

## "It wouldn't happen to me": or how Coronation Street showed it could...

*What a guy! He's a DJ in a hospital – bringing joy to sick patients and some cheesy tunes. He practices magic for kid's parties, helps at his wife's restaurant, and is funny and loved by all his friends. He has also been systematically abusing his wife for over a year.*

If you are one of the 7 million viewers of Coronation Street tuning in six times per week then you will recognise this description of Geoff Metcalfe and the abuse that he has been perpetrating on Yasmeen Nazir. Viewers have followed as the terrifying ordeal has grown from little remarks and put downs that resulted in Yasmeen (previously strong and confident) turning down a business opportunity for Speed Dahl after being convinced by Geoff that she was too old; to some much more frightening methods.

From organising a fake mugging, to searching women on dating sites with Yasmeen watching; Geoff has been undermining Yasmeen's self-esteem for over a year - all to assert his power.

He has been isolating her from friends and family making her reliant on him for personal interaction. He has used subtle techniques like giving her a long list of chores so that she has no time to go out with friends. Most cruelly of all, separating Yasmeen from her granddaughter Alya by manipulating Alya into not attending their wedding party. Geoff uses his position as a leading and popular figure within the local community to give his stories enough believability so that no one disagrees with him.

At no stage does Geoff show violence to Yasmeen. He doesn't raise his hand or assault her. So, it's not abuse right?

Wrong. One of the common misconceptions in society is that abuse is physical. This is a dangerous notion that stops thousands of women seeking justice and vital support to escape. Coronation Street (with the help of Women's Aid) have done a fantastic job of showing the impact of coercive control on a woman and how its insidious nature can slowly creep in, often without the victim realising. Coercive Control is a pattern of abuse which intends to humiliate, isolate, and ultimately, control the victim; a chargeable criminal offence since 2015. It can sometimes be difficult to recognise the signs and symptoms of this insidious form of abuse but shockingly, in 90% of all cases of domestic abuse, coercive control will be present. Watching the Yasmeen and Geoff storyline will hopefully bring attention to the horrifying and damaging impact of coercive control and help those in dire need seek support.

Twitter and Instagram users have written in their masses about the horror unfolding on their screens. There have been requests to end the storyline and confessions of viewers fast forwarding through the scenes detailing the abuse admitting that they can't bear to watch; that it's all too unsettling and just too much.

Coronation Street viewers can switch off. Take a break, brew a cuppa, forget all about it. Unfortunately for the estimated 1.3 million of women who will be subjected to domestic abuse up and down the country, that is not a possibility. They will be living in constant fear from partners who have spent months and years chipping away at their self-esteem until the woman feels unable to leave or escape. Their partners may have taken their own money off them or prevented them from taking promotions and job opportunities, just as Geoff has done to Yasmeen, leaving women trapped financially. Perpetrators will have isolated them from their loved ones leaving them at the mercy of their partners' whims. These women have no means of simply switching off and escaping.

It's not just on television that people witnessing the impact of domestic abuse don't acknowledge what they are seeing. How many people on seeing a friend or family member who isn't themselves, switch off and ignore the signs? How many just accept the lies and stories told by the perpetrator? How many people say 'he's not like that' or 'he's a good dad' when a woman tries to word her concerns?

Most people who have not experienced domestic abuse will insist that they "wouldn't put up with that", that "she should just leave". However, after seeing Yasmeen (a woman who ran a successful business, set up a community centre, and has countless loving friends) lose her self-confidence and her self-worth, organisations like The Haven are hoping it will help society understand how coercive control can trap a woman to staying with an abusive partner and how it isn't as simple as 'she should just leave.'

The storyline will hopefully help women across the country to recognise that they are experiencing abuse and that there are organisations like The Haven that can help. It is so important that charities like The Haven offering a lifeline to countless women like Yasmeen receive support from the local community.

It's also important for charities to work with productions like Coronation Street– raising awareness of issues nationwide. And most of all, it's important that everyone takes domestic abuse seriously. Every year an average of 104 women are murdered by (generally) men who profess to love them. In this age of constant chatter through social media and snapchat notifications, it's so important that we take the time to listen. It could save someone's life.

### **Signs of coercive control**

- **Isolating you from friends and family**
- **Controlling how and when you spend your money**
- **Monitoring your time and your actions (in person or with digital)**
- **Controlling your behaviour, dress, habits etc.**
- **Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising you**
- **Making threats or intimidating you**

If you are concerned about yourself, a friend, or family member please contact

The Haven's free 24 hour helpline on **08000 194 400**

or use our live chat on our website **[www.havenrefuge.org.uk](http://www.havenrefuge.org.uk)**.



By Lucy Owen  
Community Fundraiser at The Haven Wolverhampton  
She can be found on Twitter using the handle  
[@lucyowen95](https://twitter.com/lucyowen95) and on LinkedIn.