

I am a survivor

I am a fighter

I am a warrior

and I am proud!

Hey, it's me, old Claire. So you want to know about me, huh? Well... let's start with what my personality **was** like: I was full of life, not a care in the world, hard-working, bubbly, happy, loving and affectionate. I was a people pleaser and a social butterfly, life was just really good.

I had one long-term relationship - he was a good boyfriend and made me feel comfortable. We were together for nearly five years, but eventually I fell out of love and I ended things. It was hard, I was young.

I am close to my parents, in fact very close - I couldn't ask for better parents. I was lucky enough to have the best upbringing, it was filled with love and affection. I was cared for. I wish all parents were like mine, the world would be a much safer and happier place. At that time, me and my sister weren't so close - there is a four year age gap and we are complete opposites, but I wouldn't change her.

My social life was full, I didn't have a minute! If I wasn't out and about, I was phoning or texting the girls. I loved every minute of socialising with people, getting to know new people and spending time with my friends. We used to go to the cinema to watch scary movies. I'll never forget the night me and my best friend of fourteen years went to the cinema to watch a scary film, we were actually the only two in the showing! Yes I know, freaky much? Anyway, I bought us a large popcorn to share (yeah I know not cheap right?) and as soon as the music came on, I thought it was raining popcorn! It was everywhere! My friend jumped so much that the popcorn was in our hair, down our tops and all over the floor. She even flattened the box to hide behind throughout the movie! We laughed all the way through and still talk about it now! We used to go out every weekend, partying and dying from those dreaded hangovers! We would dance the night away, flirt with the boys, laugh at stuff that wasn't even funny... we were living our lives. Honestly, the old me was great - full of life, trusting, happy, had no worries and the best thing of all I did love myself.

So that was me... now him. He was very charming, hardworking, class clown, intriguing and the life and soul of the party. His family are very close and the kind of people who will do anything for you, they are lovely people and treated me as one of their own. His past relationships (from what he said) weren't too great, but he always seemed to blame them and that their families had hated him, which I should have seen as a warning sign to start off with. He would say that the one ex used to harass him and make accusations about him, he would say she was crazy. Another girl broke his heart. Isn't it funny how it was always their fault and how their family used to hate him, strange! Anyway, the warning signs were there, but I had no reason to doubt him at that time, like I said: I was trusting. He didn't have many friends, which was ok because I would choose quality friends over quantity any day, but now I can see why!

We met through mutual friends, we went out in groups drinking and went to the beach together once. Oh boy, did he use to annoy me! He drove me mad! I tried my best to distance myself - he was loud, irritating, really flirty and I had no interest in him at all. I didn't fancy him or enjoy his company but we had developed the same friendship group, so I had put up with him. Anyway, the more time we spent together (without a drink), the less annoying and more charming and intriguing he became. He was actually normal and nice! We began chatting, getting to know each other, going

on cinema dates and it moved quickly, we soon became boyfriend and girlfriend. The first month was great - the honeymoon period - where I laughed at his jokes (which were never funny), I said how nice he looked, we cuddled, we were both affectionate and loving, I was excited to see him and to hear from him... the best part of getting to know someone really. It was nice and I was happy.

One month in and I can now see that's where it all began. Everything seemed good with us: we got on, had a laugh, I had even started to fancy him. Then one day, we were out with his friends chatting and having a good time talking about booking a festival. His friend asked if I would like to go. I jumped at the chance, I've always wanted to experience a festival! I was super excited and glad his friends approved of me. I glanced across to him and received a glare of disgust. His arms were folded and his body language became intense very quickly. I felt anxious, guilty for agreeing to go without asking him first, belittled. After that day, we carried on as normal, went to the local pub on the weekend and spent the summer in the beer garden. He was the life and soul of the place, enjoying himself chatting away to everyone. It was nice, it seemed like everyone liked him and he was fun. We would go out with his colleagues, get drunk and have fun. It was good.

Two months after that, the festival had arrived! Everyone was excited, the drink was ready, our bags were packed and we were ready to go. When we arrived, we met up with some other girls who were dating his friends. On the first night, everything was great: fantastic atmosphere, everyone was getting on, best night ever! It was such a buzz, nothing could go wrong and we were looking forward to spending the whole weekend partying together and having fun, it was an amazing night.

