

Katie's Story

At the beginning of 2012 my life took an unexpectedly bad turn, up until the end of that year I had generally been a pretty happy person - I was close to my family, had good friends, and enjoyed my life. Sadly, towards the end of the year two things happened in quick succession: I lost my dad, and I met the man I would later need a court appointed protection order against. I was in mourning and did not pay

attention to how quickly his behaviour had spiralled into a toxic place.

Very quickly friends saw warning signs I didn't see. He wanted to be with me 24/7, and only two months into the relationship wanted to move in with me. Living together was a nightmare - he didn't have a job, and was constantly taking my money then manipulating me to feel like I was selfish to not give it willingly. Then the physical violence started. The first time he explained it was a mistake; it was because of stress. Then he described some mental health problems that caused him to lash out. It was always my fault. By the end of the first year of our relationship my friends and family

pleaded with me to leave him, and I felt like I was always letting everyone down. Every time I would try to leave he would beg me to stay - threatening suicide numerous times, and telling me it would be my fault if he killed himself.

I was so fed up with lying, and I hated myself. I felt trapped and useless. In 2014 one of my friends told me to call Women's Refuge. She said all I had to do was call. I didn't have to meet anyone - just talk. When I finally called I found out that I really did want to meet this lovely person on the phone. When I met her for coffee and talked I felt less crazy, and things became doable. She was so practical and encouraging, and for the first time in what felt like years I saw the end in sight. The support and understanding everyone showed me at Women's Refuge - and meeting all the amazing diverse women who had been through, and were going through the same thing as me - gave me so much strength. I ended up in a support group with incredibly inspirational women, and got financial help to get a protection order which still brings me so much peace. It is the best and bravest thing I have ever done in my life. I am so grateful to Refuge, and so in awe of my life now.

