

On September 19th, 2018, Melisa Reidy posted a [blog](#) that took her years to be able to write. At first, she wasn't sure she would publish it. Then, she was warned that speaking out could affect her financial future. But after suffering through years of abuse, she finally felt ready to share what she'd experienced. Her blog, confirming the emotional and physical trauma she suffered, spread quickly. Russell was placed on administrative leave just a couple days later. As it turned out, Reidy found she had a lot of supporters of her own. She was overwhelmed with messages from people sharing their own stories, or simply thanking her for how much it meant that she had shared hers.

Two months later, I sat down to have lunch with Melisa in Pensacola, Florida, and listened as she shared the details of her abusive marriage to Addison Russell for the first time. She also shared journals she wrote about her experiences. Excerpts from those journals appear in italics.

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Melisa Reidy was born in California and raised in Alabama, one of three girls. "My dad raised us in a Christian home," Reidy says. "We had a lot of expectations from our parents, our morals are very, very strong." For her first sleepover, her parents had to go to the house and make sure it was safe before giving her permission and things like boyfriends and nail polish weren't allowed. "We were tomboys...you wouldn't even recognize me," she laughs. Present day Melisa is petite, a fast talker, and almost impossible not to notice. "I was very insecure, I grew up and I bloomed." Reidy also went from not being allowed to buy Lip Smackers to providing expert advice on almost any product you can imagine.

It was a friend from cosmetology school who introduced her to Russell. She'd only been with one person before Addison, a high school boyfriend. When they first met, Reidy wasn't interested, but gave him a chance anyway and went to a football game with him. Afterwards, she "completely fell in love with his personality". She thought he was a gentleman, and a family-oriented person, two things that are very important to her. Before they began dating, Reidy had a laparoscopy to treat her endometriosis and Russell came to visit her every day while she was recovering at home. "He was just there, being so sweet. He was getting to know my mom, it was so perfect, it was crazy," she says. A few days later, Russell asked her to be his girlfriend.

The night before Russell left to go play in the Arizona Fall League in 2014, he had a going away party and invited Reidy. She remembers the song "Chocolates and Roses" by The Green playing while they danced, and feeling like she was "living in a fairytale". "I was so in heaven. That night he told me he loved me...that was maybe not even three weeks of knowing each other." Reidy was only twenty years old. "I was like, "Oh my god, I love you too. We're soulmates!" Looking back, she thinks that shows just how naive she was at the time.

While Russell played in Arizona, he and Reidy still talked by phone, but she describes herself as being laid back about it. ("I'm not one of those girls that's constantly texting, constantly calling you. You'll call when you want to talk, that's normal.") She wonders if maybe she made it too easy for him to cheat.

*“After leaving him, I found out more and more times of him cheating, since the day we started dating. It’s devastating. I’m still trying to heal...I feel like I’m ok, something new pops up and it makes the healing process start all over again.”*

“He was never loyal,” Reidy says. Russell was sleeping with someone else from the beginning of their relationship, which resulted in an unintentional pregnancy. When Russell arrived home from Arizona after playing in the Fall League, Reidy found him to be standoffish, and a friend told her she had heard rumors about Addison. A few days later when she was at Russell’s home, she was shocked to see what seemed to be a sonogram sticking out of his bag. “I have nephews, I know what a sonogram looks like,” she says, “I went outside and smoked a cigarette...I went back up there and my heart’s beating out of my chest. I’ve never done that before. I looked and it was a sonogram. I’ll never forget that gut feeling.” After seeing the mother’s name on the sonogram, she looked it up on Facebook. They had one mutual friend, Russell. They’ve since become friendly and developed what Reidy describes as a deep respect for each other as mothers. “We were thrown into a situation with each other that was not truthful. We were both played,” Reidy says of the connection she has with Mallory. “To make her feel like he wanted to be with her...get somebody pregnant, leave them, get a girlfriend, then keep lying...it was very hard for her.”

