

Marigold

Marigold married in the 1950's to a bank manager who worked for various banks during their 30 plus year marriage. He moved the family from town to town so that they never had an opportunity to make friends. "What goes on in these four walls stays in them...if I ever hear anything coming back you're for it"

This man started by raping his new wife so badly on their honey moon that they had to cut the honey moon short while she had surgical repairs to her (internal and external) vaginal area. No-one, either from the medical profession or her family asked her how the damage had occurred or talked to her about it. She couldn't have children after this, but adopted four.

During the course of the marriage Marigold was isolated and controlled – including instructions about what to wear and say in public. When they were in public her husband would ridicule and humiliate her, so that she stopped going out unless forced.

He would force her to drink alcohol and rape her before they went out in public. "All the time trying to ply me with double and triple bourbons, vodka, anything we had in the house, and I wasn't a drinker...and he would try and almost rip my clothes off me as soon as I got out the door..." At home, she could never refuse sex and her husband used objects as weapons and to rape her including sodomy with objects.

He often beat her and broke and damaged her limbs and other parts of her body. She was usually denied medical treatment. The one time she did go to hospital, he tried to poison her while she was in bed recovering from surgery to her elbow and knee, both caused by injuries he'd given her.

Marigold felt powerless and became obsessive about cleaning, parenting and the wellbeing of the children. She was very protective of them because she was terrified that he would also hurt them.

"I used to obsessively clean the house...I didn't realise I was doing it ... I was over fastidious with the children, now they say I smothered them."

Her husband constantly lied to her and had affairs with other women, continually infecting her with Chlamydia – a sexually transmitted infection. It was years, however, before her doctor told her what it was that she had – she thought it was just a 'woman's problem'.

He constantly intimidated and humiliated her, told her she was crazy "My husband told me I was crazy ...I went to the doctor and he put me on anti depressants, I didn't tell him what my home life was like" finally, "...they told me I was schizophrenic..."

Marigold's husband had her committed to psychiatric hospitals three times. One of these times was for trying to commit suicide to escape the abuse; another time was for trying to run away from him. When Marigold was in hospital her husband would continue to psychologically abuse her by phone and during visits. " ...my husband would ring me up and say 'when you're well I'll take you back'. Then he'd ring back

and say 'I won't have you back'." He would also take her out for the day and beat her up.

"I thought I was sane ... they told me I was bi-polar, then they told me I was schizophrenic and I was having all these drugs and I was hallucinating, I was hearing voices" Marigold became addicted to the psychiatric drugs she was on and has had a long, difficult time withdrawing from them.

For years she tried to tell staff about the abuse she experienced and they didn't believe her – attributing what she was saying to her illness rather than to her reality.

I'd try to tell them what my husband did to me – they'd tell me I was evil to make those things up about him – I must be hallucinating...then I'd get angry cause I was so frustrated that no-one believed me – and they'd punish me for being angry – put me in solitary and give me more drugs..."

Finally, "The nurses cottoned on because they used to listen on the intercom ...I'd make sure the calls were on intercom so they had to hear him"

However, the abuse didn't stop until this man finally left his wife to live with another woman in another town.

Marigold has finally found a therapist who is helping her come to terms with what has happened to her – however, she feels like she's missed out on most of her life.

Poppy

Poppy is a 40 year old woman with three children. She married young to a man who was sexually, emotionally and physically violent.

"he punched me in the face and pulled out my hair, that was the first time and there were several other times when he would just use – he was a big man- he'd use his body to threaten me, or he'd just slap me round a little bit, but he used to do things like if I wouldn't give him sex he'd grab me by the pubic hairs and drag me around the bedroom, he's raped me a couple of times..."

... He shot a shot gun off in my ears and burst all my ears, ... We'd have an argument or something and he'd sit – he knows I hate guns, he left a gun loaded one day, he's not a stupid man he's a farmer...my son came out with it... he'd sit down of an evening, if we'd had an argument, he'd go away, get his gun and just sit there cleaning it. If that's not mental torture, I don't know what is. ...I used to pick him up. One night...I was 8 months pregnant ... I picked him up, he was drunk... he was arguing that he should drive and I said no, he biffed me and I saw stars ...we stayed on the road and I just vomited.... this is a man who sent his wife off to mental institutions...another time when he wanted to drive and I wouldn't let him so he put his fist through the window.

At some time during this process, Poppy went to counselling through her church. She was told that the abuse was her fault and that she had to change so that her husband wouldn't get upset with her.

