Visual poetry of the unseen scars

The effects of emotional abuse
by
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Prologue

“Photography is not a job nor a hobby - It is a way of LIVING!!” This is what photography means to me. It enables me, as an artist, to send out various messages. Every image has a story to tell, every picture has a piece of me attached to it!!

This project is nothing different. A while ago the idea was born to focus my time and energy on a specific project. My academic background often place me in therapeutic situations where I have to help people deal with difficulties in their lives. So many times I come across the devastating effects of emotional abuse. I am privileged to be happily married for 21 years, but so many people are terribly unhappy, because they do not experience love, security and respect.

Emotional abuse is however not something that only occurs in marriages, it is a phenomenon that creeps into every type of relationship. The sad fact is that emotional abuse often comes from those who are closest to you. A colleague at work, your spouse, your parents, your children and sometimes even your best friend.

I took various pictures to illustrate the effect of this abuse. Every image is accompanied with a short poem I wrote to complete the cycle of “Visual Poetry”. The words came to me in order to reach every person that takes the time to read it. The messages and images are heavy and loaded with emotion. Some of the images are very graphic and may upset those who can relate with the image, but I believe that it is messages that need to be sent!!

Constant and prolonged emotional abuse has devastating effects on people’s lives. Often the person that experiences this abuse start to be abusive to other people, as this is all they know. It is a vicious circle that needs to be broken!! The aim of this project is the awareness of the effects thereof as well as the spiral of emotions causes by this selfish act. Awareness is the first step to CHANGE!!

“Think before you leap! Some sounds cannot be unheard and some words cannot be unread!!” Alma Oosthuizen '19
Special thank you

This emotionally loaded and dark project would not have been possible without the help and support of a few key people.

To my dear husband. “Thank you for all your support and help with the planning and execution of this project. You are my rock and soundboard where I freely bounce all my ideas. You always have the right perspective ready and because of your shared enthusiasm, we are a strong and formidable team. I LOVE YOU!!”

I used myself as model for some of the images, but I needed other willing people to partake as well. Three of my friends agreed to help me create this project. “Natasha le Roux, Tisha Meiboom and Liezel Dreyer, thank you very much for your time and effort. All your patience with me while I continuously shoot until I have that perfect shot. Thank you for helping me realize the concepts that I had in my head. I really appreciate and value each of you!!”

To some of my friends. “Only a small amount of you were aware of this project. For those friends who constantly supported and encouraged me, thank you very much. You were my motivation to carry on when I needed it most. You are all special to me!!”

Live and let live, as the Creator intended it to be!!

“A random act of kindness will have a ripple effect. Be the one to start that ripple!!” Alix Onshuizen '19
Alone

Emotional abuse, cruel and intense
deep scars that nobody sees.
A friend, a husband, somebody close,
alone to deal with all my tears!!
Worthless
I’m worthless, I’m nothing,
I really wish I could die.
Alone and scared,
I am living a huge big lie!!
Puppet on a string
I do not have control,
cannot choose what I do.
A puppet on a string,
you the “master” who controls!!
Dependent on you
I sacrificed my career,
my financial freedom is gone.
Now you hold all the control,
I’m a prisoner while you play all the cards!!
Restrained
My hands are tied,
I’m not free to be.
Unable to break,
your control over me!!
Lethal grip

The grip of your abuse,
like sharp and lethal wire.
Blood flowing out of scars deep,
blood and scars that nobody sees!!
See me bleed

“Help” I shout,
stop abusing me with words.
Why do you keep sizing me down?
Rather stop and see how I bleed!
Scream
I wish I could escape,
I wish I could breath.
As your words strangle me,
how I wish someone could hear me scream!!
Trapped
The blood of my heart,
flows over my cheek.
So desperate to escape,
so trapped inside of me!!
Inside myself
Stuck inside myself,
your actions repeating in my mind.
Your promise to love and cherish me,
is nowhere to be found!!
Loving my biggest foe
I’m living a huge big lie,
so desperately holding onto hope.
Wishing your cruelty would not flow,
but realizing I’m loving my biggest foe!!
Only a shadow
I am only a shadow, of the woman I used to be.
I cannot even remember, how to let myself be!!
Lost identity
I lost my identity,
I do not know who I am.
The vision staring back at me,
wish I could recognise the person
that I see!!
Lost
Who am I again?
Is this my fate?
Where do I find me?
I’m lost, I cannot see!!
Oozing tears
Blinded by emotional neglect,
trying to conceal what I feel.
Wrapping it all very tight,
but still my tears ooze through!!
Bound
My hands are tied,
my mouth is shut.
The tears I cry,
the only words I speak!!
Mouth shut tight
I wish I could stand up and fight,
to fight for what is right.
But I know my mouth is shut tight,
a losing battle is all I will fight!!
Forced Silence

