

YOUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO SECURING A
LIFE OF SAFETY AND EMOTIONAL FREEDOM
FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

DOMESTIC
ABUSE
Breakthrough
HANDBOOK

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About The Author

As a survivor of domestic abuse, I can say without a doubt, it is soul-de- stroying for any victim of abuse to not feel heard, seen or believed when dealing with any of the authorities or professionals responsible for safe- guarding them and their children.

And this often leaves a victim feeling even more vulnerable and scared.

Hi, I'm Kate, and I'm a trauma and domestic abuse breakthrough specialist and DASH risk assessor and educator.

Not only have I trained intensively in the

world of trauma and the topics that embody violence against women and girls, but by combining my professional expertise with my own personal experience, I am confident that if more professionals were trained to take a trauma-informed, yet factual approach to risk assessing and when engaging in any investigative process it would not only strengthen a victim's confidence and trust when dealing with these professionals, but it could reduce the rate of fatalities and improve outcomes for women and girls.

I'm also a firm believer that a big part of the jigsaw puzzle to reduce the rate of fatalities is to arm

women and girls with the facts around coercive control, stalking, violence, and other abuse-related crimes.

And helping them to better understand what is reportable and how best to approach this when engaging with the authorities and navigating day-to-day life.

Nobody deserves to live their life in fear or walk through life looking over their shoulder, which is why my mission is to bring about a change in how professionals approach this ever-growing problem and empower women and girls to transition from victim to survivor.

My Professional Qualifications

Certified Trauma Practitioner which includes knowledge in neuroscience, the nervous system and positive psychology.

Accredited Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment Risk Assessor and Educator (Formerly certified and trained by Laura

Richards in her university-accredited DASH & DASH Train the Trainer program)

Anti-Pathology Trauma Informed Advocate (Formerly trained and certified by the founder of Victim Focus Dr Jessica Taylor)

Diploma in Criminal and Forensic Psychology

Certified Meditation Teacher

Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist

Certified Breath Meditation Teacher

Introduction

Like many little girls, I grew up dreaming of the fairy-tale wedding, marrying my knight in shining armour, who would look after me no matter what life threw at us.

We all know the script in the vows... “In sickness and in health...” “For richer, for poorer...” Abuse and fear were never part of the deal.

I was drawn into a fantasy, and it turned out to be just that. The reality was, I felt trapped in a nightmare, and I couldn't see any way out.

Being in an abusive relationship is soul-destroying.

Like so many, my relationship started off appearing to be picture perfect, everything I'd always dreamt of, but slowly the cracks began to show and before I knew it, I was a new mum, trapped in a cycle of abuse. I tried desperately to cover up what was going on behind my closed doors, partly due to not wanting to accept my reality and partly because I was fearful of the backlash of exposing his bad

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behaviour, particularly given his violent tendencies.

I had so many fears that kept me awake at night.

Would anyone believe me? After all, he came across as such a doting husband and proud new father.

How would I survive financially if I left?

After getting pregnant, I'd been coerced into being heavily dependent on him in every way, the biggest being financially.

My confidence had been beaten out of me and the fire in my belly and belief in myself had been shattered.

And what would people think of me if I broke up my family?

We got married for better or worse, right?

This is what I had grown up believing and I wanted so much for my daughter to have a normal family unit. I fought so hard to give her what she rightly deserved, but it was never meant to be.

As bad as things were, his excessive drinking made our life so much worse.

The lowest point being when he locked me and our 18-month-old daughter out of our family home.

From here I knew that he wasn't safe to be around but despite everything, I kept that window of hope open for another four years, thinking he would eventually see sense, but I was kidding myself.

The stress and anxiety also began compromising my health. I found myself not only dodging bullets of abuse but also fighting for my life after experiencing a perforated bowel and a rare Cancer diagnosis... all whilst single-handedly trying to keep life as normal as possible for our daughter.

But what he underestimated was the inner strength I knew I still had buried deep within me.

**“A crisis doesn't create character...
it reveals it.”**

The moment I woke up from the fantasy and the ongoing manipulation I had played along with for far too long is where my journey began – to build my resilience and break free.

So, you see I've been exactly where you are now.

Firstly, I want you to know I hear you and I believe you!

One of my biggest turning points was having a level of acceptance and seeing my marriage for what it was.

My way of reclaiming a level of control back over my life was to gain knowledge and an understanding of what was actually taking place in my reality.

This knowledge became my power and allowed me to fight to keep me and my daughter safe. As I was able to gradually begin to help myself, I realised that I was also able to help others with this new found insight and this is why I have written this book, to share that knowledge with you.

Since advancing my professional knowledge and experience to specialise in trauma, domestic abuse and stalking I know that it is essential that I share my experiences and knowledge to offer you hope, support and your own power.

