

### **What to Expect When Leaving an Abusive Relationship.**

After [REDACTED] years of marriage and many years of counselling, I came to accept that my relationship with my husband, [REDACTED], had come to an end. I was faced with the heartbreaking decision that I needed to leave this man, the father of my two [REDACTED] children, and the hopes and dreams I had for a happy family life behind.

The damage to our relationship was irreparable and our differences irreconcilable. I had endured [REDACTED] years of abuse with this man. Always believing that his attempts to seek help were genuine and that, with professional help and my full support, he would be able to overcome his anger problems.

During our marriage, I was told that "it takes two to Tango", and believed that somehow I was responsible for his outbursts. That somehow I had brought it upon myself and was to blame. I was told constantly that I "am a victim", and "suffer from victim mentality", and that the word abuse didn't apply as he did not physically hit me. So many times I wished he would, so I could have something physical to show for the constant emotional, psychological and verbal battering that I endured on a regular basis. He would physically intimidate me, pushing his chest into me and raging in my face, backing me into a corner and when I retaliated, he would abuse me for being violent and out of control. One time he dragged me by the neck to the top of a staircase, threatening to throw me down. I remember thinking that I had caused this because of my emotional reaction to him being late for a breakfast that I had prepared for us to share.

I had tried to leave him earlier in our relationship because of his violent behaviour, but he convinced me with his remorse that he was desperate to change. We got back together and I fell pregnant. [REDACTED] years later I had a second child. We married and I stayed in that relationship for another [REDACTED] years. The abuse continued regardless of years of marriage counselling, individual counselling, his psychiatric treatment and various medications. I was committed to supporting him. It was common for [REDACTED] to be in conflict. His relationship with his immediate family members was strained; conflict would rise regularly and result in long periods of no contact. Friendships ended because of his abuse, his behaviour affected his professional life where he would find himself in a lot of trouble. This resulted in him being terminated from [REDACTED] where he was employed as a [REDACTED]

He would become distraught when he was required to be accountable for his behaviour, he would fall apart and convince me that I was the only one in his life that cared for and understood him. I loved my husband, and stood by him, regardless of whether he was right or wrong, it was my belief that this is what a good wife does. I felt responsible for him.

Like any young family, money was tight. I left my work to raise our children whilst he pursued a career in [REDACTED]. I got used to the idea that I no longer had a say in how or where we lived because I was not 'earning money'. We moved home [REDACTED] times. Any attempts I made to seek employment or study were made difficult by his lack of support and therefore compromised the care I was able to provide the children. [REDACTED] constantly criticised me for being lazy and not contributing financially, even though I took care of the parental and domestic responsibilities, I studied and worked part-time for minimal wages to fit around our family's needs, whilst he pursued his career.

By constantly criticising my friends, family, support groups and interests, [REDACTED] isolated me from all relationships that provided me with support. He wore down my self-esteem with his criticism of my physical appearance, personality, intelligence, employment status and abilities as a parent. [REDACTED] told me many times that he I needed a face-lift and a boob job. He criticised my family often and resented me spending any time with them. All of this had a physical, emotional and psychological effect on me. By the end of our marriage I was barely coping with the day to day tasks of running a household, and [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] and was a nervous wreck.

Meanwhile, [REDACTED] was revelling in being at the top of his game in [REDACTED], earning a huge income and promoting himself as the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and his business partner [REDACTED] decided to become an independent [REDACTED] company, which they named [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] became increasingly aggressive during this period.

When I complained about his aggressive behaviour towards me or his absence in the family, or any of the choices he made that affected us financially, I was told..."I'm a business man [REDACTED], if you don't like it Fuck Off" he told me that "[REDACTED]".

All of this contributed to the breakdown of our marriage. [REDACTED] would show signs of remorse and ask for help and forgiveness which delayed our separation, but these times became less frequent. Even though we were still attending counselling together, it was obvious to me that, despite my best efforts, the marriage was over. Knowing this was terrifying, as I would have to face what I lived in fear of for all of these years, [REDACTED] reaction.

Finally [REDACTED] agreed to move out of the family home and set himself up in an apartment. My relief was short lived. The abuse and harassment escalated.