Russell denied his involvement at first but eventually, Reidy says, he broke down and confessed. “He’s teary-eyed and I’m trying to put myself in his shoes...he’s a twenty-year-old kid. Everybody makes mistakes. Nobody’s perfect. I was like, you know what? You’re gonna be fine...my heart, it hurt for him, seeing him so distressed.” Melisa remembers consoling Russell, and then helping him tell his family later that day.

The waiter comes by our table to ask if we need anything else. We both ordered food but neither of us have eaten much of anything. After he walks away, Reidy sighs. “Me and the Melisa in 2014...I feel like she’s a different person than who I am now,” she says. “When I think about myself back then, I feel sorry for myself. I’m like, shit. That poor thing.”

“I got pregnant in Texas on Thanksgiving,” She tells me. “I just had the laparoscopy, I was on birth control...I guess it hadn’t kicked in yet.” She knows the sex was careless but adds that she was okay with it, “I loved him...we were gonna spend the rest of our lives together. He’d already talked about wanting to marry me.” Russell had asked Reidy’s parents if he could marry her at the beginning of December. Reidy didn’t find out she was pregnant until January 1st.

Melisa remembers Russell being happy when she told him about the pregnancy but says his family’s demeanor towards her changed completely she shared the news with them, the same day that Russell proposed to her. “Me and him were fine,” Reidy says, noting that she didn’t have a “warm or welcoming” experience with Russell’s family at any point. “They didn’t even try to get to know me.”

*“After giving the news to Addison, his reaction wasn’t as I expected at first. He was off for a day or so but then came around and made me feel like he was happy and everything was going to be okay. Time went on and we had to tell his parents, which I knew wasn’t going to be fun. Ever since I met Addison’s mother, she automatically threw prenups into conversations when we first started dating so I knew she would automatically think I was after something else other than just her son. I till this day know for a fact Addison’s mother never liked me, for reasons I still don’t know. She states she did, but her actions spoke differently, just as Addison’s came to.”*

I ask when things stopped feeling quite so much like a fairytale, and she identifies her pregnancy as the time when their relationship begin to change. She stayed behind when he left for Spring Training in 2015. “As soon as he left, I felt our emotional connection starting to wither,” she says, “You don’t realize it, but you’re putting more and more and more energy into it. You don’t even know why you’re arguing, you don’t know why he’s mad. You’re saying sorry, you don’t even know why you’re saying sorry. You just don’t want to fight.” He stopped answering her texts regularly and wouldn’t answer her phone calls. When they did speak, Reidy says their conversations were “short and sweet” and that he “wouldn’t give straight answers about anything”.

“You know when something is off,” Reidy says. “I thought maybe he didn’t like me anymore because I’m pregnant and I didn’t look the way I used to.” Between the trouble in her relationship with Russell and ongoing tension with his family, Reidy found herself in an perpetually emotionally overwhelming situation. “I’m surprised I didn’t have a miscarriage. That’s how much stress I felt. My entire pregnancy was miserable.” She credits the Cubs wives with helping her keep it together. She calls them “God’s gift to this earth” and gushes about Mindy Rosscup (“my first friend...she’s like my sister”) and Jess Bryant (“She was actually there to watch me give birth to Aiden!”). Alone in Chicago and having never lived away from her family, she was grateful for her new “family away from home”, but even when Russell was back after Spring Training, she still felt like she was alone sometimes.

“He was physically there, but emotionally and mentally he just was not. He would wake up, go to the field, go to the game, get in the car, go home, go to sleep. Over and over and over,” Reidy says, describing their life together.

His family was still a source of conflict. Reidy was particularly hurt by something that happened in May. Addison’s mother drove out to Chicago to see Mallory, the mother of Addison’s daughter Mila, after the baby was born. “She brought Mallory to the game...the wives were there with me, they knew it was a hard situation,” Melisa says. “His mom was talking about me the entire time and all the wives were hearing it.” Her friends advised her to be the bigger person, and she decided to shake Mallory’s hand, be cordial, and go back to her seat. She told Russell about the incident, finding it embarrassing for the two of them to have other people’s wives hearing his mother talk about his pregnant fiance right as he was being called up. It wasn’t exactly an ideal first impression.

