

Surviving the Dance of an Abusive Relationship

By Yarrow

Does this sound familiar?

One day I woke up to the frightening thought that this is my life! It was like waking from a long, foggy dream viewed as disconnected from my life and my feelings.

The mirror on the bathroom wall reflected the horror - black eyes, broken nose, bruises everywhere and a scalp so sore that my hairbrush felt like a scorching hot scraper pulling gobs of hair from my head. The hole in the bedroom wall emulated the contour of my head, confirming the impact.

As I now know it, I frequently had out-of-body experiences as the distant observer of my very own nightmare. If life is a dance, I was certainly out of step with its sweetness and rhythm.

But then, each day was a different one filled with the perennial feeling of promises and hope. Yesterday became a distant memory of a horror show and stuffed emotions.

It was love. I convinced myself of that. Puppy love; a high school romance with all the promise of reaching the Golden Years hand-in-hand with the same mate.

Yes, this is a flash-back story situated in the 50s, when a trilogy of sacred vows were eagerly said with the gusto of "til death do us part," you were satisfied with what you had and bound to the duty of your word.

The marriage barely survived the free love of the 60s and was tempered with a "love gone bad" in the 70s, after 11 years of marriage.

A brutal fist fight that landed me in the emergency room was my final wake up call. I had to either get out of this situation or risk dying at the hand of an alcoholic, sweet when sober; violent when under the influence.

My experience with a physically abusive relationship was 3-pronged:

- 1 – Engage**
- 2 – Endure**
- 3 – Escape!**

If you are thinking about a committed relationship and are currently experiencing physical abuse or planning how to break away from a physically abusive situation, the following information is based on my personal experience.

This story is informational only. Your personal responsibility for the use of this information is just that—your responsibility. It is you who is in charge of your life, safety and happiness, no one else. I encourage you to take any information under advisement and make your own choices.

Step up now, take planned, safe action and spring to safety. You CAN do it!

The Waltz of *Engaging* – Look Before You Leap!

There are many demarcations in the sand between “I Do” and “applying for a restraining order.” The latter is unpleasant to recall. The former is an example that *love is blind*.

What is important in my message is how to avoid getting yourself into an abusive relationship in the first place.

Tips to Avoid Engagement:

- Don't sabotage your gut feeling. If it feels scary and unsafe, it is!
- Honor your first impression.
- Be honest with yourself.
- Review what you admire about this person and why.
- Ask yourself “What am I missing or not seeing?”
- What am I choosing to overlook?
- Tune in - “It's not that bad” is a mental thought that gives you direct information to raise your attention and your guard.
- Assess the drama and the extent to which it triggers anger, resentment, and a sense of missed opportunities, etc.
- Avoid making excuses for or rationalizing behavior, i.e. he/she had a difficult childhood... so their abusive behavior was learned within the family unit.
- Review why you are attracted to this person.
- Take control of your ego and mind.
- Discipline your choices.
- Remember, being or acting naïve has consequences.

The Missteps – I Knew It. I Just Didn't Want To Believe It!

Often I think of the criteria that I used for judging and determining the character of people. My concept was that people who are kind to animals, children and elderly exhibit compassion and concern for humanity and others.

And, also I would conclude that “Well he/she is from a good family, he/she is respected and successful” to also deduct that this is a good person.

This paradigm of thinking is deceptive and flawed. Neither compassion for others nor outward appearance should play any role in the behavior of an abuser.

Some of the signs of an abusive relationship are:

- Temper and how easily it is triggered as a key indicator of potential abuse.
- Display of anger. Whether you think it is appropriate, inappropriate or a sign of power. Anger is a BIG RED FLAG! Heed its warning.
- Outbursts of anger. This behavior does not necessarily indicate capability of “taking charge.”
- Overly expressive role as a “protector.”
- Victim role, i.e. the world is always against him/her.
- Opinionated and judgmental to a fault. You can be sure that something... anything about you can trigger an outburst.

- Need to control.

The Foxtrot of *Enduring*

Stop fooling your self. An abusive relationship does not change!

No matter how hard you try or what you do to make yourself a better person, to become more compassionate or willing to shoulder the blame, the abusers need to feel superior reoccurs.

1. Re-language your internal chatter to fill your mind with these positive affirmations:

- I stop asking myself “what did I do to deserve this?”
- I accept that I made an uninformed, willing choice that put me in this situation.
- I am not the problem or to blame... This is his/her stuff – not mine.
- I did not cause this abuse.
- This is not my fault.
- If there is a lesson that I need to learn, I am open to a quick lesson.
- I can change myself; BUT I cannot change another person.
- I am not in the business of “fixing” anyone or their life.
- I am responsible for my own safety, well-being and happiness.
- I deserve better.
- Other people in my family deserve better.
- I can remove myself from this abusive situation.
- I can count on myself for my life.
- I will be safe.
- I can find the support I need.
- I can support myself.

2. Get straight with yourself:

- Discard the notion that physical abuse connotes love!
- Separate lust from love in your mind!
- Stop rationalizing the behavior of the abuser.
- Awaken to the reality that this abuse WILL NOT CHANGE, despite the remorse and apologies.

The Break Dance of *Escaping*

This is where you need all your courage, intellect and willpower. And, your ducks in a tidy, dependable row!

Basically, until I was nearly killed, I clung to the hope that this behavior would change. After all, my thinking was that “we are in love.” BIG mistake!

My escape plan took about seven years to craft so it was air tight with no room for mistakes. There would be no going back. Otherwise, I could be dead.

Here are some essential tips for your escape:

- Where are your resources?
- Who can you count on before, during and after your escape? Think of different people that you can depend on.
- What do you tell, or not tell, others? It is often best to do the planning alone to avoid compromising other people and the chance that your secret will be revealed.
- Is there an agency that I can work without him/her knowing about it?
- How do you explain to the children, if children are a consideration?
- What information, if any, does your employer need to know?
- Who will be your emergency contact?
- What financial resources do you have or can acquire without exposing your plan? Establish your credit and bank accounts if you can.
- Think down the road for 1, 2, 5 years from now. What do you want your life to look like?

As may be expected... The players in my emotional drama were fear, guilt, disillusionment, suppressed anger, exhaustion and a healthy dose of poor self esteem, which plummeted with each abusive incident. In my weakest moments the empty pit of despair and hopelessness gripped my stomach.

When I realized that it was ME who got me into this situation and that it was ME who had to get myself out, I began to look around outside myself and my life for answers, resources and successful examples.

Quickly, I learned that life is all about choices, one by one, one moment at a time, putting one foot in front of the other, day in, day out. Reaching this realization is the point at which you “know” you are on your way to escape. It is just a matter of time and a solid plan. *There is always a way out.*

I escaped with no money, no job, three small children, including a developmentally disabled child and no extended family support!

You can make your life what you desire too regardless of how you view your circumstances at the moment.

The tools you need are right there within you:

- 1) **Courage** to take charge of your life
- 2) **Willingness** to accept and let go of the mistakes made
- 3) **Belief** in yourself to do whatever you have to do to move forward with your life
- 4) **Trust** in yourself and the support team that you create

The time may be now to rally your strength, stamina, skills and talents and start creating the life you desire!

Namaste and good luck on your journey!



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Yarrow is soaring to her highest potential as an Inspirational and Motivational Speaker, Corporate Human Capital Trainer, Author and Personal Energy Coach. To schedule her for your conference, executive retreat, break-out session, employee and member event and to re-engineer your life and business, visit <http://www.ConsciousToolbox.com> or contact her at [Yarrow@ConsciousToolbox.com](mailto:Yarrow@ConsciousToolbox.com) or 410.271.1377.