What I am sharing with you may feel shocking, but I share this with the belief that knowledge is power, and I want you to feel that same inner strength and hope that I have.

There's no denying being in an abusive relationship is soul destroying and simply ending the relationship or leaving the home you share with the abuser isn't the overnight fix we would hope it to be. Leaving is hard and may even feel impossible and for many women, this is where risk increases.

When you leave, you're potentially not just looking over your shoulder regarding your abuser, you may also need to dodge bullets of abuse while you navigate your way around a broken criminal and family court system.

This is where you need to learn quickly and have your wits about you.

Many of the professionals you're likely to have the misfortune of engaging with, are what I can only describe as professional manipulators. They don't play by the rules, in fact many of them don't even know the laws around domestic abuse and stalking.

From my experience, many of these professionals play a very dirty game of chess and twist the narrative usually to suit the perpetrator or themselves.

As I said, knowledge is power, and when it comes to keeping you and your children safe from the perpetrator and the system this is so very true.

This is where you need to learn quickly and have your wits about you.

If there's one single thing that's kept me and my child safe, it's everything I've learned professionally and I want you to be armed with this same knowledge.

Be under no illusion, the police and CPS are not there to represent you as the victim. The role of the police is to enforce law and order and to protect the public.

So, when you report to the police and a crime is logged, their job is to evaluate if a crime has taken place, what risk this poses to the public and gather evidence to put a strong enough argument to the prosecution service to highlight how the suspect has committed a crime and how they pose as a further risk to you and other members of the public and then they await CPS to make a charging decision.

Whilst going through the criminal process, you as the victim, are essentially the main witness in this process. But just because you are the reporting victim, doesn't mean you and your motives are not under scrutiny. You are very much under scrutiny, and unlike the perpetrator, you have nobody in your corner who knows the law.

Only the suspect is entitled to legal representation.

This is why, when you report to the police, the decision to proceed with a charge is out of your hands. Once you make the police aware of a crime it is ultimately the decision of the sergeant who oversees the assigned officer.

CPS basically represent the Crown and like the police their duty is to do what's in the best interest of the public.

They do not represent the victim.

Unfortunately, I liken CPS to a GP, they have an overall general knowledge in criminal law but don't specialise specifically in coercive control, stalking, harassment, or sexual related crimes. And they certainly have no understanding of the psychology of the perpetrator or the victim.

This results in poor charging decisions. So, either a lesser charge is made, or they resort to NFA (no further action) because all that motivates CPS is the win and appearing as though they have a great conviction rate and the victim sadly is a pawn in that game.

But equally, we also have an issue with knowledge, skill, and resources within the police, which often results in incomplete evidence being forwarded to CPS for a multitude of reasons.

So, if you have a situation where you are going into battle with people who don't understand the law as well as they should, then you need to make it your business to identify what crimes have taken place in your own case and why it is reportable even if it's only to avoid being gaslight by these professionals and being victim blamed.

From the moment the suspect is brought in for questioning, they are offered legal representation aka a professional manipulator who knows how to play the game. They are advised and prepped every step of the way by their legal team.

You as the victim are not entitled to any such independent support, which means you are open to being victim blamed and discredited.

Criminal cases can take years to get to court. And your initial statements may have been taken when you were not only in an emotionally distressed state, but two years or more could have lapsed meaning the accuracy on the details may have altered.

It's also possible that the statements taken are not a clear account of what happened due to a victim's emotional state at the time.

And assuming it reaches court, you may be exposed to cross examining by these professionals so any inconsistencies in your account could be used against you.

A common observation made when I've spoken to officers, is that DV statements are rarely coherent and as I've learned through my training, this is as a result of how long-term memory operates when in a state of distress, which is why I put so much importance on trauma-informed timelines.

Not only is this a skill I think every professional needs to have, but I also think it's vital that you as the victim has the skills to not only identify if you've been victim of a crime but being able to construct a clear and coherent timeline in a more regulated state would significantly improve how well you communicate an account of what's taken place throughout your relationship.

This will not only help you, to help the police provide a better and more accurate account of the facts to CPS but it will enable you to better prepare for potential cross examining in the future.

I want this book to be your bible when it comes to facts around your own case.

Whether you're dealing with the police or family courts, it's vital you remain legally factual, and evidence based.

So, on that note, take a deep breath, and use the regulation tools I've prepared for you to keep yourself grounded throughout this process.

Scan the QR code on the back of the book to gain access to this.

Let's get started.

Safety Exit Plan

Your exit plan is an important process to consider when leaving any abusive relationship.

Quite often when an abusive partner realises you are planning on leaving, the abuse can escalate, but not only does the emotional abuse increase, but this is also the time physical safety is compromised.

An exit plan is designed to help you consider all your options and implement steps to limit the risk to yourself or your children.