One thing that Russell’s mother said that day stuck with Reidy: “Don’t worry, she’s not strong enough. She won’t last long.” Reidy explains that his mother had been at the game telling Mallory about how it was inevitable that Addison and Melisa would break up one day. Later, while describing a painful

episode with Addison that left her struggling with whether or not to leave, Reidy mentioned the quote again when explaining why she felt like she couldn't walk away, "I was like, "No, I am strong enough." Because I always remembered. It never left my mind. I felt like I had to prove I am strong. I had the wrong perspective. You're not weak for leaving. But I didn't see it like that then."

Reidy, asked about early red flags she saw, says that when she and Russell would go for walks when she was pregnant, Russell would try to make her trip. He "thought it would be funny". When she asked what he was doing, Reidy says he responded, "You're athletic. You'll catch yourself. I just wanted to see if you would catch yourself." She was surprised and upset. "Who even thinks that's funny? You thought it would be funny to see if I was going to stumble or fall?"

It was only a week after Aiden was born when Reidy found out that Russell had cheated on her again. "I had to drive myself home from the hospital. I had the baby blues, feeling horrible, and then seeing that your soon-to-be husband is cheating on you..." She stops for a moment, apologizing and saying that sometimes she goes into a daze trying to talk about it all. "That's the first time I tried to break it off with him. That's the first time I actually saw him act insane, out of his mind. It sounds stupid, but I actually felt bad for him." She explains that she didn't want to see him hurt, so she just forgave him, hoping to calm him down quickly.

"He did not have one lick of patience for me. By the time I had Aiden, he was having to really force himself to be patient. I could see it, he would almost snap, but he was trying to control it," Melisa says of Russell's demeanor. Did things get better when they settled in after Aiden was born? Reidy shakes her head. "That's when it started to go downhill. And I mean fucking fast." She and Russell continued to argue, but Russell began to escalate their arguments into more physical confrontations.

"He would just get more aggressive, cornering me by the wall, and yelling in my face while I'm holding Aiden, taking Aiden out of my arms. I'm not playing tug-of-war with my two month old baby...he's screaming and he doesn't even know how to calm him down. [Aiden] is scared. He feels that, babies feel tension." Melisa remembers pleading with Russell to give him back until he finally relented. From then on, Reidy felt like they bounced back and forth between "a good three days, bad three days, a good week, then a really bad week". It was like that "constantly" for the rest of their relationship.

*"This was our entire relationship after I became pregnant with our son Aiden. Before then he was always very sweet and understanding. He always put in 100% to prove to me he was worth marrying & he did it well, I fell for him fast. I never thought he would have become the person I know him to be now."*

She remembers the night before their wedding as "horrible". A friend even reminded her that she didn't have to get married, but Reidy was convinced she was in love, and that they were just going through a lot ("the baseball world, a newborn, having to deal with his mother, having to deal with his family...he was still in court about child support"). When they got married, she says "everybody cried" but she was so emotionally drained, she was just happy to get it over with. They didn't go on a honeymoon, as Russell had to be back in Chicago for Cubs Convention.

Just days before Spring Training in 2016, Aiden was diagnosed with RSV (respiratory syncytial virus, a mild respiratory illness that can be serious in infants) and had to stay in the hospital for days. It was a challenging experience for Reidy, who continued to find Addison absent when she needed him most. “My baby is hooked up to oxygen and a feeding tube...I need your emotional support, I need you to be there,” She remembers telling Addison. Instead of providing emotional support, Reidy says he attempted convince her to have sex with him in the hospital shower. (“In the hospital room with our son in the hospital bed? Why is that on your mind?”)

The first physical abuse that Reidy can recall occurred when the two of them went out with the team and their wives in Scottsdale, Arizona, near the Cubs’ Spring Training facility. Reidy says it started with him yelling at her at the club, allegedly for sitting towards the crowd with her “legs wide open”. She rolls her eyes, “Because I would totally do that in a dress, in front of everybody? None of that happened.” When they got back home, after the babysitter left, Reidy says he began to yell at her again, so she retreated to the guest room and shut the door, hoping he’d calm down.

