecting my marks.

In [REDACTED] I started renting a house for myself and the kids as my parents are selling their house and we could no longer live there. Rent is not affordable in the area where my support network is, especially when I do not receive child support, as many survivors of domestic violence do not. These men continue the control and financial abuse by finding ways to avoid paying child support. My ex-husband also tells my kids that he gives me all my money and that everything I buy for them is really from him. He continues the verbal and emotional abuse of the kids. My only consolation is that the children are only exposed to this two nights a fortnight instead of every night as it was when we lived together, but I am no longer there to console them and cuddle them when he upsets them. A [REDACTED] year old and a [REDACTED]

year old need to be protected from him yet without any concrete proof he is entitled to spend time with them and continue the abuse.