A perpetrator who has a history of coercive and controlling behaviour and meets several of the high-risk factors, once discarded has at higher risk of committing a murder or serious assault.

This is in no way to frighten you; it is simply to highlight the importance of exiting in the safest possible way for you and your children.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Become aware of low-risk areas in the home where there are no implements that could be used as weapons, and if possible has more than one exit route.
- If an argument or heated discussion was to occur, try move the conversation to this part of the home.
- Always keep your phone on you, having it discreetly in a pocket is preferred so that you can access it easily if you need to call 999 for emergency assistance.
- Additionally, if it is safe use your phone to record any event which could later be used as evidence with the police or courts.
- Keep your handbag, keys, money, or cards in an easily accessible place in case you need to grab them in a hurry.

- If you have a neighbour you can trust, let them know about the situation and ask them to call the emergency services if they are concerned at all.
- Have a discrete secret word for friends and family so you can message them or call them using this word as a signal you need help.
- Store in your phone emergency numbers under female friend's names.

LEAVING WITH CHILDREN

Unless your children have been directly exposed to the abuse, it is always best to avoid alerting them to the situation until the time is right. One thing we must be mindful of is being accused of badmouthing the other parent. This could backfire on you when it comes to court and child arrangements.

Obviously if the children are aware of the situation, then I don't believe in diluting the seriousness of the situation or lying to them in any way because this can also result in trust issues occurring and one thing the children need in a situation like this is

certainty, they have one safe parent in their life that they can trust.

And the children are victims also, so we certainly do not want to minimise what they have experienced or how they have been impacted.

It's very much a case of weighing up and evaluating the conditions your children are exposed to and how much awareness they currently have.

- Talking to children about what to do in an emergency is a vital life skill regardless of there being domestic abuse in the house.
- Depending on their age, ensure they remember as many of the details needed for the emergency services, such as their full name, Mummy and Daddy's first names, address, and phone number.
- Teaching them to call 999 or shout for help if anyone is seriously hurt or unconscious or in case of a fire is vital for your current situation.

- If your children are aware of the situation, encourage them to call for help if things were to escalate but not to try intervening or get involved.

EMERGENCY BAG

Pack an emergency bag for yourself and the children and hide it somewhere safe. Ideally, this needs to be out of the family home but if you can't leave it at a friend's house or neighbours, then have this somewhere your abuser won't find it and you can grab it easily in a hurry.

When I think back to when my abuser locked me and my daughter out, we had nothing other than a small amount of credit on a credit card, which I only had by chance, so before checking into a hotel for the night I had to buy everything we needed so I could at least attend to my daughter's immediate needs.

When packing an emergency bag think about the worst case scenario because you may not be able to gain access to the home you shared with the perpetrator for some time.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Money/cards
- Extra set of house or car keys
- A couple of sets fresh clothes for you and the children
- Passports
- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- Any other legal documents you may need for the house or insurances etc.
- Bank details
- Medication
- Any documents related to children

If it's not possible to go to a friend or family member, maybe have an idea of a couple of hotels, you could affordably book into until you can contact the relevant authorities and women's refuges.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Discuss with a trusted friend or family member your intention of breaking away from your abuser. It is important to know where you are going to be able to stay until you get back on your feet.

If it's not possible to go to a friend or family member, maybe have an idea of a couple of hotels, you could affordably book into until you can contact the relevant authorities and women's refuges.

One of the most dangerous times as previously mentioned, is when you leave your abuser.

The moment you remove any degree of control from your abuser and pose a risk of exposing the abuse, you're no longer the women they moulded and groomed to control throughout the relationship. You become a risk and their only thoughts will be, how do they keep you silent and how do they continue to make you suffer. Therefore, the sooner you can put a call into the police the better and at the very least get a crime logged and a statement on record.

Ask them to place a critical marker on any address in case the perpetrator was to locate you.

Provided the evidence, you provide the police is strong enough they should bring them in for questioning and pass over to CPS for a charging decision.

If this results in the suspect being released on conditional bail, you at least have a small amount of protection for a max of 90 days. This is when you will need to consider a non-molestation order or a stalking protection order.

Regardless of an official legal investigation, always apply to the family court for an emergency non-molestation and an occupational order.

A non-molestation order is an order made by the family court which restricts your abuser from directly contacting or coming within a certain distance of where you live. It may also have other restrictions such as preventing the perpetrator making contact via a third party such as family or friends.

An Occupational order is an order made by a judge around the residence of the family home. The aim in applying for an occupational order in the case of a domestic abuse case is for the judge to order the perpetrator to move out of the family home so you and the children can reside there.

The order will usually instruct your partner to not turn up at the family home unless otherwise agreed.

If the family home is in your ex partner's sole name you will need to apply for a residency order in your name on the land registry. This will prevent the other party from selling or borrowing against the property without your say so.

