

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

25th November to 10th December 2020



A survival story told by a VIDA Service User

I wanted to share my story to show that it is possible to get out an abusive relationship. I was with my partner for over a decade and had moved abroad in 2018. The relationship had progressed from emotional abusive before becoming frequently violent after a decade, particularly after I had moved overseas with him. I had found myself increasing isolated and reliant on my partner and as a result lost my independence and confidence. I was walking on egg shells constantly and suffered depression. I didn't tell anyone what was happening as I believed my partner when he said it was my fault and that people would side with him. Eventually, I returned to the UK with no belongings. It was incredibly hard to leave everything behind and fly back alone unsure if I would be welcome. My ex-partner had convinced me I was worthless and family and friends did not care. I have come a long way since that point with the support of family, friends and Eva.

When I returned to the UK I eventually confided in my brother what had happened and he was so supportive showing me that there are people who will believe and support you. I also slowly confided in friends and the rest of my family. It was difficult as I still loved my partner and believed much of what he had said to me. I found the strength to end the relationship with my ex-partner - by email for safety reasons. I also went to the hospital to get my injuries checked and to see the doctor for help with my depression. Through my doctors surgery I was referred to Eva.

I have been part of the Arts and Crafts group for over a year now. I have met some good friends who genuinely care about me and understand what I have been through. They have also had similar experiences. There was no pressure to talk about my experience - it was more a case of having a safe place to be myself and do some crafts and colouring. This was great as I had I not felt safe for so long and still have times when I'm not ok. The group has helped me see what I feel is normal and ok. I have enjoyed doing a number of activities including making an Easter bunny bag and a calendar. The craft group organiser also arranged for boxes to be sent out so that the group members could do crafts at home during lockdown.

#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible



#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible

I have completed the New Beginnings programme through Vida. This has helped me understand more about how the trauma from my abuse has affected me and suggested some coping strategies. My healing journey is continuing further through Eva one-to-one-therapy. Each step I take moves me emotionally further away from my life with my abuser.

I have a greater understanding of abusive behaviours and now realise that although the violence occurred very late in the relationship it was a progression from emotional abuse that had started very early in my relationship. Sharing my experiences with others who have been through abuse has been invaluable. I now understand that the abuse was my partner's fault and not mine. Through the support I still receive I have been able to stop my abuser coming back into my life which I may not have been able to do before as I may not have recognised the abusive tactics he was using.

At the start of 2019 I had little confidence, I could barely sleep and was tense and hunched up most of the time. I struggled to look for work as everytime I tried to fill in an application I was worried that I wasn't good enough and hadn't worked in a while. I also found it hard to concentrate - I couldn't read a book or watch a tv programme.

Through understanding what happened to me my sleep and concentration have improved. I feel much safer than I have in a long time - thanks to Eva and the support of family and friends. I can see the positives in my life and am able to hold onto these in bad times. The support I have received has been life changing. When I returned to the UK I was physically and emotionally scarred and now I feel stronger and happier than I have in years. I still have a lot to process but I can sleep better at night and have made some good friends. I am slowly learning to trust myself and other people more.

This has enabled me to find work and get involved in volunteering. I feel like I am finding myself and I am in a place where I can help other people and continue to rebuild my life.



Not all violence is physical or visible; control and manipulation is abuse too.

