

Innocence Lost

She wakes up in the morning, a pain in her head, her clothes on the floor.

Her head is pounding; her heart is frozen to the core.

Her mind is pleading just to know what she's done.

She starts looking around, then she hears – "I hope you had fun".

She looked to her side and started to cry.

What she saw beside her was an unfamiliar guy.

She tried to remember what had happened last night.

When she realized what had happened, she screamed out in fright.

Part of her memories came flying back to mind.

She searched through her mind and was scared of what she might find.

As she kept searching through her mind her worst nightmare came true.

Memories of her and this guy clearly came to view.

Memories of letting him do what he had wanted, things she knew would thoroughly be flaunted.

Her reputation would be ruined, stomped into the ground.

She had to get out of this room, away from the sound.

Anonymous!



BARRIERS TO WOMEN LEAVING

Fear
Children
Money
Religion
Stigma
Reputation
No job
No place to go
No car
No support
Lack of education
Love
Family pressure
Caretaker role
Fear of deportation
Fear of outside intervention
Fear of government/agencies
Fear of losing children
Fear of retaliation
Fear of the unknown
Lost hope
Poor self care choices
Self blame
Denial

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS BEING ABUSED TELL HER:

- the abuse is not her fault
- she doesn't deserve it
- the violence will progress without intervention

"Can You Really Help Me?"

Life can be tough, especially if you have low self-esteem and your home is "dysfunctional". I had been in a violent relationship for 13 years. I love this man and I most likely will for the rest of my life. I chose to ignore the "little" wrong things he did on a regular basis. I guess this is what the advocate calls "minimizing". I have learned to survive his rages. I felt sorry for him because he was a victim of child abuse. Sometimes he can be a very nice person. The nice man is the one I love and he's the one that accepted me into his life and loved me regardless of my past.

Now you want me to leave him? Will you really help me? I have many needs and I only have a month of sobriety. I can't leave, you don't understand. If I leave he'll take the kids or he'll have his family take the kids from me. No, no! I can't do that, I can't take that chance. The kids have told me what happens when I'm not with them. I just need to stay at home and deal with our personal issues myself. Thank you for your help...bye.

One Year Later

Things have escalated. He abuses the children in front of me now, but he leaves no marks on them or me. He usually drags me by my hair or hits my head against something. Yesterday he slammed my head against the car window three times while I was driving, then became angry because I wasn't watching the road. I can't make him happy, nothing works. I can't get a job because he doesn't want me to work around men, but he brings his male friends to our house to drink. I relapsed a few months ago, but I stay in my room so that he doesn't accuse me of sleeping with his friends. I enjoy drinking as much as he does, but things are out of control. I wish he'd stop using and I do really want to stop. I told a friend about the abuse. She told Children's Services and now they are threatening to take the children from me. What will I do? Everything is in his name.

If I leave, I leave with nothing...If I stay, I may lose my kids or he may lose control and really hurt either the children or me.

"Can you help? I'm scared!"

Anonymous!

If You Leave...

Leaving an abusive relationship is a very difficult step, one of courage and strength. The following are suggested actions you can take to maintain safety once you have left an abusive relationship:

- You can obtain a restraining order. Many batterers obey protection orders and some do not. You may ask the police and courts to enforce the order.
- If police do not enforce the order; you can contact your advocate or attorney and file a complaint.
- Inform friends, neighbors, daycare/babysitter, and coworkers that you are no longer with your abuser, so they can screen your calls or call the police if your abuser shows up.
- Provide your daycare/babysitter with a list of people who have permission to pick up your child.
- Change the locks on your doors and install a security system.
- Avoid social places or stores that you frequented while with your abuser.

Safety Planning

A safety plan is critical if you live in an abusive situation and are thinking of leaving. C.O.B.R.A. can help

24-Hour Hotline: (541) 389-7021 or 1-800-356-2369