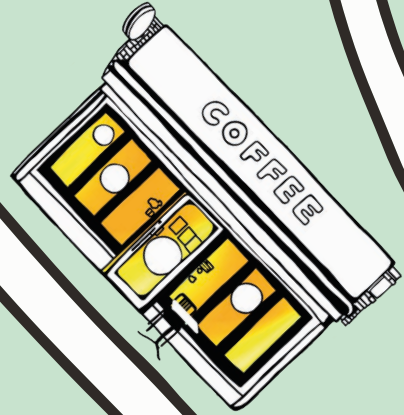


SOMETIMES  
IT HURTS



# AMY'S STORY



AMY'S  
FLAT



CHANGING RELATIONS



# Foreword

“

**G**rowing up, we had heard of what domestic abuse looked like, but we did not know what it felt like. Often, to really understand something, we need stories, not statistics.

We always thought we were experiencing something different, something more complicated – we labelled it ‘family problems’. We thought that the only pain that counted was physical pain and so we ignored the rest. We believed that our emotional pain meant that we were weak kids, rather than that something was wrong in our home. Often, we felt that we should have been able to cope with what was happening at home, and that it wasn’t dramatic enough to bother others with. We needed to hear others’ stories of domestic abuse before we could begin to make sense of our own.

We are confident that **Sometimes It Hurts** will encourage young people to recognise the many forms of hurt that domestic abuse causes. As we have learned, sometimes hearing another’s story is all the validation that’s needed to begin to acknowledge our own experiences. This awareness will certainly spark conversations that help young people connect the dots, see the patterns, and get the help they need and deserve.

## Luke and Ryan Hart

Brothers Luke and Ryan Hart are award-winning domestic abuse advocates, authors and international keynote speakers. In their book, **Remembered Forever**, and their work, they share their family’s story of coercive control and domestic homicide. So far, their work has taken them to over 13 countries and they have trained tens of thousands of professionals in identifying, understanding, and ending domestic abuse.

# About SOMETIMES IT HURTS

**S**ometimes It Hurts aims to give a voice to young people and a language to themes that are difficult and sensitive to approach, such as poverty, neglect, divorce, domestic abuse and unhealthy, controlling behaviours, both within families and within young people’s own romantic relationships. With the stories – and the resources we have developed around them – we hope to help both adults and young people to recognise what is healthy and unhealthy, develop empathy for self and others, and seek and offer better ongoing support.

This series of books was produced by arts education company Changing Relations, who commissioned writer Bridget Hamilton to work with a group of young people and tell the stories they felt needed to be told. Here is what Bridget had to say:

“

**T**he six stories you are about to read have been written with the help of a group of young writers, some of whom have experienced domestic abuse. The young people decided on the names of the characters, the situations the characters have found themselves in, and how the stories ended. Some of the stories also contain direct quotes and experiences from the young people, which they were comfortable to share with you.

Some of the characters live with their parents and some don’t. Some have older siblings, some have younger siblings, and some don’t have any brothers and sisters at all. They are all different ages, races and sexualities. Every situation is unique, just like in real life – but they are all experiencing something at home that hurts them, and that is what the stories will explore.

**Bridget Hamilton**

WHERE ARE YOU?



# Amy's Story

## Summary

The character of Amy is 17 years old and is studying hairdressing at college. She recently moved out of the family home to live with her boyfriend, because her mum's new partner was becoming an increasingly violent and frightening presence in the house. Unfortunately, things aren't great at her boyfriend's house, either. He wants her to come straight back from college, cook him dinner and keep the flat spotlessly clean. She's even caught him monitoring her texts and WhatsApp messages.

If this feels like a story that would be interesting or helpful for you to read, read on! If you're not sure, why not have a read of the summaries of the other stories in the **Sometimes it Hurts** series to choose one that feels more relevant for you.



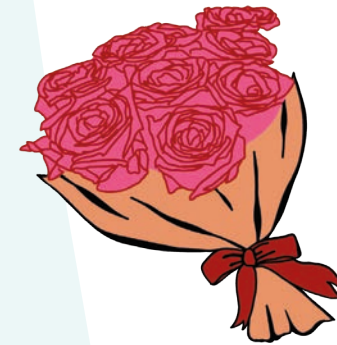
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I'm Amy, I'm studying hairdressing at college and a few months ago, on my seventeenth birthday, I moved in with my boyfriend Dean, who's twenty.

