



RCFV - ANONYMOUS




29th May 2015

To whom it may concern,

My name is  and I am a victim of domestic violence. I was in a -year relationship with a man who manipulated and controlled me, abused me verbally and mentally, and once or twice, abused me physically.

I am making this submission to the Royal Commission as I feel extremely strongly about this issue, but even more strongly about the fact that the voices of the people in my situation – mental abuse rather than physical – need to be heard more.

I fear that a lot of people who are in my situation do not realise they are in a violent and abusive relationship because their partner has not physically assaulted them. I certainly did not realise.

In fact, I did not realise that I was in an abusive relationship until just three weeks ago (more than  after I separated from my former husband) when my counsellor pointed it out in no uncertain terms, and put me in touch with the family violence workers in her organisation.

I was shocked to my core to discover that I was a victim of domestic violence. I believed “domestic violence” applied only to physical assault and while my former husband had physically assaulted me once very early in our relationship, it was not the main reason I was concerned about our marriage. His continual manipulation, paranoia and controlling behaviours were what ended our marriage when I left him, but I had absolutely no idea this constituted abuse.

I also did not realise that his behaviour was abuse because he has a psychiatric illness, but I now know that a mental illness is absolutely no excuse for domestic violence.

I am making this submission to shine more light on this side of domestic violence. There is a lot of focus on physical violence but I believe there needs to be more education about mental abuse and how this is just as devastating to the victim as being hit by your partner. I have attached a story on the following pages, which I wrote about my experience. I hope this gives you some insight into how I have been affected by my experience.

Please, I implore you to focus on this issue in your deliberations. I am willing to give evidence if required so please contact me if you need to.

Kind regards,



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Running on empty

By [REDACTED]

I have always been a strong, independent woman, hell bent on my career and making a mark in my chosen occupation, [REDACTED]. I wanted to be a [REDACTED] and work in [REDACTED], but it wasn't long into my first job there were signs I just wasn't cut out for it. Far from it. I would get upset when my [REDACTED] found a flaw in my [REDACTED], I found it incredibly difficult to [REDACTED], and I cried after spending all day [REDACTED]. I was okay in the [REDACTED] but came totally unstuck when I got a job on a [REDACTED]. My world crumbled – I couldn't be a [REDACTED] after all.

It was not long after I had returned from a [REDACTED] sabbatical travelling around Australia that I met [REDACTED]. He was working in my parents' business and had a charm that was magnetic. He was clearly attracted to me and that in turn, attracted me to him. We were together [REDACTED] years before we married. I didn't sleep much in the two weeks leading up to the big day and it's only now that I realise it was because I knew it was going to be a mistake.

I'm not entirely sure when the "a-ha" moment came. I would say it was more like a slow reveal. A slow burn that finally left its mark, indelible, on my psyche. You'll think that's crazy when I tell you the next bit.

The first sign came when he tried to strangle me after we came home from a night out. He accused me of flirting with a man I was speaking to, a man I had worked with and with whom I was having a friendly chat, and accused me of sneaking off to the toilets to have sex with him. In full view of everyone. He was drunk. I was drunk. I forgave him.

The physical violence didn't continue. There was the threat of it – a shove here, a raised fist there – but he didn't lay a hand on me again. But from then on there was a sneaky infiltration of my brain, a pernicious manipulation, guilt trips and convincing pseudo-science talk. A way of controlling my behaviour with small comments, criticisms disguised as "jokes", and a reliance on a mental illness I'm still not sure actually exists. He was ill – it wasn't his fault. He loved me so much. Then he would call me a stupid bitch in the next breath.

The manipulation continued for [REDACTED] years. Although I am no longer with [REDACTED], he is still in my head and that makes me so angry. There are so many things I need to change – I need to move from this town, I need to clear his memory from my life, I need to cleanse my body and breathe intent into my being again. But first, I need to change my brain and heal.

I can't remember much of the day I made up my mind to end our [REDACTED]-year union. We had been at a work function the night before and he had embarrassed me with his drunken ramblings to my client. But that wasn't what pushed me over the edge. At the function, he was full of praise for me in front of everyone but when we got home he showed such disdain and malice towards me with his vicious words, it would have been evident to any eavesdropper that he hated me.

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When I told him it was over, he begged and pleaded. He cried, told me he loved me, and tried again to guilt me into staying. But I was on auto pilot and nothing was going to stop this 400-tonne aircraft. Nothing at all – not even a mountain.

I went to my parents' and told him he had two days to leave. Thankfully he did but that didn't end the harassment, manipulation and guilt trips, abusive phone calls, messages and comments on social media, and the stalking. It's something I am still putting up with to this day. An intervention order is my next step and it's been [REDACTED] since I made my choice.

Not long after the separation, I loaded a crazy mix of house and electronic music onto my phone, put on my crappy old sneakers, plugged in the earphones and ran out the front door. I don't know why, but I ran and ran and ran, with hard-core music pounding in my ears. My legs ached and my lungs burned but I kept running. I was so unfit but I felt alive – and dead – all at the same time. Thoughts coursed through my head like speed bumps, but I kept running. The sound of my feet on the footpath pounded those thoughts out the other side.

The running was a sanctuary and the music became a very loud soundtrack. The electronic tunes were what I had always loved but I hadn't been able to enjoy them much in recent years because [REDACTED] hated the genre. Reclaiming the music reminded me of who I am, of who I was before [REDACTED], and who I needed to be again.

As most runners will tell you, it didn't take long for the running to become an obsession. I ran every day and injured myself. The physio told me I went too hard, too fast – I was crazy to take up running over [REDACTED]. I ignored her and despite the injury setbacks, I soon realised I needed a goal so set my mind on a fun run six months away and started training properly, intently and thoroughly.

The day I first ran six kilometres without stopping at all, a certain song pounded in my ears about the half-way mark. It spurred me to keep going when I was just about to stop and walk for a bit. Even though I had a long way to go, I had already come so, so far and the song made me realise I had no-one else to beat but myself, my own thoughts telling me to stop when I didn't actually want to. Or need to.

And that was the day the motto "mind over matter" finally made sense. My thighs were crying out for respite, my face was pouring with sweat, my lungs wanted more oxygen than I could give them, and even my fingers were hurting, but I kept going. Because of this song, a song that summed up my resolve with its words and repetitive, pulsating beat.

That was five months ago and since then this song has been placed on all of my running playlists. And while I put the songs on shuffle, it never fails to come up exactly when I need it. There aren't many words, but that's okay – the ones I really need are there. "Here we go now ... here we go ... here we go ... **C'MON!**"

Really, that's all I need to hear.

The song tells me to keep going, keep slogging, because there will be, very soon I know for sure, a light where there has only been darkness. A time when all my hard work will pay off

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and my happiness will return. I am still that strong, independent woman. I know it but the running compounds that fact and etches it deep into my being.

Last Sunday I ran that fun run I set my sights on so many months ago. I was equal parts elated and terrified, but when I crossed that finish line I was the proudest I've ever been of myself. Ever. I walked off away from the crowd, bent over with my hands on my knees and my head down and wept. For myself. For my strength. For my resolve. I was happy beyond belief.

I recently read this quote from American journalist and long-distance swimmer Diana Nyad: "I'm overwhelmed with the strength of my body and the power of my mind. For one moment, for just one *second*, I feel immortal."

This is true when I'm running, and that in turn drives me when I'm not.

So, put your earphones in, turn it up and run with me.

My song: Go West! (Special D RMX Edit, from Skitzmix 24 mixed by Nick Skitz), Arcadipane vs. Balloon