

Why didn't they just leave?

Ah that burning question every outsider asks, and every survivor dreads. Why didn't they just leave him? Well let me tell you something love, if it was that easy domestic violence would not be a thing, to first abuse there prey they must get inside our heads. I can't tell you the amount of opportunities I had to go, yet his voice was inside my head 'if you go up KILL you, IL KILL myself, IL KILL your family.' Or no threats at all ' I am so sorry I love you so much IL change I promise'. The other alternative is that they are basically keeping you hostage. Take your keys, control your money, quit there job so your with them 24/7, or and even more unfortunate of late, the country is in lockdown and it's this god awful government keeping you in hell.

Let me tell you I am so grateful I left when I did, I wouldn't be here writing this if I didn't and my child would be motherless. A thought to scary I try to keep out of my mind. Not that's he's making it any easier. Yes. There are other ways to abuse there prey, the family courts! The justice systems finest quality. To make survivors of domestic violence victims once again! And boy do we know it. But this time we know what there up too this time we armed and ready.

So you want to know why we don't just simply up and leave? Well I recently took part in the freedom programme and we learnt about the different personas of an abuser, so I'm going to explain each one to you through my own personal story and explain why I didn't just leave, maybe you will them understand. Maybe then you won't judge me.

The love story.

In order to understand fully how something like this works you need to start at the beginning. When things seemed promising and we weren't really thinking ahead.

Well let me tell you it was no typical love story. In the year of 2016, my father was diagnosed with bladder cancer, he had an operation to remove it but it got infected and by the time his wound healed it was too late, it had spread, he was dying. I couldn't quite cope with this because although we were close now we weren't a few years before, I had treated my parents poorly, and even to this day I haven't forgiven myself. So I self medicated, tequila and beer. Every other day whilst working every hour under the sun.. I was killing myself by trying to not think about it. To let myself feel this would make it real so distraction was key. I had a best friend at this point, IL call him Bob for now for the sake of the book. We decided on a drunken whim to move from London to Brighton. (Stupid idea) so I left my flat that I shared with my oldest friend in London, and moved in to a back Packers hostel. Essentially becoming homeless. That's where we met.

I had seen him around but never bothered talking to him until one morning I needed a cigarette. I should have seen something then to be fair because he was angry and agitated after rowing with someone in his room over noise , I mean who looses it like that over something so petty? I didn't care though at this point. All I saw was six pack, Irish accent and tattoos. I basically had beer goggles on. From then on we became friends, it all came to a head when we ended up in the same room sharing a bunk bed. A cute story I thought we would one day tell the grandkids.

We decided with a few friends to go out clubbing. To be honest I wasn't up for it, it was pissing it down and everyone apart from me did drugs. So I text John asking if just me and him wanted to go out, so we did. Another sign I should have noticed and cared about. Cocaine addict. He was hooked on it every weekend, but again I didn't care I just wanted to numb the pain so he did that while I got drunk. He had told me how his father passed away a few months previous so actually he knew my pain and for that I felt connection, but to him I was easy prey. That night we became started something but I got the phone call I had been dreading which was I need to go home. It's time. I was sure I'd never hear from him again but didn't really care I just needed to see my dad and be with my family. I thought it was over but he stayed in touch, my friend Bob who was meant to join me a few days later, had disappeared, and left me I felt alone and needed someone, so naturally I talked to John about it all, we would meet up on weekends in London hotels and just let it go. A few weeks later my uncle who had also fought cancer passed away, it hurt me more than I thought it would because although me and him were not particularly close I was fond of him, and I knew my dad's turn was next, when this happened I tried to get a few days of work, so John decided to come down for the weekend comfort me. But my boss told me I had to work and made me go in or I was fired. This led to our first argument and boy was it a big one, it was a huge sign, but again I didn't see it.

He had booked coach tickets and spent his money in other stuff so had no money left and he was fuming he blamed me called me every name under the sun and made me pay him back for the tickets hundred quid he wanted and he demanded it from me, I had two days to get it. So I borrowed money, for him after that he cut me off and when he had enough of my text and calls he had rang me telling me to leave him alone and do one basically so I did. And I thought we were done.

