

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

25th November to 10th December 2020



A survival story told by a VIDA Service User

As I woke up and looked around at the doctors around me I kept thinking this must be a dream?... Maybe I had an accident and they had got it all wrong! My face was black and blue and I had finger marks around my neck. I was photographed, swabbed and examined. The hotel had called the police and told them what had happened, as guests in hotel room next door had heard arguing and me screaming. The police kept asking about how this had happened...the person who was supposed to love me had inflicted a head fracture and raped me, on a holiday that was meant to be a fresh start for us. Well in a way it was for me!!!!

When I was informed my partner was in custody , I knew the past few months had accumulated to this moment. It had always been hidden away from the world. Now it was out there. You would have thought I would have left years ago, escaped the daily abuse but I didn't. It's so hard to explain why you don't leave!...Maybe you can't believe it's happening! You can somehow stop this? It's your fault or he will carry out his threats to kill himself or even worse me and our unborn child, or I am that useless person he tells me, and I wouldn't be able to cope on my own!

Again he wasn't prosecuted as I withdraw my support... I took further beatings and his control and abuse got worse. It reached a new intensity. I was left with no self-esteem, all that confidence I once had, had gone. I had no self-worth, in fact most days I wished I wasn't here.... I made 2 attempts to end my life. I lost touch with friends and family. I was told what to wear, even what to eat. My whole existence was controlled. Luckily I had one person I confided in... my midwife. She didn't judge me , she listened and guided me and helped me take those necessary steps to begin a new life. Now when I look back ...8 years it is, I wonder how I got through those very dark days....I felt it was me being punished for his abuse. I had to be relocated without my family, friends, belongings. No money, no access to money without documents such as my passport , birth certificate. He had kept such things lock away from me. I couldn't even get into a refuge because I had never claimed benefits....7 months pregnant I was, but I did take those steps that strength was always there and once I got away from him I knew it wasn't me, it was not my fault HE had inflicted the abuse.

#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible



During my journey I had people who cared or who went that extra mile, my midwife , who then got me in touch with women's aid, who then supported me for the first 2 years. My outreach worker " my guardian angel" I call her! She got me accommodation , help me furnish it, even got me baby things and helped me get back a life without his abuse. She always went that extra mile, nothing was ever too much. Even when he found me and I was rehomed again she stuck by me and would be there at the end of the phone to hear my tears and fears.

When you leave abuse it is harder then dealing with the abuse. I perfectly understand why so many women go back to their abuser you have to find deep courage, strength like you have never felt, but trust me you can, it has always been there.

It never goes away.... "that fear" but you manage it and day by day and that strength and confidence gets stronger. Now he knows the strength and confidence I have and won't dare to come near us. See that's what made the abuse stop when I unleashed the strength and confidence to stand up to him. Just over 7 years now and he has not come near us, He has never missed a CSA payment, he did at the start, even refused to accept he was the father but when I unleashed court proceedings , police arrests his threats and control all stopped.

Now when I look back I don't have hate or anger, I am pleased I faced the abuse (you probably reading this and thinking what the hell is she saying...) but I wouldn't be the person I am today and I wouldn't have met so many supportive people who have guided me....my NHS midwife....my outreach worker....my therapist at Vidayes I have the scars, and memories I cannot forget , but I have my angel daughter. There are moments she reminds me so much of him, her stubbornness, his eyes, but I don't feel hate, the exact opposite. We would have been nothing like the mother and daughter we are today. I am now back with my beautiful family, all my family together, and I am so proud of the journey I have accomplished to get here. The message I will leave you withyou feel it's you, your fault...no one will believe you, but you will be believed! You do have that strength, to continually face abuse and reach out for help takes enormous strength. You are not alone, and you will be believed.....Tragically abuse is all too common but you will join the group of ladies who share and have one thing in common.....a tragic awful journey of the abuse they have faced and the inspirational women they have become.

Today I facilitate the women's group I attended on my journey and have become that confident, happy if not a better person than I once was.

My life was controlled by the abuse but that isn't my future.



I dedicate this to E my midwife's who got me away from the abuse.

T my support worker who cared and protected us.

J my Vida therapist who listened and unleashed my confidence.

Lovely ladies I have met at the women's group including my bestie xx

My beautiful guardian angel "my daughter".

My partner and children for all their love and always being there.

Thank you to my abuser as I wouldn't be the better person I am today.



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

