

What has a year of COVID, lockdowns, isolation and unexpected deaths taught us about the human trait of resilience?

From university students swallowing their student loans and accosting their education online to the campaigning efforts of the late Captain Sir Tom Moore, whose legacy will forever be shrined, resilience is a trait which has been exemplified in many, in this waging war against COVID-19. It is seen in the adherence of lockdown rules as we weaponize with masks and vaccines; the sculpture of a nurse erected in my local park stands testimony to its existence and it has been a word that is littered across social media and news articles to praise our efforts collectively. While resilience is such a thing that has lit a beacon of hope worldwide, this essay focuses on the link between resilience and an issue that hits much closer to one's home: the increase in domestic violence, paralleling the stretch of lockdowns in UK.

Resilience is defined as the ability to continue in spite of adversity, and whilst we are faced with a pandemic, the most obvious examples of it would be of those on the front lines against this virus, yet many are plagued with a simultaneous pandemic that cannot be helped with the wearing of a mask, and there hasn't been nearly as much attention on those aiding victims of domestic violence or on the topic of domestic abuse. Victims of domestic abuse are often painted as a timid, weak woman, unable to fight back in our minds, yet the only part of this stereotype that identifies with Davina, a survivor of domestic abuse, is woman. Davina (whose real name is disguised to maintain her privacy) shared her experience on live tv, explaining how if she had not reached out to Women's Aid charity, she would most likely be dead, as she was accustomed to abuse by her partner. Work done by services that deal with domestic abuse is incredibly important and deserves to be the front runner for shows of resilience, as they have persevered through the pandemic to help victims of domestic abuse.

Services that deal with domestic violence were already steeped in a funding crisis prior to the pandemic but with the half-fold increase in domestic abuse, due to lockdown, the government concentrated more money to help victims. Even with the additional £11 million funding boost (confirmed on November 2020) to cover services offering help to victims, many of these services face an inability to keep up with demand- the numbers of victims having been heightened by the first and all subsequent lockdowns. Over the first couple of weeks in the first lockdown, there was a 54% increase of women who sought urgent accommodation and men's advice helpline received over 8,500 calls in the first three months of the first lockdown. These statistics illuminate a conspicuous problem, that is aggravated by lockdown, that must be dealt with. Domestic violence does not discriminate between genders nor age, and with prolonged periods of isolations inflicted by lockdown, victims find it harder to escape from their situation. The very lockdown that is meant to protect us from COVID-19 plunges some into a more immediate, life-threatening scenario, whereby victims are trapped with predators, unable to leave.

Women's aid is an organisation that offers support to women and children who are victim to domestic abuse, coordinating and improving responses to calls of help and working to identify those who need help earlier on. They actively campaign to revise the Domestic Abuse Bill (2020), a statutory guidance article that aims to encourage and protect victims who come forward, so it meets with their recommendations, supported by research and testimonies of victims. They have proved the power of campaigning as they successfully managed to alert government officials to a 'wider ban on cross-examination to protect all survivors who face this traumatising practice in the court system', a direct statement from the acting co-CEO's (Adina Claire) official press release. Organisations that provide these services have met a victory in the establishment of the

Domestic Abuse Bill, though there is a long way to go until one day, we reach a world which does not require such services to exist.

I see resilience in each and every victim that survives their situation and fights to escape their abuser. I see resilience in the work of those striving to raise awareness of the topic. I see resilience in every person that donates their time to help victims. This year of COVID-19 has been a myriad of displays of resilience, and no doubt, in the years to come, psychologists will look back at this period to advance their understanding of the trait. I present this essay to encourage people to look at examples of resilience which does not get equal screen time to other issues.

It is incredibly easy for the story of each victim to be faded into a statistic, especially among the instant news age our generation is delving into, yet these numbers should not harden our hearts against this crime and we should strive to ensure no woman, man or child endures what Davina underwent. COVID 19 has revealed a lot about the human trait of resilience, and in the example of the fight against domestic violence, has shown that continued actions supporting the direction of your beliefs will lead to positive outcomes. Resilience is a universal attribute in mankind, suggesting it is a trait that natural selection has deemed adaptive, and when faced with adversity, we must use it to clear a way ahead, for the betterment of future generations.

To conclude, no one example of resilience can be deemed more important than another but this essay is an effort to shine a light on an issue that has been worsened by COVID and to appreciate the efforts shown by those taking the issue head on. Everyone embroiled in the war against domestic abuse deserves to be recognised for their resilient perseverance in achieving their goals.

