

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Breakthrough

HANDBOOK

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

KATE BEESLEY

The
**PUBLISHING
POD**

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my daughter.

I want you to know just how proud I am of you.

My mission is to find purpose from our darkest days.

Supporting other women to transition from victim to survivor is my legacy
to you my beautiful girl.

My hope is that you never have to experience what you regrettably witnessed as a child.

Never allow anyone to dim your light.

Continue to shine like the bright star you are and never stop being you.

You gave me strength on some of my darkest days and you motivate me every day to make our dreams a reality.

Our bond is like glue.

Mummy loves you always.

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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 pro-
fessional 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 equally 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 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.

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 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 newfound 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.

If there's one single thing that's kept me and my child safe, its 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 and let's get started.

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

Chapter 1

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 implementation 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 of 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.

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.

Assuming 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. This relates to UK family law; it will differ for other countries.

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, 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.

You can access our free women's only support group where you can get guidance on any safeguarding and risk concerns from trained professionals... Details are provided by scanning the QR code at the back of the book.

“The Journey to Safety & Freedom Begins with a Single Step.”

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

These can be located by going to <https://www.hestia.org/safe-spaces> and asking for an ANI, and you will be taken to a safe and private room and offered support to call police and domestic abuse services.

This only applies to victims living in the UK.

Chapter 2

Coercive Control and Abuse in Intimate Relationships

COERCIVE CONTROL IS WHEN another person manipulates and controls how you feel, what you do, where you go and what you say.

Their actions are designed to intimidate and induce fear in their victim.

A coercive controller moulds and grooms their victims to live by their rules and meet their every need, whether that be an emotional punch bag or domestic or sexual slave.

A victim has a set of rules to live by and if any of those rules are not followed this ultimately leads to consequences.

Often these are unspoken rules which will become clearer as we move through this topic.

But it almost never starts off that way.

In fact, the relationship often starts out picture perfect.

Coercive controllers are Oscar winning performers so please don't see yourself as naive to have fallen victim to their smooth-talking ways.

Until the shift in behaviour creeps in there's really no way of knowing if they are genuine or not. Even then, they have an uncanny ability to have you question your version of reality or have you blaming yourself for their disrespect.

By the time reality becomes glaringly obvious the situation has often escalated to such a point that submitting to the abuser is the only way to risk-manage the situation.

Coercive controllers often start with intense love bombing. Maybe they have expressed their undying love for you very early on in the relationship. Maybe they have fast tracked the relationship to the moving in stage or encouraged pregnancy.

A coercive controller will quickly identify any vulnerabilities you may have and use those to strengthen their position in the relationship and you go with the flow because they do such a good job of making you feel emotionally safe, and that life is so much better with them in it.

When I met my abuser, I was going through a particularly tough time. I had been diagnosed with Crohn's disease after a very long hospital stay which resulted in me not being able to afford to keep my apartment. I stayed with a friend short term, who yes was also taking advantage of my position, but my abuser was keen to highlight this and stir the pot enough that it resulted in a fall out with this friend leaving me in a bit of a predicament.

Little did I realise; this was the start of the isolation phase. Additionally, things were not exactly calm waters with my parent's either. My dad had brought his mum to live with them and to say my grandmother had a strong dislike for women in general would be understatement. As a result, not only was I not able to stay at my parent's house, but my dad also refused to take my calls if Nan was around.

Dad didn't even visit me in hospital when I was readmitted with my second Crohn's flare. He said my nan wouldn't let him go anywhere without him.

And my mum, she did as she was told and visited me in secret.

Naturally I felt very upset and betrayed, so it was my new partner who was my knight in shining armour and took his sick, homeless girlfriend into the home he shared with his equally unwell mother. So, within the first three months of this new relationship, we had been on holiday together, which he paid for. Moved in together and having conversations about marriage and the future.

On our 12-month anniversary he proposed. Bearing in mind, the proposal was no surprise, as we went to pick the ring together two months beforehand and the ring sat in the bedroom draw until the official proposal day which he had decided was going to be on the 12-month anniversary of our first date.

So, in true perpetrator style, the proposal was a performance, and he was centre stage. The ring I had chosen with him was given to the waiter and he asked him in front of me to bring the ring hidden in the desert. As I found the ring, he got down on one knee in the middle of the restaurant. I knew he had an unspoken expectation of me to act surprised so everyone could applaud... which they did.

For the first 18 months of our relationship, he was what I can only describe as supportive and loving and encouraged me to make my business a success. When I achieved what I set out to do, he beamed with pride when he spoke about me to others.

On face value, he appeared the perfect partner. I remember one of our neighbours commenting the way he talked about me, and our relationship sounded like a fairy tale.

And she wasn't wrong, because fairy tales are make-believe and that's exactly what I had been lured into... A FANTASY!

But this alone doesn't immediately mean someone is an abuser. In fact, you may read this and think you yourself have been guilty of moving a relationship too fast or expressing feelings of love and admiration very early on. Or maybe you've mirrored the same feelings back when these have been expressed to you.

Let's be honest, it feels good when someone makes us feel desirable and that they only have eyes for us and often, we can worry that if we don't express the same level of enthusiasm, we could risk losing that person.

Some people can come across in a love bombing way because they are simply insecure which can be for a multitude of reasons. But if someone has grown up feeling deprived of love and connection as a child, it can be easy to get swept away with potential.

For many victims, coercive control goes undetected for much longer, because it's familiar and has become their association with love and relationships. This is why, we must identify the shift in behaviour and temperament to determine if any over-expression of love and commitment is in fact a manipulation tactic to entrap you as a victim.

A big red flag is a lack of consistency in a positive expression of love or support.

Actions that contradict their words, is manipulation.

This is why when assessing any timeline, we must establish that switch in a perpetrator's behaviour towards their victim and demonstrate a pattern and escalation in abuse.

After my official engagement, I remember frequently having a sense of treading on eggshells and him being easily annoyed by me, although at this stage still appearing to be supportive.

This gradually progressed to calling me names and intentionally locking me out of the house he had welcomed me into and the next minute idolising the ground I walked on.

