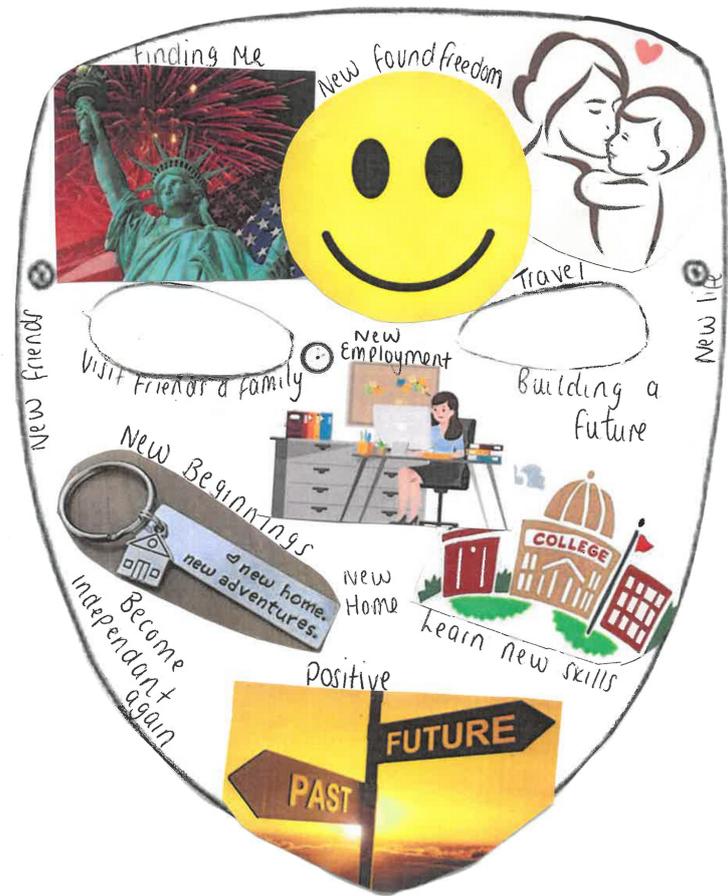


NOW

On returning from the family holiday to Slovakia, I realised the abuse could not continue and that I had to leave for both mine and my son's safety. On arriving back in the UK I called my family in Slovakia and told them of my intentions. My family supported my decision to leave my husband.

I arranged to meet my friend and told her everything. She told me she did have suspicions previously. I asked for her help to get away. At that time, my phone was connected to my husband's phone so he could see any activity, such as messages and phone calls I was making. Due to this, I had to use my friends phone to contact support agencies. I couldn't risk him finding out what I was planning to do as he would have stopped me, making it even more difficult for me to get away.



My friend contacted Women's Aid who then contacted one of Trident Reach's domestic abuse refuges, in order to complete an assessment. During this, which is quite a lengthy process, I was scared as I was using my own phone and was worried my husband would return from work if he noticed that I was on the phone for so long.

I was accepted into refuge and left my family home with very few belongings as I needed to leave quickly. The phone I had been using was left behind so he couldn't track me.



On arriving at refuge, I was supported to resign from my employment, contact my landlord to advise him I had moved out and contact utility providers of bills that were in my name to advise of the change of address.

Since being at refuge I have attended some sessions of the Freedom programme which has helped me to understand that the abuse was not my fault and to recognise the signs for future relationships.

I have also begun an ESOL course to help improve my English.

My husband now has contact with our son which has been arranged through the courts. When legal proceedings began, I was really scared to see my husband again so refuge staff accompanied me to the first court appearance. Following this, at future hearings, I felt empowered and strong enough to face him alone.

As expected, he has tried several times to encourage me to spend time alone with him and has made it clear that he would like me and him to get back together. I now have the strength to say no to all of his advances. I am happy that my son now has a relationship with his Dad and things seem to be going well. The future looks bright now for me and my son.

I am looking forward to getting a new home, gaining employment and getting my life back on track without my husband.

"There is nothing stronger than a broken woman, who has rebuilt herself!"

- Hannah Gadsby