

Stories of Hope



Finding hope and strength



Moving on from the experience of family violence is not easy, but it is possible. Below are stories of women who have been impacted by family violence and sought assistance and support to help them through.*

SASHI'S STORY

I moved to Australia from India to an arranged marriage organised by my parents. I had only met him three times before that but he seemed nice and I didn't want to disappoint my parents and bring shame to the family by refusing. I felt I had no choice and I wanted to come to Australia as I knew it would be a good opportunity for me.

I had always wanted to be a nurse and began my training a year after I arrived. I qualified and started working on a surgical ward soon after.

The violence began around the same time I started my training. He wasn't keen for me to be at university and constantly questioned me about who I spoke to there, about some women I studied with and how many men were in the course. He would prevent me from talking to other people

when we went to church and when I called my family in India, he would limit the time I could speak with them. He yelled at me for no reason and berated me for everything – my cooking, the way I cleaned the house, the way I spoke. Other times he was loving and supportive. I felt isolated and alone, and confused about his behaviour. I thought I was a bad wife and that if I could just do better it would be OK. I blamed myself.

I became pregnant the year after I qualified and his violence began to get worse. He became more and more demanding, controlling and manipulative. One day he started slapping me and only a week later this escalated to kicking and punching. I was worried for my baby and for myself.

At work I found it hard to concentrate – the violence at home started to affect my work. I spoke

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to my Manager and she was understanding and referred me to a family violence counselling service. The service helped me understand that the violence was not my fault and that I didn't deserve this.

It took me a year to leave him. I was afraid as I didn't have any support networks or friends but the service that supported me were wonderful. They helped me to find a place to live and referred me to a legal service to sort out his access to our son. I have on-going counselling to help me deal with the impacts of what happened to me. Some days are hard and I still struggle not to blame myself for what happened, but I am so glad that my son and I now live without the violence in our lives.

ALICE'S STORY

My partner was physically and emotionally violence. It started with pushing and shoving and taking my keys when I wanted to leave. He was very insecure about past relationships and jealous of people he thought were a threat. He'd call me names and some nights it would go on for hours. The next day he was sorry and said he didn't know why he said and did the things he did. I believed him because I wanted the relationship to work and I loved him – I just didn't love what he was doing.

We went to counselling together and at first he seemed to have changed but it didn't last. I kept telling myself that it was the drink, and I tried to change my way of thinking and acting. Nothing worked and I knew I had to get out. I spoke to a friend who helped me cope and realise I had to leave.

After I left he started to stalk me. At first he would call me a few times a day. When I started to ignore his calls he would call back again and again or he would text me and demand to know why I wouldn't speak to him and if I was seeing someone else. He started to turn up at my work or at my new house. It got so bad I had to call the police who helped me take an intervention order out against him.

Some days I don't know how it got to this. I am in a new relationship but find it hard to trust. I have helped others who are in similar family violence situations and always tell them: believe in yourself and tell yourself you deserve better. No matter what they tell you, never ever believe that the abuse is your fault.

SARAH'S STORY

I was in an emotionally abusive relationship. He seemed like a really nice guy at the beginning but he changed once we moved in together. I hoped that he would change – that it was just a phase. He was always looking through my things, questioning my activities, questioning me about my past, consistently brought me down about my weight, comparing me to his ex-wife, calling me names. His actions made me feel wrong about everything.

A friend noticed the change in me – I was withdrawn, in my own head a lot of the time. She encouraged me to talk about it and I spoke to my doctor also. I found the strength to end the relationship. For a while he wouldn't let me go and would always be asking for a second chance. I knew his past actions would be repeated and with support from a counsellor and my doctor I had the strength and belief in myself to say no.

I feel a much stronger person now. It was a hard decision and I know I was lucky as many women have experienced more abuse after they leave. I have needed time to heal the hurt, but am starting to feel like myself again.