[REDACTED] was out of control and he blamed me. He rang my mobile and home phones frequently with abuse. He rang me whilst speeding in his [REDACTED] car, threatening to take his own life. I did not know how to deal with [REDACTED], in the past I felt obliged to rescue him, and calm him down. In my efforts to search for support with [REDACTED] behaviour, I met with the psychiatrist who was treating [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. I was told that [REDACTED] sees me as a mother figure and he could advise me on how to manage his behaviour. On the basis that I had my own children's grief to contend with, along with my own, I rejected this professional opinion and the idea that [REDACTED] behaviour was somehow my responsibility. My attempt to seek support for myself had become about my role in supporting [REDACTED].

Whilst I was left to care for the kids and begin the arduous task of selling our home, [REDACTED] behaviour continued to be out of control. [REDACTED] wanted to settle financially straight away. He withdrew funds from me and threatened to cut me off financially completely if I didn't accept his terms of settlement. During this time he had access to our savings which he was spending on overseas trips and indulgences, whilst the kids were in my care. He harassed me constantly through text and phone messages and came to the home refusing to leave.

[REDACTED] presented me with a financial settlement which he told me if I did not agree to he would take the kids. (My children were aged [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at the time). I was distraught and had no knowledge of the financial situation of the business, [REDACTED]. I agreed to meet with him numerous times to discuss our settlement, but this always led to me being traumatised by his abuse. I refused to meet with him unless it was in the context of mediation with the Family Resource Centre, which I arranged.

We met with the case worker separately, I was told that separation was difficult for [REDACTED], and the financial settlement he offered was a lot more than what a lot of other women get. I felt profoundly misunderstood. Mediation was not possible at this time because of [REDACTED] behaviour, as determined by the case worker. I was advised to let things settle and try again at a later date.

[REDACTED] bullied me into a position of rushing our financial settlement. Abusing me constantly for being greedy and all about money, whilst I maintained stability for the children and he continued to withhold finances and be overtly self-indulgent. I was incredibly reasonable in the face of his ongoing abuse; I maintained my focus on the care of the children and protected them from his behaviour towards me. I

have never felt that the children are in any physical danger when in his care. I encouraged him to have the kids as often as he chose and always accommodated for his constantly changing needs.

I sort legal advice in regards to his 'offer'. I was advised by my solicitor not to accept it without a transparent valuation of our shared assets. I was only interested in a fair and transparent settlement based on our shared assets at the time of separation. I was verbally abused and harassed relentlessly by [REDACTED] for seeking legal advice. [REDACTED] continued his threats to take the kids from me and withheld funds unless I agreed to his demands in relation to the financial settlement.

I was advised by my solicitor to "sit tight" and that the storm will pass. The attitude that it is very common for men to behave this way during a separation was of no comfort to me.

The expectation is for women to act maturely, intelligently and responsibly during the emotional trauma of separation, whilst caring for the needs of the children from that partnership. In the case of separating from an abusive partner, the experience is even more traumatic. As an intelligent, educated strong woman with access to an support network from close friends and family and resources that enabled me to receive counselling services, the experience was exhausting and traumatic and required all of my efforts and the support of family and friends to endure. The fact that some women do not have access to these resources can help to explain why so many women stay in situations that are intolerable, abusive and violent.

Eventually, [REDACTED] employed his own solicitor and our solicitors, and along with the assistance of our accountant worked hard to achieve a fair settlement that I was able to agree with. Whilst I had absolute faith in all professional parties, the outcome was a lot less than what I was entitled to. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. This was a huge compromise for me as I was leaving a marriage, without a stake in the business that I supported [REDACTED] to build and without the income capacity or qualifications that could secure an income for me in the future. As a [REDACTED] year old woman I was earning \$[REDACTED] an hour working part-time in [REDACTED] and studying part time to complete my degree and unable to get a bank loan or access to any credit.