“He kicked the door down and ripped Aiden out of my arms. I’m following him, like...please give him to me, I’m nervous. I don’t think he’s going to hurt [Aiden] but he’s drunk,” Reidy explains. “Honestly I’ll never forget that. That feeling was like, you know when your dad yells at you when you’re a kid, and you’re like, “Fuck. I’m about to get a spanking.” It’s probably the scariest thing as a kid to feel. That’s basically what I can relate it to.”

Reidy says Russell had their son in one arm, and grabbed the front of her shirt with the other, throwing her across the room and onto the ground. “I was this close to my head hitting the coffee table,” she continues, “I just sat up and looked and he closed the bedroom door and had Aiden in there.” She went into the other room, and retrieved Aiden when she heard Russell go out onto the balcony. She fell asleep and woke up to him in bed with the two of them. Afterward, she was the one who felt like she had to apologize.

She says when he came home, he blamed her for the fight and threatened to send she and Aiden home from Arizona, telling her she was an embarrassment. “From that day on,” Reidy says, “I walked on eggshells.” I ask Melisa about the experience of having conversations like this and she admits that it can be difficult. “When I take time to try to dissect, I’ll remember things I forgot even happened, there’s just so much.” She says. Still, there are moments that stand out.

One Christmas, they argued after he said something she describes as “insulting and disrespectful” and embarrassed” her in front of her family. After an argument, she left the apartment in exasperation with Aiden and got in the car to drive away. “He was hitting the car. I thought he was going to break the window at one point,” Reidy says. She went to a friend’s house and she was asked what she was doing with him. “I’m like, I don’t know but what am I supposed to do? What do I do?”

Melisa says Russell also had a habit of breaking her phone when he was angry with her, mentioning two specific incidents. Once, he taunted her about trying to plan their wedding without it and another time, it resulted in him giving her a new one as a “Christmas present”. Reidy became suspicious

of gifts from Russell early on. When he offered to buy her a car after Aiden was born, she didn't want any part of it. "I said, I'm not picking it. I didn't want anything to do with it because I knew he was gonna hold it over my head," she says.

Money was one of the things Melisa felt Russell always held over her. "He always told me, I have the career here, not you. I make the money. What do you do?" Nevermind, Reidy adds, that she gave up her career and her life because Addison wanted her to be with him. She describes their financial arrangement as her having a separate card that he deposited money on once a month that he told her to use for herself and Aiden. She had no access to his money and her allowance was expected to cover "diapers, wipes, food, travel, hygiene, stuff for the house" and remembers using it to purchase items to make a gift basket for the Cubs to auction off for charity. Or, other times, she says they would go out to eat and he would get angry, storming out in the middle of a meal and leaving her with the bill.

The day after Aiden's first birthday, Reidy remembers Russell being "really, really mean" to her. He had been trying to call her while she was sleeping. When she got in touch with him, she says he just started "cussing me out and saying fuck you, you're a fucking bitch...you don't fucking deserve me." She says she had to beg Russell not to cancel her flight to Los Angeles to bring Aiden to come see him during the Cubs series against the Dodgers. Going to Los Angeles turned out to be, in Melisa's words, the "worst trip ever".

The day she arrived, she "saw stuff on his iPad" and realized that he was cheating on her again. This time, with a woman who she described as a "really, really close friend". She still had to fly back on the Cubs' plane with Russell, to whom she wasn't speaking. She was sitting with Aiden near the window when she says Russell came over, grabbed her leg, squeezed it, and started to whisper in her ear. "He was like, "If you don't fucking act normal right now, I swear to god, I'm going to embarrass both of us on this plane. Do you really want that? Do you really want me to embarrass you in front of everybody? ...Act fucking right, act like I'm your fucking husband. Treat me like I'm your husband," Melisa says she asked him what he wanted her to do. His response? "He was like, talk to me. Turn around. Look at me. Sit closer."

