



MWIA CASE STUDIES

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE & VIOLENCE CAUSING DEATH

Case 35: A long-term abusive relationship

Objectives

- To show that staying in an abusive relationship can be life-threatening

Narrative Case

** At the end of the case study you can find "Learning points" related to information presented in the narrative case, denoted by numbers in square brackets.*

Marie is 45 years old, married for the last 12 years with two children and has a very busy life with an interesting job. She seems very happy but unexpectedly told her family that she had left her husband and moved with the children to a flat and filed for divorce. The family is understandably upset: "Is there another man? Is the husband unfaithful?"

Finally she admitted that her husband had beaten her for many years. Each time this had happened he told her that he is very sorry, it is the last episode and he offered her a gift or flowers. She thought that she was guilty of something and never spoke about this to her family. However, her husband became increasingly violent, sometimes pushing her out of the flat and closing the door so she was obliged to seek the help of her neighbours. She decided to go to the police to lodge a complaint against her husband but was still not ready to leave him.[1] One evening, she was taking a bath, her husband came into the bathroom and was very angry. He put his hands on her head and tried to drown her. She was really afraid. He stopped just before she fainted. [2]This time it was really too much and she finally managed to leave him, got a divorce and got custody of the children. [3]

Learning Points

- [1] This woman needs help: she must talk to her family or to a close friend. She can get in contact with services and associations specialized in that kind of help and can ask for legal aid. However she needs to have proof (for example, an account from neighbours, or a medical certificate)
- [2] A woman beaten by her husband is in danger of death—even if he does not want to kill her he can go too far.
- [3] A message to women is to never tolerate the first slap in the face, as it can foreshadow more violence.

Background Information

- In France every three days a woman dies due to intimate partner violence
- A national number can be called in France to get help – 3919

Reference

- Portail du Gouvernement. (26 November 2009). Lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes: Grande cause nationale 2010. Retrieved from: http://archives.gouvernement.fr/fillon_version2/premier-ministre/la-lutte-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-grande-cause-nationale-2010.html