On day two I was dancing away having a great time and when I looked up, he was standing with his friends, again with that look of disgust. He snarled at me, "Have you taken anything?" I was shocked and when I said no and asked why, he replied, "The way your acting and your dancing!" I immediately stopped, I felt embarrassed, ashamed of myself. I thought I must have looked like a right fool for him to say that. He frowned and did not acknowledge me for the rest of the night. I just felt so embarrassed about how I must have looked in front of him and his friends, even now I still get that sinking feeling when I think about it. I still doubt myself and wonder if I did look like an idiot?

By day three, I felt tired, worried and confused about what I had done to upset him so much. I felt like I must have been an embarrassment to him. I tried brushing it off so I didn't spoil the day by being upset over it, I had made enough of a fool of myself. As the day went on, his friend asked me what was wrong. "He's upset with me and not talking to me." I replied. His friends reassured me and told me to enjoy myself and not to worry. All day he was the life and soul of the party, having pictures with random girls and having the best time making jokes with his friends, but he still hadn't acknowledged me. I felt so uncomfortable and I didn't know anyone very well. His friend told us to have a photo together - I smiled, he scowled. I felt embarrassed, upset and worthless. I needed to fix this! I suggested for him to have a photo with his friend - his friend smiled, but he smiled bigger. By then I was convinced I had upset him, I felt so awkward and out of place. I followed the group and tried my best to act as if nothing was wrong, I didn't really know anyone there and didn't want to be offloading how I felt to them. It was a festival, I was supposed to not have a care in the world! Later that night, I fell asleep in the tent and when I woke up, everyone had gone. An hour later they all turned up, he continued to give me one worded answers or not acknowledge me at all, he then sat in between two girls and flirted with them in front of me all night. I did nothing. I didn't want him to think I was insecure or to make him even more upset with me. Once again, I felt embarrassed, worth-less and that there was something wrong with me. I felt that I wasn't good enough for him! I even started analysing the girls, thinking they were way prettier than me, no wonder he's showing more interest in them. I started to believe that I need to lose weight, start wearing nicer clothes and be more upbeat and lively, just to make sure that I was good enough for him.

When we got home, he was back to his charming normal self and so I asked him about how he acted at the festival. He explained that a family member was ill and he was worried about it, which at the time made sense to me - he just wasn't dealing with it well, but I couldn't shake the nervous feeling. I thought I was partied out and needed a good night's sleep, food and a shower and that everything would be fine in the morning.

After a few months together, I moved into his place. It was my first time moving out of my family home. I felt excited and reassured that things were going well. However, amongst all the excitement, I still felt tired and became very anxious, as if I was waiting for something bad to happen. I lost three stone in two and half months.

When we lived together, my routine during the week was to go to work and either pick him up from work or I would have to be home before him. If I was even slightly late picking him up, the atmosphere would be horrendous - he would sulk, have a bad attitude, one-word answers and arms folded. If I was home before him and hadn't cleaned the house, the same would apply. There would be remarks on my cleaning that it wasn't clean enough. I wasn't allowed a Hoover, I had to sweep everything, the excuse being that I would mark the floors by using a Hoover. I realise now that this was just because it took me longer and that not everything was being picked up by a brush, which meant he had an excuse to tell me off for the house not being clean enough. When he would come home and it was clean, he would make sure that everything became a mess with packets of rubbish that he had eaten left on the floor, his clothes left everywhere, dirty plates lying around and I would have to make sure his ashtray was empty. Although, this may sound like a typical home setting, there was a motive behind it. I now know it was for him to feel like "king of the castle" - I was basically his slave.

Every Friday night, we would go to our local pub. He would play on the bandit all night as I sat and watched him waste a full week's wage. Once his money had gone, I would then have to buy us drinks all night. He would regularly flirt with other women and buy other people drinks, not once did he ever buy me a drink. It made me feel so small, unworthy, unloved and pathetic. It wasn't him not buying me a drink, but that he would spend all his money buying everyone else one and making sure that he didn't even offer me one as if I wasn't worthy of his money, showing that he didn't respect me or see me as an equal.

One night, my friends and I were out in our local pub, he was out with his friend and we all sat and had drinks together. Throughout the night he would flirt with one of the girls, he was buying her and the other girls rounds of drinks all night, his friend said what about your missus? He shouted and laughed, "She can get her own drinks!" I wanted the ground to swallow me up! I have never felt so embarrassed and humiliated in all my life, I just put my head down and stayed quiet for the rest of the evening. Once he ran out of money, he became charming and interested in me and was asking me to buy him drinks for the rest of the evening, which I did. It made me feel privileged to buy him drinks! I know it's crazy to think that, I suppose looking back there was also a sense of getting some control back. Later on that year, that girl he was flirting with told me that she thought we were swingers and trying to seduce her, as I allowed him to flirt with her and buy her drinks all night - I was mortified!

