

SOMETIMES  
IT  
HURTS



AVESHA'S  
HOME

# AVESHA'S STORY



CHANGING RELATIONS



# Foreword

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**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:

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**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**

SOON THE SUN



WILL SHINE AGAIN.

# Ayesha's Story

## Summary

The character of Ayesha is 14 years old. She comes from a Pakistani and Geordie background, and goes to the mosque regularly with her mum, dad and baby brother. Her dad has always been protective of her, but recently he has started to ban her from going to after-school clubs, and she isn't even allowed to see her aunties or cousins. Since lockdown, Ayesha has been unable to talk to anyone she trusts about what's going on at home, and she greatly misses art classes, her favourite subject, where she is able to have a sense of release in her paintings and drawings.

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.



**M**y name is Ayesha, I'm 14 years old and I have always lived at home with my Mum Julie, my Dad Kasim and my baby brother Amir. My Dad is Pakistani, and Mum is Geordie, but we are all Muslims and go to the mosque every week. Recently I've had a lot of worries to get down on those big pieces of paper Mrs. Khan keeps in the art classroom. I've been worrying about my Mum, and how much Dad shouts at her. I worry about the bruises on her wrists where he has gripped her while he shouts. She tries to hide them under sleeves and long shawls, but I always spot the fresh ones.



The most important thing you need to know about me is how much I love art. I am desperate to be an artist when I grow up, to have my paintings put up in art galleries and have my own studio. When things feel like they are building up inside my head, drawing and painting takes all of my worries and lays them down onto a page. When I'm concentrating really hard on my art, I can't think about anything else. Most of the time, adults only pay attention to you when they're telling you off or wanting you to do something for them. But when my art teacher Mrs. Khan looks at my sketchbook and makes good comments, I feel so happy that I could float away on a cloud.





In my culture, the father is always the head of the house. In many ways it's good, because Dad is always there to protect Mum, Amir and me, but a lot of the time he is far too strict. My grades have to be good all the time, and I'm not allowed to go to any after-school clubs. I'm not even allowed to meet with other girls from the mosque - Dad says they listen to the wrong music and wear too much makeup. And boys? They are totally out of the question. The only boy I'm allowed to talk to is Amir, and he's not even two years old yet.



I don't have a mobile phone or a tablet, so I can't join in with the group chats that other people in my year have. At first, I just thought all of this was normal, that dads always expect their daughters to be perfect in every way. But as time went on, I realised that this was something more serious. It wasn't about our culture or our religion. This wasn't normal for any family, including mine. When school was shut down and we all had to learn from home, everyone was so upset about missing their friends, but I don't really have that many friends. I was going to miss the art classrooms the most. It's where I feel like I can be free.





Being at home all the time just tightened Dad's control over Mum and me. It was like being in prison, like the house had become ten times smaller than it used to be, and Dad had grown ten times bigger. We used to see Mum's family at the weekends, because they only live a few streets away, but during the lockdown Dad wouldn't even let Mum FaceTime them. I think I was one of the only pupils in school who didn't enjoy being at home all the time. It didn't feel relaxing at all. It made me feel like I couldn't breathe properly.



One night, we were all sitting watching the Prime Minister on TV, and he said that people who were experiencing domestic abuse could move to a different house in order to be safe. I think something clicked in Mum's head then (although she didn't show it) because the next morning I found her packing up a few bits for her and baby Amir. She asked me to get together some clothes and school stuff, too, and the next time Dad went out to the shops we all left and went to Grandma's a few streets away. Grandma's face lit up when she opened the door, and then turned to sadness the second she saw my Mum's bruises and tired eyes. Straight away, she put the kettle on and then handed my Mum her phone, saying that she had to call the police. We were all crying by then, even Amir, but I don't think he knew why. Grandma had her arms around me, and she just kept saying, 'You are safe now. You are safe.'





Living at Grandma's isn't bad at all. There's less space than there was at home, and the kitchen and living room are always packed with friends and neighbours and cousins and aunts visiting, but the house is full of laughter this time, and the only shouting is to tell me to come down for dinner. The police arrested Dad and arranged for Mum and I to go around to our old house and collect the rest of our things. We also got lots of support from the mosque. The Imam raised the money to buy me a new tablet so I could take part in school lessons again and talk to my classmates. Everyone made sure that we had everything we needed and felt like our big, extended family, which made me really proud to be a Muslim.