At first, living with Dean felt like the best birthday present I'd ever got. For one thing, it meant that I no longer had to put up with living in a house with my mum and her new boyfriend Malcolm, who's been on the scene for a couple of months now. He's short and skinny, with a face like a rat, and all he does is lay on the sofa all day, smoking and drinking beer. The two of them seem to be madly in love one minute and then, five minutes later, they're shouting so loudly at each other that you can hear them halfway down the street. If Malcolm isn't getting his way during one of their fights, he wraps his bony hands around my mum's throat until she can barely breathe. Mum never fights back when he does this, and if I try to talk to her about it after he's calmed down, when her voice is still raspy and sore, she just pretends it never happened. I think she's too scared of being on her own to tell him how out of order he is being.

“

Anyway, when I first moved in with Dean, he would treat us to takeaways and meals out all the time. He'd bring me flowers or chocolates home with him from work and tell me I didn't need to lift a finger around the flat. Nowadays he gets annoyed if he comes back and I haven't been to the shops to get our dinner yet. I suppose we couldn't live on takeaways forever, but it does feel like things have changed all of a sudden. I was doing everything right before, and now I seem to be doing everything wrong.







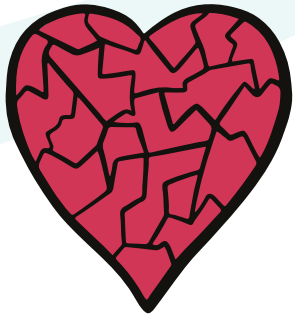
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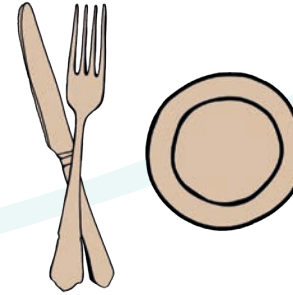
I used to stop off at Costa for a coffee with my friends after college, but Dean always wants me to come straight home now, and he's even started to get suspicious of me texting them. Sometimes I catch him checking my phone when I'm out of the room - it's like he doesn't want anyone else to get attention from me.

To be honest, I have never been the type of girl to put up with things like this. I know you're only supposed to be with people who treat you right, who have respect for you and never cause you any pain or suffering. I suppose I'm just scared of annoying Dean and having to go and live back home with Malcolm.

“

I don't want to find out if Dean has a violent side like Malcolm's. I don't want to know if what Malcolm says to me is true, that I'm just like my mum, lazy and stupid and I should feel lucky to have a boyfriend at all. So I bite my tongue and I let him get his own way, even when it makes me feel like crap. It's probably my own fault. Maybe everybody gets sick of me after a while.



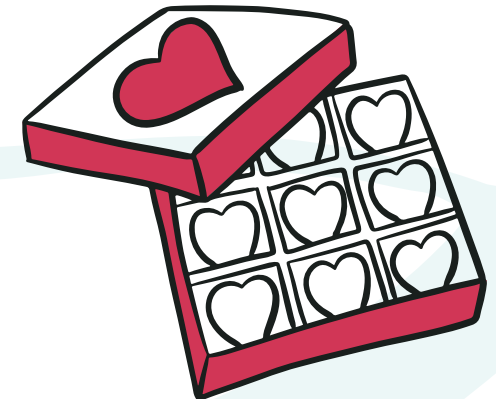


“

Sometimes I feel angry at my mum for even letting Malcolm into our lives in the first place. She should have chucked him out the door the first time he ever got that angry look in his eyes, long before he ever laid a finger on her or said anything bad about her. Does she not want to protect her child from him? What was wrong with things just being the two of us? But then I feel awful, because it's not her fault, it's Malcolm's fault. Malcolm knows exactly what he's doing and that we're both scared of him, so he just carries on.

“

I can't go back home when Malcolm is there, I just can't, but I can't stay with Dean either when he's acting like this. Everything is so messed up. Who knows what either of them might do to me if I tell somebody what's happening?



# What Support Is Available

## Information About Domestic Abuse

If you or someone you know may be experiencing domestic abuse, both **Women's Aid** and **Refuge** have websites with comprehensive advice and can support you to hide your internet search history to cover your tracks.

Together they run the **National Domestic Abuse hotline**, a 24-hour freephone service – **0808 2000 247**.

## Emergency

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call the **police** – **999**.