Eventually, I ended up in debt due to lending him money which I never received back and paying for his cigarettes and food throughout the week. I even paid for his expensive hobby which was fishing. This made me become more isolated as I did not have money for myself to go out, as he did every Friday. This would mean that on a regular basis I would be at home cleaning and sitting with my thoughts as I couldn't afford to do anything nice. He would be in the pub on a Friday night wasting the money he owed me, this became a vicious cycle.

When his birthday came around, I bought him a cake and spent hundreds of pounds on him because I wanted his day to be special. Mind you, I did that every Christmas, birthday and valentines day even though I never even received a card on any occasion. We were all in our local beer garden having drinks. We were with his friends, their partners and one of their partner's friends, who I knew from school. She was a year younger than me, an attractive girl who liked to have a little flirt, but quiet. He seemed to constantly chat to her all night, I could tell he was interested and could see he was flirting, but I kept telling myself that it was his birthday and not to cause a scene. Plus how was I to prove that he was flirting? I would look like I was overreacting! At one point, they all went inside. I followed five minutes later, everyone was sitting down and there he was, squeezed in next to her. When she saw me, she looked a bit awkward and uncomfortable but he carried on chatting away with her as if he didn't care if anyone else was in the room, like he was fixated on her. Something was telling me she was acting uninterested in front of me, it just didn't sit right. That night, I felt awkward and as if I was getting in the way of him chatting up another girl! I felt embarrassed that I was sitting on the other side of the room as he was there chatting up another girl and he didn't even speak to me all night. When she left, I felt hugely relieved and a bit more relaxed. As the night carried on, everyone got drunk and we went to bed. The next morning, I wondered whether I was just looking into it too much. Surely she would have stayed otherwise! But then a notification popped up on his phone - she had sent him a Snapchat photo! Now why would a boy who was in a relationship have her Snapchat after meeting her for the first time? Instantly I knew that what I was feeling and thinking was right. They were definitely flirting together all night while I sat there like a lemon and allowed it to happen! I felt betrayed, stupid, and just kept thinking "Why aint I good enough? Why doesn't he flirt with me and chat to me like he does with others girls?" No matter where we were, he would literally give me no attention at all, unless it was really negative.

This was becoming more regular week in and week out. He started to become secretive with his phone. One day, I held his phone as a torch for him and a text came through from his ex: "You liar, Claire's car is outside!" I then discovered he had been mailing his ex and sending her nude photographs. I did nothing, I forgave him as he told me she had been harassing him all the time. He tried saying that she was mad and that she wouldn't leave him alone. Well, he did tell me that is what she was like in the beginning.

Not long after that, we both went out separately. He had taken drugs and did not want to see me, so I went out as I planned. At the end of my night out, I went back to our home and saw two naked pairs of legs walking in our upstairs window. Straight away I felt a sinking feeling. I crept upstairs and interrupted him and his ex in our bed. I was angry, betrayed and in shock. I couldn't believe that I had witnessed him do that.

The next day I got all my things and left, but after three days of apologies and "it will never happen again"s and the excuse of being drunk and on drugs, yes, I went back. He was the perfect boyfriend for two whole days, but that didn't last. He soon went back to his usual self and carried on flirting with girls, but as he said - I was just being paranoid, right? He was back to spending all his money then being amazing to me to get his drinks, just a normal week really.

However, one night it became different. He was drunk and we were in the local pub. He grabbed the back of my arm and squeezed, leaving fingerprint marks, which led to tripping me up and hair pulling. He made it jokey, as if he was messing around pretend play-fighting, but every time it hurt and every time it left a mark. If I ever dared to say, "ow, your hurting me now!", he would shut it down and say things like I need to toughen up or aww I'm trying to have a laugh with you and you can't even take it. I knew he knew he was hurting me, but I convinced myself not to make a fuss, as he would often say you're being too fragile or I hardly touched you or I'm only trying to mess about with you!

