

Domestic Abuse

case study



Sam's Story

66 Before I came to Glow, I'd spent ten years in a domestic abuse relationship. In the beginning he would always want me to be with him and I just thought that he just loved me that much, rather than he wanted to control me. My friends and family started to notice me spending less time with them and when I was out with them he would always be there.

The mental abuse was hard I was constantly told that I was fat and ugly and that I would never amount to anything. And I just accepted that, I believed what he was saying was true. It was when I got pregnant that things got really bad. I was getting locked in the house without any food, and it was only then that I got scared and I began to realise that it wasn't normal.

I had been separated from my friends and family, I had no contact with my mum and we lived next door to his family. I was just cut off from everyone, it got to a point where I knew I was in a dangerous situation, but where would I go? This was all I had and without it I would have nothing and at that point I believed that was the only thing in my life. I didn't want to involve my family because I didn't want to put their safety at risk, plus there was always the thought that they wouldn't believe me.

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Things got really physically abusive and so I knew I couldn't stay in that relationship anymore, I had to break free. At the time the Police were involved and they put me into contact with Glow. I called them and I was put up in the refuge straight away, I was so lucky. I left that situation and Glow gave me the support straight away, they took care of me and made me feel safe.

Since being at the Sunrise Centre, a recovery centre ran by Glow, I've been meeting others who have been through the same things as me. I wanted to understand what had happened to me and where I would go from this situation. I needed to know these things so I could heal, so I could move past what I'd been through. I did the Our Journey course and that really allowed me to be vocal and to help others.

It's a lonely place going out into the big wide world on your own, and I know that at the Sunrise I can always come back. It's like having a family, you don't have to communicate but it's just nice to know that you're in a safe environment. It's such a stark contrast to the abusive relationships because you have everything stripped from you, you lose who you are, you're removed from your family, your safety has been taken from you and so when women walk into places like the Sunrise Centre, they're a shell and they have nothing, and have to build their lives from, the ground up.

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One of the most important things that I learned with Glow was that it wasn't me it was him (perpetrator). It's an important part of the healing process because you need to know that you didn't bring any of the abuse on yourself, it wasn't your fault. When you walk away from an abusive relationship you hold so much guilt that you can't just talk to the average person about it because they would never understand. Glow made me realise that it's not about why you stayed or how you ended up like that, but how your abuser manipulated you to get to that point, and that was so eye opening to me.

I've been inspired by Glow and I want to use my experience to help others who might be going through abuse. I want to work in mental health and inspire women. I'm just finishing my second year of sociology degree and I plan to complete my dissertation around mental health and stigmas with domestic violence. I think there's a lot of stigma that if you're a strong woman and a bit gobby that you won't get into these situations. But actually it's not your character that's going to stop it it's on them (the perpetrator). And I wouldn't have known any of this without the help of Glow. And I think this is a problem, if as a young person you're so used to abuse or these stigmas then they'll become normal and young people might think it's okay to replicate it. I think we all need to understand what a healthy relationship is, especially the next generation of boys and girls. It might prevent abuse from happening and that will always be a good thing.

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I wouldn't say that I'm fixed, I'm a work in progress, but I know I've got that helping hand should I need it. I like to be continuously involved with Glow because I feel like I owe them so much. I will always come back to Arch whenever I'm needed.

I know I've been lucky, not everyone is fortunate enough to have experienced such a positive service after domestic abuse. When you have a disease there's a cure, and you can go to the doctors and they will fix you. With domestic abuse, you need to be taken away from the abusive environment and you need a healing process like that of curing a disease. But sometimes that isn't always made available to everyone and that's really sad.

I am a strong willed determined person but without Glow, I wouldn't be where I am today.

