

Lisa's Story

This is a true story, told in class by a former student. She was asked and agreed to record her story for future classes.

My name is Lisa. I am 36 years old and a non-traditional Indian Hills student. I would like to talk to you about domestic violence.

Understanding domestic violence

What is domestic violence? It is a pattern of coercive behavior used by one person in order to maintain power and control in a relationship. Batterers repeatedly subject their victims to physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and financial tactics of control in order to force them to do something batterers want them to do without regard to the victim's rights or well-being.

Power and control wheel

Power and control are at the hub of the wheel because they are at the center of violent relationships. Batterers do not batter because they are drunk, high, stressed out or angry. They batter because they want to maintain power and control over their victims, and use any means they can to do so.

Each of the spokes of the wheel represents a category of abusive tactics, ranging from emotional abuse to economic abuse to use of children. These are tactics of control and, although every violent relationship is different, they share many of these tactics in common.

The rim of the wheel represents physical and sexual violence. The threat or reality of physical and sexual violence hold the violent and abusive relationship in place because it is the ultimate tactic of control. Although some abusive relationships do not include the reality of physical and sexual violence, the threat is always there for the victim, and the fear that goes along with that threat can be a powerful motivator for the victim to stay in a relationship.

My story

I am a survivor of 13 years of domestic violence. I married my childhood best friend and everything seemed good for about three months. Then that's when things began to happen. Arguing, yelling, and threats. This is the "tension building phase." I was scared to say the wrong thing or do something that would make him mad, or I would keep the kids quiet so not to set him off. It was like walking on eggshells. He also drank a lot and though it wasn't the cause, it intensified the situation.

If he didn't like something I said or did, then the next phase was the "explosion phase." This is when he would yell, scream, call me names, threaten me, and then the physical part. I would get hit in the mouth or he would grab me by the throat.

Then several hours later, the "honeymoon phase." That is when he says: I'm sorry, I didn't mean it, if you wouldn't make me so mad I wouldn't hurt you, I love you baby, I'll never do it again. Those were all of the classic phrases.

As time went on, the domestic violence got worse. If I disagreed or gave looks that were not approved of, I would be called names and hit. He would break TV remotes, phones and dishes. He would punch walls or break furniture. All of these were "intimidation" tactics to scare me. I was repeatedly told that I was a slut or nobody would want me because I'm stupid or ugly. He loved to play mind games, making me think it was always my fault or things happening were in my head. He would humiliate me in front of his friends by putting me down.

I wasn't allowed to have friends, and he timed me to go to the grocery store. If I took too long, I was accused of cheating or seeing someone behind his back. Most of the time he had to go everywhere I did, especially taking my kids to school. There was one time he wouldn't let me out of my house for a week; I couldn't talk to anyone, especially on the phone. I couldn't even talk to my parents. It was never his fault. He would always tell people I was crazy and it was always my fault. He was afraid I would tell people what he was doing to me.

He would threaten to hurt my children and my family. I wasn't allowed to get a job. On two occasions I was allowed to get a job, and he would sabotage it. I would have to quit or I would get fired. If I did "get" to work, he would take my money so I never had any for my kids.

He introduced me to drugs and if I didn't want them, he would spike my food or drink. I became addicted to methamphetamines. On one had it helped me be able to fight back, to stay up longer than him to make sure my kids were safe. But on the other hand, I was now addicted and had another problem to deal with. He would threaten me that he was going to commit suicide to make me feel guilty. He would call me repeatedly. The record was 238 times in one night with 123 text messages ... all threatening.

In 13 years, he was convicted of domestic abuse four times. There were eight restraining orders (which he would convince me to drop), two violations of a restraining order, and I was arrested once because I fought back and he looked worse than me. He would also use sex as a way to control and abuse me.

There were several permanent injuries because of the abuse; to name a few: repeated broken ribs, herniated disk in my neck and back, several teeth knocked out, dislocated shoulder, broken collar bone, one miscarriage, and 3-4 handfuls of hair pulled out.

In the three years since I broke the cycle of violence with the assistance of the grace of God and the gift of DHS (Department of Human Services), I still have a restraining order on my ex-husband. About a year ago, he chased me in my car at 80 miles an hour, trying to run me off the road to kill me. Now, he is attempting the cycle with our 11-year-old daughter. She has been taught the Power and Control Wheel and we do not allow the domestic violence cycle to be repeated.

You might ask, why did I stay? I thought that I could change him. Then it was FEAR of the abuse getting worse or him carrying out his threats. Believing his promises to quit. And worst of all, the unknown!

I am an advocate for women and children of domestic violence and sexual assault. There are safe places to go and you must make a safety plan if you are in an abusive relationship and get out. Please help

anyone who is in a domestic violent relationship. This cycle is not age-specific. The best defense against a batterer is to tell your family, friends, co-workers, clergy, or any trusted person. You do not deserve to be hurt or scared by anyone!

You can survive ... I did.

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