

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 from an interview conducted by [Rosie's Place](#).

BRITTANY

I experienced domestic violence over 10 years with three different partners. With all of them the violence was always related to alcohol or drugs and not having money to get what they wanted.

They always worked, but they never seemed to have enough money to get the alcohol, to get the drugs to go to the pub, to play the pokies. So I was like the ATM. They never gave me any money. I

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kids missed out. My girls missed out on doing a lot because I was always handing money to them [my partners].

The first relationship went for a little over seven years - that's the longest I stayed. He's the father of my two girls and he was physically violent. In that first relationship I ended up paying off his drug dealer so they wouldn't hurt him. After that, when I saw the signs earlier, I just went "nah."

It's been two years now since I had contact with the last partner. I have a child with him, a son – he's two now and I left when I was three months pregnant. My son's father was a gambler and he did the drugs and the drinking. He'd drink at 5 o'clock in the morning. He'd wake up to a can of bourbon and he'd say, "that's my coffee."

The middle one he wasn't as bad. He didn't hit as much; it was the verbal abuse and he still needed money for the drinking and smoking pot. Whereas the first and the last they were physical and verbal and if they didn't get the money, they'd just steal it anyway.

There were times we didn't have food for the kids. I used to go to my Mum's or, if Mum and Dad weren't home, I'd go and raid the freezer and go, "Okay we'll have this for dinner." I used to eat at my Mum's on frequent occasions and she'd always say, "how come you don't have money to get this?" and I'd say, "oh a bill come up." I'd always lie. I'd always make good excuses, but in the end the excuses just got so lame I was going, "I don't even believe that."

"How come you don't have money to get this?"

Sometimes I'd get bills direct debited so it was paid straight away, or I'd say I'd only got paid this much, but really got paid more and then just hide it somewhere. But it's hard. You try and make excuses, but I was always behind the eight-ball. Always. Bills were always late, rent was always late, or when the rent was due I'd only pay this much and I'd spend the extra hundred bucks on something, like for the food, so rent was always behind. But as long as they [partners] were happy, the household was happy. So I kept things calmer until it got to the point where I didn't care if I rocked the boat.

I would buy the cigarettes, but I would hide them and then he'd get to the point where he was right on red level and I'd go, "okay, they're there," just to see how far I could go. But then sometimes I'd push too far and then I'd think, "wow, I should've just said it three hours ago instead of now," and the house looks like a mess and I'm cleaning up broken glass and stuff 'cause they can't get what they want.

They only expressed remorse to get what they wanted, as in more money or if they wanted, sex. Then it was all good and they make you feel like you're that princess again, and then it was like, "oh I'm done, I'm done with you," and then within seconds they could just shoot you down; they didn't care 'cause they'd got what they wanted. It was not what I wanted.

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In the end I used to just hide my money at my Mum's. So if I had to move, I had that money there. I always put stuff away. I always had little pockets where I had

money, that they didn't know about. I used to just wipe out the bank account 'cause then they'd go, "well let me check your bank account," well there's nothing in there. So I had to play the game smarter.

Out of all of them, the last one was the worst. He didn't hide it, he was quite open: "I want it, you will get it. I have to go here. I have to go to parole, you're going to drive me there," because he was on parole too. And I'd say, "but my daughter's got swimming," and he'd say, "I don't care, you have to." I used to always drag her out early, take him here, take him there.

He was getting a wage, because he used to work for his brother, but he'd tell me, "no, I didn't get paid today. No, they didn't give me my money, they didn't put it in my bank." I used to ring his sister-in-law and she goes, "no, the pay is there." He'd say he didn't have any money, but he'd always come home with alcohol, or go to the pub and ring me, "I need to get picked up." It was exhausting.

He was big, like six foot two. He towered over me and he was very strong. So because I saw the signs, I was gradually making a plan. I gave my notice to the real estate, I gradually started packing things when he wasn't there, and I was putting it in the storage shed.

I was gradually making a plan.

He got really bad and he locked me out of the house with my two girls in the house and they were screaming for me. He was on the phone to the police and they said, he said I had bipolar and they wanted to take me to the mental home for 72 hours. He was cunning. He knew how to play the system. The next two nights I couldn't spend at my house because the police said I was too "unstable" to look after them. I'm like, "any mother would go crazy if someone took her kids."

It got to the point where I just couldn't take the abuse anymore, and seeing my kids see it. So, we left and went back to my Mum and Dad's. When we separated I umm-ed and ahh-ed whether to tell him I was pregnant and when I did he was all happy and excited and then one night we went out with his family, and he just cracked and that's when the violence set in. He didn't care. He openly said to me "I'll kill the baby." So, I just went "no I've had enough," so the next morning, I went to the police station.

It is hard. It is hard to just pack up a bag and move 'cause you've worked so hard to get what you've got. They'd say "I'll change, I'll never do it again," and then a week will go past and then they've got no money and it happens again. But I

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hated being alone. I didn't want to be alone; they always thought I was worthless, that I wouldn't get anyone. And when you're down and out, that's all you believe. So I had to put it in the back of my head or get rid of it and go, "no I am important. I am someone. I'm not just a mum. I'm me and I'm better than that."

The kids don't see their dads at all. The first two don't bother me now, it's only the younger one who concerns me because he has another daughter and he has taken her from her mother and kept her for two weeks and no-one knew where they were, so that does scare me.

Generally, I'm not as scared now, I don't really care, I'm just very wary of who has my kids, if my Mum can't mind my kids, then they don't stay with anyone. My son goes to day care, but I've known that lady for 10 years and she's had my two girls too, so I trust her. Apart from that, I don't leave my kids with a lot of people.

I have my own home now, I moved out from Mum's. I have my own place, the kids are in a new school, I'm doing TAFE, I'm studying, so I'm doing what I want. Now, if I have friends come in, or if I get another partner, they come in, I'm like, "I'm doing what I want, if you don't like it, then don't bother contacting me." So it's what I want now. It's what I want and what's best for my kids. It's taken a long time.

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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