

**Submission  
No 153**

## **COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 3 May 2021

Partially  
Confidential

## Alone

I started this story with one word and that is how I have felt most of my life and I think how every victim of domestic violence would feel. That's is how every woman, man or child would feel when they are faced with this silent and deadly attack.

I will start with some of my background story, I came from divorced parents and there was DV within that relationship. Although I remember some of that time a lot of it, I'm sure I have forgotten the worst parts. Most of my childhood was magical and I had wonderful grandparents who I spent a lot of time with, I had a wonderful step father who treated me and loved me like a daughter. I was treated with respect and I was loved. I felt like a princess most of the time.

I first kissed my future husband at the age of 14 he was one of the cool boys he was handsome and had some of that devil about him perhaps that is why I felt this fated attraction. This was where it begun, and I didn't know. I did not realise what cohesive control was until just recently. I thought it was stupid teenage stuff we would love and we would fight usually he would fight and I would say things like I'm sorry I won't do it again even though I never really knew what I had done. We moved on and both had other people in our lives but by the time we were 19/20 we were drawn to each other again.

This is the time that I started to be alone every day and every week I would have done something wrong or something to make him angry and it would result in some of the cruellest acts of violence toward me that I accepted and I let happen. I shouldn't have looked at that man over there or even let that other person talk to me. He didn't want me to spend time with my parents he didn't like my family he would say no your mum doesn't like me who does she think she is and he made all sorts of threats toward my family that made me nervous and scared to be around them so I slowly stopped spending time with them. He made me feel like I was a bad person if I went out with my friends and he felt my friends didn't like him, so I didn't see my friends. Over the years I would protect him and tell my family and friends how great he was but it soon became too hard so I only seen my family when I had no other choice and I just didn't see my friends or socialise with them

I was alone and I had no idea what to do or how to even do this. It's like you can't breathe and you don't know when you are going to breathe again. You have no control over what is going to happen to you so instead you try to control your own environment as much as you can. You lie to people you tell them you're sick or the baby is sick so you can't come and see them. You find every possible reason to try and avoid everyone. This how you try to breathe, to try and make yourself as safe as possible but it never works because he always finds something you did wrong. You cooked the tea wrong you didn't speak to his mother very nice and you just keep saying I'm sorry I won't do it again.

I hid the mail in case there was a bill in there that I hadn't paid yet even though he never gave me money for the bills or the food or anything much he was always saving and he told me that it was savings if I needed it for anything but if I asked him for any it would become an issue so I never asked. When my eldest baby was born he came to the hospital and while nursing the baby he told me that if I fucked up he would take my baby, he said if he wanted he would just walk out of the hospital with her and I would never see her again. There would be nothing I could do about it. I went back to work when my babies were all a week old because I needed to feed us. And he never offered to buy food I never asked I did it myself (he told me I could do it myself, if I wanted a house I could

pay for it myself. So, I did) perhaps it was the only thing I did have, the ability to provide for my family. My work was my only saviour it was the only place I got to go by myself but if I was home late and didn't have dinner on the table by 6 then I was in trouble. I would drive to home to my house in tears wondering why I am going there, what sort of mood will he be in what have I done wrong who did I talk to today.

My babies were at home and that's who I went home for. no one ever came to our house to visit and I didn't really have a support system other than his family who knew most of what was happening, maybe they didn't like it, but they never helped it stop. Maybe they didn't know how to so their advice to me was to not worry about it. he doesn't mean it. It will be ok tomorrow. he will be ok when he wakes up.

I knew that this wasn't right, but I didn't know that this wasn't right so every day I woke up and pretended like everything was alright. I have 5 children. Where were they while this was happening in my life? They were there they seen and heard so much more than I ever thought. I thought I was hiding it from them, but I really wasn't. I didn't know just how this would affect them as our family grew. I still don't know just what they seen and heard as we have not ever really talked about any details but I know they suffered now and that is something I cannot change and that is the one thing I wish I could. I used to watch them sleep and whisper silently to them I'm so sorry that this is happening one day we will run away but I never did run away I never did keep them safe I allowed them to be hurt just as much as I was hurting and I didn't know and even if I did what could I do. I told my kids let's just be quite and watch a movie let's not make daddy angry. I thought that was protecting us. I wish I knew. I wish I ran away.