## Local

Your local **Onepoint** centre offers advice and practical support across all aspects of family life, helping young people up to the age of 19 with a wide range of issues, including health, bullying and what activities are available in your local area.

## Young people

**The Mix** is the UK's leading support service for young people under 25. They are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing - from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to them via their online community, on social, through their free, confidential helpline or counselling service **themix.org.uk** – **0808 808 4994**.

For children experiencing or affected by domestic abuse, including witnessing abuse within the home, there is information on the **Childline** and **NSPCC** websites. There is also a **Freephone Helpline** – **0800 1111**.

## Sexual Abuse

There is often an overlap between domestic abuse and sexual violence. The national **Rape Crisis** website has a lot of information, including where to find local support services. They also run a **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 802 9999**.

## At School

When you are at school, the school is responsible for keeping you safe from harm and abuse. If you are worried about life at home or have any concerns about someone else, speak to a trusted teacher, tutor or learning manager, or, if you know who they are, ask to speak to your school's **Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

If you are an adult and have a concern about a child or young person's welfare who lives in County Durham, call **First Contact** on **03000 267 979**. First Contact brings together children's services staff with partners such as Durham Constabulary and health services.

## Stalking

Stalking can be an aspect of domestic abuse and is sometimes experienced after survivors have left an abusive relationship. The **Suzy Lamplugh** website has information, advice and guidance for victims of stalking. They also run a **Freephone Stalking Helpline** – **0808 802 0300**.

## LGBTQIA

For specialist support for those who identify as LGBT+, go to the **Galop** website, or call their **National Helpline** – **0800 999 5428**.

## Men

Specific information for male victims of domestic abuse, or to seek more information about supporting men is available on the **Men's Advice Line** website. You can also call their **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 801 0327**. There is information for male victims of sexual violence on the **Safeline** website or you can call the **National Male Survivor's Helpline** – **0808 800 5005**.

## Abusers

If you are concerned about your behaviour in a relationship, or that of a friend or family member, the **Respect Phoneline** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Perpetrator Helpline** – **0808 802 4040**.

## Minority Ethnic Communities

For a comprehensive list of support services by, and for, those from black and minority ethnic communities, go the **Imkaan** website. For those affected by honour-based abuse and / or forced marriage, the **Karma Nirvana** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Honour-based Abuse Helpline** – **0800 599 9247**.



# How We Created SOMETIMES IT HURTS

The original **Sometimes It Hurts** book was created by arts education company, **Changing Relations**, in 2021 through working with our creative associate, **Michelle Harland**, CEO of **Creative Youth Opportunities**. Together with writer, **Bridget Hamilton**, Michelle led a programme of weekly creative workshops with groups of young people, inviting discussion around ideas of family, relationships, hurt, trust and getting support, through a range of participatory creative discussions and activities. These were shaped by physical and digital scrapbooking to collect and log thoughts and ideas which would help our illustrator and animator create a visual landscape for the book and subsequent animation we produced.

Our then Artistic Director, **Pollyanna Turner**, managed the creative team, which additionally included illustrator **Tamsin Rees**, animator **Sheryl Jenkins**, and sound artist **Rupert Philbrick**, fostering the environment of co-production that is a central part of our approach at **Changing Relations**. A project steering group completed the team with individuals from a range of backgrounds, including safeguarding, education, local councillors, together with professionals and individuals who publicly advocate domestic abuse awareness-raising, including **Luke and Ryan Hart** (CoCoAwareness), **Susie Hay** (Safelives), **Cllr Jeanette Stephenson** (Stanley AAP), **Rosa Walling-Weffelmeyer** & **Dr Stephen Burrell** (Durham University).

The book and stories within it were well received by children and young people as well as the adults who work with them. They felt the stories were a great way to talk about difficult issues children and young people might experience at home. Because the book was so popular, we decided to do some work to make sure more people could benefit from the stories in the original six-chapter book.

In this new phase of development, in 2023, we have created six individual books, one for each of the stories, with additional illustrations to make them more interesting and accessible for young people.

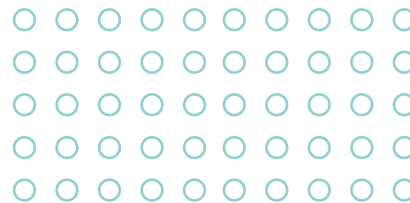
We worked with a creative action group of children and young people from primary and secondary schools in County Durham to develop a brief for our illustrator Tamsin and explore the places and spaces where the stories take place to develop ideas for a map which forms a key part of the new book series.

