

AIMEE

1

I met my boyfriend in my final year of high school. He was a year older and had a car! At first all my friends were really impressed that I had found myself a great looking boyfriend, who worked and had money to take me out. He told me he loved me and wanted to spend all his free time with me. I thought I loved him too. At first I was more than happy to spend as much time as I could with him. I stopped playing football for the school team as he would get really jealous if any boys cheered when I had the ball, I was a striker.

He would get mad if I wanted to hang out with my friends after school, even to study. My friends stopped asking me to go anywhere with them. They couldn't understand why I would chose him over them all the time. He would tell me, nobody could ever have me, I was his forever. I tried to finish it with him but he said he would kill himself if I ever left him. I felt that we needed each other as by this point I didn't speak to my friends anymore.

STEPHEN

1

My girlfriend would tell me she loved me and that nobody would treat me as good as she did. That nobody understood me like she did. I met her just after I lost a close friend in a car accident. She was loving, supportive and understanding. We would spend hours talking on the phone, messaging each other late into the night.

The summer holidays began, we had been together 6 months. I was starting to feel better about my friend's death and I was ready to start going out with my old friends again. My friends had always been about, we just hadn't been spending as much time together. I got invited out to go to the cinema and get pizza one night. My girlfriend was so angry she didn't want me to go, but I did anyway. She followed me there and saw me chatting to my friend's sister and her mate. It was completely innocent.

My girlfriend charged in the pizza shop screaming at me saying she knew I just wanted to go out to chat to girls. I was mortified. I just stood there embarrassed asking her to calm down. She stormed off out the shop and I followed. I wish I never had... I had a can of pop in my hand when I caught up with her. She grabbed it from my hand and threw it at my face with such force, it gave me a black eye and a bloody nose. I didn't see it coming and I never suspected she would physically hurt me.

KHADIJA

1

I live with my auntie as my mum died when I was really young. My auntie didn't have any girls so I guess I've always been a bit spoiled. My aunt and uncle have always been really strict with me and my three cousins, their sons. I don't mind as I know they have our best interests at heart.

I started going to college and I met this boy, who I began to spend a lot of time with. My oldest cousin found out and threatened to tell my uncle if I continued to spend time with him. I knew my family wouldn't approve if they found out about it, as his family is different from ours.

I didn't stop seeing him and my cousin did tell my family. They were upset and so was I. Now they are making arrangements for me to get married. I'm too young to be thinking of marriage! They're saying that I'm bringing shame on the family and if I brought further shame by refusing to marry the man they have chosen, there would be severe consequences. They watch my every move and get angry with me if I don't come home as soon as I finish college.

ELISHA

1

My mum met a really funny man when we were on holiday. They spent nearly every day together and they kept in touch when we returned home. He moved in with us not long after. My mum said it would be good for me and my little brother to have a man around the house. He was really nice in the beginning and redecorated my brother's room and the bathroom.

He makes us all happy most of the time but sometimes he gets really angry and shouts at us if we don't put things away or if we're not home exactly when we say we will be. He scares me when he shouts, so I spend a lot of time in my room, out of his way. I've noticed mum and my little brother do the same. I tried to speak to my mum about it, but she said he's just a bit stressed because he hasn't been able to find work since he's moved in with us and things will calm down when he does.

AIMEE

2

I moved in with him not long after finishing high school. I was young and didn't realise how irresponsible he was. He spent a year unemployed while I worked two jobs to pay the bills. He got more controlling but relied on me financially.

I wasn't allowed to do anything without his permission. I met one of my friends from high school and arranged to meet up with her. He found the texts on my phone and grabbed me by my throat and smashed my phone. I know I should get help but I just don't know how to get out. I've invested a lot in this relationship and I'm scared to start over.

STEPHEN

2

I know I deserve more than this but how can I tell my friends and family that my girlfriend has assaulted me?

The police were called and I've given them a statement and taken photos of my injuries. I don't have a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) against her currently as she's 17 years old and you have to be over 18. However, her bail conditions prevent her from coming near me.

I look a mess and I know people are going to ask questions. I'm so embarrassed that this has happened to me. I'm a big guy and play lots of sports. Maybe I should lie about how I got injured...

KHADIJA

2

I don't know what to do, I have no choice but to obey them.

I missed the bus the other night and got home late. My auntie was so angry she was screaming at me that I was dishonouring the family socialising with a boy from another background.

When my uncle came home I was summoned to be told I would be getting married in three weeks' time. I locked myself in my bedroom all weekend crying.

I felt so powerless and was really low.

ELISHA

2

I've heard them shouting and my mum crying on occasions. Mum doesn't have her friends round anymore. I think he has made them feel uncomfortable when they come round. I've seen him sitting in the middle of mum and her friends not speaking or taking part in the conversation. He sits there really moodily and I've heard him talking badly of them to my mum when they leave.

The other night the shouting had gotten worse and as I came out my room to go to the bathroom, I saw him slap my mum. I ran to my mum and he shoved me out of the way. I fell and hit my eyebrow on the edge of the door frame. There was blood everywhere but at least he had gone.

AIMEE

3

There are local resources to help victims of abuse. Bridges is the local support for Tameside. If Amiee is not sure where to start, or if she just wants to talk to someone about whether her relationship is abusive, she could contact them. She needs to form a plan to end the relationship immediately and safely. Physical and emotional abuse should be considered a deal-breaker for a relationship. Regardless of your love for one another, how long you've been together, whether you have kids or pets, or whether you live together, a relationship that involves physical or psychological abuse needs to be over.

She lives with her abusive boyfriend, so she must be extremely careful using the home computer or her mobile phone, as her page visits and phone calls may be stored in the history or call log, which he may be monitoring. If she has to leave in a hurry, she should have an "emergency bag" packed and hide it somewhere so that it is ready to go when she is. If you share a mobile phone plan, remember that many phones have GPS tracking capability, and he may be able to find you or monitor you through your phone. Consider leaving it behind and getting a new phone and number.

STEPHEN

3

Steven needs to immediately and permanently cut off all contact with her. No meetings, no talking, no calls, no texts, no going through an intermediary, NOTHING. Any interactions he should have can take place through the legal system. If there are charges filed against her, and Steven has the opportunity to drop them. This would be foolish regardless of the pity he may wind up feeling.

Assault is not a civil violation, so he doesn't need a solicitor. It's a criminal act, and the police have the jurisdiction to bring charges if there is enough evidence. The black eye and Steven's statement would be sufficient. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will have the final say even if Steven decides to drop charges, Steven would be called as a witness.

As for his own safety: obviously he is that his girlfriend is dangerous. He would be advised to vary his routine, secure his home, always travel with a charged phone, make his friends and family aware of where he will be or when he might be home, if he was going out and thinking that he might run into her for some reason.

His friends and family would more than likely support him and understand his situation if he explained it to them

KHADIJA

3

On Monday my friend from college told me that he wanted me to meet someone. Later that day he gave me a telephone number of a woman who works for a support agency that helps girls in my situation. I was worried as I loved my family and never wanted to bring shame on them or hurt them in any way. It took me a week or more before I called her. It was good to be able to offload my problems. I don't know what's going to happen but I know my rights and who to contact if I need help at any time.

I went and spoke to a worker at the charity and she understood my background. It was good to talk to someone who didn't ask me why my family were like this, someone who just listened and accepted my situation for what it was. With advice and support from the charity, I am preparing to tell my family about Paul, and that I don't want to get married yet. I don't know what will happen, but the charity has told me all about who to contact if I need help at any time.

ReSPECTful Relationships