Locking me out was about letting me know he was in control. He gave me a roof over my head, and he could put me back in that vulnerable state whenever he wished. He was very aware that the stress he was causing would trigger a Crohn's flare but that gave him a further sense of empowerment. He would distress me enough to trigger my symptoms and then act like the concerned partner.

Abusers position themselves as not only our saviour but also our source of pain. This was a tactic I was no stranger to. When I look back on this relationship, many parts of it were a duplicate of my parents and an extension of my childhood.

Originally, he beamed with pride over my very quick success in developing my business, but gradually, this turned to him finding fault and looking for things to criticise and beat me down on. And if he couldn't find anything specific to attack me with, then he would fabricate something.

In public he continued to speak proudly of my achievements, yet behind closed doors I was 'a failure', 'shit at business' and frequently accused of deceiving him. Experiencing this on repeat resulted in my Crohn's flaring again so badly that I collapsed in the middle of London whilst on a business trip resulting in me having to put business on the back burner to recover.

It was confusing and I found myself wondering if I was the problem. Was I blowing things out of all proportion? I made constant excuses for the emotional distress he caused me and for me that excuse was the demon drink.

Because, after all, he tells me he loves me.

This is what the brain does, it looks for reasons. If there is a reason for a problem occurring, then there is a solution which the brain actively seeks out to attempt to fix the problem.

Although I did later pick the rains up with business, I never achieved the same success because I believed he was right. I kept my ambitions low so not to fail. My association with feeling unloved and invisible was strongly associated with failing and this lay the foundations for my abuser to entrap me further and make me completely dependent on him in every way.

But nothing could have prepared me for the escalation that lay ahead of me.

It was a situation that crept up on me.

I had gone from treading on eggshells and questioning if I was to blame to fearing for my safety.

Even then I dipped in and out of denial until one night I broke under the pressure and rang 999 and my abuser was arrested.

What Shifts in Behaviour Are We Looking For?

Devaluing You

Finding fault in the things you do or the way you look on a repeated basis. This is designed to lower yourself worth and give your self-esteem a beating.

Name Calling

This is another way the abuser lowers your self-worth and self-esteem.

Cheating

Often abusers who are unfaithful have multiple affairs, one-night stands or send sexually inappropriate messages to women they will connect with on dating sites.

Some even book escorts.

Withdrawing Support or Letting You Down

It's common for abusers to target specific vulnerabilities and utilise that to gain a feeling of dependency and safety within their victim.

Examples of vulnerabilities an abuser may target are:

- Disabilities.
- Chronic Illness.
- Sole parents who have limited or no support network.
- Financial difficulties.
- Large age gaps.

Initially the perpetrator will go above and beyond to support their victim and only once they are certain their victim is dependent on that support, they will either withdraw or become resentful. This often leaves the victim feeling more vulnerable than they were before.

Using Your Past Against You

Another tactic a coercive controller will engage in is data gathering. This is where the perpetrator makes you feel so safe, they feel like home. You naturally feel comfortable being vulnerable and maybe share your deepest secrets. These may be things you've not shared with anyone before. The perpetrator comes across as understanding, empathetic and even supportive.

Once the perpetrators' behaviour begins to shift, this is where they will bring your past up and use it against you or as a way of devaluing you or deflecting away from something they have been caught out on.

This is a common way DARVO is implemented which stands for Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim Offender, I'll cover that a bit further on.

What would constitute all the above as coercive control is when you enter a cycle of these behaviours followed on with either gaslighting or fake displays of remorse and promises to change. The coercive controller may even engage in what's referred to as future faking to re-secure their position. Future faking is where they've identified something that's important to you and they sell you a pipe dream.

Remember, the coercive controller is a master manipulator, they are very good at coming across sincere to keep you immersed in the fantasy. You find yourself thinking, maybe this time will be different. Or worse... if I change maybe the situation will improve... and that is the power of gaslighting.

This script gets played on repeat until the victim becomes wise to their reality. Unfortunately, once the perpetrator realises that they can no longer

manipulate your version of reality, this is often where risk increases and behaviours escalate.

Gaslighting

This is a term used when someone makes you question your version of reality and deflects away from their own wrong doings to avoid accountability. Gaslighting is designed to send you into a whirlwind of confusion.

Some examples of Gaslighting are phrases such as:

- “I never said that.”
- “You’re making it up.”
- “You’re twisting my words.”
- “You’re crazy you need help.”
- “I was just joking” “You’re too sensitive” “But you know I love you” When they insult you or devalue you.
- “After all I’ve done for you/you’re so ungrateful.”
- “If you hadn’t done XXX, then I wouldn’t have done YYY.”
- “You made me do XYZ.”

Some other behaviours that constitute as Gaslighting:

- Dragging up something from your past to deflect away from something that you have caught them out on.
- Telling you how you feel. Accusing you of being in a bad mood and continuing to probe as a way of initiating an argument and

making it appear as though you are the instigator, “See I knew you were in a bad mood.”

- Comparing you... “You’re just like your mother, father, sister...”
- “What do you think you are doing checking up on me? I can’t trust you.” This is a common response if you have caught them being unfaithful.
- Threatening you with divorce or ending the relationship if you challenge them.
- Laughing or smirking when you raise any concerns.
- Giving you the silent treatment and then pretending as though nothing happened.
- Moving or hiding things to make you question your own sanity.

My ex even expected me to take the blame for something he had been caught out on at work, and because his job was on the line it was suggested it would be my fault if he lost his job and couldn’t pay the bills.

Isolating From Friends and Family

This doesn’t always happen as obviously as most would think. Rather than, “I forbid you to see your family,” or “I forbid you to go out with your friends.” It’s often made to look like it’s your idea to withdraw yourself, therefore, if anyone was to ask if they are to blame, it’s very difficult to say yes when they haven’t specifically said you can’t.

In my situation every time I would plan to go anywhere without him, he would initially be very supportive and actively encourage me to go but he

would always create a problem that would take my attention away from whatever I was doing, and back onto him. Or he would have me on pins wondering what trouble I was going to come home to. This would range from fabricating illness and trips to hospital. Suicide threats or pretending to have had already done something to himself. Trying to call me at times he would know I wouldn't answer the phone and leaving angry messages.

