

Anonymous (41 years)

“I’m not that kind of person”

When I was six years old my mother and father broke up. My mother gave up the house and we, my mother and my sisters, we moved from here to there, living with other people. Eventually, my mother send us to her grandparents. I was at the age of ten then. From there, they put us in school. I went to high school as well. I only dropped out at grade 9. When we were moving around we didn't go to school. I started at standard 2 when I was ten years old. That was like a big age, to be at standard 2. At the age of seventeen I left school. I failed at school and so my sister and I, we ran from home and hitchhiked to my grandfather's nieces. We lived with them. We made friends there. I make friends easily with everybody. After some time we again moved to other people, we got a job at a flower place. We had a nice time. Then, we moved to this other place, to work. It was only casual work.

Eventually I moved to Paarl with a friend. I lived there with her aunt. We lived together there. That was when I split with my sister. That was still when I was seventeen. Then people came there and they said they are looking for someone who could work with them, to look after their child. That was in Cape Town. Then after some time, I left that job and went to stay with my sister in Manenberg. The next year she got me a job, at the supermarket in Elsie's River. I worked there for a year. Then I ended up living with the people that I worked with. Something happened at my sister's place, but I'm not going to go into that. From there I ended up living in Retreat. That's where I met my husband.

From last year I started doing things, like courses. Before that time, I had babies; I was actually a stay-at-home-mom, a home-executive as they say. I started a business course, then I did the parenting course, I did computer classes, life skills classes. The most important thing that happened in my life for me, it would be the job shadow that I did. That was important. It was intriguing for me as to say that I sat at home for most of my life. At the age of forty-one now, I did the job shadow. That was important for me. My husband is unemployed; I want him to get a steady job. That is why I am empowering myself now with these courses. Maybe one day I can be my own boss.

“I can't have any friends”

In my life now, I am a pure person. I know I am for my husband and my children, I am only for them. But my husband is sometimes loving, sometimes he's, how can I say, he's very abusive.

Like emotionally abusive over these years. He's possessive, I can't go anywhere. I can't go to my mother's house or to my sister's house. I'm going to get emotional now... (*cries*) I can't have any friends. If I go to the supermarket, I can't walk in the street where my friend lives, I must walk all around it, to avoid coming to her house. I can't be even your friend because your husband or your brother is now there. He's accusing me of having affairs with just anyone. It started when my eldest son was born, that was nineteen years ago.

When I come home and I go to the bathroom, he says, where are you going now, are you going to rinse your vagina out because you had sex with another man? He's saying words, how can I say these words... I talked about the abuse in one of the courses at New World Foundation. That was confidential; no one must talk about that. When I shared my story everyone was crying. I talked to another old lady as well. If he must know about that, I don't know what will happen.

He's a good husband and father, but the abusiveness... I can't even stay at the gate or sit in the yard because I'm going to have a look at the nineteen year olds. I know I'm not that kind of person. I can't go to my sister's home because I would sleep with her son. My sister is married to a white man. I can't go there with Christmas, then he will say I like the white men's penis. It's hurting to hear these things. There is not a day that goes by without him doing this. He must just stop doing this and be loving. I don't go around with other men. I know myself, I don't do this stuff.

Today he is doing a casual job. He said I am making myself *lekker* pretty now to have sex at the New World Foundation. He says I won't mind taking three men at the same time. I would take one at the front, one at the back and suck another one's penis. He says I don't mind going for big penises because my vagina is so big as a coke can. I had enough of this kind of abuse. Enough is enough.

If I take him along to my mother or my sister it would be bad too. It would be worse. He would be stalking me. I can't even go to the toilet. He would say, I saw how that man eyed you. Why? It's my sister's friend. They only introduced them to us. What's wrong with you? Someone told me I must rather keep quiet when he says these things.

*"I just want to be free"*

One woman told me she had the same problem, eventually she left her husband. Another woman told me her mother went through that. Her father was saying these things to her mother and she thought he was saying the truth. At least I know my daughter knows these things my husband says about me are not true. She knows I'm not that kind of person. I don't know what they are going through, my children. I don't want my children to grow up without a father, like I did. Maybe they should talk to someone. Maybe she won't talk to me. She would always say daddy must come right, I don't know what's wrong with him. He's a sick man. She believes he makes this stuff in his mind and then he believes himself. I think he needs help. I told him he needs to see a psychiatrist. Then he says my vagina needs a psychiatrist. Or I must go tell that to

my *naaiers* (abusive term for 'boyfriends').

My children, they also can't go anywhere. One of my sons, he loved the ballroom dancing and wanted to go to classes but my husband says that is for *moffies* (gays). And my baby, my five year old daughter, she loves dancing and modeling but I am not allowed to take her to the library, where they have courses. Children can't just go to school. They need to do things they love. We all have a talent. That's what I always say. But he says, why do you have to take the child somewhere, the children belong at home.

My weekend was fine. But how can I say it... I just want to be free.