I am not going to fill this with all the bits and pieces of each attack that I received but I wanted to make sure you understand that this was repeated and consistent and happened over a period of 20 years. So, lets fast forward to 2017 and to be honest we had had a much better 5 years before that. He had given up drinking the violence had stopped but the control and the fear of violence was still lurking in the background. I had started to feel more comfortable and to perhaps let my guard down as I started to get more involved in community functions and I found friends and they even visited our home and I visited theirs. I didn't have anything to hide and I didn't feel like I was doing the wrong thing as long as I had his tea ready and gave him everything he needed to be happy then I was able to be a little bit free to do some things that I wanted.

For a period of 8 weeks I was attacked daily, in front of my children I was threatened with death multiple times per day sometimes per hour and had a pillow held over my face a knife held to my throat and more. I was not able to sleep I was not able to show up for work even though I would still try I was mentally and physically exhausted I half heartily attempted suicide twice in the last week of that period by taking tablets that I found in my cupboard because I was ready to die I didn't have the strength to do this anymore (they just made me itchy ) I could no longer go on, every day was a nightmare, just to be alive was a nightmare. But there was still my kids they were still there they were still hurting and it became obvious when my daughter said dad please stop doing this to mum I rang the police and then I hung up and then he attacked me again and I retaliated and cut him then I rang the police again. I told them what had been happening and what I did.

The police came and I thought I was saved I thought that they wanted to hear what had been happening and they listened or I thought they were listening but they didn't they arrested me and

took me back to the station. While I was at the station I was thinking that I would finally be able to tell someone what had been happening to me but every time I talked they didn't seem interested it was like they didn't care so after I had been in the fish tank for around an hour I stopped trying to talk I stopped believing that anyone cared and I realised that no one was here to save me. The police didn't want to listen because they said they had never been called to my house before so as far as they were concerned because I never rang the police in that 20-year period then it didn't happen. There was no knowledge of DV within my house They didn't want to know the story, I was the perpetrator and I deserved to be arrested. The officer that processed my bail told me that I am the worst kind of person and I have broken the law if it was up to him, I would not get bail and I would get locked up for 12 years. The officer that arrested me wanted me to sign her book to say that everything she wrote down was what I told her I said no I told you more than that, but no one cared.

That was the only day in my life that I had ever fought back I saved my own life well I think my daughter saved my life she gave me the strength to stand up. I have no doubt that if I didn't, I would be dead now. But again, I was alone because the people I thought would care didn't

This started a whole process my charges were withdrawn 6 months later because it was self-defence and the police officer went on stress leave and they were unsure when she would come back it. During this time there was an AVO in place and we had some changes made so that we could communicate (for the children) when that went to court a police officer said to my lawyer why does she care isn't she seeing someone else and named the person. Another police officer told him when he went to ask about changing the AVO that I was seeing someone else and named the same person. The most distressing part of this was that the police put my life at further risk by telling him that I had another boyfriend because that was one of his reasons for trying to kill me because he thought that I was having an affair. I have not then and not ever had an affair. The person that they named was someone who I know and who the police associated me with because my neighbour was found collapsed on his lawn this male friend and his wife found him and called for help I went to help and we performed CPR on this man for half an hour until the ambulance came when the police came they asked my friend who was with you and he named me because we did the CPR together but his wife was there the whole time. My neighbour died that day we did not save him despite all our attempts.

