



Relationship Abuse Case Study

Together for just under five years, a married couple was going through a rough time. Things were great at first, but over the past year the husband became very controlling and harsh. They began to fight a lot, and when they did he would put her down and humiliate her. He became very cruel, calling her names and even threatening to harm their dog to get back at her.

One evening, she arrived home after an evening out with her friends to find him waiting for her. He was very angry. While he did not physically hit her that night, he was very aggressive and his body language was extremely threatening. His behavior was scaring her more and more, but she didn't feel like she needed to tell anyone because he hadn't actually hit her. She was also ashamed of their fighting and felt uncomfortable telling anybody about it.

A few months after that night, he began to be physically violent with her. Their fights ended with him pushing and hitting her. Afterwards he would apologize with such genuine emotion that she felt she had no choice but to forgive him: he was her husband after all. She was feeling very vulnerable and was even afraid to be in her own home sometimes. She wanted to talk to someone about it but had no idea where to go.

Discussion Questions:

1. At what point do you think that this woman's experience with this man would count as abuse?
2. At what point do you think a crime has occurred, and she has grounds to take legal action against him?