This will strengthen your position if you apply to court for an occupational order.

THINKING ABOUT DIVORCE?

As a rule, I wouldn't be encouraging a victim to start divorce proceedings until they are safely away from the perpetrator. However, not everyone's situation is as extreme, so this is a decision you must weigh up carefully, but from my experience, perpetrators can become more volatile and antagonistic once this process is put into motion.

Just a quick note on divorce, I know the cost implications around this can be something that can stop people from making that break. But I promise you, you can do this without a solicitor, and even if you decide to invest in representation for court, you can save an absolute fortune by doing all the application process yourself.

POST SEPARATION AND MAINTAINING SAFETY AROUND CHILD ARRANGEMENTS.

This is where it gets a bit tricky, and you must weigh up the risk to your safety.

The first thing to consider is the age of the children and if they are expressing any wishes to see the other parent.

Whether the children wish to see the other parent or not, I would encourage you to apply for an emergency child arrangement hearing highlighting there is a history of domestic abuse.

And if the other parent does not know your new location of residence it is also important to complete a C8 form which will prevent the courts from giving the other side any of your contact information.

Depending on how quickly the court respond, if the children are asking to speak to or see the other parent, I would potentially arrange telephone communication which takes place with an external family member or friend present.

Be sure to highlight in advance that any calls that are arranged must be child focused and it is not an invitation to engage in dialogue regarding any other matter and advise them that the call will be recorded.

If the conversation at any point becomes abusive, threatening or not child focused, terminate the call and report to the police as a stalking offence.

If the children on the other hand are expressing strong wishes not to see the other parent due to their own fear, as their resident parent you have the right to do what you feel is in their best interest to keep them all safe and well. But I would advise applying to court as soon as possible.

I know some McKenzie friends and solicitors would say wait and see if the other parent applies to court for access, but there are three reasons I would recommend not to.

The first reason is so you feel more in control of the process and the last thing you want is to be wondering when your ex is going to creep out of the woodwork with a child arrangements application. This is going to add to your anxiety.

The second reason is by taking the bull by the horns you can put the true facts across to CAFCASS from the start, and as the applicant it means it is down to the perpetrator to disprove any allegations.

The final reason is, it looks like you are being child focused and looking to seek a safe outcome for your child/children. And by being proactive you are less likely to be accused of alienation.

Remember, always be legally factual and back everything up with examples and evidence if you have it.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

No contact is vital at this stage of your recovery and if you must communicate regarding the children try to avoid getting into dialogue.

Change your main day to day number and if the children have telephone contact with the other parent, have a dedicated email and cheap phone just for that contact at the arranged time, and have that phone switched off between arranged call times.

I honestly cannot tell you how much of a difference no contact makes. It is hard at first because your system will want to draw you to what's familiar and will be craving that dopamine hit, but, as hard as it feels, please stick it out. If you get the urge to contact them, distract yourself with a meditation or one of the tools I am going to be walking you through. Call a friend or family member instead if you need to get it out of your system.

If you're tempted to message, type all you want to say and send it to your spare phone.

If you must engage on calls with the children or handovers if child arrangements are firmed up via an order, it is important to continue to avoid any verbal engagement and try to have a friend or family member with you whenever possible and any handovers need to take place in a public place.

For Example in a supermarket car park as an example. Just make it somewhere there are plenty of people around.

This is where regulation tools come in, because reacting is an instinctive response when we are operating from the emotional part of our brain. The other thing I want you to consider, once you have arranged accommodation for you and the children, is a security camera. I know it may seem extreme, but if the police are currently involved, or need to be involved in the future, this evidence will prove useful.

Let your children's school know immediately of the situation. Advise them of any court applications and any safeguarding matters they need to consider if the father was to turn up and they know to contact you straight away.

It's also important to remind them to update any emergency contact information if necessary.

If your ex-partner turns up at the address you and the children reside at, call 999 immediately and never arrange for any collections to take place at your address, these must only ever happen in a public place or by another person like a grandparent or other relative who you can trust.

Make a list of friends and family that could support you in an emergency if you need it.

Start to work on your timeline. If you can have this done before engaging with the police, this would be beneficial. But please don't put off reporting anything if your risk is imminent.

This is discussed further into this resource and in your free members area.

If you need help and a safe space contacting or reaching out to police when the uk government has connected up with some banks and pharmacies and supermarkets which are acting as a safe space for victims.

These can be located by going to www.heistia.org and asking for an ANI and you will be taken to a safe and private space and offered support to call police and domestic abuse services.

This only applies to victims living in the uk.

You can also access our free women's only support group where you can get guidance on any safeguarding and risk concerns from trained professionals...

**“The Journey to Safety & Freedom Begins With
A Single Step.”**