A couple of weeks later on my uncles funeral, he had text me wanting to talk. I told him not that day, so we talked the next day and he said he wanted to come see me for the weekend, he missed me.

So down he came, I booked time off work and he came round, and told me he loved me! I couldn't believe after all that he was in love with me! I was so blind it's unreal. But seeing signs and noticing what a god awful human being he was didn't matter, my dad did, so I just ignored signs and carried on. The weeks after that weekend we were planning for him to stay for Christmas, three weeks, with his job he wouldn't be working, and would need somewhere to stay, (I now realize that was all he wanted that Christmas) so my brother key us stay in his flat and we had it all arranged and then he came. We had a slightly awkward Christmas that year after all we had only been officially a couple for a few weeks and he was thrown in the deep end meeting my entire family at Christmas. But we got through it and it was a nice three weeks. And then came the first row with one of my family members. My little brother Stan. John had smoked his weed and didn't ask, so instead of talking like adults like my brother wanted John went for him, verbally, John was in the wrong but had tried to make it my brother's fault I don't know how to be honest but he did and I ended up paying him back. Then started my family not liking him. HM I wonder why?

So he went back to too London. And came back two weeks later, fired and homeless. Planning on going back to Ireland. Boy did I wish he had, my brother let us sublet for a little bit and we returned to the flat. I week later I felt strange so I brought a test. It was positive. We discussed this and I had told him, stay or don't stay but I'm not having an abortion. End of. The next day I went doctors to confirm, I was all over the place emotionally, I mean dad was dying how do I feel about this? Was I allowed to

be happy right now? I told my dad, a decision that not every one agreed with, and five days later he passed away. He was an amazing support for me and helped me through it right up until the funeral.

So you see I couldn't leave him then. I was pregnant , grieving and needed him. Reason number 1.

So we had settled down and started preparing for our little bundle of joy. But the stress of us not working and no money caused rows, big ones to the point I spent then night at my step mums, our first row after dad died was via email because I smoked all the dog ends from the ashtray, he had tried to boot me out of the flat and even made me sleep on the sofa! I told my self it will be ok soon we just need to get jobs and earn some money, so I did, I started a job at McDonald's while he was in and out of work.

The night I stayed at my step mums was the beginning for me , she was concerned so spoke to mother who quite literally kidnapped me and told me to leave him because it was abuse, I didn't see it that way because it wasn't physical, and just saw it as another row, but mum was insistent and only let me go back to him if they had a word, and boy did they, he pulled the wool right over there eyes and I looked like the bad guy. That was it I was trapped, and I was made to feel like the guilty party on both sides. But I couldn't Just walk away then. I just lost my dad, I didn't want my child to grow up fatherless so I convinced myself it would all be ok. But I was wrong and thus started the cycle of abuse that I couldn't escape.

From that night, things got from bad to worse, it still wasn't physical until way later but he had a whole nine months to isolate me, to belittle me and to control me, some might say I told you so, and yes you did, but I didn't know that then do you can't really blame me for that. You see I honestly believe now that unless you have been abused in anyway, you don't understand. You can't, because and believe me when I say, when it's happening to you psychology, you don't see it , you see another lovers tiff, you see just stress, you see that it normal. And that is how it starts and that is reason number two why you can't just leave.

The jailor.

He has already argued with one brother and my parents, so from this point on my family = the enemy. Bit by bit, one by one he started to hate my family, the brother who let us sublet, because he wouldn't let us pay rent a week late, he hated him and didn't want him round, if I didn't agree I was his enemy too. Then there was mum and my stepdad, I could go round there but there not allowed here, because of that night and also, actually I don't know why because all they did was help. That escalated later after the baby was born.

Our daughter was born after 24 hours of labour, my mum was with us the while time and I was so grateful, at one point during labour he literally ordered weed when my mum left the room! Yeah very supportive. After the baby came he cried, he was so happy and clearly in love so was I, it was the most amazing moment if my life, and I thought nothing could go wrong now. A happy little family. My family. Shortly be after the birth I went for a cigarette, something which would often be used as an excuse for beating me later on.