He even managed to get himself car jacked one night in my car while I was away on business, or that's the story he wanted me to believe. But whatever happened it resulted in me coming home to find him with a whopping black eye and me having to pay to get my car out of police compound. It had naturally got to the point where, doing anything without him wasn't worth the aggravation and going with him equally wasn't an option because he either refused to go or I would be on pins wondering if he would create a scene.

The result was I did the isolating for him.

Another thing that contributed to my isolation was that he caused so much trouble with my family that he forbade them from coming round.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse doesn't just happen when the victim is financially dependent on the perpetrator, although this is the most common scenario. Sometimes it is the perpetrator that exploits the victim for financial or personal gain.

Here's some examples of how financial abuse can present itself:

- Scrutinising every penny, you spend.
- Incurring debt in your name.

- Putting the victim in a position where they incur debt as a result of the perpetrator's actions.
- Forcing the victim to hand over their full wage.
- Living off the victim's wage whilst juggling all the responsibilities with the upkeep of the house and the children.
- Forcing their victim to sign pre or post nuptial agreements to make divorce a more difficult decision for the victim.
- Forbidding a victim to work or generate an income of their own.

This happens more often after the birth of a child or pregnancy and may initially be suggested in a supportive way. I know in my case; it was presented in a helpful way and that I didn't need to put myself under any additional stress adapting to being a new mum while recovering from preeclampsia and a C- section. "You focus on being a mum; I've got this I can support us all." were his exact words. Only when I started to work on content for an online nutrition program, this is where behaviours escalated, and he made it quite apparent this was not the helpful gesture he made it sound. This was an expectation. This was the first time he made a threat to my life.

One that is probably less common but happened in my situation was making me guarantor on his LPA (Lasting Power of Attorney) This was a situation he strategically played. Like when he suggested I focus on being a mum. He said the LPA was necessary to protect me and our daughter because if he lost mental capacity I would need to deal with the finances. After restricting his access under his own instructions and managing the account again as he instructed, with the assistance of our bank manager.

The week he received the divorce paperwork he reported me to the office of public guardian with allegations of fraud. Claiming I had fraudulently withdrawn money from the account and restricted his access without his authority to which I found myself under formal investigation.

Despite me clearing my name with OPG he made the same allegations to the police to deflect from the criminal proceedings he was under investigation for and used this allegation in the family court in the hope it would result in an adjustment to the financial order and get me charged with contempt of court.

It was clear that the LPA was his insurance policy for if I was to step out of line. Which is why his last words to me before he was arrested were, “Do as you are told or what’s to come is worse than having cancer.”

Financial abuse can present itself in less obvious ways and there may be situations that have taken place in your relationship with the perpetrator that I may not have listed but hopefully this gives you a clearer understanding of what may constitute as financial abuse.

Sexual Control

Sex is often used as a source of control and to intimidate a victim. This can occur in a couple ways. Victims can often feel pressured to consent to sex for fear of consequences. The perpetrator can also withdraw sex as a way of positioning authority causing you to feel rejected, undesirable, and unloved. They take great satisfaction in seeing their victim beg for intimacy and connection, only for them to reject any advances made towards them.

Equally they can reward you with intimacy as a way of breadcrumbing and keeping their victim hooked and in a state of confusion. This tactic can

sometimes result in a victim developing a strong association between sex and love.

Due to the fact that victims can develop a strong association between sex with love, this can lead to the perpetrator shaming a victim into partaking in sexual acts that they may not necessarily feel comfortable doing. Fulfilling the perpetrator's sexual desires or demands is often the only way a victim can experience connection with their abuser.

A perpetrator can also sexually shame a victim for past sexual encounters. Recording their victim in a sexually compromising position and threatening to share with others if they step out of line. Even if they never do this the fear of this getting out is enough to intimidate their victim back into compliance.

Victims who have experienced sexual related control, abuse or rape can often appear to be promiscuous. This is a classic response to trauma resulting in a victim using sex to establish connection, intimacy and feeling wanted.

Monitoring

Monitoring can present itself in the following way:

- Controlling what you wear.
- Monitoring calls, messages, and social media activity.
- Keeping tabs on your whereabouts and movements throughout the day even using friends and family to facilitate this or tracking devices.

Just like when I covered love bombing, you as the victim may have been guilty of checking the perpetrator's phone or checking up on their where-

abouts. This is by no means done with the same intentions as the perpetrator. Usually, this behaviour is because of a fear that your partner is being unfaithful, and the perpetrator is denying or dismissing these concerns and gaslighting you into thinking you're the problem. This sends your head into a whirlwind of confusion and increases paranoia to the point we seek out evidence to prove we are not going crazy. Although any type of monitoring is intrusive the motives are very different, you may think that by presenting the perpetrator with evidence of your suspicions they will somehow communicate honestly.

Similarly, to gaslighting this can cause the perpetrator to focus on your distrust and how you have invaded their privacy, rather than their own wrong doings.

Silent Treatment

The silent treatment is a common form of abuse the perpetrator engages in. It is designed to instil a feeling of isolation for their victim as punishment. This in turn may trigger or result in abandonment wounds being exposed and causing feelings of inadequacy.

During this isolation period it's common to internalise the problem, blame ourselves and submit to the perpetrator as a way of navigating our way out of this induced feeling of isolation and back to a place of emotional safety.

This is a classic case of Stockholm syndrome, where the nervous system finds safety in submitting to the person holding them captive and in a domestic situation this is the romantic partner, even a caregiver.

The silent treatment was a form of abuse I experienced not just from the man I was in a relationship with as I experienced the silent treatment

through most of my childhood therefore submitting became my natural survival response.

Fear Induced Silence

A perpetrator's worst nightmare is an overly vocal victim who speaks openly about the treatment they endure behind closed doors, so the perpetrator silences their victim through fear.

