

My name is [REDACTED]. I married my ex husband [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. I am from [REDACTED] and he is from [REDACTED]. We had the most romantic long distance relationship for 2 years, while I was living in the [REDACTED] and he was living in Melbourne. I left my family to marry him in [REDACTED] then we both came to Australia to start a new family. I had no family and friends here Australia.

[REDACTED] started beating me only months after we married, and continued to do so all throughout the marriage, including when I was 4 months pregnant with my firstborn. Verbal and emotional abuse were most dominant in the relationship. In the beginning, I did not think of reporting any of the abuse because I was alone in Australia and I did not know who could help me; I was ashamed to go back to my family because I thought my family and everyone would be disappointed at me. I also was afraid that my husband would lose his job if I called the police. He also raped me twice during the marriage. I did not know who to talk to about the rape.

In early [REDACTED], I was homesick and asked my husband if I could go on holidays to my country to spend time with my parents. [REDACTED] said if I had a baby instead, I would feel better from my homesickness. I loved him and trusted him and agreed. I became pregnant, and when I could no longer work due to the morning sickness, [REDACTED] verbal abuse increased by often calling me a bum, calling me from work daily to ask if I was doing anything "productive", and began to control me financially because I was no longer working. He compared me to other pregnant women who worked during pregnancy. He also beat me when I was 4 months pregnant. In [REDACTED], we had another child. I suffered with depression because I had no family and close friends to help me, was not getting enough sleep taking care of my two babies, and was unhappy with my husband's treatment of me and lack of help with the babies.

Around [REDACTED], I was fed up with the physical and emotional abuse, and began to call helplines and women's services. I was advised to go to a shelter with my children, and to call different services. However, at the time I did not have a car, and I was still scared to report my husband, in case he became even more hostile, or he lost his job. I was not ready to leave him yet, So instead I tried to find peace of mind by meditation and self help, which did not seem to work.

I struggled with Depression during most of my marriage, and out of hopelessness and despair, I had two minor suicide attempts as a cry for help. I went counselling numerous times. I tried to improve my marriage, but my husband did not cooperate. In fact, he told me that he did not know how to love me "my" way. He also criticized me often because of my previous depressive and suicidal episodes. He decided to build a house and bring his parents from overseas to live with us, making matters worse as I had warned him.

One of my counsellors was an [REDACTED] woman called Dr. [REDACTED] from [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] She is no longer at that location. After I revealed all the problems I was

having in my marriage, she only stated in her report that my marriage was “volatile”; There was no further investigation or action from her part. In fact, she used to yawn and act tired while I spoke during each session. She also tried to teach me meditation, which was of no avail, because the actual problem was that I was very unhappy with my husband.

In [REDACTED], I was feeling happier while taking the medication [REDACTED]; however, I was overspending a little on clothes because of the side effects was weight gain. So I went to a GP called Dr. [REDACTED] and told him about my overspending. He then “diagnosed” me with Bipolar Disorder. He told my husband too, and then referred me to a Psychiatrist called Dr. [REDACTED] from [REDACTED]. Dr. [REDACTED] stated in his report that the Bipolar diagnosis was a “maybe”, but nevertheless he filled me with medications. My husband began treating me like a crazy woman on medications, and I found out some time later that he was cheating on me. A report was later written by a different psychiatrist named Dr. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] stating that there was no evidence to suggest Bipolar Disorder.

When I found large amounts of evidence that my husband was cheating on me, I had an emotional breakdown. My husband called my psychiatrist, and Dr. [REDACTED] advised him to bring the CAT team to my home. I don’t know what my husband had told him. When the CAT team arrived, I told them that my husband was cheating on me, but the CAT team told me to “leave it in the past”, and that I needed a break from the stress. They advised me to go with them to hospital, but I did not know it was the psychiatrist hospital. I packed my bag and sadly said goodbye to my children. My husband stood at the door and watched me leave. When we arrived in hospital, I realized where I was and became very sad. I told the doctors that I was very angry because my husband was cheating on me. I was sad that he put me there only because I was hurt. I was not a threat to myself or my family. My husband went to visit me and then regretted the fact that I was there. He said “you don’t belong here.” He called my church pastor and asked him to help me to get discharged. He told the Pastor that he needed to get back to work and the children needed care. When I was discharged and back home, my husband went back to work as usual and did not want to discuss about his cheating.

When his parents had moved in to our newly built house, they did not respect any of my boundaries for separate living. His parents did not speak English, but watched my every move. His mother fed my children whenever she liked, and complained to my husband when I did not allow it. She wanted me to act like an Indian woman, and be extremely submissive to the men just like she was. His father told me that I was not allowed to tell others or seek help about my marriage problems (including the family violence) His mother also said that in Australia it is normal to cheat.

We separated end of [REDACTED]. We divorced in [REDACTED]. However, between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], we tried to reconcile. But in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said to me that if I did not follow his way and his parents way (his parents were also living in our home), I had to move out with the children. I found an apartment, but he beat me again during an

argument a few days before I moved out. The police were finally involved, but they did not arrest him because he told them in a defensive and arrogant way that he was “provoked”. Police believed him and advised me to spend the night elsewhere for safety and move out sooner. I did not have a place to go to, so I spent the night scared locked in my room. Next day, he tried to talk to me as if nothing had happened, but when I turned my face, he slammed the door at me. I moved out with the children the next day.

██████████ continued to harass me on the phone about children’s arrangements, and he would yell on the phone and make threats to take the children away because he said I was “unstable”. I became overwhelmed by his harassment, and on the ██████████, I filed for an Intervention Order against him. I was granted full protection for myself and my children.