[REDACTED] stated clearly that he could not afford to pay me in a lump sum payment, a compromise was made by entering into a Binding Child Support Agreement, where he was to pay the amount he owed to me by a \$[REDACTED] payment, until such time as the children turning [REDACTED] years of age or leaving my full-time care. I was advised that this was the best outcome and to agree to this. It was revealed on the day before the agreement went to court that [REDACTED] had not been transparent with our finances, that he had received a large sum from his business partner, which he spent on a new [REDACTED]. This meant that he could have afforded to pay me a lump sum payment, and I would have been able to afford a home convenient to the kids school and therefore increase my work opportunities. However, it was more valuable for the sake of the children and my mental health, to avoid the financial and emotional costs of court proceedings. I was offered the option to revisit the settlement, which I declined. I had absolute faith in all professional parties involved in the settlement process, however, [REDACTED]'s abuse and harassment was constant and was wearing me down. I accepted less than what I was entitled to and see this as my contribution to the children's education. I thought [REDACTED]'s abuse would cease after we reached a financial agreement. This was not to be so

[REDACTED] insisted in the agreement that the family home was to be sold by [REDACTED] and I was to pay him a commission, and return the [REDACTED] to him, which I was more than happy to do. I complied with every aspect to our legal and binding agreement.

I worked extremely hard to get the home ready for sale, whilst continuously subjected to [REDACTED] rants and harassment. It was a full time job as it was a large [REDACTED] property and in need of repairs. Without the ability to apply for any credit, I was well aware that the proceeds of the sale of the home

was going to determine my financial future and the home I could afford to buy for the kids and I to live in. I was hoping to be able to afford a home close to the kids school. Because of the success of our [REDACTED] business, the children had become accustomed to a more than comfortable lifestyle, a lifestyle that was unsustainable for me.

With our financial settlement complete, we had the care of the children to resolve. [REDACTED] changed his needs constantly and only had the kids when it suited him, which wasn't often, often changing his mind and lying to them about work commitments when he was going on holidays etc.

Because of [REDACTED]'s continual abuse, we were unable to communicate effectively in order for us to establish a regular parenting plan. I arranged for mediation again, this time with the Family Relationship Centre.

My anxiety was understandable given that every encounter I had with [REDACTED] I left traumatised. Despite this, and that [REDACTED] was continuing to abuse and harass me through emails, text messages and phone calls, I maintained a strong composure. It was so difficult to be in the same room as the man that I was grieving the loss of and at the same time was causing me so much pain. When I was in his presence I felt guilty for over reacting, he had a cunning way of minimizing his abuse which made me feel inadequate and ashamed. I had to be so strong. [REDACTED] saw this as me being cold and accused me of emotional withdrawal, which, to him, was a form of abuse. This was so confusing for me. To be told that I was the abusive one, after all that I was being put through, that I was over reacting, and there was something wrong with me because I was unable to handle this type of treatment. That I was not in any physical danger and that [REDACTED] was just 'emotional'. I was in a constant state of turmoil, was not sleeping and could not eat due to anxiety. I was not Ok Physically, either, [REDACTED], something he would also taunt me about.

All I wanted was to leave a situation that was no longer tolerable and to be able to navigate my kids through the separation with as little emotional harm as possible, respectfully, peacefully and compassionately. I had to learn to harden up; it was dangerous for me to expose any emotion to [REDACTED], as he would quickly pounce on my vulnerability. Compassion for [REDACTED] was a luxury I could not afford. It took all of my courage to maintain a position of strength, I can not stress enough how difficult this was for me, and I am blessed with wonderful support and resources. I had access to.

[REDACTED] continued to spend money on himself, go on overseas holidays and he had little interest in caring for our children. He continued to abuse and harass me. He withheld funds and threatened to cut me off financially. Telling me that I "ought to go out and get a full-time job."

Through mediation a basic structure regarding the care of the kids was developed, with the opportunity to revise in [REDACTED] weeks' time.

The house was on the market and an opportunity for me to [REDACTED] came up. This was during the summer holidays, and would contribute to the completion of my degree. I weighed up the decision to take this opportunity and discussed it carefully with the children, my counsellor, my solicitor, family members who offered to care for the kids, Centrelink, my university supervisors, friends, the counsellor at mediation and the real estate agents from the business, [REDACTED] employees, [REDACTED]. After much discussion, and with the overwhelming support from my family, I decided to take the opportunity. The children were more than happy with the care arrangements for their older cousins, who they are extremely close with, to care for them. I also believed that the kids would also benefit from having a break from seeing me stressed out and consumed by the circumstances of the separation.

Based on the care plan that [REDACTED] and I had agreed to in mediation, I developed a schedule for the time I was to be away. Utilizing the support of my family, I had everything planned for, for the time that the kids would usually be in my care, I made sure that my decision to [REDACTED] did not impact

on [REDACTED] in any way. And, of course, the schedule allowed for [REDACTED] to have the kids as often as he wanted. He could have had them fulltime for the period I was away if he chose to.