One night, I went out with my friends and I was actually having a great time, then a text from him came saying "I've packed all your stuff in black bags and if you don't come for them in the next hour they will be out in the street in the rain." I immediately left. I asked him, "What's wrong? Why have you packed my stuff?" but he wouldn't answer. I left my stuff downstairs to collect them in the morning. The next day when I went to collect my things, he was fine as if nothing had ever happened. I didn't dare to question it as I was happy that he wanted me to stay but this wasn't the last of it, every time I went out my bags would be packed, if I wore a low cut top I would be called a 'slag' or he would say that I was going out to cheat and it was for other boys, I felt worthless and ugly and always worried about what I wore incase he would flip.

One Valentine's day, we went to the pub with my parents. We had a good night, me and him were dancing having fun and he turned to me and said, "Why are you wearing them (I was wearing leather look leggings)?, Fat girls like you shouldn't be wearing those, you can see every lump and bump of fat on you!" Bearing in mind I had lost loads of weight and was the smallest I have ever been! I felt disgusting, fat, ugly and stupid, but at the same time I just couldn't believe he had said that to me! I didn't make a fuss. We were actually having a good night and he was giving me loads of attention and my parents were there so I had to keep up the pretence that everything was ok.

Not long after, I got hair extensions to make myself feel better, but every time I did my hair he would shout at me about hair being all over the floor and that he didn't like them. It got to a point where I was too frightened to dry my hair when he was there, so on top of the cleaning before picking him up I would have to shower and dry my hair and sweep the evidence away before he came home, even though there was hardly any hair there. As time went on and this was happening on a regular basis, I started to become depressed, I had no self-worth. My hair was never brushed, I never wore make-up and my face would be down to the floor - I was nothing but a shell. My life, mind and body were no longer my own, I was at my lowest point.

As life carried on, he would regularly call me names, my cleaning would never be good enough, he would book holidays with the boys, he went out every weekend, he flirted and texted many girls and I would just go to work and sit at home cleaning. Eventually I became numb. He was in control and I was isolated. I would constantly walk on eggshells to avoid upsetting him because I was scared of the reactions: sleeping with another girl or physically hurting me or even a bad mood. My life was a constant worry of how he would come home or how quickly the atmosphere would change throughout the evening. I had no life, no mind of my own, just a constant worry about his reactions and feelings and the consequences that I may or may not face.

As I said before, one of his hobbies was fishing. I can not stress enough how much I **hate** fishing! He has all the top quality gear: a fishing bed which was around £300, then the tent and all the gear which was a lot (it must have come to thousands altogether) which I partly funded. When the weather would break, I would take him fishing, every weekend! We would go everywhere, miles from our home town. I would pay for petrol and food for us both as he said he couldn't afford it. In the beginning, he would have a small tent and his £300 bed which he happily slept in, however I had to sleep on the floor. I couldn't afford a bed of my own and he said there was no room for another bed. I felt dirty, disrespected and not worthy. Thankfully, after a lot of nagging and my mother having a pop at him, he got a bigger tent and I managed to find a bed for £20. It wasn't great but it was better than the floor. This fishing would be most weekends in the summer, most of the time I would have to carry all his fishing stuff from downstairs and put it in my very small car, he had a very long fishing bag for his rods which would be the whole length of the car - it would literally come in between us as I was driving. One day he was in a foul temper because I took so long to get everything down two flights of stairs on my own. He rammed the fishing rod bag through my car and broke my mirror and my stand for the Satnav! I was so angry that I paid all this money for my car

and I carried all his heavy stuff down just for him to go fishing and he couldn't even respect my things. What did I expect, he didn't respect me so why would he respect my things? I said, "You need to start respecting my stuff!" This was the first time I really spoke out. His reply was, "don't worry, I'll hold your phone to drive there, now come on because we only have two hours to get there!" That was that, not a care in the world. I don't know why I was surprised. I just felt so fed up and angry. I just wanted to cry but whenever I cried he would make me feel stupid and he obviously didn't care so I just held it in. There was just no respect there and I knew if I did that to his stuff it would be a different story! Why didn't I just disrespect his things like he did to me? I was too scared of his reaction to treat him the same way he treated me and that's how he controlled me. This would be every summer time rushing to go fishing, my finances suffering from up-holding his hobby. However, I did actually get some relief while we were fishing because I didn't have to worry about him cheating, I didn't have to worry about him throwing me out and I didn't have to worry about putting his hands on me. It actually became a bit of a safe place and it gave me a mental break. As soon as the warmer weather went, all that stress and anxiety flooded back and the weekends of him in the local became a reality.