We were eventually offered a house but had to stay at my mum's already full house. We camped out in the living room, it started ok but then he mentioned to me that one of my brother's (another we are now on to the third.) Didn't shake his hand at the hospital. Something he took way to seriously in

opinion. And everyone else's. But that came to a head when he came to visit and ignored him again. I told John I would talk to him, and whilst I did he came charging in and threatened him! I had the baby in my arms and was quite frankly scared myself. So I froze actions I regret today, my brother didn't deserve that at all. This caused a huge row between him and my parents and my little brother whilst they all argued I stayed quiet, if I had taken his side they would be hurt, if I had taken there side so would he. So I said nothing. But all I knew after that was he was ready to cut them off. We moved out and in To our home. I wanted to be happy but my gut told me we wouldn't. By this point my family I was pretty sure hated be and I was so scared I convinced myself it would be ok. It had to be. New house new start. That were the true terror began. Two weeks in we had no money so need to borrow it from someone i said ask mum but he refused so we called my uncle who actually rang my mum. I honestly don't know why this made him as mad as it did all they wanted to do was help us they didn't nothing wrong but nethertheless I had to ban them from coming round ever again. This caused a huge rift. I went to there house behind his back but when he found out he lostvit and I ended up cutting them off. I was officially isolated. My family hated my I lost my friends (apart from one) because all I ever did was ask them for money. I was completely alone. The one friend I had, she did nothing to help apart from listen. I'm sure if I didn't have her I don't know we're I'd be.

So there you have it. Reason number three. They isolate you so you have no one and no where to go. The make you feel that alone you don't want to go. Still sound easy?

To some people the term 'the jailor' means keeping you locked up the house not letting you go any were, but in fact most of the days I was with him if he wasn't working me and baby would have too leave the house all day I mean literally 6-8 hours a day come rain or shine. Sometimes we went to town , sometimes we went to a friend's sometimes we sat in Asda until closing time. We did because , guess what? He needed a rest! Yes ladies you heard this man needed a rest from all the hard work he was doing of sitting around all day smoking weed.

His other version of the jailor was my worst. After a while he would sleep on the sofa every night. So if we had rowed, and he was pissed I would have to stay upstairs. So he got the TV, the tobacco, the food and drink. I would be up stairs from 6-7pm until the morning. He was literally starving me and I was breast feeding so he was technically depriving his child too.

So you see, not only had he isolated me he wore me out, made me too weak to want to go. He had physically and psychologically wore me down. Reason number 5.

The bully.

Yep you read correctly, bullying doesn't just occur on the playground, it happens every where any place. In this case my house. The bullying started right back to my pregnancy, just little things at first like calling me stupid and fat, it didn't really affect me then, but over time it stripped me of any confidence that I had. As a parent and as a person. Bullying does that, even more so when it's done by the man who was meant to love you. I mean after a while you start to think if that's what love is I don't want it, but there's nothing you can do about it. So everyday, little digs become something you get used to, and before you know it, it gets stuck in your head you can't get it out, even after you leave, the voices may be quieter but there still there, the linger silently.

With the bullying comes the beatings, it started off with threats, in fact the first time he went for me we were bathing our daughter and he put one hand on my throat, the other a fist to my face, all while I'm holding on to our baby. It all went downhill from there, he even bought blackout curtains for the purpose that the neighbours didn't see. It started with poking and prodding pushing and shoving, and then quickly escalated to biting, kicking, pulling hair, hands on throat and head butting, all while I'm breastfeeding or just holding our baby. That was my worst I still flinch now. This wasn't every so often it started every week, to every other day, to everyday. He literally beat me to scare me into staying into doing what he wants, there's no way I could leave now?!

That was until he made a confession. Here he was making me feel guilty for not being able to bond with our baby, he admits to shaking her. Not once but three times. He told me so calmly it gave me chills, he could have killed her, he tried to!! From that moment I did try to leave I had to be a monster! Whilst I was getting her ready for bed I looked up symptoms for shaking babies and decided to confront him. BIG mistake. One that nearly cost me my life. He immediately lost his temper, beat me until I couldn't take anymore and in the end put his hand on my throat until I was choking and coughing. He didn't care. I did and was done.