I spoke to the counsellor about bringing this up at mediation. It went as well as expected. Mediation was stopped, due to [REDACTED] "Emotional" response, and I was asked to leave the room. The counsellor returned shortly after to inform me that mediation was not possible and she would provide me with a certificate for proof if I needed one. I didn't see the point. Once again [REDACTED] abuse was excused as 'emotional' and it was never clearly pointed out that this was [REDACTED] behaviour, not mine. I was never asked how this was affecting me and therefore the care I was able to provide the kids, just another fact of separation left for me to deal with.

[REDACTED]

During the sale of the home, I went through four different real estate agents, [REDACTED]. Whilst I was away, an offer was made on the home which I negotiated with the agent via email. [REDACTED] was emailing me abuse during this time. I accepted the offer, [REDACTED]. I was advised to take this offer.

With the sale of the home I was able to secure a property. A modest home that needs repairs in a suburb further away from the kids school and social network. Not the luxury home [REDACTED] that the kids had grown accustomed to. It was not any easy adjustment for them, particularly for my [REDACTED] year old daughter in her [REDACTED] year of private school.

Meanwhile, [REDACTED] continued to flaunt his extravagant lifestyle. Securing a luxury townhouse walking distance to the kids school and [REDACTED]. I never objected to any of his requests in relation to the care of the kids, and I have only ever facilitated the kids having as much contact with him as he was able.

[REDACTED] now insisted on having the kids 50%. As the kids agreed to this, I did not object. As difficult as it was, I packed them up each [REDACTED] to spend the week with their Dad, because this is what the kids wanted.

[REDACTED] abuse regarding the financial settlement continued, believing that, as he now has the kids more, he should not have to pay me the full monthly amount as per our financial agreement. He shared his attitude about this with the children which caused them a lot of confusion and conflict.

I attempted to explain the terms of our legal and binding financial agreement to [REDACTED] time and time again, and the only way it can be changed is if it went back to court. [REDACTED] insisted on only paying me half the monthly payments. [REDACTED] threatened to take me to court if I didn't accept him paying \$[REDACTED] less a month. I sort advice from my solicitor and decided to not accept less than my entitlement which I had already compromised on. I asked [REDACTED] to reinstate the full amount of my monthly payments, otherwise I will need to hand the matter over to The Child Support Agency. As he did not comply, and his communication continued to be abusive, I contacted the Child Support Agency to collect my payments on my behalf.

Having the Child Support Agency collect payments for me meant that I need not have any contact with [REDACTED] at all regarding finances. This alleviated the anxiety of whether or not I would get paid for the month. This was such a relief for me. When I have had concerns about his late payments, the agency has been not only extremely efficient, but incredibly supportive as well, always offering genuine care and understanding. Having an organisation that fully understands and validates that [REDACTED] has a financial responsibility to me is invaluable. At one stage [REDACTED] was \$[REDACTED] in arrears and unwilling to pay. The agency was only able to recover some of this.

Child Support Payments are not enforceable by law, even though there is a legal and binding agreement. Considerable resources are used by the Agency in an effort to recover payments and arrears. These resources could benefit those who do not have a capacity to pay their Child Support Payments, rather than wasted on [REDACTED] who displays a clear capacity to make the payments but simply chooses not to. [REDACTED] was more interested in using financial control rather than complying to the agreement that is there to protect the needs of his children. To date, [REDACTED] pays the monthly amount required but remains \$[REDACTED] in arrears. Each month his payment cancels out his debt, but he becomes another \$[REDACTED] in arrears. This will be the case until the end of the agreement [REDACTED] that is providing he continues to make the monthly payments.

[REDACTED] still does not understand that the terms of the agreement are clear and final and do not change depending on the amount of time he has the kids. It would only change if [REDACTED] was to become their full-time carer, which is not the case.

I have demonstrated respectful communication with [REDACTED] through email at all times, despite his constant abuse. I believed that respectful communication was necessary for the sake of the kids, and I was committed to this. However, [REDACTED] constant abusive taunts and harassment had a debilitating effect on me and prevented me from being able to focus on all other areas of my life. [REDACTED] abuse was affecting me emotionally, physically and psychologically.

