

The Art of Survival - Amy's Story

Pushed out, locked out, I walked, barefoot, without clothes, into the night. Someone gave me a blanket. Someone gave me space in a caravan. It was so cold I'd wake in the morning with my ear frozen to my pillow. I had no food for three days, no gas to heat the space or make a cup of tea. A neighbour, also down on his luck, offered me hot tea one day. As he pottered about in his caravan, brewing a drink, he gave me tips on how to manage this kind of life.

'You'll learn it', he said. 'The art of survival.'

I went back that time. Why? We all find reasons to go back.

'He disnae mean it' 'He needs me' 'He says he'll change' 'It was my fault because I didn't have the tea ready, have his clothes sorted, have his...' 'He bought me a lovely bag and said he was sorry'

'He **needs** me.'

'It was **my** fault.'

What does it take for us to realise that the art of survival isn't about going back for more beatings, more abuse, more humiliation, more rape - it's about building the life we deserve.

Apart from abuse. Apart from him.

That takes courage. But we need to do it.

I met Jane (not her real name) in a refuge. She was always being beaten and thrashed by her man. She blamed herself for his behaviour. She took responsibility for his actions. Three times she came to the refuge, battered. Three times she went back. That last time - he killed her.

I can't stop thinking about Jane. About how if only she hadn't gone back, she would still be alive, and two wee kids would still have their mother. This is why I need to tell my story. If I can support one other person not to be killed by an abusive partner, my dream will have come true.

The final straw, my awakening if you like, came when I woke up in a wheelie bin, with cracked ribs and a dislodged eye. I realised I'm gonna end up dead. I realised all his promises - I'll change; I canna live without you - were just emotional blackmail.

He never changed and never would, and if I kept going back, next time I wouldn't wake up at all.

He said he couldn't live without me. I thought I couldn't manage without him. He got under my skin, into my head, until I couldn't think for myself. Till what he told me was more real than what I knew about myself.

After waking up, literally broken, in a wheelie bin, I realised, I'm nae a bad person. It's nae me that's doing it. It's him.

So I want to say to you:

As a woman you deserve better

As a woman you must have courage to leave before it's too late

As a woman, you have help - go to a refuge, speak to Rape Crisis - find the people who believe in you so you can learn to believe in yourself

Reach out to other women. Hear other people's voices telling you that you matter until you hear your own voice agreeing. I carried this inside me, inside my brain and body for 20 years. Then Rape Crisis helped me. I don't want you to go through what I went through. I don't want you to end up like Jane.

We are not responsible for our man's actions

We are responsible for ours

Get help. Help is there.

Stay alive - in a good life

In a life you deserve

I've taken back the power

Now you take back yours

Amy

Get in touch with Rape Crisis Scotland
any day between 5pm-midnight

Phone (freephone): 08088 010302

Text: 07537 410 027

Email:

support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Webchat: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

**Rape Crisis helped me
They can help you
Call them
It might just save your
life**

Find local support here:
(or by searching
bit.ly/3D6P6SD)