Typical tactics the perpetrator will use to plant seeds of fear and uncertainty in a victim are:

- Blackmail and threats to expose vulnerable or sensitive information.
- Punching walls or throwing objects near their victim.
- Threats to unalive their victim if they were to ever speak out or leave them (This could also fall under the umbrella of threats to kill.)
- Intimidating their victim with weapons. (This could also fall under the umbrella of threats to kill or an assault offence.)
- Threats to take the children if their victim leaves the relationship.
- Threats to leave their victim financially destitute if they leave the relationship.
- Fear of the perpetrator harming any children

A perpetrator can also use other indirect approaches to either instil fear or to reinforce any of the above direct tactics. The perpetrator I was in a

relationship with, of course engaged in many of the direct methods listed above but it was the indirect messaging that reinforced all of this.

He described in detail violent acts towards other people. Many of which I know didn't take place, but he wanted me to believe they did, and he would describe leaving his victims in a critical condition. He told me on several occasions he wanted to see certain people who had annoyed him die in his own hands.

He would frequently tell me about a SOS programme he had watched where this man was on the phone to his wife, and someone broke into the house and stabbed her to death in front of their children. He would say, that could happen to me, and he had put me in that position, because at that time we were living separately due to safeguarding reasons for our daughter, so I was in a rental house alone with a young child, unprotected was the suggestion.

Taking all this into consideration, I didn't know what he was capable of, and this played a huge part in why I stayed in this dangerous and disjointed relationship.

A big part of me was terrified but he equally had done a very good job of having me question my version of reality. And that not only kept me silent, but I continued to make excuses to myself for the actions, so I stayed in the hope he would see the error of his ways.

Emotional Manipulation

This tactic is to play on a victim's empathetic nature. Most victims are natural people pleasers and hate the thought of anyone being in distress, thinking badly of them or worse being the cause of another person's pain.

The perpetrator is often very aware of this and uses the following tactics to re-secure their position with the victim.

- Threats to unalive themselves.
- Making up serious illnesses and suggesting they don't have long to live and need your support.
- Guilt tripping you on breaking up the family.
- They may even suggest they are doing or saying certain things for your own good.

These are all tactics my abuser used every time he felt I was close to walking.

Catching You When Your Guard is Down

The perpetrator loves nothing more than to catch their victim in a vulnerable position. This not only gives them a sense of empowerment but gives them a greater advantage over their victim.

Sleep deprivation is a common tactic abusers engage in, so their victim is too tired to defend themselves which makes them an easier target.

Ways that they may prevent you from sleeping are:

- Arguing with you until early hours, knowing you need to be up to either attend to the children or go to work while they sleep through the day.
- Staying out until all hours, being uncontactable knowing you will be wide awake worrying.
- Extreme symptoms of trauma alone can impact sleep.

Something that my ex did, was fall asleep downstairs after texting other women until early hours. He did this knowing I wouldn't sleep worrying about what he was up to. When I'd creep downstairs and try to wake him, he either refused to open his eyes or said he would be up in 5 mins. But he would usually end up climbing into bed as I was getting up.

Another vulnerable position the perpetrator may choose to ramp up the abuse is when a victim is suffering or recovering from chronic illness. This was something I experienced on two such occasions.

The worst by far was when I was not only admitted for emergency bowel surgery, but one week after being discharged from hospital I was formally diagnosed with a rare tumour and advised to start pre op radiotherapy immediately. He not only walked out on me leaving me to care for our young daughter single handed, but throughout what was the scariest time of my life, I had to dodge bullets of abuse for the duration of my six-week daily radiotherapy.

During this period, I also had an unexpected hospital stay with my daughter who was rushed in with suspected bacterial infection. Most concerned parents would have put any issues to one side to be there. Instead, I laid in a hospital bed with my scared 3-year-old, wondering how I was going to go for my own life saving treatment whilst not wanting to leave my daughter alone. Meanwhile he thought it was appropriate to bombard me with abuse and threatened me with divorce.

All this was because I was selfish for getting sick and compromising his career by expecting him to step up as a father and a husband. Those were the exact words spoken to me.

And although he acted remorseful in the lead up to the surgery to remove the remaining tumour, I knew he was drinking heavily whilst supervising our young child. So, throughout my whole recovery I was on pins worried

for my daughter's safety but afraid to challenge him given the long recovery I had ahead of me.

Further into my recovery as I started to become more mobile, his behaviour escalated which was something that didn't go unnoticed by the district nurse.

Of course, it was my fault for not hiding my emotional state better and causing people to think badly of him. It was six months into this recovery when he threatened me with knives.

Reactive Abuse

Reactive abuse is an in the moment impulsive response to the ongoing abuse a victim has experienced. It causes the victim to react completely out of character by either saying things that aren't usually in their nature to say or displaying aggression towards the perpetrator. This then results in the perpetrator feeling justified to label the victim as the problem and therefore taking on the role of victim themselves. This is known as DARVO.

Religious or Cultural Control

This can include:

- Forced marriage.
- Threats to take children abroad.
- Forcing a victim to dress a certain way against their will.
- Family condoning men to be unfaithful or have multiple wives.
- Forced circumcision.

- Genital mutilation.
- Monitoring from the community.

Other Behaviours to Consider

Other behaviours that constitute as coercive control are:

- Driving recklessly with you in the car.
- Withholding medication knowing they are putting your health at risk.
- Bullying you or deceiving you into the car that they are driving whilst under the influence of alcohol.
- Treating their victim like a slave, offering no help or support with the management of the house or care of the children.
- Speaking for you and not allowing you to make decisions of your own.
- Manipulating or influencing others to devalue, criticise or abuse you as a way of validating their behaviour.

I often described my relationship as a scene out of ‘Sleeping with the Enemy.’ Tins had to be lined up perfectly in the cupboard, labels facing the correct way. Towels lined up. I even recall being criticised for walking out of the bathroom and leaving the corner of the bathmat folded over.

As you can see, coercive control is never one isolated behaviour. Coercive control by its nature is very often a set of unspoken rules the perpetrator expects you to live by. It is progressive and often happens over a long period of time causing you as the victim to become conditioned to the abuse and it therefore becomes normalised.