Three weeks later, ██████████ also filed for an Intervention Order against me. He wrote the most horrible allegations on his application, but the Magistrate only granted “no contact” and “no internet publishing” on his order against me. When ██████████ realized that the children could not call him on the phone anymore because of the order, he began to call my friends to say he had made a mistake and asking them to mediate between him and I. My friends realized how revengeful and controlling he was, and did not want to help him.

██████████ breached his Intervention Orders three times, was arrested on the ██████████ and is currently awaiting Court for conviction. When I reported the first two breaches, the ██████████ Police at first seemed unwilling to help me. They made excuses to for him saying he missed the children, or he is allowed to be out in public places, etc. But when I insisted that he was breaching the orders, they took Statements. He breached for a fourth time on ██████████ and another arrest is pending. I had to go to the Police numerous times to ask them if they were doing anything about the breaches, because I was fearing for my safety. Mediation about children’s arrangements was then terminated and deemed as “inappropriate” because of ██████████ breaches.

During the Summons hearing, I asked Duty Lawyer (from ██████████) to mention to the Judge about ██████████ breaches, but she refused to do so by nodding her head no before the Judge. ██████████ demanded me to remove the children from the Intervention Order so he could accept his, but I refused to, afraid that he would then attempt to collect the children from school, and to harass me again about children’s arrangements. So the Hearing was adjourned to the Directions Hearing on ██████████.

On ██████████, the day of the Directions Hearing, ██████████ was present in Court with his private lawyer from ██████████ Solicitors. They would take turns and walk past where I was sitting with a friend to spy on us. His lawyer approached us and introduced himself to us, and asked to start negotiating about the Intervention Orders. We told him that we were waiting for a Duty Lawyer. He later approached us two more times to attempt to start negotiations. They stood and watched our every move for hours until we were called into

the Courtroom. The Magistrate was pressuring me to accept my order of no contact because there were emails and messages I had written nearly one year ago that he thought were relevant to [REDACTED] allegations that I am trying to destroy his career. I have never called his work and I am not trying to destroy his career. So I did not accept his order, and chose to contest. [REDACTED] accepted my order against him nevertheless. The Hearing was again adjourned to the Contest Hearing in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] hired [REDACTED] Lawyers to make demands and false allegations about me. He was demanding for every weekend visitations to avoid increase in child support payment, and threatening to have my children's passports removed; he alleged that my children were in danger, but refused to seek any type of custody, and was unwilling to negotiate my proposals for the children's best interests. He paid his lawyers for many letters of only harassment and controlling tactics to get his way.

I was overwhelmed by his harassment through lawyers. I hired a lawyer named [REDACTED]. At first, she was kind and seemed understanding of my situation. After replying a few of his letters, [REDACTED] became verbally insulting to me by saying that [REDACTED] was not "that" bad because I had gone back to him [REDACTED] for reconciliation, despite the family violence. She also said that he was not such a bad father only because he never hit the children. I told her he caused the children to witness his physical and verbal abuse against me, but then she became defensive and told me to find another lawyer who could "tell me what I wanted to hear". I became very distraught and cancelled her services.

I could no longer afford another lawyer, so I began to communicate directly to [REDACTED] lawyers via email. His lawyer, named [REDACTED] was notified that I had no lawyer, she then increased her fierceness with more threatening and demanding emails. I was again overwhelmed, but I gave her a final proposal, demanding her to either accept my proposal or take me to Court. [REDACTED] then began to cooperate by sending me a Draft proposal, but continued to attempt to convince me to accept requests which I had refused; but when I stood firm with in my defence, she called me difficult and confusing.

I accused [REDACTED] of bullying me and being unprofessional. She became enraged, made threats to complain about me in Court, and denied the allegations. She kept excusing her actions, writing me long emails until [REDACTED]. She demanded me to apologize and retract my comments, or take me to Court. She later herself retracted from making such threats.

An overall solution to what happened to me would be to firstly, train General Practitioners to investigate and interrogate a patient's personal life when there is a diagnosis of Depression, and also for General Practitioners to desist from making drastic diagnosis such as Bipolar disorder on a depressed patient, when that is the actual role of a specialist.

Secondly, train Mental Health specialists to investigate further into family violence, and not just note on a report that a relationship was "volatile"; also take necessary steps to make sure any mention of abuse is reported to local authorities. Also, when I was admitted into the psychiatric unit, there was no further investigation as to why a husband would be willing to admit his own wife only because she was angry, even after admitting that he was cheating on his wife. The hospital must interview the husband and wife together, make the husband accountable for admitting his wife, and not just treat the wife. When I was discharged, my husband made no changes and continued to cheat, control me and beat me.

In regards to the lawyers, the solution would be to educate lawyers to understand family violence and a client's character, and not just discuss finances and who has the most money. Lawyers must take family violence situations seriously. In my case, lawyer [REDACTED] said that my ex husband was not such a bad father, even after I told her how he physically and verbally abused me in front of the children, how he has very little hygiene and basic care skills to look after children, and how he insisted our son to sleep on his bed.

The duty lawyers from [REDACTED] refused to address the Judge about my ex's breach of orders and arrest on both the Summons and Directions hearings. Lawyers must take family violence seriously, and not separate children and violence. My ex's lawyer [REDACTED] has separated the two issues, and she demanded that I negotiate children's arrangements without acknowledging any of the abuse allegations concerning her client and the children.

In conclusion, doctors and lawyers must not overlook signs that something bigger and dangerous such as family violence is happening to their patients and clients, and not just take their money and fill them up with medications.

Please feel free to contact me between [REDACTED], if you have any doubts and further questions.

Thanking you,

[REDACTED]

