

The following insights are from a person with lived experience of domestic and family violence focused on the financial abuse they experienced. The narrative highlights the **lived experience of violence and abuse** including their responses and resistance to violence, and where **social responses** were helpful, unhelpful or harmful. It has been assembled by the Insight Exchange team from the transcript of an interview conducted by [Rosie's Place](#).

ALLANAH

I've had two relationships where I stuck around longer than I should have. Part of it is from fear of not being able to provide for myself or my children. Growing up, I never had money from Mum. She always got the government payments for us but used it for her own things.

In my first relationship, when I was 14 and Todd was 19, Mum would say "oh, now you've got a boyfriend, he'll buy you things." He worked, but he never gave me money; he would never even buy me a present. And this was when Todd was living under her roof.

"Now you've got a boyfriend, he'll buy you things."

He used his own money for himself, although he would always borrow off his Mum to pay rent. He'd also use the government's money that I got for Adam, our son. He'd buy food, alcohol, drugs, for himself. He would use my money with the promise of paying it back, but he never paid it back. I kept waiting on it to come back, but it never did – and I felt stuck waiting for it to come back. I think it was his intention to take my money.

He was doing contract labour earning \$250 - \$300 a week and he was living at my mum's house and paying rent and I was getting I think maybe \$700 with the Family Tax A and Family Tax B, and I remember the feeling from him was, "how does she deserve that money?" It was his child. He felt he had a right to it. He didn't see it as Adam's money, he saw it as his money because he was the father.

I was very young. I had to learn that the government is helping me to raise my children and that the money is for the children. After I'd give the money to Todd, there were times I would go to ask my Mum for money and she'd say, "well where's your payment gone," and I would tell her and then she would go "but that's not right, it's for you, it's for your children, I can't support you." So that's how I learned.

He left as soon as I put on weight. I was 15. He hasn't always paid child support - he doesn't believe he has to pay for his child. He currently owes me more than \$18,000.

My second relationship was with Peter; he never wanted me to work, he always wanted me to be at home with his Mum; I lived under his parents' roof. He needed to be the 'provider' and control all the money. But he never had a stable job. I still got the government payment for Adam and I would need to pay half of everything.

I didn't get money from Peter. I think he knew about the government benefits before we had the girls, because as I was getting those payments, he'd be smiling and laughing, saying things like, "you benefit a lot." He never bought anything at Christmas or birthdays. It wasn't until the last Christmas after the court case, that he tried to buy something for the kids, and I think it was a way to try and get back with me.

If we had enough money, everything would be fine, but if he was in an elevated, agitated state and he needed something, then he would question me about where the money was going. He would make me go and get money from my family. But I had to have a reason for my family. I would have to show proof of the hardship; like an electricity bill - I would always need a reason otherwise my Mum would think that it's for my partner.

I didn't realise what he was doing at the time, I just thought it was going to get better. He was cunning. I was constantly going to my family and borrowing money and my family's looking at me like "you're bad" and they started cutting me off. So Peter's winning all round. He really only wanted me to have contact with my family when he needed stuff from them. Then he'd say to me "me and your mum are getting on all right, I've sorted things out there," and I'd find that strange because he hated them and spoke badly of them and all of a sudden he's smoothing things over. I didn't know why. It was very confusing. It was only just recently he went and got the dole and started to look after himself.

When I was in the situation I felt trapped because I felt like I was chasing my tail. Now looking back I feel I shouldn't have been so easily misled or played. I also know if I'd pushed back or said, "you shouldn't have chosen to buy alcohol or whatever," I would've had to deal with the outcome. And I was pregnant most of the time, the majority of our relationship, so that's a scary state to be in and to deal with his edginess, his nastiness. So, I think it was a way to make things 'fine'; keep things calm.

I noticed his behaviours changed as soon as I had Jade. He'd make me feel bad about myself. In front of his family, he started to go "oh better send her to a gym," even though I wasn't that big; yes, I had put on a couple of kilos in the pregnancy. And his family would go "well you're going to lose her if you keep speaking like that." His family said to me "Allannah, don't put up with this," they saw the bruises. One night, his sister came and put make-up on me because I had a night out at a ball; it was really nice, and she said, "we will support you through court."

I stupidly let her down because I told Peter his family supported me. He said something to me about his family, and I said "that's not right, they've said they will help me and they know what you're like." Ever since then, he's worked to turn

You want everything to be OK, but you don't have support to fall back on.

them against me. He's been maliciously saying stuff about me. Now, they don't see their granddaughters or their nieces at all. He got into their heads and changed the story. His sister ended up attacking me saying I'm a terrible parent to my son. Once I had the

second bubba with Peter, I thought "I've got to get out." But it was scary; you want everything to be OK but you don't have support to fall back on.

Peter sponges off everyone; me, his mum and his dad. They took him in after we broke up and paid for his lawyer through the court case. And when his Dad did finally cut him off – more recently - that's when I felt the full force of him. He came back. I knew that he was around the house and I'd wake up at night because I could hear him. He was texting all the time. There was 32 in one day, 60 in the next. Voicemails; they were horrible. It was getting really bad. I shut down my facebook account because I couldn't manage. I opened up another account and he made up a profile and was stalking me, so I've taken photos of that, and blocked him on that. It looks like I'm not going to be able to have anything without him finding out. I couldn't figure out how he was still finding out information, so I just shut down the whole page until we're safe.

Acknowledgement and thanks

Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM) would like to thank [Rosie's Place](#) for conducting these interviews and providing these transcripts to Insight Exchange to ensure the voices of lived experience are able to help inform and strengthen social, service and systemic responses to Domestic and Family Violence.

The initiative to conduct the interviews was from an informal pro-bono collaboration by Rosie's Place, WASH House, and the Mt Druitt Family Violence Team. The narratives were provided by the individuals for the benefit of others. The narratives were obtained through interviews with Rosie's Place and assembled by the Insight Exchange team.

DVSM would also like to thank the person with lived experience of Domestic and Family Violence who has generously shared their insights for the benefit of others.

We acknowledge that despite our best efforts to assemble with a person a more accurate representation of some of their experiences of violence, we can never fully understand all that their experiences mean to them now or through their life. We understand that no one's life experience can ever be fully represented in language or any other form.

Handle with dignity

You have been reading an excerpt of a person's lived experience of violence and adversity. It is not simply another 'story', 'sample' or 'case study'. Whilst consent has been obtained via Rosie's Place to share this account we ask that as the custodian of this copy that you uphold the dignity of the person who shared this experience as you distribute and/or store it.

Tips for handling with dignity:

- Keep the copies in an envelope distinct from paperwork and reports
- Explain the importance and value of these accounts before distributing them
- Collect any copies left behind by delegates/participants after workshops

Copyright: © DVSM 2019 www.insightexchange.net. DVSM gives permission for this resource to be photocopied or reproduced provided that the source is clearly and properly acknowledged.

Disclaimer: This Insight is a carefully assembled excerpt of a person's lived experience of Domestic and Family Violence. Details of this person's identity, and that of others, have been altered to protect their safety. Whilst great care has been taken to do no harm and to contribute to improved understanding of and responses to Domestic and Family Violence, DVSM assumes no responsibility for how the resource is used by other parties.