That night I decided to leave I planned on doing so the next day when he was at work. But I had nowhere to go. So I had to think. He went to work, and I called around refuges and charities I was ready but when it came to it I froze, by the time I was ready he texted he was on his way back, I got scared so I put things back and carried on as normal. If I left he would hurt my family, he would find us and kill us, all those threats he made were true. I believed them. I still wanted to leave, I just had to find another way, and of course that was the last time he worked. To be honest, looking back I'm not proud of it, in fact I hate myself for not finding the courage to just go. Especially after finding out what he did to my child, but I was scared, I couldn't I had nowhere and nowhere to go. It even got to the point where it was evident he was enjoying it because he would pick an argument over nothing or pick an old row from weeks ago.

Finally I plucked the courage and called the police, yes I did it! I rang them whilst he was out with baby, I begged them to get back before he did, but they didn't and by the time he got back, he guilt tripped me and convinced me I had mental health problems but he was going to help and support me. I still wanted the police involved but was so scared, eventually they rang me and said I should go to them or they would come round, I got scared and said I didn't matter everything was fine! I was so close. But he overheard. And I was screwed I tried to call them back I tried to stop it but I couldn't, all the while being told I'm splitting his family it's all my fault. Ironically he wanted me to speak to them at my friend's house, he didn't want the baby to watch him get arrested! I spoke to them and they knew I mean they saw all six bruises on my face including a bite mark. Yet I just told them it was a one-off. I was so scared because I knew I had nowhere to go and no one else. He was arrested but released without charge. And all went back to normal.

So there you have it, even more reasons, fear, threats, and thinking I had nowhere to go.

Sitting here and writing this isn't easy, I hate myself so much that I didn't jump at them opportunities, but in these situations it's not our fault it's them they are in our heads and they own us. At least they think they do. Once you're so far in, the right to get out is hard. Unfortunately some victims don't get that chance. Eventually I found that strength and I've never looked back, yet somehow he is still a piece of me, he is still that little voice in my head and he is now fighting me in court for access to our

child. I do not believe the government should allow this to happen, it's allowing the abuse to continue.

King of the castle.

My ex was a man who claimed to be house proud, but in fact he wasn't, he just wanted a housewife. His work pattern was on and off, mostly off due to being with agencies and lack of work. I think the most he lasted was four weeks. When we first moved into the house we agreed that he would cook and clean and I would take care of the baby, that lasted about a week, he would soon come home and berate me for not having dinner ready or the house wasn't clean enough. He had literally know idea how exhausting it was taking care of an infant, or he didn't care, he chose what we watched on TV, what we ate and were kept things, at one point three away any memories I had of my dad of my time in London, I have nothing left of them. Because we needed space. Even though I paid the rent (if we had it it normally went on his 150£ a week weed habit). The house was his castle. And I was his slave.

With that comes the headworker, he puts you down so much, to the point you are so low you can't function with out him. The food is not good enough, clothes aren't clean enough, I missed a spot on the floor, he makes you think you can't do anything and convinces you that you wouldn't cope without him. So there you go another reason you can't just up and leave, because you don't think you could do it on your own, you need them.

The persuader.

This guy is the guilt tripper, after hours of beating and berating me he would apologize, he would cry, he would beg me not to leave and tell me how much he loved me and our baby. He would die without us, he would literally take is own life. Now for me, i was convinced it was true, if he said that now I would say go ahead! But remember, he was already in my head so it was easy to fall for rubbish. Imagine living with that on you conscience? I mean he loved me ight? This was all my fault it's ok I'll change, things will be better. Yeah, right.

I couldn't leave him because he needed me and I needed him. Every time we had our 'rows' it always came back to this. The night I left, I got out before he got the chance too. I didn't believe I deserved any better, I didn't believe I was worthy. Another reason.

There is another, the sexual controller, now honestly, that wasn't an issue in this case, we barely had sex and when we did he was half asleep, it wasn't awful but I just felt empty, unloved. Disgusting. So I would deliberately not clean and wear horrible clothes to make me undesirable, I didn't want sex with him. So I made sure he wouldn't want to have sex with me.v

Im getting to the good part now how I left. It took me two years to find that strength, to get out and live.