Melisa didn't share that part of her life with anyone at the time, her closest friend wasn't there anymore after her husband was traded to a different team, and she felt people distancing themselves because they "didn't want to be a part of the drama". She distanced herself too, especially from the wives, because she thought she'd "bothered them enough" and felt embarrassed that she didn't know what to say. "You go to the field and you see everybody and they're happy together with their kids...why can't we be that family?" She asks rhetorically. "You grow up, you find someone that's your companion in life...and you do life together, and you have a family...that's what I wanted, that's what I thought I'd found."

One of the worst incidents that she remembers with Russell occurred after she went out for a "girls night" with a friend. Reidy says he came to find them and immediately said they were going home. Once in the cab, Russell was yelling at her ("in front of his friend and my friend and the taxi driver") so she told the cab to stop and decided to get out and walk home. "I was crossing the street, I saw Addison coming out of the taxi. You know, you just know...he just starts running towards me," Reidy says. Her

fight or flight instinct kicked in and she took off running. “He slips...which pisses him off even more. I remember him gritting his teeth. I look back...and so I just try to run. And then everything kind of went sideways.”

“He slammed me into concrete...like, football tackled me. His friend was there and Carlie was there and they watched it. I was down, he was on top of me, yelling in my ear, saying, “You like doing this to me. You push my buttons. Do you like it when I get like this? Do you like doing this? You like pushing me to the point where I have to act like this.”

When he apologized, she says he told her, “I would never really hurt you, I just needed to get your attention because you weren’t listening to me.”

*“He rarely said sorry. It took me coming to him apologizing for what I didn’t even know I was supposed to be sorry for, just to have some peace between us. I couldn’t live miserable everyday fighting for him to see my point and how he was hurting me. I came to the conclusion that no matter what I said or how much I tried to explain my side or how I felt, he wanted the last word & wouldn’t stop until I admitted he was right. I was the problem. If I would just listen to him, we wouldn’t fight, he wouldn’t get mad at me. He wouldn’t have put his hands on me. It was my fault. I pushed his buttons.”*

While the Cubs victory in the 2016 World Series was a cause for joy for most in Chicago, the win only worsened things between Russell and Reidy. “We won the World Series and...he literally saw himself as a god,” She says. “His attitude changed so much. His head, his ego...” It got to the point where none of Melisa’s friends wanted to go out with them anymore, because he would always “do something crazy and ruin the whole entire night”. While everyone else celebrated, Reidy just remembers how things started “completely just falling apart” after that.

She describes Spring Training in 2017 as simply “horrible” and said she had come to feel like she was “living with a stranger.” When Aiden wanted to play, Reidy says she was beckoned to come get him so he wouldn’t disturb Addison. “It got to a point where I just completely lost my voice. I was literally invisible. He would come home and see through me,” She says. She started to suspect he might be hiding something again after catching him being dishonest about a pair of headphones. She found a pair that weren’t compatible with the phone he had, and he claimed they belonged to a teammate, he’d just grabbed them by accident. Reidy says she called to ask the teammate’s wife about it, and she confirmed that Russell had lied to her again. Something had to give. In mid-April, it finally did.

One night, she was calling Russell and he wasn’t picking up. “I just had a really bad feeling...I was like, “God, please just tell me what to do. I can’t live like this anymore.” I woke up in the middle of the night, and it sounds really crazy, but something just told me to text him,” Reidy says. Trusting her instincts, she sent him a text that simply said, “I know everything” at 3 o’clock in the morning. That got Russell’s attention. “He was blowing up my phone...I didn’t text back. He just started telling on himself. He literally told me everything in text.” He even offered to go to marriage counseling, something Reidy had been asking him to do for a long time to no avail.

After she was told what she already knew, she was deeply hurt and in a lot of pain. “He had sex with a random girl. He brought some random girl up to his room,” Reidy says. “He said they didn’t do anything but kiss, but do you think I’m a moron? I was trying to keep my composure because Aiden was there...I went in my car and drove to the Walgreens parking lot on Halsted and Broadway and I just sat there in my car and I called him.” She describes herself as “angry and hurt and hyperventilating” and remembers her ribs being sore for days afterwards from how violently she had sobbed.