One night, we actually went out together, but the same thing happened - he spent his money flirting with girls, the norm. When we got upstairs, his mood quickly changed. The dread came over me because I knew this wasn't good. He pinned me down on the bed and as I laid still, he head butted me in the nose. I begged him to stop, this was too far now! He did and he let me go, but as I walked away he grabbed me and pinned me on the settee. He pushed all this weight on top of me, he was much stronger than I was. He held my wrists down with his one hand and raised his other in a fist. I shut my eyes and he just looked at me and paused for a few moments, then he hit me in the mouth and cut my lip. He got up and sat in the shower and sobbed. I was in shock but I was still more concerned about him. I sat next to him and he cried out that I was going to leave him, I reassured him that I wasn't going to leave but if he ever touched me again, a grab, push... anything and I would hit him back! The next day, I asked him why he hit me, he looked at me in disgust and said, "you would have known if I'd hit you." I was in utter shock. I was confused that the night before he seemed to have broken his walls down and I thought he had realised that he needed to stop but he soon persuaded me to believe that I had overacted and that he hadn't actually hit me that hard. The physical abuse stopped for a while after that, but the emotional and mental pain was still a daily occurrence.

On New Year's Eve, we had a pretty good night. We had lots to drink, he wished everyone (except me) a happy new year, including his ex who was there and gave her a kiss, but that was the norm and I felt that I just had to get on with it. At the end of the night, we went up to bed and his phone was lighting up. I know that I invaded his privacy and it was wrong of me but I found him texting my best friend saying that he liked her a lot. My friend could not believe it either and was in the middle of texting me what he sent! I got up out of bed and told him I was done, this was the first time that he grabbed me aggressively again. I am not proud but yes, I used self defence! He punched me. I woke up next to the bed on the floor, in and out of consciousness. I then woke up on the living room floor. I touched my head and saw a lot of blood. A family member arrived and I heard him tell them that I fell. They picked me up and I stayed at theirs for the night, I told them all the physical abuse that had been going on, but at the time I didn't realise that I was being abused emotionally and mentally as well. I honestly didn't know what was happening to me. Yes, I knew it wasn't right but I didn't realise how bad it was, I thought he was just moody, horrible and not a very nice person. The next morning, I woke up with a massive black eye and lump on my head from where he hit me and a large cut at the back of my head. When I arrived back home, he was sitting there in a sulk. I sat down and said this needs to stop because I will end up dead. He ignored me for the rest of the day, didn't even look at me. I had a close family member of his to wash my top to ensure that my parents

didn't find out, and when I went to work I lied and said I got caught up in a fight in town, all to protect him.

After that, he never touched me again, but the emotional and mental abuse continued. One night, he went out and I know he was flirting and getting friendly with a girl from his workplace. He was in our local with the girl and the boy she was dating at the time. I went up to bed early and woke up at two a.m. to find our bed empty. I panicked, ringing him and the girls he worked with but I had no answer. I eventually found out that they were together but there were others there. I was up all night knowing that they were going to sleep together. I was exhausted, upset, worried and devastated. All sorts of thoughts were running through my mind! The next day, he came in as if nothing had happened. He was hungover and even though I knew that he had slept with her, I knew he would never admit it, so I left it go. A few days later he ended it with me and I didn't take it well. I was devastated and I knew he wanted her. A few days later she didn't want him and told me she had no interest in him and that nothing ever happened, so we got back together and I was relieved! Not long after, I found messages between the two of them and nude photos sent, I was devastated and knew they had slept together. I messaged the boy she had been dating out of anger, but, again, I forgave him. I never really let it go, it made me realise and fall out of love with him (although I don't know if I was ever in love with him or was it all just control? I am still questioning that now). I knew I couldn't carry on, it felt like a light switch had come on and I had realised that this wasn't right and that this wasn't what I wanted anymore. I couldn't help but feel worthless without him, how would I ever manage?