I liken a domestic abusive relationship to living under cult like conditions and when a victim becomes aware of the trap they have been lured into, leaving can equally be a dangerous option, which is why everything I'm covering with you is so very important to your safety moving forward.

Domestic Abuse is terrorism in the home and 1 in 2 perpetrators follow through on any threats made towards a victim. This is why the safety exit plan is an important part of transitioning to safety.

The Law

Coercive Control was added as an offence to the domestic abuse bill in 2015. To gain a conviction the police and CPS need to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the perpetrator's intention was to cause their victim to feel intimidated or afraid and that the perpetrator's intention was to control or restrict the way a victim lives their life. This is why demonstrating a pattern to these behaviours is vitally important when engaging with any legal and safeguarding professionals.

An apology without consistent change, words that consistently contradict actions... are only ever manipulation.

Actions prove who someone truly is.

Chapter 3

Threats to Kill and Assault

THREATS TO KILL CAN apply to verbal or physical threats to unalive someone. Verbal threats do not have to be them directly saying, “I am going to kill you.” Verbal threats can be indirect also. My ex repeated three times he was going to “fuck me up,” after initially backing me into a corner, clenching his fist to punch me and then throwing a glass against the wall in my direction and then threatening me with knives.

Physical threats to kill, could include threatening their victim with a weapon or even bringing the victim’s awareness to a weapon they have in their possession. An example would be a farmer having a gun cupboard and banging on the gun cupboard door to induce fear and uncertainty in their victim.

Although all these are indeed designed to cause a victim to fear for their life, the grey area in law is whether the police or CPS view the incident as a threat to kill or one of the assault offences.

I know in my case, after the final appeal, despite all the victim blaming and excusing his behaviour CPS said there were no grounds for threat to kill, but there was potential for a different charge, however unfortunately, we are now out of time to convict on this.

This I can only assume was one of the assault offences as in the case of common assault and battery which amounts to domestic abuse, the victim must report within 2 years of the offence taking place and proceedings

must have commenced within 6 months of a victim's statement or interview taking place.

So in terms of an assault charge this is in some respect dependent on the efficiency of the investigating team.

It is important to take any threats to kill or attack by the perpetrator seriously, whether that be direct or indirect, and bring this to the attention of the police immediately as this is an indicator of high risk.

Remember 1 in 2 perpetrators follow through on a threat.

Chapter 4

Post Separation Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Law

ONCE YOU HAVE LEFT a domestic abusive partner, the ongoing abuse you experience will now fall under two potentially different crimes and this needs to be reflected when reporting.

Post separation abuse and stalking are very closely connected when dealing with an ex romantic partner, so I'm going to give you an overview with examples of these two different reportable crimes.

Stalking and Harassment

Stalking and harassment are any behaviour that the perpetrator knows is not wanted and is likely to cause their victim distress. It is obsessive in nature and may cause you to alter your routine to avoid the perpetrator.

Stalking can include:

- Calling or messaging after making it clear this is not wanted.
- Monitoring your social media activity even on fake accounts or friend's accounts.
- Attempting to lure you to locations via third parties.

- Loitering around your place of residence, workplace or anywhere they know you will be.
- Having third parties deliver messages on their behalf as a means of intimidating or causing you distress... This includes using children to deliver messages when there is shared care.
- The sending of gifts either in person or via a third person. This can appear very innocent but is a tactic some stalkers use to remind their victim they can access them whenever they wish.

All these equally constitute as post separation abuse, but gaining a conviction on a stalking crime is far easier than post separation abuse.

Post separation abuse is essentially post separation coercive control and we need to prove the perpetrator's intention was to cause distress.

Stalking however, we only need to demonstrate that the perpetrator was aware the behaviour was unwanted and if there are two consecutive incidents after being made aware the behaviour is unwanted within a 6-month timeframe this is enough to open an investigation. Obviously, the less time between each of the incidents the greater the chance of conviction and the police and CPS taking the matter seriously.

It is important to specifically report as stalking, as harassment can often be viewed differently by the police and CPS.

Post Separation Abuse

Because of the nature of how the perpetrator implements the following types of abuse, they unfortunately have a broken system validating and

facilitating this ongoing behaviour which means it's not something the police or CPS get involved with.

The recording of this data, in my professional opinion, is still very important because if the police and CPS have other incidents that they are investigating, the following behaviour can help demonstrate the perpetrators character and support their ability to prove beyond reasonable doubt.

So, although legal abuse within the family court domain and post separation financial abuse isn't anything the police can seek a conviction on, it does however help in forming an overall picture of the perpetrator's intentions and character.

Legal Abuse

This is generally where the perpetrator uses the family court as a playground where they can legally intimidate and cause distress to their victim.

This often looks like:

- Not showing up to hearings.
- Not engaging or submitting court paperwork on time.
- Hiding marital assets or income.
- Being relentless with child contact applications.
- Using their solicitor to send intimidating letters which are headed "without prejudice."

Applying for child contact despite their lifestyle not being able to accommodate the children's needs is common. This is often done to spite their

victim and certainly not taking into consideration the children's needs or best interest.

Solicitors often get very close to crossing ethical boundaries by engaging in this kind of conduct on behalf of their client, but again they are protected by the system to some extent, and it's a system they know how to play. Victim blaming isn't a tactic some solicitors and barristers shy away from which contributes to further distress for a victim.

Financial Abuse

Post separation financial abuse almost always occurs after you leave the perpetrator, whom you have children with. As a rule, the family courts don't like to get involved with any maintenance issues, they usually leave this to child maintenance services to manage.

Unfortunately, due to this equally broken government system these issues are managed poorly. Certainly, this is the situation in the UK.

Ways that post separation financial abuse can present:

- Not paying the agreed amounts on time or missing payments completely.
- Disputing monthly figures so that month's payment is applied to the arrears amount.
- Leaving employment or intentionally remaining unemployed to reduce the amount they are expected to pay as their contribution to support the children.
- Claiming not to be the biological father.

- Returning mail sent by child maintenance service to suggest they have moved with no forwarding address.

