



My name is Jenny.* I am going to tell you my story and what happened to me and how I came to Family Transition Place and met Kerry.* I hope this reaches anyone who is feeling lost, terrified, alone, confused and any other negative emotion that goes with being in an abusive relationship.

I used to live in Caledon with my ex-boyfriend for nine years. I met him when I was 39 years of age and I thought he was the love of my life and we were going to spend an eternity

together. I felt like most people do and that he was my world. I made him my world which in itself is the first mistake I feel we as women make. When I began dating him, things were great and I was on top of the world. I had fallen in love with him quickly. He said all the right things, made all the right moves and trusted me with all his finances, which he did to make sure he could steal it all back from me later on.

Shortly after I met him, the abuse began. I felt like I had nowhere to turn. I had just entered this relationship so how could I tell people that perhaps I had made a huge mistake. I just prayed he would change and everything would be alright. I was terrified to tell anyone, I felt so ashamed that maybe I had chosen the wrong person again to live with. I hid the abuse from my friends and family for years. How could I have chosen the wrong man after years of being single. Maybe because I was desperate to love someone and be loved, I ignored the signs of abuse and the abuse itself for what seemed to be a lifetime. I want to stress to anyone who is being abused; whether it's verbally, emotionally or physically, it is NOT YOUR FAULT. I took the most horrific abuse for almost eight years until that one day that everything changed. That one day that I met Kerry.

I recall talking a walk outside and crying till there were no more tears left. I felt like a lost puppy wandering the streets. I ended up in a building near my residence. I walked up the stairs, still crying and not caring who noticed me. There were many people in the building but I felt like I was screaming out for someone to see me, for someone to help me so dearly. All of a sudden, I walked by a door that if I recall read Family Transition Place. It had some information on the door and how to make an appointment with a counsellor. Something inside me knew this was an answer, that someone in here would help me, they needed to help me. I was so desperate and so abused and scared.

A few days later I got a call from a woman named Kerry. I could tell instantly from her voice that she understood what I was going through. She really cared. I made an appointment with her and the rest is history. From that first appointment my life had changed forever.

Kerry and I talked a lot during our meetings and she always reassured me that the abuse I was enduring was not my fault. I was the victim suffering here and she assured me that the awful things my ex was telling me were not true and that it was all part of the abusive cycle.

The one thing that stands out most in my mind was how she understood that I was not ready to leave my abuser yet and how she told me that sometimes women stay even for their pets. That was exactly what I was doing. I had animals I loved so dearly and they loved the property, especially my black

cat. I tormented at the thought they would have to leave the house and property they loved so much. Part of me stayed for them like a mother stays for her children and part of me wasn't ready to let go. I still had so much fear of being on my own. Kerry understood it all. She helped me grow stronger and just by talking out what I was experiencing I got stronger, like I used to be before the abuse started.

We continued our meetings for a year or more maybe. I knew I was almost ready to get out of the relationship. And one day I did. My ex- boyfriend and I were fighting and I just yelled out IT'S OVER, I'M LEAVING!!! A month after I had uttered those words, I packed all my belongings and left. I had a friend help me move and we used her truck for frequent moves back home to my dad's. I did not want to live with my dad but I didn't have any money left to be able to even afford an apartment. I never would have had the strength to leave if it wasn't for everything Family Transition Place did for me; particularly Kerry.

After less than two years, I had saved some money, made new friends and felt better about myself than I had in a decade. I eventually left my father's house which hurt me very much. I felt guilty leaving an 85-year-old man living alone. My mother has Alzheimer's and is in a nursing home. I also had met someone else, the real love of my life. I knew I had to be with him and my mother would have wanted it that way. She always knew I would find that special person and told me that the stars in the sky had not finished shining for me.

I have been with my new common in-law husband for over two years now. Things are not perfect but they are not abusive. We have grown and healed together which makes it wonderful.

I will never forget the people at Family Transition Place and the love and help they gave me. They healed me like a wounded bird so that I was able to fly on my own again. They will always be in my heart forever. I had counselling before I met Kerry but it just was not the same. They didn't provide me the strength or security I needed to be free of abuse.

Forever in my heart you will be Kerry. I owe the great life I am having to you. It scares me to think where I would be without your help. Luckily, that is not the case.

Yours truly,

Jenny

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*