A few months later, I finally plucked up the courage with a little help and advice from a family member of his, I left. I was back in control, enjoying my life like I should be. It was a great six whole weeks of freedom before he turned up with a sob story, saying that he couldn't sleep, he didn't know what to do without me, he missed me and that he had changed. He started messaging me all the time, exactly like he was at the beginning, so I did what I do best: I gave in and went back. He was a great boyfriend for the next three months, but I didn't love him anymore and had that taste of life. We actually booked a holiday together (something he never wanted to do with me, only the boys!) but I decided that after the holiday I had to cut him out of my life for good. I just didn't feel anything for him, I suppose before I had at least felt fear but now there wasn't even that. After that, he received life-changing news and it didn't take long for him to become emotionally and mentally abusive again and I became vulnerable again. Thankfully, another woman came along so he left me for a new life. It was by far the greatest news I had ever had, even though at the time I was devastated all over again that he had chosen another woman over me again. For weeks after they got together he messaged me saying he didn't want her but he had no choice due to the circumstances. I was scared because I knew this time I'm really going to be on my own, I thought I wasn't going to be good enough for anyone else.

A few months of partying went by and I didn't care. I just needed to distract myself and feel good about myself again and I did that through alcohol and partying on the weekends. Once that passed, I fell into a deep depression and anxiety: I gained loads of weight, I didn't want to speak to anyone, the only reason I got up in the mornings was for work and I tried my best to put a brave face on for my family. I had decided to tell them what had happened even though I still wasn't fully aware of what had actually gone on myself. I knew it was wrong but didn't know the full extent. I know, it sounds mad, right? How can you not be aware of you being abused? Well if I was aware of it happening, I wouldn't have allowed it in the first place. I discovered a program thanks to my local doctor, who was also a fantastic support she recommended me to try this incredible programme called Domestic Abuse Resource Team (DART), it's for people who have been through or going through domestic abuse and I can honestly say I wouldn't be the person I am without them, what an amazing program. The support I received and how they helped me to recognise abuse was

incredible and I cannot thank that one person in particular enough for that - they gave me my life back.

I am currently back to a funny, bubbly person but there's more to me now. I can recognise the signs of an abusive person, I will not allow anyone who puts a negative impact on my life to be in my life and excuses are not allowed. I will also have my say and if there is something I don't like, I will tell you! No, I don't go around telling people I don't like the colour of their shirt, but if someone does something that upsets me it will be discussed like adults. I have learnt that the best thing to do when someone is abusing you or being negative in your life, is to simply cut them off. Yes, harsh! But at the end of the day, this is my life and my happiness and nobody will take that away from me again. I know we all make mistakes and hurt people sometimes, but I know now what is genuine and what is malicious.

I have been single for three years now, but I have dated on and off and I have enjoyed getting to know new people. My experience has also made me realise how strong I have become as a person. I have recently finished a foundation degree in childhood studies, which I would never have been able to have done in those circumstances. Most importantly, I am free and I live my life exactly how I want to live it, by being independent, happy and full of life.

Why have I done this, you ask. There are three main reasons. The first is for myself to realise how far I have come and to see how it all started, which I didn't know until I began this journey. The second is for you, yes you! Anyone who thinks, "Oh this sounds familiar", or deep down you know this is your situation and you think there's no way out. I want to show you that there is, it is hard because you think there's no other way or, like me, you didn't really think at all as your minds not your own. Everyone has choices and your choice is exactly that, YOURS. You can do it, you can be happy again and you can be a survivor! I know how easy it is for me to say, but you will only gain from removing that abusive person from your life and that gain will be your happiness and freedom. The third reason is for the people who haven't been through domestic abuse, who will never fully understand and I hope they never have the chance to experience it! I want them to try and understand that someone who is being abused will hide it as much as they can to protect themselves and their abuser. Their mind is not their own and they don't care about anything else other than pleasing and worrying about what the next abuse is going to be and not knowing why! This person will be walking on eggshells constantly, they will distance themselves from the people who care about them and they will feel guilty by making excuses for not meeting up or cancelling plans. For their safety and their mental health, please don't give them a hard time, they are struggling and worrying as it is and whatever you do, do not tell them to leave! It is not as simple as, "Why don't you leave? I wouldn't put up with that!" You don't know what you're 'putting up with' when you get manipulated and you're being controlled, we don't allow it to happen and it's not our fault! You can't leave as you have no mind of your own. This happens slowly and carefully at the hands of the abuser. In the future, I want you to look and think when a person's behaviour and appearance changes. I want you to think about how you speak to them or the pressure you put on them because they have cancelled on you. Instead, ask yourself what is wrong, what's happened for them to behave in this way and try and be supportive. Always remember to be kind as you don't know what is going on in somebody else's life.

You are strong

You are beautiful inside and out

You are a fighter

You are independent

You are a warrior

and you are a survivor

You're amazing

Be proud!