One that my ex also engaged in; not sure how common this excuse is, was that he couldn't pay due to being under criminal investigation. Despite being told by CMS and the police he still insisted that he was told by a barrister that criminal proceedings meant he couldn't financially support our child. Once he realised that excuse had no mileage, he worked his way through all other tactics.

Chapter 5

Sexual Offences, Strangulation and the Law

Rape

RAPE IS FORCED NON-CONSENSUAL sex. Which include vaginal, anal, or oral penetration. Even if a victim initially agrees, but later changes their mind, this constitutes as Rape. Penetration whilst asleep or unconscious constitutes as rape, as you cannot give consent whilst asleep or unconscious.

Sexual Assault

This is categorised as inappropriately touching or groping without consent.

Sexual Harassment

This is categorised as:

- Unwanted pressure for sexual favours.
- Unwanted sexual looks or gestures.

- Unwanted letters, calls, texts of a sexual nature.

Sexual related offences towards an adult or a child have no time limit for reporting to the police.

Non-Fatal Strangulation

Strangulation can take place both as a direct attempt to unalive or scare a victim, but also strangulation can take place as part of a sexual act.

Even if a victim has consented or does not object to strangulation as part of a sexual experience, this still constitutes a crime that the suspect can be prosecuted for. Strangulation however brief can be fatal and can raise your chances of homicide by 800%.

It is important you call the emergency services immediately or as soon as it is safe to do so and seek medical attention.

Death from strangulation could occur weeks after the incident if internal injuries have occurred that may not be initially obvious.

The exact definition of *non-fatal strangulation* is an obstruction or compression of blood vessels and or airways by external pressure to the neck impairing breathing or circulation of blood.

Applying any degree of pressure to the neck could obstruct the airways or blood flow.

Symptoms to look out for are:

- Burst blood capillaries in the eyes.
- Hoarse voice.

- Pain or discomfort swallowing.
- Coughing.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Internal neck injuries.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Light-headedness.
- Involuntary bowel or bladder activity.

Chapter 6

Mental Health and Victim Blaming

Mental Health

THE MENTAL HEALTH CARD when it comes to both family and criminal proceedings is something of a double-edged sword, and the side of the sword you get very much depends on your gender.

For male perpetrators, mental health is one of the most overused excuses to either NFA (no further action) a charging decision or proceed with a lesser charge.

This is why, despite originally training as a narcissistic abuse specialist, I would strongly discourage referring to the perpetrator as a narcissist or any other disorder listed within the DSM-5, particularly if there is no formal diagnosis.

By assigning that excuse with a clinical label, it can be suggested that the perpetrator is not responsible or in control for their actions under medical grounds and therefore did not intend to cause their victim distress.

What you must realise about the whole world of psychology and its diagnostic process, is that it's not very scientific or clinical at all!

People are labelled as disordered through pure observation every day, or a diagnosis is attained based on behaviours or traits that are described to the

psychology professional by either the patient or a third party. This means that diagnosing is subjective, and why different clinical professionals could give the same patient a different opinion.

So, with or without an assessment, it is very important to remain legally factual and support as many of those facts highlighted in your timeline with evidence and avoid any suggestion that there is a clinical reason for their behaviour.

Even with a formal diagnosis, perpetrators are very aware of their behaviour and its impact on their victims. They could choose to behave differently but the desire to have a need met far outweighs any concerns for their victim's wellbeing.

Often perpetrators have been raised being taught violence, aggression and intimidation is the way to get what they want in life, and usually without strong enough consequences. This means long term validation of this kind of behaviour, leads to entitlement!

Unfortunately, the mental health card is less forgiving with female victims. Mental health is often a stick to beat the victim with by discrediting them and their word. Often female victims are pathologized with or without a diagnosis or formal assessment by a psychology professional. This is a form of victim blaming, suggesting the victim is unstable, volatile, and somehow antagonised or provoked the perpetrator.

The mental health card is frequently used in children's proceedings to label the mother as an unfit parent due to her mental state, and often without evidence to support this.

Going into battle with a perpetrator becomes a game of tit for tat, and this is a tactic you must prepare yourself for. The perpetrator will seek to discredit you in any way they can.

The perpetrator and the supporting professionals are more than capable of using a victim's emotional state against them without any prompting, but we don't want to be encouraging this kind of attack on your character when it may not come up.

Often the perpetrator is aware of this fact and will intentionally attempt to set their victim up prior to separation by convincing you that something is wrong with you and it's you who needs professional help.

Once a formal diagnosis or assessment is recorded on your medical records, it can be suggested you are unstable, irrational, and volatile, which could be used against you in any future proceedings to support any potential tactics of DARVO.

This is why my suggestion to every victim is to avoid seeking any formal assessments for disorders if your safety is at risk or if you have children with a high conflict person.

Obviously, this advice does not apply if you are feeling suicidal or if you feel the children are not safe in your care. But in that instance, if possible, reach out to family and friends for childcare support and when engaging with any medical professionals it's important to focus on how you feel and the experiences that have contributed to you feeling this way. This is to ensure that anything that is recorded on your medical records has a better chance of working for you, rather than against you.

Mental health struggles are an ever-growing problem, meaning trauma impacts the lives of many including the professionals, you may be seeking support from. It's a well-known fact many police, judges, support workers, lawyers, teachers, and medical professionals struggle with their emotional wellbeing and so this can also include psychology professionals. There is a whole host of reasons for why someone may be struggling emotionally or struggling with day-to-day tasks at work and or at home but experiencing

the implications of trauma doesn't necessarily mean that person is unstable, untrustworthy, or unfit to parent or perform their job.

Unfortunately, being labelled as disordered does instantly carry that stigma which can affect you throughout your life, but I assure you, there is nothing at all wrong with you. What you are feeling and how you are functioning is normal given what you have endured.

Trauma that is embedded within the limbic system is triggered by your current landscape and this activates a survival response. Long term whether you feel you have a disorder or not, what is needed is the appropriate psychosensory therapy to address the snapshots stored in the long-term memory from past traumatic experiences, which may go back as far as childhood.