But all those things I described, they build up and build up until you can't take anymore and your left with two choices, stay or go? There's one important factor that the abuser never takes into account, and that is a mother's love for there child, they underestimate it, they don't even know how strong it

is. Throughout all the abuse the only reason I survived was my child, the only reason I didn't give up was her, and the night I left was down to her. So next comes

The bad father.

To say he was a bad dad is an understatement, I can't fault he did try for the first few weeks, but then he gave up, he couldn't take the sleepless nights and took it out on us, the first time he was violent, I was holding her in the bath, it didn't matter when he attacked, most of the time I was breastfeeding her or I was just holding her, his anger knew no bounds and he didn't care. The abuse started at night if we woke him up, it then carried on into the day, and my poor little girl witnessed the majority of it, she was only an infant not even 1, and people say she won't remember, I know it's affected her because she is scared of men. She can't be around them unless she know them or I'm with her. When he was with her she cried when it was just me she was so happy and when I knew he was coming home and felt anxious, she felt it too. Who does that? Who scared a child!? He didn't see that though he just accused me of being a bad mum, constantly told me all I cared about was cigarettes and TV, he had know idea what it took to raise a baby on your own. (I might have well have been) he did change the odd happy though and feed her once or twice. That doesn't make him a father though.

Then the days he wasn't working, my poor baby spent most of her first year out side in a pushchair, I would have to take her out 6-8 hours a day so he could rest, it was a joke, but even IL admit towards the end of rather we stayed out.

After his first arrest there was no abuse for a week, alot if guilt tripping though things like he couldn't hurt me because social services would take her and then the bug one, if you leave IL have her adopted if I can't have her you can't gave her. That statement scared me more than anything, I had to stay to keep her with me. But I had to keep her safe. When the physical abuse restarted, it was worse than ever and I thought we were going to die. I had to get out I just didn't know how.

The night I left.

I had spent most of the day outside with our baby, it was around 5pm that we got home and he had demanded my phone, (which I sold do he could have his weed) I didn't have it so he forced me out if the house leaving our baby , to go shop, I got him credit, and I could hear her screaming half way down the street , I ran back in and took her, and then started the worst beating I ever got, he followed me to the hallway and head butted me, which ended up me headbutting my baby, I told him he hurt her as she was screaming but he said he didn't care. I went up stairs and tried to settle her but he followed, he stood over me shouting about how much I embarrassed him, how much he hated us both and wished we were dead. Told me we couldn't leave but he would drown us in the bathtub. That was it. That was when I found my strength, I was getting out, that night. No one threatens to kill my baby. No one. He proceeded to assault me, head hurts, stomping on my legs, hair pulling and punching. After a while he left me to get baby asleep and made me go downstairs. I went for a fag, and sat on the sofa, the abuse worsened. Bites, punched ribs, kicks, head hurts, slaps chunks of hair pulled and hands on my throat. All the while asking me "why can't you change? Why do you lie? Why are you hurting me all the time?? It was 2 hours of torture, all the while baby was asleep, when he had tired himself out, he went for a smoke, I took my chance and ran out if the door, I called for help and the police came and he was arrested, as soon as I got the chance I went in and my daughter was asleep. I could breathe. It was over. I was free. Or so I thought.

After that things were crazy, I saw my family again, and in time we became close again, my daughter has a relationship with them and we have moved on. Life couldn't be better. As for my ex he got a four month prison sentence, suspended for two years, he was ordered to pay a £500 compensation and court fees, ordered to do a course to better his behaviours and I got a two year restraining order. All of which end in December. A year ago he applied to get access to our child, and it is still on going, so far it's been lies and denial, and although he admits abusing me, he takes no responsibility for it, with all the evidence put forward, I am still fighting and it's not right. How is this justice? The man abused us both and we escaped but the justice system seem to think it's ok to let these things continue through them. I left him but he is still with me the only difference is I'm stronger and wiser and can fight back.

So you see, there are various factors for why we can't just leave, but we all have it in us to do so, I am calling for a change. I believe that the family courts should not allow for abusers to drag their victims through court, further making them scared and vulnerable, the severity of the abuse should be taken into account. Any man or woman who puts their child's parent at risk should not get access to that child, that is not love that we not care, that's pure evil and our children need protection.

I hope this reaches the right people, I hope it gives someone courage to speak up I hope this makes a difference.