Finally, I took my solicitors advice and applied for an intervention order that prevented him from contacting me or coming to my home, unless it was in relation to the care of the kids.

I explained in court about the emotional, psychological and financial abuse I was experiencing from [REDACTED] and had pages of emails and text messages as proof. Despite that I felt ashamed about the situation, for exposing myself and exposing [REDACTED] behaviour towards me and despite the fact that I felt that the courts would think I am lying to them and being a 'Victim'. The fact that [REDACTED] behaviour was recognised as Family Violence was such a relief for me. I did not need to show them any evidence, I swore on the bible, in front of a room full of strangers and the intervention order was granted. I wanted to feel relieved, but I was scared.

[REDACTED] had the order served to him when my Son was with him. [REDACTED] immediately rang me to abuse me for going too far. He joked about the intervention order with my Son.

Abuse from [REDACTED] continued, I blocked him from my phone so I would no longer receive texts and messages that distressed me. This was not easy to do as the children were in his care and now I had to rely on the kids for communication, which was not ideal and they resented it. If I responded to [REDACTED] emails it was to ask that he only contact me in relation to the care of the children, for practical reasons. [REDACTED] was not able to, he was not able to provide me with even basic information that was relevant to the care of the kids, [REDACTED] with the kids during the Summer holidays.

[REDACTED] emails were always inappropriate and abusive. He breached the intervention order numerous times. I went to the police, not because I wanted him to get into trouble, but because his behaviour was causing me considerable harm and I needed it to stop. The police advised me that because he is not physically threatening me there is nothing they can do. The intervention order was not able to be enforced by the law, even though it was granted in court.

I blocked his emails. I had to explain to the kids that their Dad is unable to communicate with me respectfully and responsibly, and therefore communication is not possible. This was a great concern to them as they wanted to see their parents get along and not have to communicate for us. The kids were angry about this, and rightly so.

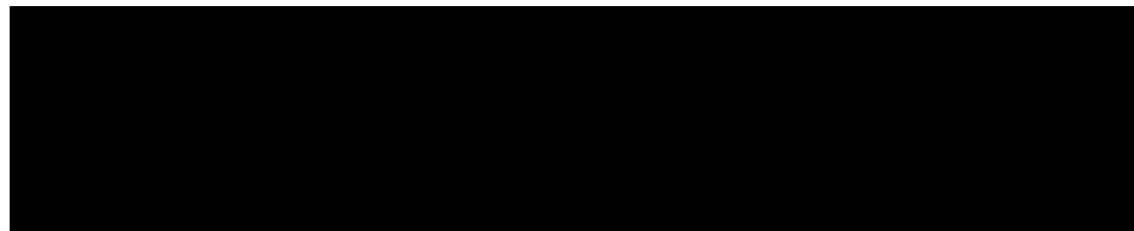
During this entire process, I tried my best not to involve the kids. I got so sick and tired of them blaming me for [REDACTED] behaviour. The kids told me that [REDACTED] and I should be able to get along and

when I explained that I have tried my best to communicate with their Dad they get angry. They parrot 'it takes two to Tango'. When I explain that it takes one person to be abusive for communication to not be effective, they get angry at me for blaming Dad and using the word 'abuse'.

I was so afraid that the children would choose to live with their father. I was so afraid that [REDACTED] was in a position where he could entice the kids with his [REDACTED], close to the kids school and friends, in the best suburb of [REDACTED]. The kids had freedom at [REDACTED] when I wanted to teach them independence. [REDACTED] employed a cleaner; I wanted them to learn to be responsible. I was so afraid of losing my children that I started to let them walk all over me. I was scared that if I upset them that they would want to live with [REDACTED] full time. I focussed on taking care of all of their needs and forgetting about my own. Even though I was divorced from [REDACTED] I was still living in fear and as though he had control over me. We have been separated for over [REDACTED] years now, and [REDACTED]

Recently, I was walking in town with a close, male friend when [REDACTED] approached us. [REDACTED] assumed control over my personal life. He was emotional and threatened my friend. [REDACTED] asked about a chance to reconcile our marriage. He caught me off guard, I felt sorry for him, I reminded him he has a fiancé; I wished him well and said goodbye. The next day he sent me an inappropriate email stating that he was, and always will be in love with me. I asked him to stop this inappropriate communication.

