

Survivor of Domestic Violence Living in Red Deer

Whether you are still in a domestic abuse environment, or whether you are out and free from domestic abuse.... YOU ARE A SURVIVER!! If you are alive you are a survivor and CAN find your way out into a world of respect and self-esteem.

I don't remember much from my childhood so I cannot say whether there was domestic abuse between my parents or not. I do remember that my father regularly physically punished my sister, but those are the only occasions I remember. This does not mean there wasn't abuse going on between my parents, but I don't remember. I have found over the years that a lot of people don't remember if abuse was going on in their homes as children. This does not mean that if it was happening that it did not dramatically affect their lives and in turn their attitudes about domestic violence.

My story begins when I ran away from home at 17 years old to travel across the country from Ontario to Alberta to get away from an emotionless and uncaring mother and sister. The death of my father at age 15, (my hero and biggest supporter) was the major reason that my mother and sister COULD ignore me and treat me the way they had felt they wanted to and needed to and could now do since my protector was no longer around to save me.

Now that I have written that little paragraph, I see that my sisters and mothers rejection and treatment of me, WAS ABUSE, so there is a little insight I didn't really realise before now.

I came to Alberta with a boyfriend, my girlfriend and her boyfriend and we set up in Calgary. My boyfriend was quite a bit older than myself and had a criminal record but had never been aggressive or abusive in any way toward me. After a year we had found our own apartment, a basement suite below people I had known for the year I had been in Calgary. Things were going well; at least I thought they were going well. One day he went out for a while to see friends and when he came back he had been drinking, he started to beat me. I honestly cannot remember the way it all started but I do remember what transpired and how it ended.

He began with smacking me around, this escalated into smashing my head into the fridge and stove threatening that he was going to kill me. I suppose at this point my screaming caused him concern that the police would be called (and in the 60s police did not always respond to domestic abuse

calls as there was little information out there and domestic violence calls were very dangerous situations for officers to attend). My abuser, at this point, decided that he was going to take me a few blocks away to a friend's apartment. We had the keys as they were away and we were to water plants etc. He dragged me by my hair up 17ave S.W. Calgary, with a knife pressed into my back in plain view of anyone who was around, up to our friend's apartment. I was sure at this point that he was going to kill me. I really didn't think by this time that anyone was going to help me. Apparently someone did decide that they needed to call the police but not soon enough. He then decided that he needed to drag me back down 17ave to our apartment which I guess was a good thing in retrospect because this is where the police came to save me.

As he was beating me I heard a BANG BANG BANG on the door and "this is the Calgary City Police". At this point my boyfriend was now frightened and told me to tell them that I had fallen down the stairs and he went to the door. As soon as the police were in the door I ran to them and told them what had happened and they took him away. In the 60s at least the abused had to be the ones to press charges, so I did. Once a couple of days went by I started feeling very bad that I had had him locked up, so I went and dropped the charges, something that is very, very common among the abused women out there. The day he was released from jail he came back to the apartment and as soon as I saw him I was terrified. He was his normal self and felt very bad for what he did, but I was so scared of him even if he raised his hand to scratch his head I would flinch and start crying. A few days went by, I moved and we never saw each other again. This would be the start of 40 years of being the brunt of physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse at the hands of an intimate partner.

Story two

Well, let's see...I met my future husband through the people that lived above where my first boyfriend and I lived... THE FIRST ONE THAT ABUSED ME.!

My future husband and I met through this mutual friend. He was..... To my knowledge...single...but I was wrong...he was married with 2 children and one on the way. I became involved with him and that was my first (very worse mistake). We at some point after that developed a relationship, albeit a bad one. Once we had decided that we were going to co-habituate, that's when the problems started. Within the first week he assaulted me and this was after he had gone and spent the night with his ex. For the next 8 years, while raising his daughters, ages 6 months, 1 1/2,