Poppy was initially taken to a psychiatric hospital by her husband. She had a bad physical illness and was exhausted from being ill and caring for the children, as her husband never helped. When her ex-husband came round he found her weepy and fragile and had her admitted into the local psychiatric hospital. No one asked her why she needed to be in there – no one asked about her relationship. While she was there she was raped by another patient. When she tried to report what had happened, she was beaten up by male nurses who said she was trying to cause trouble and put into solitary – she was not offered any medical assistance or counselling and support.

“...I felt I must be crazy because I'm here, or there must be something terribly wrong with me because I'm here, even though I knew that just the day before, there had been a bad incident...I wasn't in a fit state to deal with that, so that just added to it and they didn't ask me any of that, nothing about that, so I felt really disempowered, I felt my status within the community went down about to zilch, I felt my whole being, right throughout my whole life had just floated out the door, plus I was in a place I was absolutely terrified of and had never been to in my life, locked in there...”

Poppy spent 10 years in the mental health system. She was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia and finally post traumatic stress disorder. She was highly medicated and became addicted to the psychiatric medication. It took her some time to withdraw.

However, having finally been given a constructive diagnosis and supportive constructive therapy, she is gaining strength and confidence.

Jasmine

Jasmine is a twenty four year old woman. She has a four year old daughter. Jasmine moved in with her boyfriend when she was 19. She had been going out with him for two years before moving in. She had tried to end the relationship about a year after it started, but he pursued her, showering her with gifts, crying and threatening to hurt himself if she didn't go out with him – so she gave in.

After she started living with him they moved from the North Island to the South and he began controlling her behaviour completely. “He would ask me every day what I was going to do and who I would see – if he didn't approve he'd just tell me not to go – like I was going to see my friends and he'd say she's a slut, why are you seeing her – are you a slut.. he would ring me all the time – I wasn't allowed to turn the phone off – and if I said I was going to be at home he'd ring on the land line and I'd get beaten up if I didn't answer it. He'd also turn up all the time at places I'd said I'd be – he lost one job because he was always following me...”

He played mind games all the time – saying one thing and doing another, calling Jasmine names and humiliating her in front of his friends. He was also very rude to the few friends that she was starting to make and they stopped seeing her, so she was very lonely and alone.

When Jasmine became pregnant things got worse. Her partner started hitting her regularly – once hospitalising her with a threatened miscarriage. When he had beaten her, her partner would deny totally that it had happened – either ignoring her injuries or telling her that she had been clumsy – he started making jokes about her clumsiness to his mates. Jasmine felt that either it was her fault – or that maybe she was making it up – she had, by this time, no-one to talk to.

Jasmine was feeling increasingly crazy. “I didn’t know which way was up – everything I thought was real, he’d change, tell me I was wrong, stupid, making it up – everything he did was my fault – I thought I was going mad – I went to the doctor and he said I sounded stressed and maybe I should try to relax because otherwise the baby might come early – I asked for sleeping tablets and after the baby was born I got post natal depression and they put me on anti depressants.”

One day Jasmynes’ partner picked up the two month old baby and threatened to bash her head against the wall to stop her crying. Jasmine realised that she had to get out before the baby was subjected to the same kind of abuse that she had been experiencing. She rang a woman’s centre who gave her the contact details for a refuge. The refuge asked a number of screening questions including whether she was on any medications. Jasmine said that she took anti-depressants – the refuge told her that they wouldn’t take her. At this stage, Jasmine started drinking during the day as a way to make the time pass more easily. She felt trapped, crazy and alone. Her drinking was increasing. One day, about a year later, she ran into an old family friend who had also moved to the area. This person took her to a café and started asking about how things were. Jasmine didn’t say anything – but this woman kept asking until Jasmine gave her her phone number. Over a period of time this woman began to understand what was going on and tried to encourage Jasmine to leave. Jasmine again rang a refuge, however, this time she didn’t mention the pills – or admit to drinking alcohol. With the help of her friend she moved, with her toddler, into the refuge – however, she was seen taking her pills, and this, combined with her erratic behaviour, and bringing alcohol into the refuge, led to her being thrown out after 4 days.

Jasmine moved back to her home town. She has been fighting to retain custody of her daughter, as her partner is using her drinking and use of anti-depressants to demonstrate her inability to safely parent – currently, her mother has interim custody.

She is getting treatment for her drinking and her mental health problems – and also information about domestic violence.