The creative action group tested out a set of creative activities for teachers and other supporting adults to use to help children and young people explore the themes raised in the stories and have supportive conversations about things which may be affecting them at home. Their feedback helped us understand what young people may enjoy and find useful, relevant and interesting. Young people are the ones who will be using them, so they know best!

We also worked with the creative action group to get ideas for our web developers to create a website to host the stories and resources in multimedia formats. The creative action group was made up of children and young people from **Copeland Road Primary School, Escomb Primary School, Greenfield Community College, King James I Academy** and **St John's Catholic School and Sixth Form**.

The creative action group sessions were delivered by artist and creative producer, **Sarah Stamp**, supported by youth workers from **Learning a New Way C.I.C.** and the delivery team worked closely with **Changing Relations'** Managing Director **Lisa Charlotte Davis** and academics **Dr Nikki Rutter** and **Dr Josie Phillips** at **Durham University** to develop the content for the sessions and ensure we were exploring the themes in the stories in a safe and supportive way.

This new phase of development brought back some of those involved in the initial project, such as graphic designers **Curious 12**, as well as involving new creatives professionals, **Vida Creative** who led on the associated web development.



# Acknowledgements

The biggest thank you for making **Sometimes It Hurts** possible goes to the brave, funny and kind young people who entrusted us with their stories and worked so hard with our creative team to help other young people who may find themselves in a similar situation get the recognition and support they need.

We're also hugely grateful to the new group of young people who supported us to develop and test the creative activities and website that will be used as part of that mission to help young people who are experiencing difficult situations at home.

Thanks must go to each and every one of the team behind **Sometimes it Hurts** in both 2021 and 2023.

And of course, we're grateful to the funders who made this project possible.



Thank you all!

**Lisa Charlotte Davis**

Managing Director & Company Founder

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We're passionate about what we do and we'd love to hear from you.



# SOMETIMES IT HURTS

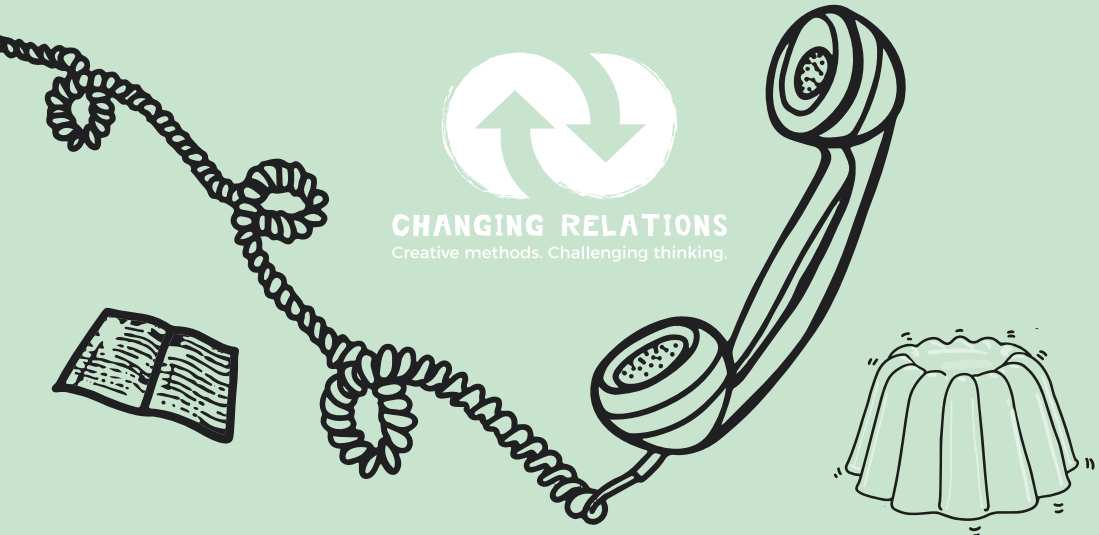


"Being someone that has been that young person, it is spot on."

"It makes you feel like you're not the only one when you go through it."

"It could make a lot of people understand more and be more kind towards friends going through this."

*Young people whose insight and experience was gathered to inform the writing of the book, responding to a reading of the first draft.*



**CHANGING RELATIONS**

Creative methods. Challenging thinking.