

## How to get out of an abusive relationship

When women are in an abusive relationship, the most common thing I hear is “why don’t they just leave?”



It is only when you have walked a mile in their shoes that you realise abusive relationships are designed to imprison and lock women into a cycle that can seem impossible to get out of.

### **Abusive partners cut their victims off from support**

In most cases, by the time a woman is ready to leave, they have no connection to family, friends or money as they were systematically cut off from these by their abusive partners.

The only way to break away from this is to slowly regain some control and build a better support system for leaving.

Here are a few tips on how to do this:

### **Money – Build an emergency fund**

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This plays a big role in the victim's reluctance to leave. They aren't able to figure out how they will cope or survive without access to finances.

Starting small is the best way to build up an emergency fund. That petrol money? Take R20 each week and hide it in a new bank account, or in a safe hiding spot.

If your kid's school play is R50 ask for R70 and stash the difference. After a few months a few R2's here and R20's there can add up to a surprising amount.

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If you can get back into the job market, ask your boss to place a certain portion of your salary in your emergency fund each month so your partner never sees it.

### **Research women's shelters**

In severe cases, when you aren't able to hide funds, do some research into women's shelters. Most accept children and their mothers and provide a free place to stay for a short period. The shelters offer various programs designed to help you find work, places to stay and counsel you through the emotional scaring.

### **Reconnect with friends**

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This gives them an understanding of why they were cut out in the first place and gives you someone to talk to and help plan.

### **Rebuild family relationships**

Your family may have warned you to leave your relationship – and you were forced to choose between them and your partner. Abusive partners often turn their victims against their own families, and force them to turn away from their so-called 'meddling'.

So how do you rebuild relationships with your family after cutting them off?

The great thing about family is you can fight for years, but you are still family. They knew who your partner was before you did, and that's okay. Although you might have to admit to them that they were right, it is worth it.

Explain that they were right and that you need their help - words they have been waiting a long time to hear. It may take a while but, mend the fences slowly and you will find that you have more people to support you.

## **Plan your escape**

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Make sure the place you go to is not known to your partner. If it is known, ensure that it is secure and the people with you are able to deal with any issues that may arise.

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It is always best to have no contact with an abusive partner if you leave, but sometimes due to children or other issues this is unavoidable. In cases such as this, a third party and/or mediator should be present.

If it is done outside of a mediators/lawyers office always make sure it is public. When leaving, have the other person who is with you drive so that the abuser cannot see your car or follow you to where you now live.

## **Remember who you are**

Over the period of an abusive relationship, the view of oneself becomes distorted.



An abuser makes you feel “less” than them so that they can feel good and maintain control. You are NOT the person they tell you you are.

Remember your past, and that you are strong and worth loving. That strength is still inside you, abusers can’t take it away, only make you forget it’s there. So use your strength and know you can, and will, survive and grow without them.

In fact, it will become easier over time as they will not be able to tear down what you build.