

BROKEN

PERSPECTIVE OF BEING DIVORCED AT 21 YEARS

PROMISES

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*names have been changed

I only very recently have become confident in myself. It took me a while to find my footing, to discover who I was and what I am capable of. To get to where I am now, full of potential and excitement for the future, I had to go through a lot of dark spots.

I think my story is one that should be told. I am not writing to brag about myself or make me out to be this heroic, strong figure—I'm writing because I want students that find themselves in similar situations to know that they are not alone.

Not very many 20-year-old college students can say that they've been married and divorced. I married Timothy* two weeks after I graduated high school. He was my high school sweetheart—I thought he was everything. Everyone believed, including us, that we would be together forever.

From the time we can walk, little girls have it deeply instilled in themselves the concept of marriage. It seems like a fantasy to many—falling in love with a handsome Prince Charming who sweeps them off their feet and living happily ever after with a couple kids, a nice home with a dishwasher and a passionate and fulfilling love life. I find it extremely common for girls to have their entire wedding celebration planned out by the time they are twelve, complete with a dinner menu for their guests.

I was one of those little girls with my entire wedding planned out. I spent my junior high years dreaming about my first kiss (which for the record, I received my freshman year of high school) and then about my first boyfriend. I was always deeply committed to whatever current relationship I was in, and I have always been a person to plan ahead for the future. That being said, my relationships always tended to last longer than my friends, but when they would end, I would crash. Hard.

Fast forwarding through my high school years, we get to Timothy. Timothy was the quiet kid in high school—I didn't know much about him, except he was dating one of my close friends. He was pretty religious, and I was friends with his older brother. When Timothy started to show an interest in me my sophomore year, soon we were texting all the time. He was sweet, funny and kind to those around him. I was in love. Dating Timothy through high school was the magic I thought I needed, the few red flags I saw in him were easily pushed aside by his charming and sweet nature.



Her first time taking off her wedding ring. Her ring symbolizes her passion for love and knows she will find it again someday.



I dated Timothy through the rest of high school. He was a year older than me, so my senior year he started attending a Bible college. Both of us, especially Timothy, were very religious at that point in our lives, so as we thought about our lives moving forward together, the obvious choice to us seemed to get married to do things the “right way” in regard to our religion.

Yes, I did wait until my wedding night. Yes, I did tell my parents. They told me that I should wait, but I was very young, naïve and in love. I couldn’t picture myself without him, so all the doubts that came to my mind about marrying young transformed into arguments on why young marriage was the right thing to do. I got engaged December 2011, graduated high school in May 2012 and was married two weeks later.

You learn a lot about yourself after high school. Beliefs you grew up with suddenly are in question, and you realize that there is so much more of life outside of school walls. There is also a lot you learn about a person after you live with them. They no longer are the same person you occasionally, regularly or frequently hang out with. Living with another person means learning about their flaws and learning how to work together to make the relationship work for both people. This is true for a roommate, a family member or a lover. It means everything you overlooked before in your relationship often makes itself well-known. It didn’t happen right away, but slowly all of the red flags I had overlooked during my long-term relationship with Timothy bubbled up to the surface.

Abuse is an ugly word. When you picture abuse you think about bruises, cuts and wounds. You think about threats and hopelessness. Physical abuse is often at the forefront of a person’s mind when they hear the word. My personal definition of abuse I figured out a ring, a vow and a wedding license too late. It was not physical—I had

no bruises on my body. But words can cut deep and leave painful scars no one can see. If a person hears they are worthless enough times, they will eventually start to believe it.

I was constantly manipulated into believing I was a horrible and ungodly wife if I did not complete all the chores before he came home from work. I had no say in financial matters—if I bought something from the store without my husband’s permission I would be reprimanded for being careless. I could only talk to people he approved of—which, for the record, were only people of the female gender.

I had always dreamed of reporting and writing for a big magazine or newspaper out of state, maybe eventually out of country. But now I was tired. My role was to keep the house clean, maintain a quiet and submissive spirit and not argue. On the outside, I was a smiling and bubbly wife, but in reality, I was living in my own personalized version of hell. We spent many late nights screaming at each other just because he believed I was hiding something from him on my phone—I wasn’t.

Finally, I broke. Timothy had warped my viewpoint of religion—something I once believed to be beautiful and hopeful I now saw as dark and manipulative. I wanted nothing to do with it. I was sick of not speaking up and always being told that I was wrong—that I was inferior. I was completely broken.

Everything I thought I was shattered at my feet and the only thing I knew to do was run. I wanted out—I needed out. I started spending every night at a different friend’s house and purposefully started “hiding” things on my phone so Timothy would find it in hopes of an escape. Timothy had never physically hurt me up to that point—but near the end of our relationship, I learned not to come home.

It’s now been a year since my divorce has been finalized, and I can honestly say that it was hardest and most painful thing that has ever happened to me. In retrospect, we both were too young to get married. Neither of us knew who we were or what we wanted from life. To anyone who is in a serious relationship and reading this, I do not mean to scare you away. There are relationships that turn into wonderful and fulfilling marriages.

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Learning to love yourself is the greatest adventure of all—taking the time to learn who you are and everything you are capable of. And then, I promise, if you are lucky enough to find someone who loves you unconditionally for who you are, for all your flaws, someone who respects who you will someday become, never ever let that person go.

And to the students who find themselves in a circumstance similar to mine, whether you are in or out of marriage—you are not alone. 📧