This will create space in the container where we store long term data, meaning your capacity to cope will improve, along with your memory and day to day functioning through daily life.

Short term you need coaching to develop awareness of how you're feeling and why you're feeling the way you are. With that awareness you can then implement trauma informed tools to develop emotional resilience and self-regulate at the time of feeling triggered. This will allow you to function and emotionally cope better, but more importantly be less reactive to the perpetrator or unempathetic professionals, which can be reversed and used against you.

I realise you feel like you are treading water, but in the next chapter I'll be taking you through some coaching exercises and regulation tools which will support you through this difficult time.

Victim Blaming

Victim blaming can come in a few different forms. As I've covered in detail above, mental health is a common tactic used to put a victim's word and reliability into question.

DARVO is a classic example of how the perpetrator and even the authorities will utilise mental health to reverse the victim offender role.

First there will be a complete denial of the facts being presented. This then follows on with a direct attack on the victim, targeting something they can use against them. This is a deflection tactic. Rather than focusing on the perpetrator's behaviour, the focus is directed towards how you have done wrong by the offender or to suggest that your word isn't reliable. Often this is either something from the past and completely irrelevant to the case or a complete fabrication of the truth. But the idea is to shift the attention away from the offender and onto the victim.

An example of DARVO in my case with CPS:

As I mentioned earlier, my ex made me act as an attorney on an LPA and instructed me to restrict his access to the account, which he then changed to joint.

Despite the investigating officer providing CPS with a statement clarifying the facts around the LPA and the account management, which could have been easily confirmed by speaking to our bank manager who we both communicated closely with while managing the account under my husband's instructions.

CPS accused me of pursuing the criminal investigation for financial gain. This was based solely on the perpetrator's word and that of his one witness who was a family member and the perpetrator's biggest enabler. Not only

was there no evidence to support this, but the decision to proceed with a criminal investigation was never mine to make in the first place. It was the sergeant that said based on the initial evidence I provided after I called 999 in distress, they said it was too serious to ignore, and my concerns regarding escalation were ignored.

But that aside, there was no financial gain to me by pursuing any criminal investigation as bad behaviour isn't an influencing factor in financial proceedings.

The courts try to make financial orders based on what is in the children's best interest and who has the main or sole care of the children. The outcome of financial proceedings would be the same with or without a conviction.

This was a classic case of DARVO.

There were other things: CPS twisted the narrative to justify their charging decision, but this was just to give you a better understanding of what DARVO can present as in a formal setting.

Within the relationship an example of DARVO would be catching the perpetrator cheating and they immediately deny the allegation and when presented with evidence they redirect the focus on something you have done. This could either be focusing on your mistrust and invasion of their privacy or suggesting it was something you have done to cause them to be unfaithful.

This very cleverly turns the tables, and you end up apologising for upsetting them and feeling responsible for their behaviours.

Other forms of victim blaming when dealing with the various authorities are:

- Blaming rape or sexual assault victims of encouraging the perpetrator because of the way she was dressed.
- Suggesting that a victim is sexually promiscuous, or a nag so therefore deserved to be abused or even killed.
- Coaching children without any evidence of this having taken place.
- Parental alienation without any evidence to support this suggestion.
- Accusing victims of wasting police time.

I remember a sergeant calling and accusing me of stalking the investigating officer after control room passed the book to him when my ex made two separate attempts to lure me to the marital home under false pretences via third parties, both in the same day. This was after a series of other breaches of the non-molestation order that the police had chosen to ignore, and I was naturally keen to speak to the officer in charge.

Chapter 7

Navigating Your Way Through the Storm

FIRST AND FOREMOST, YOU must take care of your emotional wellbeing during this challenging time. This isn't only important for your physical health; this will also support you to feel more emotionally present for any children that are part of the equation. It will also improve your resilience to better cope with what's ahead and engage more effectively with the various professionals and dodge the further bullets of abuse from the perpetrator and all their enablers.

If you scan the QR code on the back of the book, I've prepared some demonstrational videos walking you through a trauma informed technique that you can implement easily throughout your day, and I have given some suggestions on activities you can incorporate with this technique.

There is also a video demonstrating some trauma informed tools you can implement with any young children that are needing emotional support.

These are designed to slow the rate your brain is operating at, allowing you to function and think in a more regulated manner. This technique distracts the amygdala once alerted to perceived threats within the immediate landscape, to bring a sense of calm to the nervous system and provide better management for symptoms of anxiety.

It's important to highlight, children who are exposed to or witness violence or abuse towards a parent, are seen as victims in the eyes of the law.

Children who are exposed to domestic abuse can develop self-esteem and behavioural problems and developmental and academic delays.

Your next priority is to get organised with your evidence and facts surrounding what's taken place throughout the relationship. I've designed a framework for victims specifically to record their data in a clear and precise way. This data will support any formal investigation process and assist in an effective risk assessment process.

When dealing with any of the authorities, it is important to be consistent with the facts you're sharing with the various professionals and when you're operating from the emotional part of your brain the language used and the details that we provide can vary depending on your current level of distress and how memory recall operates. So having records for your own reference, will help you better prepare for any future court appearances as well as being consistent with the historical facts when engaging with any of the professionals throughout any criminal or family proceedings.

Any inconsistency in the facts could leave you as a victim vulnerable when cross-examined by the perpetrators defence, as well as victim blaming and not being believed by the other professionals.

Things to Know When Leaving an Abusive Partner

The person you fell in love with does not exist. It was a fantasy they drew you into. Don't worry about what they are telling everyone else. If there is one thing, I am sure of, perpetrators are great at playing victim. They will most likely be blaming you for the breakdown of the relationship. What they won't be telling anyone is all the times they lied, cheated, bullied,

blackmailed and gaslighted you, when all the time they were the one who engaged in controlling and coercive behaviour for the best part of the relationship.

Remember your worth. You selflessly loved them despite all the abuse, but they never deserved your loyalty. Now is the time to turn that loyalty towards yourself and your children.

