

You Chose Option B...

You were too ashamed to tell Sara that Josh had been drinking that night. Given the circumstances, it's doubtful that a marriage counselor would solve anything and you worry that it could make things even worse. You take Phillip to stay with your parents for a few nights and leave a note for Josh:

Josh,

I love you, but I'm really hurt right now. I'm scared of you sometimes, Josh, especially when you drink. I need some time to think things over, so I'm staying with my parents.

Love,
Stephanie

When you get to your parents' house, you tell them that Josh is out of town and that there is work being done on the house, so you need a place to stay. On the second day, after picking Phillip up from school, you get back to your parents' house and see Josh's car in the driveway. Phillip recognizes his vehicle and gets excited, he asks if he can go home with daddy. When you go inside, your mother tells you that Josh is in the backyard waiting for you and that you need to go speak with him while she watches Phillip. *"Don't be foolish,"* she says. *"Think of your child."* You wonder what he told her before you arrived.

When you find him in the backyard, Josh is in tears. This is the first time you've ever seen him cry. *"I'm so sorry for the way I've treated you,"* he says, *"I'll do anything for you and Phillip if you'll just come back home. I'm going to go to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and promise I'll stop drinking."* It's exactly what you had wanted to hear, so you embrace him and start crying, too. After you both calm down you head back home with Phillip.

Josh was on his best behavior for a few weeks. But, he started being violent and forceful with you again. Last Tuesday he yelled at you so loudly that the neighbors called the police and you had to spend an hour explaining to the officers that everything was fine. Josh also began threatening to ruin your life and take Phillip away from you if you ever dared leaving him again.

A Follow Up from Emerge:

It's a common assumption that drinking causes abuse and violence. Josh was using his drinking habit as an excuse for violent behavior, leading Stephanie to believe that it was the cause. Although alcohol and drugs are often associated with domestic abuse, they don't cause the violence. If alcohol and drug usage caused violence, then everyone who consumed alcohol or used drugs would become violent. Not all people who use abusive behavior drink, and not all people who drink use abusive behavior. In fact, often we can see a pattern of abusive behaviors that may be more subtle when a person is not drinking that will persist even after a person stops drinking. It is important for individuals who use abusive behavior to get help to address the underlying beliefs that inform their choices and behaviors in addition to any services to address their substance use issues.

Additionally, Stephanie may be feeling isolated, given that her mother and friend don't fully grasp the situation. Not having an understanding support system is a barrier to reaching out for help, and may also cause Stephanie to feel like the abuse she experienced was somehow her fault. The other factor that is present for Stephanie is related to Josh's threat to take her son. She may be worried about whether he will follow through with this threat and it may impact the decisions she makes about how to address any further abuse that she experiences.

[Click here to see what would have happened if you would have chosen to call a marriage counselor.](#)