and 2 1/2 years old. I was beaten because he thought I was having an affair with someone, anyone. It was not true. It was his own insecurities that caused him to accuse me of anything and everything with anyone. I believed in monogamy and being faithful to the person who you love and have committed yourself to. For years his insecurity showed itself in violence against me. He would imagine things and make them real in his mind, ending in me being the evil one. When I became pregnant after 8 years of living together and raising his 3 daughters I told him one day that if he ever hit me again I would leave and take our child with me. He did not hit me for another 8 yrs until one day at an outdoor live band dance for a Heritage Days celebration he decided to take a round out of me. After he started the band quit playing and came to my aid. The members of the band as well as others intervened and tried to help me. Some pulled him off of me and some tried to talk some common sense into him. He was not listening to anyone; he stormed off down the street toward home. This was the first time that I actually understood what was happening and became very much stronger. I marched off down the street after him. When I walked into our living room he was sitting in a chair with his head in his hands, he looked up at me and said, "You are leaving aren't you"? Yes, yes I was leaving and I did so the next day. I went to one of the women's emergency shelters in Calgary; I was there for nearly 2 weeks and finally began to feel safe and calmer.

One day near the end of my stay my husband found out where I was, for some reason I ended up talking to him on the phone and I don't remember how that all transpired but he talked me into going back, things would of course be wonderful. I did go back and he was very much different for a while (you know, the honeymoon phase). That phase lasted longer than before but when it ended it ended the same way it always ended. I waited until he went to work the next day and I took my clothes and some stuffed animals and went into Drumheller to see a worker to help me get my own apartment. I had almost reached Drumheller when he came up behind me in his truck and ran me off the road. I don't remember much about what happened after that, but I do remember that he was charged with unlawful confinement and something else. I also remember that at some point after he was charged I tried to get the charges dropped because I didn't want his children to end up back with their mother, at least that is what I assumed would happen if he went to jail. The Crown Prosecutor threatened to charge me if I dropped the charges. I did get the charges dropped eventually and I was not charged. I don't remember how long after that I finally got out through with the help of agencies. I moved into a small bachelor suite.

For months I had to watch over my shoulder ever minute of every day. He broke into the apartment bldg, trying to get at me, a couple of times. I had myself wedged under my bed with the phone one day while he was breaking down doors to get at me. The police in Drumheller were amazing, they knew if I called they needed to respond immediately, and they always did. They are responsible for my not being killed on numerous occasions.

After a few months he finally calmed down and found himself someone else to abuse so he left me alone. We then became civil for the sake of the children and especially the child we shared.

Story 3

A few years after my divorce and after earning 2 year Diploma in Criminology/Law Enforcement I moved out of Drumheller and away from my ex husband to Red Deer in 1994.

After about a year in Red Deer I met a man through the classifieds. After the fact, I knew I had made a very bad decision. This man, I guess honed in on my insecurities and made his move. We moved in together and I soon realized he was very insecure and therefore very controlling and abusive. We would fight and he would immediately want to have sex, something that I could never understand. He checked the phone everyday to see who had called, the last person I had called. He continually asked about my past and how many men I had been with. He would ogle other women if we were out in public but would become enraged if I caught any mans eye. Over the years he alienated me from my friends because he wanted to be the only person in my life. Throughout this relationship of 5 years I ended up in the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter 3 times, and attempted suicide twice. My life was completely messed up. He was a compulsive liar; I never knew the difference between his truth and his lies.

He cheated on me 3 times. Each time the women all called me and informed me of what he was doing. There came a point when I became tired of this and decided to meet with one of the women. We devised a plan to get him good. I took him out for supper one night after having arranged for the other woman to show up at the restaurant at a pre-specified time. We were eating supper when she came in. I was facing the door and when I saw her come in. I told him that he should move over because we had company. She sat down and we then asked him questions. He could no longer lie at this point as we were both there listening to what he had to say. He was, to say the least, shocked. We both let him know, quietly and politely, what we both thought of what he

was doing. After the other woman left, he said that what I had done was amazing; even he had to admit it. I don't believe in retribution or vindictiveness but what happened was the best thing that could have happened. This was finally the end of a bad situation. It has been almost 9 years since that horrific situation ended and I am now very happy.

Since then I have been working on myself, trying to figure out what in me made me susceptible to these types of men and what each of these relationships had to teach me, since every broken relationship in our lives has materialized to teach us a valuable lesson about ourselves. I believe we all need to find who we are before we can ever be totally whole enough to find anyone and be happy. I do know that I will never end up with an abuser again. I HAVE learned my lessons well.

Anonymous Red Deer Resident.