

MONIQUE
AGE 19, IDAHO

Monique began dating her boyfriend in the 7th grade. To most of her friends, Monique's boyfriend was the perfect catch – athletic, involved in school activities, funny – constantly putting on a show for her friends and family.

Monique slowly began to notice that he did not like when she was alone. He would manipulate her family into joining “family only” activities. He had to know what she was doing at all times. The abuse started small; he would constantly belittle her, and control who she could or could not see. He would always make fun of the clothes that she would wear and point out even the tiniest imperfections on her face or body. She would have to talk to him while at her friends sleepovers because he didn't trust her to be alone. The physical violence escalated when he pushed her forcefully, grabbed her by the arms, and aggressively held her. He would constantly cheat on her, and when she confronted him, he would beg for forgiveness, crying and buying her gifts.

As Monique began her freshman year in high school, she began hearing rumors that she had sex with him, which was untrue. Hurt and confused, she approached her boyfriend to confront him about the situation. He yelled at her in the halls and spread lies about her to her friends. She felt very alone. On one occasion, he poured kool-aid all over her car, and defaced her posters while she was running for student body vice-president.

By December of her freshman year, she had enough. She found herself crying every day when she got home from school and was acting ruder to her parents. One day, she collapsed into her dad's arms and pleaded for help. With the help of her family, Monique ended the relationship. After three months of counseling, she was so scared to go to school that her little sister, who was in seventh grade at the time, walked her into high school. Monique spent one month in a confined classroom doing her school work because she was scared what people were saying and thinking about her.

Her ex-boyfriend then began stalking her. The school became involved – changing her locker at school, and removing him from her science class. After the relationship was over, he followed Monique and her family in their car and pointed a “fake” gun at her car. At this point, a police report was filed, but then dismissed. It was later known that he would abuse the next few girls he would date, leaving some with black eyes and visible bruises.

Monique has had no contact with her ex-boyfriend and has become an advocate for teen dating abuse to educate others on the dangers of unhealthy relationships. She speaks out at her school, and was involved in the Teen Advisory Council at the Idaho Coalition against Sexual & Domestic Violence. She is part of Liz Claiborne's Teen Task Force and will continue to educate teens on positive, respectful relationships.