

SOMETIMES IT HURTS

Examples of: Positive and negative relationship behaviours

Positive

Negative

ALFIE

Most days, after school, I go home with my mate Harry. We both love Newcastle United

My mam is asleep on the sofa downstairs, and she doesn't wake up while I get into my uniform and slip out of the front door. It makes me a bit sad when she doesn't say good morning to me or even notice that I'm there, as if she couldn't care less whether I went to school or not.

Harry's Dad drives us to Saltwell Park and we kick a football about together.

When I don't turn in my homework, because we needed to use a computer to finish it, or the light outside was too dim to work, they don't ever ask why, they just shake their heads or tell me to bring it tomorrow. It's as if they're scared to ask about it because they wouldn't want to have to deal with my answer.

When it gets dark, Harry and his Dad sometimes invite me to get fish and chips with them.

I live with my mam and dad in a flat in Gateshead, but they aren't actually around that much. Since Mam lost her job, they both prefer going down the road to the pub, or spending the night at their friends' houses.

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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.

I used to stop off at Costa for a coffee with my friends after college.

Malcolm would lay on the sofa all day, smoking and drinking beer.

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.

Nowadays Dean gets annoyed if he comes back and I haven't been to the shops to get our dinner yet.

Sometimes I feel angry at my mum for even letting Malcolm into our home.

AMY



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About my GCSE options, and boyfriends - well, girlfriends, actually. I've had a girlfriend called Iqra since September, she's in my class and things are going really well. I was thinking of coming out to my parents just before they said they were splitting up.

When Dad finally moved out, I don't know how but things managed to get worse, not better. It was as if my parents started treating us like toys they wanted to fight over. They raced each other to the school gates to try and pick us up first. Mum started buying us really expensive toys that we hadn't even asked for, while Dad treated us to McDonalds so much that it didn't really feel like a treat anymore. My little sister Lily loved being pampered and basically felt like a princess the whole time. I was the opposite. Every time Mum and Dad insulted each other, it felt like two monsters were scratching either side of me with their claws, deciding who got to take the first bite.

After they sat inside Lily's teacher's office for a long time while we waited outside. It was the longest time they'd been together in months without screaming, but they both came out with blotchy faces and red eyes. I wondered if Lily's teacher had told them off like she does with the little kids

I didn't talk to anyone about what was going on for a really long time. Every time I tried to put the words together, they managed to sound really ungrateful. Who wouldn't want gifts and nice meals and trips to the cinema? My friends at school were acting as if I had won the lottery; I could get whatever I wanted. But all I actually wanted was to be a normal family. And that felt like pretty much the only thing I couldn't have.

Things have gotten better since that day at school. My parents are definitely not best friends or anything, but they respect each other a bit more now and they don't ask us to choose between them anymore.

It turns out that even if your parents would never want to hurt you, sometimes they still can. That's what Mum and Dad said to us when they had to come and pick us up from school.

CHELSEA

Once you get to know him you realise he's just like any other parent. He plays rugby, he cooks boring meals for tea and he's always telling me to get off my PlayStation. He's pretty much the most normal guy you'd ever meet.

I told myself that kicking and punching is just the way men settle arguments - it certainly seems that way at school, there's a fight nearly every week

He used to be dead positive, always asking me about my day or wanting us to spend what he called "quality time" together

Then he became really shy, barely speaking when Brandon was around and never smiling or laughing at all. It was like Brandon had this power over him.

My Dad joined a support group for men who have experienced domestic abuse. There was one guy called Tariq whose wife was really violent with him, and he and my Dad got on well. I think they bonded over talking about rugby and they've been for a pint a few times now. I'm glad Dad has someone to talk to who definitely understands what happened to us.

Things were easy to ignore at first. When the two of them had a fight, I'd just turn the TV up really loud or take our dog Lola for a walk. That was really helpful, actually he didn't really look like my dad anymore. Slowly I started to change, too. I felt more anxious whenever I got home from school because I didn't know what mood Brandon was going to be in.

I'm just glad that my Dad's looking a bit more like his old self now. & he's definitely strong, inside and out - he can still beat me in an arm wrestle any day.

JAMIE

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Seeing the counsellor actually really helped in the end, and it taught me a lot about why I was feeling angry all the time.

Kyle was always an angry kid, even when we were little. He would bite and kick and scream and throw tantrums, and Mum would have to calm him down.

Since things have been getting better at school and at home, I've been messaging a girl in my year called Stephanie.

The first time Kyle hit Mum, he was really sorry afterwards. He wouldn't stop crying and asking Mum to forgive him, and she just sat on the sofa in shock, totally quiet.

We've met up outside of school a couple of times and it's made me more certain than ever that I'm never going to treat anyone like Kyle treated us.

I told a teacher what was going on. The teacher was no help at all. He looked super nervous, shifting back and forth on his feet like a goalkeeper, and kept telling me that my mum should show Kyle who's boss.

I don't believe that just because my brother was violent that I have to be. I'm going to treat all of my friends and family with respect and make sure they never feel scared or powerless.

I felt like he had passed on some of his anger to me. It was like I'd been holding my breath for ages, and I could finally let it all out. I was really angry at him, and I was really angry at Mum

TED

AVESHA

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.

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.

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.

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 aunties visiting, but the house is full of laughter this time.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.