Be prepared for them to weaponize and even punish the children. They may even discard the children. Remember, this has nothing to do with the children but everything to do with you. Your abuser has lost control of you, so they will control you the only way they can and that's via the children and finances.

Remain no contact wherever possible and where contact is unavoidable due to child contact reasons, keep all communication child focused and via text or email. Make it clear phone calls are not wanted.

My 6 Top Tips When Engaging With Professionals

1. Avoid any mudslinging or name calling this will only take the professionals' focus away from your risk and increase the chances of them dismissing the crimes that are taking place and give them an opening to label you as the problem.
2. Remain legally factual throughout and support wherever possible with evidence. Regardless of your personal opinions on your abuser's psychological position, it is not a crime to have a mental health disorder whether diagnosed formally or not! And as I mentioned earlier this will only increase the chances of charges being dismissed or the perpetrator being given a very light sentencing

under mental health grounds.

3. Becoming your own expert will serve throughout this process in so many ways. Do not allow uninformed professionals to have you question your very real experiences. They will try to gaslight you into thinking you're making a mountain out of a molehill, and this is something you need to be prepared for and do not be afraid to tell them they are wrong on something if you can support the facts.
4. Don't be afraid to pester the police if they are not doing their job properly! They have a responsibility to act professionally and, in the public's, best interest. If calls into control room or emails to the investigating officer is not getting them to make your safety a priority, then my advice is turn up at the station! I know many stations these days do not have an open desk which causes lots of problems pinning anyone from the police down, in which case find out which station within that force or division does have an open desk. You will generally tend to find the forces headquarters and some of the bigger stations will have an open desk even if it is restricted times. And if the first visit is fruitless, keep going down until they take this matter seriously.
5. Really commit to completing the *Trauma Informed Timeline Template* in the resources this is going to make the polices job far easier. And the easier you can make things for them the more likely they are of not missing important facts when presenting the file to CPS.
6. Work on your emotional resilience every day! Make it a priority! It is important to have a clear head to avoid reacting or responding in a way that they may label as irrational! Remember, mental health

struggles are not viewed as favourably for females than it does for men.

Your Healing Journey

If you scan the QR code below this will direct you to the nervous system regulation demonstration and recording. Also, your data recording template as a PDF and your timeline template as a PDF. There is also a video walkthrough on how to get started with this.



Here is a direct URL if you are unable to scan the QR code:

<https://www.sayno-das.com/handbook>

Thank you for reading and I now want this book to be a tool you can keep referring to and record directly in here the relevant data for any ongoing stalking or post separation offences while you're out and about. This is only safe to keep in your handbag or car for example if you have safely escaped any home you shared with the perpetrator.

Therefore, the remainder of this book is a duplicated template to record ongoing events that may constitute as post separation abuse or stalking.

The more detailed timeline template helps you to highlight the different milestones and demonstrate escalations and a pattern to the perpetrator's behaviour throughout the relationship.

You will also find an audio version in the resources if you prefer to listen to this content.

Here you will find:

- Nervous system regulation toolkit.
- Coaching exercise for healthy boundaries.
- Trauma informed timeline assessment templates. (TITLA)
- Incident recording template PDF.
- Audio version of this content.
- Access to a free support group where all admins are trained professionals.

Some of the Stats

Currently 2 women a week lose their life at the hands of a current or ex partner.

Less than 24% of domestic abuse cases get reported to the police. This is due to a combination of lack of trust in the authorities and victims not realising that they are being abused and what they are experiencing is a criminal offence.

1 in 2 perpetrators follow through on a threat.

1 in 5 children live with a perpetrator of abuse so abuse becomes normalised resulting in those children either becoming an abuser or repeating the cycle as a victim in the own relationships.

1 in 5 teenage girls have experienced abuse in their dating relationships.

1 in 9 girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse or assault.

So the stats speak for themselves and this is why we need more experts advocating for women and girls and educating our younger generation.

For those wanting to find purpose from your experience, check out my Victim to Survivor Trauma and Domestic Abuse Advocacy & Coaching Certification, allowing you to heal and process what's happened in your own life and then find purpose and meaning from those experiences by helping others to secure safety for their own future.

Full details are on the resource page, accessed via the QR code.

I also offer trauma informed training for professionals; email me at info@sayno-das.com to request details.

Chapter 8

Raneem's Law and Clare's Law

IN CONCLUSION, IT'S CRUCIAL to note that the law and reporting deadlines mentioned in the resource apply to the UK Domestic Abuse Bill. Laws may vary across other countries, so verify the regulations in your place of residence.

The information provided remains crucial for identifying abuse and assessing risk levels, irrespective of your country's laws.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight two laws now in effect in the UK due to the tragic deaths of two women. Make sure to inform your female friends about these laws and utilise them when necessary to enhance your protection.

Raneem's Law

Raneem and her mother were both stabbed to death by Raneem's husband, after being a victim of coercive control, rape, and stalking.

This legislation would require police to respond faster to domestic abuse and to take into consideration immediate use of orders to protect women which will force the police to provide more protection for victims.

It would also require every police force to have a dedicated officer oversee all civil orders designed to protect violence against women and girls.

This law would require all 999 control rooms to ensure victims are responded to quickly.

Labour have also promised to push for a national electronic link between family courts and the police so that police are immediately notified on civil orders and injunctions.

Clare's Law

This law allows the police to share information to victims or potential victims of domestic abuse involving their current romantic partner or ex partners abusive or violent history.

If you have any concerns, it is always worth putting in a call to the police and requesting a Clare's law check. Even if this comes back clear of any previous history, never ignore the red flags as there could be a multitude of reasons as to why a re-offender isn't being flagged as having a history of abuse.

Remember, less than 24% of domestic abuse cases get reported.

Chapter 9

Recording Incidents

Date of Incident

Details of Incident

Was this reported as a crime within 6 months of it taking place?

If yes what was the outcome?

What evidence do I have to support this?

Has this happened before?

How did it make me feel?

How intense was this feeling? From 1 to 10

What did I think was going to happen or could have happened?

Did this impact any minors either physically or emotionally?

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Further Notes