

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](#).

DEB

I was in a relationship for 17 years and the red flags were waving their fury from day one. I suppose I turned a blind eye and thought “maybe he’ll change.” I’d make excuses; “it’s the alcohol doing it,” or “it’s his gambling that’s doing it.” I realise now it wouldn’t have mattered whether he gave up the alcohol or gambling; he was an abusive, violent man.

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He was not a big provider for his family. We had a child together, Ethan. He didn’t provide a house and we shared the car. I was the one that juggled and paid everything; everything was in my name, water, electricity, Foxtel, everything. So that it’d always come back onto me if we

couldn’t pay it; he couldn’t have cared less. He was very emotionally controlling. When it came to grocery shopping, he’d come with me and be saying, “no we don’t need that; why are you putting that in the trolley?” So, very controlling.

He made me go on the single parent payment so that if he felt like not working, or if we had a fight or whatever, I’d have money. We’d often have a fight and he’d disappear for two days, go through his money and come back two days later and rely on my money. But I was being made to take the risk there; being with him and being on the single parenting pension and he’d threaten me, “well I’m going to go and tell Centrelink.” I remember racing down to Centrelink one day and, and I was honest with them, I said, “he stays a little bit more than three days and I’m in a horrendous domestic violence situation,” and they totally understood. They were very good.

I’m not sure what he did during those two days. I’m pretty sure he had another bank account going on. He was a big-time cheater and I found a lot of disturbing pornography on his computer. I also managed to find all the dating sites he was on. One of the dating sites was \$300 for him to be a member for a year. And I thought, “where on earth is he getting the money to be able to do that?”

I had a Department of Housing place that you’ve got to wait 17-20 years for and he made me lose that because he said, “we’re not bringing our baby up in Department of Housing.” So I lost that.

He would say I was a nutcase. When police would come around during a fight, he’d say to them, “the nutcase is inside,” right? He said to everybody, “she’s a nutcase; she has this and that wrong with her,” and everyone believed him. I mean if he was sitting here talking to you now, you would seriously question me - he’s that good.

“He couldn’t possibly do that, he’s the nicest person.”

He manipulates everybody. When I used to have girlfriends come around, he was like the hostess. He’d go and make coffees just to show my friend how “good” he was. They’d sit there and go “God he’s good, geez you’re with a good partner, aren’t you?” And I’d think, “God, if only you knew what went on.” And then, when situations did happen, they wouldn’t believe me, “No, he couldn’t possibly do that, he’s the nicest person.”

I explained what was happening to one of his friends and his friend was shaking his head and I said, “you might have grown up with him as friends, but you don’t live with him buddy. You’re not here 24/7, so don’t you doubt what I’m saying here.” I mean this man put me through a plate glass window.

I’d spent a day with a girlfriend and he came home, cranky, so my girlfriend left and he was going on and on and I thought, “oh, he’s drunk.” So I went and had a bath and just switched off. When I got out of the bath, naked, to go into my bedroom to get dressed, he grabbed hold of me and said “you can get outside.” And I said, “I can’t because I’m naked,” and he’s saying “get out,” and he’s trying to force me out the front door and it was a plate glass door and I’ve put my foot back to stop myself being pushed out and my foot’s gone right through; my Achilles tendon was hanging out my leg, it was dreadful. He’s done dreadful things: Dragged me through the car, split my nose.

He must have had another bank account that I didn’t know about.

He used to go out to work and then he’d come home, drunk, and see me with my girlfriend and say “oh, you’ve been sitting around all day doing nothing, eh?” He’d have his three long necks before he’d arrive home, lie to me about it, (but

I’ve got a nose like a bloodhound and I could smell it all over him), but where did he get the money to get the drinks every day? He must have had another bank account that I didn’t know about. He hid a lot of things.

When we did separate, I went through what was left in the house, went through his bank details, and I saw payments from ‘Smith’ on a certain day that he was supposed to be paid. And I thought “Smith – what’s this?” And I went and got his phone details, to look at who he was talking to on that day and it was his mother. So he was bludging money off his 80 year old mother; that’s how he was funding some of this stuff.

