

## You Chose Option A...

You find the hotline number in the pocket of your jeans before washing them, and you are reminded of the night you went to Urgent Care. You wonder what this hotline could possibly offer you, especially since you are gay. Would they understand?

You start thinking more and more about your relationship and realize you don't have anyone to talk to. A combination of curiosity and loneliness gets the best of you and you make a call to the hotline the next weekend while Ben is at work. You give them a different name when they answer the phone. The alias and the privacy of speaking over the phone give you the comfort to be open about everything that's been going on.

When Kathy answered the phone, she asks: *"Where are you? Do you feel safe?"*

You end up talking for over an hour about the cycle of abuse, Ben's behavioral patterns, and your life-long trauma from being ridiculed for your sexual orientation. Kathy doesn't skip a beat when you identify as gay, and she tells you that domestic abuse happens in same-sex couples, too. She is fair and neutral about Ben and never demonizes him, instead she keeps the focus on how you feel and helps you get a better understanding of the dynamics of abuse. Kathy also talks with you about your emotional safety, you had never considered that abuse is about more than your physical safety, and you start to think about all the times Ben was emotionally abusive to you. This realization is hard to take in, but somehow you feel less vulnerable now that you're aware.

Before you hang up, Kathy asks if you would like to make an appointment at one of the Emerge! Community-Based Service sites, or if you needed help connecting with any other community resources for additional support. You also create a Safety Plan together in case Ben has another explosion. You're surprised at all the insight Kathy has for the plan, and she helps you think through scenarios you never would have thought of on your own.

When you get off the phone you feel validated that your experience was something worth talking about and that you don't deserve to be abused. You're not sure what your next step is, but you certainly have a lot to think about.

## A Follow Up from Emerge:

At the beginning of their relationship, Martin was emotionally vulnerable and Ben helped to build up his confidence. Martin naturally learned to trust Ben and turn to him for emotional support. Though, Ben eventually took advantage of this by trying to control Martin through ongoing psychological behavior.

Domestic abuse isn't about one isolated incident – it's a system of coercive behaviors that one person uses to exert and gain control over their partner. Power and control can often be gained without the use of physical or sexual abuse, which is mainly what we see happening with Ben and Martin. Several tactics are illustrated in the story, including degradation and bullying about Martin's wardrobe, intimidation about coming out as gay, and destruction of his possessions.

Effects of emotional and psychological abuse can include feelings of inadequacy and being overwhelmed, loss of confidence and self-doubt, shame and embarrassment, self-blame and feelings of guilt, anger turned inward, isolation and powerlessness. These effects can also become a barrier to getting help or leaving an abusive relationship because they make survivors feel like they don't deserve to be helped or that if they did reach out, that no one would help.

Educational and outreach efforts are still at the beginning stages for LGBTQ communities. Fortunately, Emerge! goes to great lengths to ensure that everyone requesting services receives the individual care they deserve. For example, all staff members are trained about LGBTQ issues and how they intersect with domestic abuse. Emerge! also partners with other community agencies so that individuals who identify as LGBTQ have complete access to the help they need.



[Click here to see what would have happened if you chose to forgive Ben.](#)