Stopping the Pain

Recovering from abuse takes time and the support of people who care.

March 7, 2016 By Kate Ferguson

By the time Nora, a 30-year-old police officer, decided to leave Howie, her boyfriend, she was emotionally scarred from the four years of abuse she'd suffered. Howie was a corrections officer she'd met at work. They'd dated for one year and then decided to live together. That's when she learned how jealous and controlling he could be.

Now, three years later, Nora still thinks about Howie and some of the good times they had. She knows the abuse was bad, so why does she sometimes wonder if leaving him was the right decision?

When you leave an abusive relationship, thoughts like Nora's are natural. In fact, healing and recovering from abuse is different for each person, stresses Safe Passage, an online support service for survivors of abuse and their families located in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Recovering from abuse is difficult and takes time, and each survivor heals from this type of trauma in his or her own way. But this process is made easier when survivors of abuse get support and take the time to heal and grow.

"If you have learned or been forced to be helpless in your relationship, work on small accomplishments that will gradually build your self-confidence," advise Richard Kraus, PhD, and Andrea Lissette, MA, domestic violence intervention program group leaders and authors of the book Free Yourself From an Abusive Relationship.

For example, these accomplishments can be as simple as volunteering to serve meals at a neighborhood food kitchen. The basic takeaway is this, say Kraus and Lissette: Interact with people who will offer you encouragement and support for who you are and what you're able to do.

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