He also took my child and had me up for an assault charge that I didn’t do. It was my 40th birthday; he forgot about it and so he raced down to the petrol station and bought me two magazines. That was what I got for my 40th birthday. And then we had a fight about the two magazines, and so he went and stayed in a hotel room and got a prostitute. This is how we ended up separating for the final time. He told me he slept with a prostitute and I thought to myself “why would he be telling me this?” I thought, “well, if he’s telling me this, then he obviously doesn’t want to do it any more, he’s being honest” and then I realised he was telling me to make me angry, to provoke me to do something so he’d get Ethan. But it didn’t work out because I wasn’t reacting, so he had to make it up. He got on the phone and yelled out, “Ethan, she’s hitting me in the head” but I didn’t. I was sitting on the bed. He’s over six-foot-tall, so how could I be hitting him in the head? I couldn’t even reach his head. But I got charged for assault. He was absolutely horrendous.

I didn’t fight the assault charge because I didn’t want to be in the same room as him in the courts. I can’t even look at him. And I’m due in court again soon for another mediation and I don’t want to be in the same vicinity as him. I am petrified. I won’t even talk about him and that makes it hard for my son.

Now my child says he wants to live with his father, so I’m not sure whether he’s afraid of his father or he doesn’t want to hurt his father’s feelings or whether there’s more going on, I’m not sure.

Recently we had a day out at an adventure park and it was absolutely fantastic and Ethan had a ball. A week later, and it’s my son’s birthday soon, my son comes around and says, “Dad just bought me a four-thousand-dollar electric drum kit.” I went, “you’re kidding me!” So, it’s like he’s sort of trying to buy my son. Also we’ve got

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court coming up soon, so you know, “here’s your four-thousand-dollar drums and this is what I want you to say in the courts.” It’s just dreadful. To me, that’s part of why my child wants to stay there, because there’s no rules, he gets what he wants. I mean, I have rules and I’m not there to buy my son.

I see my son fortnightly but it’s only interim orders. It’s like I’m the one that’s paying for my ex being an alcoholic, a sex addict, and a gambler. I mean he had these horrendous addictions. He used to say to me all the time, “you’re the only girl I hit.” I don’t believe that. Leopards don’t change their spots. But he’d blame me, “If you hadn’t have done this; or if you hadn’t have done that.” I couldn’t win. I’d put a nice meal on the table, he didn’t like it, he’d be picking at anything he could find.

“You’re the only girl I hit.”

I am a woman with a big heart and I would do anything for anybody and I loved that man. I made love to him, I told him my inner secrets, I cooked for him, cleaned for him, this and that, yet I have been made out to be the perpetrator, I’m the “violent” one. I think I was just somebody to give him a child.

I reckon I would’ve left him a long time ago if I was in a better financial position. I had nothing, I was financially stuck. I wasn’t sure I could do it on my own. He’d put me down so much that I ended up believing him that I couldn’t function on my own without him. It’s ludicrous because I’ve managed to do lots of things in my life without him. I mean he’s not even a provider, he wasn’t bringing in a whole lot of money just piddly amounts, and I’d think “God, what on earth do I see in him?” But I felt trapped. I lost my sense of self-worth. He made me homeless.

I ended up getting help from my brother in Melbourne. I was walking away with no car, no roof over my head. I’d lost my Department of Housing place because of him. My brother came up and helped me and found me a place near him, so I went and stayed there for three months, scared out of my wits. Then I thought “I can’t stay here because my son’s in New South Wales, I’ve got to lodge court papers or I’m never going to see my son.”

I ended up driving back to Sydney knowing I was homeless. I went and stayed in hotel rooms sneaking in my dog. I stayed in a couple of people’s places and then I went and begged a real estate agent that I know to help. I said, “I’m just about to drive my car off a cliff, please help me.” So, she did. She found me a place for \$350 and she said, “can you afford it?” I said “nope - but I’ll work on it.” That’s when I went to Department of Housing and they helped me with a clean start where they help pay the rent. I got that - there was a team that helped me - and I thanked them from the bottom of my heart. But that only goes for two years.

It’s taken a hell of a long time to see things for what they really were because I was numb, numb of emotions, not sure what’s going on, and living in this confusion. He had me in confusion all the time.

I can honestly say I’m the happiest I’ve been in a long time. I am free. I don’t have to worry. I don’t have to worry about, “is he going to take all the money and blow it on his weekend stint” of whatever he does. I can just live.

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.

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