The next day [REDACTED] appeared on my door step in tears claiming that he did not love his fiancé. I told him that he cannot be at my home and asked him to leave. He sent me another email, this time I replied, reminding him that our marriage was definitely over. I was clear and respectful.



When he returned the kids home to me the next day, [REDACTED] sent me a text complaining that I didn't greet him. I replied there was no need for me to see him, that I would give him the results from my daughter's medical tests when we received them. Coincidentally, I ran into [REDACTED] when I was at the medical clinic with my daughter a few days later. It was awkward but my daughter was pleased to see us talking, I told him I would call him after my daughters' appointment to discuss the doctors' opinion of her medical condition.

When I called him he quickly turned the conversation into one about finances and my appearance. I ended the call politely and blocked his number again. [REDACTED] started abusive emails again. I replied that it was disappointing that, even in these circumstances with our daughters' medical condition and for the sake of the children he could not commit to respectful, responsible communication about the care of the kids. I have demonstrated this for [REDACTED] years now but, as he is clearly unable to, I have now ceased all contact with him. I also emailed [REDACTED] fiancé and forwarded a copy of his previous inappropriate emails to me. I made it clear that I do not want any part of this type of dysfunctional and inappropriate communication. I simply want to live my life in peace, free from [REDACTED] constant abuse and harassment. As always, my communication was polite and respectful and I wished them both well.

I have developed an irrational response to any form of communication from [REDACTED] based on his past abuse. I have a physical and emotional reaction when he drops the kids off and speeds off from my driveway [REDACTED]. I have had many conversations with [REDACTED] past friends, colleagues and

professional people in [REDACTED] who have also experienced [REDACTED] abuse. He has a reputation for being an aggressive bully [REDACTED]. Every time someone else tells me about their unpleasant experience with [REDACTED], I feel a sense of relief, that it is not just me. I have had people tell me they don't know how I lived with him for so long, and now I wonder the same.

I am an intelligent, strong, rational woman, but I am unable to control the physical anxiety when he communicates with me. It is an all-consuming instinct to flight; I feel the adrenaline release and my heart rate rise. I still attend regular counselling to develop ways to minimise the effects that [REDACTED] abuse has had on me.

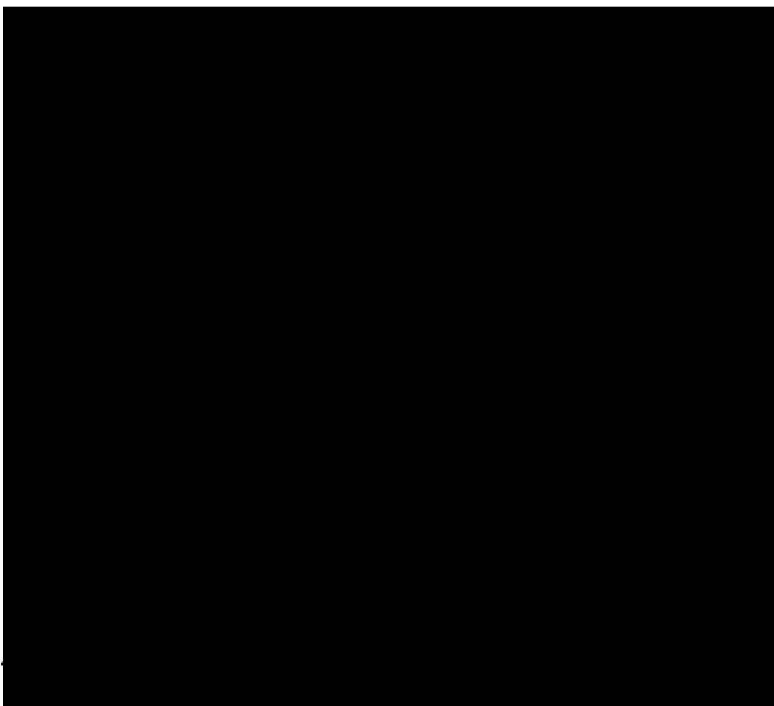
[REDACTED] years out of the marriage it is getting easier. I try not to worry about the kids wanting to live with [REDACTED] fulltime or [REDACTED] turning them against me. I simply continue to be the best Mum I can, as I always have, when they are in my care. They often call on me when [REDACTED] is unable to meet their needs when they are in his care. This is a bonus for me, I get to see my kids on the week they are not with me and demonstrate that I am always there for them. I have learnt to trust the parenting that I have provided them with all these years and as I continue to live my life, maintain strong boundaries and be true to myself, their respect for me grows. They see me committed to creating a sustainable, healthy, home and lifestyle for them and achieving my study and employment goals. I respect their relationship with their Dad, and, as hard as it is at times, I refrain from speaking about him negatively.