I dot trust the police and I don't think I ever will. I will not ask them to help me with any personal issues again

By now DOCs and the family services have been bought in and even though I told them my story I was still required to do a family support program because the reports by the police named me as the perpetrator. I repeated my story so many times I was still made to feel like I had done something wrong I was made to feel like I was a bad mother and everything that he had told me over the years was just reinforced by this program. The positive parenting course only made me feel worse and more confused about the whole situation. I was told how great he was doing and how he really wants things to change no one ever cared about what I needed, and my feelings were not validated.

My children were referred to 13 different counselling services and each service I had to tell my story and it's a long story to tell 13 different times to 13 different people who would listen to it all and then tell me that my kids were too young or they weren't equipped to offer that type of service or we needed a more specialist service or they just don't attend our town. My children still have not

received any counselling on a regular basis. In the years leading up to all this my children had suffered enormously. Their behaviour wasn't destructive to anyone else, but it was them self-destructing. I could not get them to go to school in fact one of my children did 6 weeks in school over a three year period during this time I begged the school for help we had meetings after meeting where I was told by DOCs that I needed to make my home less happy so that my children would want to be at school. I didn't know then that they didn't want to go to school because they were worried that I wouldn't be safe while they were at school and the school had all of these things they put in place but nothing worked cause my children did not feel safe to talk to anyone or to open up. They were scared of DOCS taking them away. It is such a horrible thing to say please go to school or docs will come. I feared docs taking them away. The threat of loosing your family and your life or the life that you know is so crazy and confusing. I was so scared that this bubble I had imagined around me to keep me safe would be burst and how could I cope with that. How could I protect myself? I am sure that people knew but no one ever said anything. Maybe they just hoped that they wouldn't have to deal with it. Or maybe they just hoped that it would go away and my kids would just go to school. Ill just add that the school took me to court but I'm sure they didn't want to answer to all the things they had said and not done so they didn't follow on with that and by then I had done the hard yards on my own and got my kids attending school more regular.

When he came back into the house after my AVO was finished and I had placed a non-violence AVO on him but I couldn't stop him from coming to the house cause it is his home too he was able to join in on the parenting course from family services but he told them what they wanted to hear and what he wanted them to hear. There were comments made about how he could claim the DV money because after all he wasn't the one that was charged. there were threats of if I didn't do parts of the course then DOCs would get back involved and I could lose my children because after all I was the one that had the charge against me. Doing the parenting course involved us each reading out a paragraph of the booklet out loud and talking about it. After 18 months of a once a week progressing to once a fortnight visits this service ended, and our lady left us alone and I'm sure she reported back that we were fixed but we are not he still lives in my house.

He lives here because that is the safest place for me. If he moves out who is going to save me who is going to keep me alive. Who is going to stop him from constantly stalking me harassing me and making my life misery? And do I have to share custody with this man. My kids don't like to leave my side how would they cope with weekends at dads. They don't ever sleep at friends' houses. I am sure that my kids still love their dad, but they know what has happened. How many kids sit at the police station for hours waiting for their mother and making sure she is ok before they even go to the hospital to check if their father is ok. The law certainly won't help me.

I don't have the energy and I don't have the strength it takes I just want to breathe, and I just want to live happily without fear of retribution. I won't tell my story to the police again; they had their chance on that day I was ready I would have been able to. Maybe because I was in shock but regardless it was the only chance, I had to tell my story and I was made to feel like I wasn't worthy. I won't talk to a councillor again because they are mandatory reporters and they will only tell the police and I can't do that again

I can't stand in court and tell anyone what has happened to me it's embarrassing its shame and its failure

Who can I trust, who wants to listen I don't want to be that person that people look at with sympathy and I don't want to be that person who people look at and know what has happened?

Who will say enough is enough who will look out for our children who will make the changes that need to be made to protect all people from this behaviour?

And what's my duty to him anymore do I protect him? because I don't want my children's dad to be in jail. I feel sorry for him. Where would he even live.? Why do I care so much about what happens to him? People think it love it's not love I don't know what it is, but it's not love.

This is why I was alone and why I will remain alone for the rest of my life