The next morning she had to take Aiden to a doctor’s appointment, so Reidy’s friend Carlie went to the apartment she shared with Addison, packed up all of her things, and put them in the Jeep. Melisa booked a flight for her mother and Aiden to fly home, and then she and Carlie drove the 14 hours from Chicago to Florida together. “It was just good to clear my head, it almost felt like I could breathe,” She says. “I never felt so relieved as I did driving away.”

Her relief was short-lived, as Reidy says she agreed to come back to Chicago in May after Russell insisted he wanted to see his son. She wanted to see Aiden’s half-sister Mila for her birthday and figured it was an opportunity to see if he’d meant anything he’d told her about how he was trying to change. It was fine for “the first two days”, and then things went right back to how they had been before. “He said something rude to me, and I responded, “What, do I look like a maid or something?” I was sitting on the couch texting...obviously it pissed him off,” She remembers the kids were playing on a small trampoline by the TV. “He walks over and grabs me by my throat and pins me up against the couch. He’s like, “Who the fuck do you think you’re talking to?” I had to pull my knees up and push him off.”

Reidy says she went to the bedroom to walk away from the situation and Russell followed her into the bathroom, shutting the door behind himself. “He’s yelling at me and then he literally bowed up,” She stops for a second to collect herself before continuing, “He bowed up his arm and I was like, “You know what? Go ahead. Fucking hit me. Just do it...it’ll be the last time you ever put your hands on me. Go ahead and do it.” Russell backed off, and Reidy believes that he knew she wasn’t scared of him anymore after that.

The night before she went back home, after a contentious marriage counseling session earlier in the day, she tried to end things with Russell on a civil note. “Do you understand that you scare me?” Reidy remembers asking him. “You do not make me feel safe...I feel like you are going to hurt me and I do not feel safe with you. You’re my husband, I’m supposed to feel safe with you and you’re the last person on this earth I want to even be alone with.” She says Russell wouldn’t accept that, insisting she just needed more time. She flew back home the following day.

They had a second marriage counseling session scheduled at the beginning of June in Chicago. She flew out, but instead of going to counseling, she made an appointment with a lawyer and met with him instead. She says Russell was furious, texting her about how it would be the “biggest regret of her life” and suggested she sell her ring to pay her lawyer. Even her lawyer told her if she waited a few months longer, she might benefit more financially in the end, but she had no interest in sticking around any longer than she already had. “I might be in a casket in two months,” she told him. “You could not pay me enough.”



*“Thinking you are going to spend the rest of your life with one person, expecting your future to always be with him, & then you find yourself alone, a single mother, jobless, literally fighting for everything you have including your son, trying to keep your sanity, is the hardest thing I have ever experienced.”*

Reidy says the last time spoke to Russell about their marriage, considered working things out, or saw him in a capacity unrelated to their coparenting was on December 31st, 2017. His ability to convince her, even then, that he was truly interested in changing and that his apologies were genuine, is part of what makes her continue to doubt the sincerity of the public apologies he has made to date. “He was on his knees, bawling his eyes out, telling me how sorry he is, how he ruined his life and how he lost the best thing that ever happened to him...he actually made me believe he was sorry,” She says he told her all the things she’d desperately wanted to hear for so long. “I started hoping that we were gonna fix it and then he ended up leaving me stranded at a bar to go see his friends.” He told her to go wait for him at home, and she found herself unable to even be angry with him, she knew she shouldn’t have believed him.

“I was so humiliated and I knew I did it to myself,” She explains. “I should’ve known better. But he was so convincing, and when you really have that much love for someone...even when there was nothing to hope for I was like, “You never know, God can change people’s hearts.” Looking back, Melisa says she’s actually glad that it happened, because she knows now that he won’t ever be able to fool her again.

It was only after she finally got away from Russell that she began to realize the scale of damage he’d done to her. “I had to start from the ground,” She says. “I had to accept the fact that my entire marriage, my relationship, everything that I thought that was, it was never that...he was never in love with me the way I thought he was. It was all fake. Everything was fake.” She lived with her mother and shared a bed with her and Aiden initially, Reidy says it took involving lawyers to even convince Russell to help her find somewhere to live with Aiden. She calls herself “lifeless” looking back. If someone had asked her what she liked to do, she wouldn’t have even known what to say.