The expectation has been for me to be well equipped to care for myself and my children, maturely and responsibly in the event of the traumatic separation from my abusive partner. I have had to take responsibility for all of the necessary lifestyle changes in order to leave an intolerable situation. This has come at a great cost to me financially, emotionally and psychologically. While I was coping with the trauma of the separation, [REDACTED] ongoing abuse and harassment, caring for the kids and [REDACTED] constantly changing demands in relation to this, selling and moving house, finishing my degree and finding work, [REDACTED] lifestyle was one of irresponsible self-indulgence and blame. [REDACTED] has avoided responsibility for his damaging, abusive behaviour; he has not had to make drastic changes to his lifestyle, and still continues his bullying. If it were not for the Child Support Agency, he would be able to avoid his financial obligations to me and the children as well.

Often, the focus of domestic violence is the physical aspects of it. It is a well-documented fact that too many women in our communities are being killed each year as a result of domestic violence and that must be addressed immediately. My hope is that my story can shed some light on the insidious nature of ongoing emotional, psychological and financial abuse, and the effect this has on families.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my story. It has been a cathartic experience for me and I am hopeful that it may assist you in the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Kind Regards,



ph:  
email



At last, an opportunity to speak out against domestic violence, although it took the extreme situation of Rosie and Luke Batty to bring domestic violence to attention.

Years ago, when I was in a difficult situation, there was little if any, support to be found.

While the more serious and dramatic cases of domestic violence sadly make the headlines, I would like to point out the effect of insidious domestic violence that is experienced by many women in the form of constant verbal attacks either face to face or by email, text messages, phone calls and, just as damaging, conversations with the children of the failed partnership. Often this is combined with withholding the woman's dues such as finance, goods, etc.

These unseen constant attacks wear down the recipient and their families, but often do not come to public attention, even though the effect on the target can be as severe as physical abuse.

This is not discounting the excellent community services that offer counselling and advice.

In my family, my daughter has been harassed by her former partner since their separation and subsequent divorce three years ago. She left the marriage after much counselling, because she could no longer tolerate his uncontrollable outbursts of anger and insults, aimed mostly at her, but also at family, friends, and his own colleagues.

**Financial Effects: withholding or threatening to withhold settlement payments**

When my daughter left the marriage, she was responsible for selling the family home and purchasing a modest home suitable for her and her children to live in. At the time her financial situation was non-existent. When she has found work it is often part time or of markedly lower pay than her ex-partner's. She is also in a challenging financial position as he threatens not to pay out the money he owes her.

**Effects on the children and difficulties of shared parenting**

Her former partner chooses when to have the [REDACTED] children, so it becomes controlled parenting rather than shared parenting. He refuses to communicate in a civil manner, but criticises, and divulges his bad feelings towards their mother to the children rather than assisting in making decisions regarding their welfare. He has the financial capacity to provide them with more worldly goods than their mother can, and will entice them to take holidays etc. with him at inappropriate times.

**Emotional Effects**

Having left the marriage because of his bullying behaviour, she is now not only dealing with a more frugal lifestyle, which her former partner gloats over, but also having to give up her children for half the time. She avoids any repercussion concerning the arrangements he demands for his time with the children, because he threatens to take them full time if she doesn't comply. The present arrangements only allow her to have her children half the time, this is distressing not only for a mother, but for the extended family, but as a family we are loathe to interfere in any way for fear of making the situation worse for her, or the children. This leaves her having to accept his bullying behaviour, unable to defend herself for fear of repercussion, having to swallow her anger and hurt and behave impeccably, for the sake of the children whilst he continues to make demands in order to suit himself.

Whilst the common answer to an oppressive relationship is to leave the situation, the cost of leaving intolerable circumstances can be as exhausting and distressing as was the marriage itself.

[REDACTED]

( [REDACTED] s Mum )