Sometimes my head still feels full of worries, and I go down to Mrs. Khan's classroom for one of those big pieces of paper to paint on. When I came back to school after Dad was arrested, I told Mrs. Khan what had happened. She asked me if it was OK to tell some other teachers about this and make sure that my mum and I had the right support, and I said yes. Once she had spoken to Mum and Grandma, she arranged for me to see the school counsellor, who has an office just down the corridor from the art classrooms, so I have seen her walking past a couple of times.







Mrs. Khan says that it's normal for me to still worry, and it's OK to miss my old house and even my Dad sometimes, even though he was hurting us. The school counsellor helps me work through all of the worries that still feel big. All my teachers know what happened, but not all of them really know what to say. Mrs. Khan is different. She doesn't look at me with sad eyes like she's about to cry, but she lets me talk about stuff if I want to. I think she understands that Asian parents can be strict, but that what my Dad was doing was far worse than that.



The first piece of art I finished after all this happened was a giant sunset. I used lots of yellows, oranges and white, and I noticed that those were the colours I had never really used much before. Mrs. Khan loved it, and she even asked if she could show it to my school counsellor, who loved it as well. They both agreed that they thought it marked the end of something, and that although things were still hard for me, they were slowly getting better, and soon the sun will shine again.



# 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.

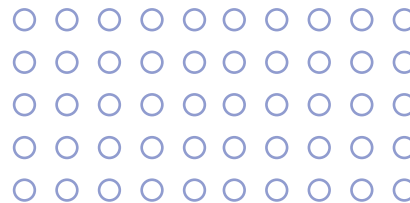
We worked with a creative action group of children and young people from primary and secondary schools in County Durham to develop a brief for our illustrator Tamsin and explore the places and spaces where the stories take place to develop ideas for a map which forms a key part of the new book series.

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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# SOMETIMES IT HURTS

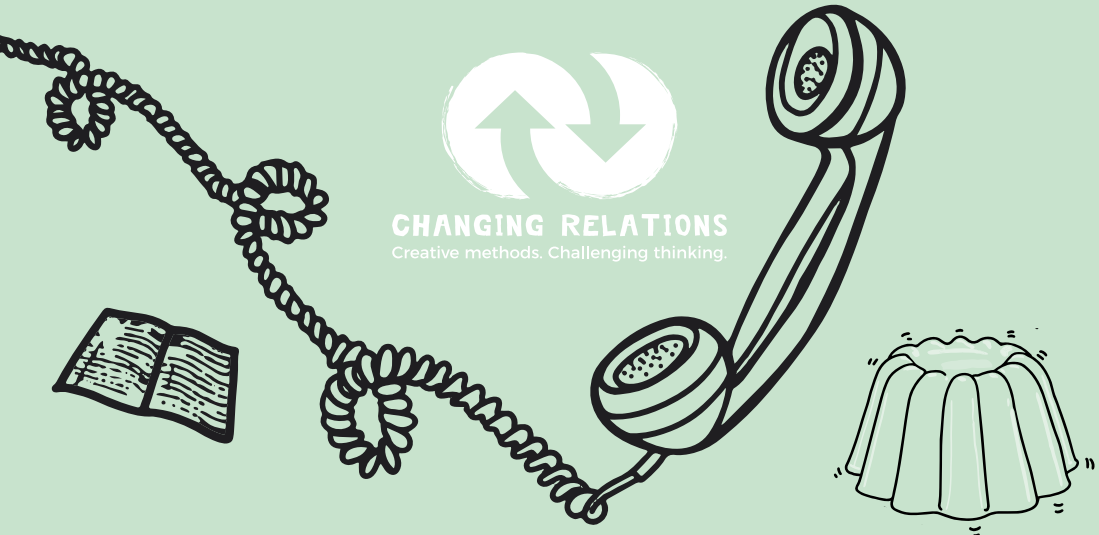


"Being someone that has been that young person, it is spot on."

"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.