

Emotional Abuse Leaves Scars

BY AN ANONYMOUS SURVIVOR OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

In August 2007, I was 8 months pregnant and feeling so alone -- like my life was about to end. I was having a baby, and the father of my child left me for another woman. I longed for companionship. I had known John (not his real name) for a while, and he seemed so nice and caring. I reached out to him and he reached back. What I thought was the best thing that ever happened to me and my unborn child soon turned out to be one of the worst experiences of our lives.

For the first year and a half of our relationship, I thought John was a perfect man -- almost too perfect. Then John started changing. First he tried to change the way I dressed. Then John told me he didn't want me going out with my friends. He would even get annoyed when they called. John said as long as I had my family, I didn't need friends. At the time I thought maybe that's what you're supposed to do.

Then the problem got worse. Whenever I went out, I had to tell him where I was going, who I was going with and when I would be back. If I was a few minutes late, he accused me of cheating. If I had to go somewhere, I tried not to go over my time limit. If I did, I would plan in my head a reason why I was late. John would tell me it was only because he loved me. He would say "Be glad that I care so much."

John never cared if my son

was in the room during an argument. He would yell and cuss at me until my son and I were both in tears, and even then he wouldn't stop. I would think to myself, why is he treating me this way? Am I that bad of a person? I believed I was the one who had a problem.

John was the only father my son had ever known. When John was mad at me, he would push him away and say, "Get away from me; I'm not your dad. You don't have a dad." Those words cut like razors.



I lost count of the times I left him with the attitude of "I'm never going back." Of course I always did. When he cooled down he was always sorry. He would tell me he knew he had a problem, and he promised to change. Things would be fine for a while, but John would always go back to his old ways.

"As time passed, John got more cruel and threatened to beat me and worse. I believed that he was capable of doing almost anything to me."

I had tried everything to make him happy, but I finally moved out. My son was having temper tantrums. When John wasn't around, my son would lash out, usually at me. I think my son knew it was safe to act out with me because he knew I would never stop loving him. This is when I realized I could no longer do this to myself or my child. I just got tired of trying to be this person John wanted me to be. I couldn't even be myself around him because I was not what he wanted.

My son and I have a long road of healing. There is still not a day that goes by that my son doesn't ask why he can't see John. Even though it felt like it was the hardest decision I had ever made, it was the best decision I ever made. I finally could be me without someone telling me I wasn't good enough. I finally decided that my son and I deserve so much more.

What I learned most and what I would like to pass on to others is, no one deserves to live this way. You may think at times that you will never overcome it, but you can! HCWC is here to offer hope and help. 