She had started writing about her experience in journals as a form of therapy for herself. She felt like she didn’t know many people who could relate or understand, and thought she was becoming a “broken record, going through it over and over and over again” with her mom and her friends. When she began to write her blog, she was thinking of all the people out there who didn’t have the support system that she had. “They only have the person that’s abusing them,” Reidy says, “and they can’t get out...you’re struck and you’re miserable and that’s not a way to live. If I could help somebody else just by my story...”

She was cautioned about what the reaction might be like. She was warned it could affect her “financial future”. At the beginning of September, she says there was a night where she just couldn’t sleep. So she grabbed her laptop and began to type. “I didn’t even realize when I was done, it was 5 o’clock in the morning,” She says, though she still hadn’t decided whether or not to post what she’d written, an almost 3,000 word summary of her relationship with Russell. Every time she decided not to, the idea wouldn’t leave her head.

“I felt that God was like, “Okay, Melisa, this is something you need to do. There is a purpose to your pain, you’re going to help somebody else. You know there’s some people that aren’t as strong as you and they need that encouragement,” She says that she felt that people seeing someone like her, a young mother, be open about her struggles, might help them start to see light at the end of the tunnel. Ultimately, she decided that staying silent was, in its own way, letting Russell win. “That’s still letting him control me. I’m letting his money control me still being able to have a voice? He’s still controlling me,” She says. She felt that the chance to help someone, to save someone from some of the pain she experienced, was worth more than anything else.

Reidy’s life now is completely different than her life with Addison, and she couldn’t be happier about where she’s landed. She’s started focusing on her mental health. She has a therapist now. She’s started seeing someone who treats her well, and whose family she adores. “I am so in love with my boyfriend now. He’s amazing,” She says, noting that it wasn’t the same as her love for Addison, and that was a very good thing. “The love I had for Addison was a consuming love to where it was like, you completely didn’t give a shit about yourself...it’s not healthy...that was a toxic way to love.”

After she posted the blog, it didn’t take long for it to go viral on social media. She never heard from Russell about the post, but she did say someone in his family texted her and said she couldn’t believe she’d done it. Melisa didn’t respond. Protecting Addison was no longer a part of her life. “He’s his own person, he needs to take responsibility for his actions. If you don’t want to have that type of reputation and that character, then don’t do what you do. Learn from your mistakes and if you do something to someone, they have every right to talk about it.” She still prays for him, because at the end of the day, “he’s my son’s father and he will be affected”. She knows one day she will have to have tough conversations with Aiden about all of it, and she feels certain it will make him a better a better adult. Sugarcoating it, she says, won’t teach him anything.

*“I had to make a decision for my son & I. Live miserable to keep my family together, or leave, struggle, but allow my son to have a happy childhood with good memories, instead of him being exposed to his father abusing his mother. I knew it would continue to get worse. It already was. He exposed Aiden to his abusive behavior many many times. I don’t see how anyone can think that is wrong of me to do.”*

“As soon as I posted it, I was completely free from any type of control he ever had on me. Anything. I broke every single chain he could ever have to tug on me,” She says. “No one is going to make me feel like I don’t have the right to my own voice. Society makes you feel guilty for standing up for yourself. You’re not being a victim. You’re taking back control of your life to be able to open up about it.”

She’s also found a new passion in her YouTube channel, [LifeWithMelis](#). She started vlogging to connect more with the people who supported her and to be able to relate to people going through what she’d been through, especially young mothers. What is the ultimate goal of her new project? “I want to be able to inspire someone going through a rough patch...I want to be able to reach out and encourage young women and just be a light in this broken world.” I would say Reidy has already done exactly that, and

there should be little doubt about her ability to continue to create as much hope as she can out of whatever life gives her.

Melisa Reidy has found her voice again. The world is going to be much better for hearing what she has to say.