My silence is forced,
my smile taken away.
I dare not say a word,
I can only silently pray!!
Silent tears

Words are not allowed at all,
no sound allowed to leave my soul.
I keep my mouth, I shut it tight,
silent tears all I’m allowed to speak!!
Safety mask
The mask I wear,
I truly hate.
But the masks I wear,
is where I feel safe!!
Hiding place
Like a scared little mouse,
so unsure where to tread.
From out of my hiding place,
wondering when it will be safe!!
Fictitious world
So trapped in this abuse,
absorbing your heartless acts.
A fictitious world in my mind,
the only place where I can be free!!
The masks I wear
I walk along the path of life, leaving a pure white trail.
All my smiles and my pretence, my mask is like a pure white veil!!
Smothering grip
I wish I could escape,
be able to actually live.
Too scared to make a move,
your grip is smothering me!!
Struggling to breathe

You believe that what you constantly hear, you become that what the words scetch you to be. You are shaped by words, how they are said, now you struggle to freely breath!!
Nothing left
You batter, you hurt, with power you condemn.
Nothing stays untouched, my self-esteem is crushed!!
Dissolving
My true self is dissolving away,
vanishing into thin air.
I wish I could remember,
who I was before I dissolved away!!
Up in smoke

Your opinions given as facts,
you trample on my heart and soul.
Cracks showing all over me,
I’m truly going up in smoke!!
Dying inside
In the mirror I look, bare lies my pain.
Pretence to the world, slowly dying inside!!
Shattered view
I look through the window,
the window of my soul.
So shattered the glass,
so distorted my view!!
Window to my soul

My eyes are the windows,
to my very deep soul.
I cry for help, my hands stretched out,
the tears I cry, the only sound out loud!!
Look again
I look and look again,
the reflection of myself.
Who’s the girl that’s staring back?
I recognise not who I see!!
Why

Why, is my question,
I do not deserve.
Please tell me why,
you enjoy it to crush!!
Crushed soul
You treat me with utter contempt,
your words filled with no respect.
You think you are entitled to,
to crush my heart and break my soul!!
Drowning in tears
You slash and slice,
with your words so deep.
Please help me, I drown,
in the tears of my bleeding heart!!
Ripped apart
Sometimes I wish, that you’d rather hit me hard. The scars will at least, not rip my heart apart!!
Disguising masks

One, two, three up,
the masks for the world out there.
I laugh and dance with all around,
the masks to disguise the tears I cry!!
Pinned lips
Your smile so sweet in front of the world,
your touch so pretentiously dear.
But with the look in your eyes,
you pin my lips shut!!
Fake smile
A fake smile to the world,
“‘I am ok’ I then say.
But the true pain inside,
I’d rather hide it away!!
Grip of abuse
I want to escape the grip of your abuse,
words and attitudes that strangle me.
I want to be free to be me,
like God created me to be!!
Numbness

My tears are drying up,
the pain not throbbing any more.
All my emotions are being replaced,
with numbness I cannot explain!!
No apology
Your words are filled with disrespect and contempt, but you dare blame me for misreading your intent. “Sorry for ever giving you my opinion!” will never serve as a true apology attempt!!
Cry for help
Dear God in the Heavens,
I call upon Your name.
Please hear Your child’s cries,
please save me from this hell!!
The light from above
Blinded by my tears,
limited by my fears.
Searching for an answer,
guidance from the Light above!!
Time is running out
Every day I struggle with your abuse,
precious moments in my life are lost.
Time is running out, I have to act,
set up boundaries and stand up for myself!!
My shattered pieces
I look around myself,
seeing all my pieces scattered.
Only I have the power,
to get up and put it back together!!
God’s light
Trapped, but not forgotten,
hurt, but not broken.
Reaching for the light above,
the light of God’s everlasting love!!
Hope
There’s hope, there’s light,
Jesus is His name.
A child of the King,
He’s holding me tight!!
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