

# Kipling's "If": Hope for Domestic Abuse Survivors

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Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" offers a beacon of hope and resilience that can resonate deeply with the challenges survivors of domestic abuse face.

## If

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

## My interpretation of the poem

The poem urges *"keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you"*, motivating domestic abuse survivors like myself to find inner strength. Amidst chaos and a whirlwind of gaslighting and unwarranted blame, survivors should remember that both good and bad times are temporary. I have read this poem many times, along with ['Don't Quit' by John Greenleaf Whittier](#), and found hope during some of my darkest moments.

The line *"watch the things you gave your life to, broken, / And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools"* draws comparisons with the arduous journey of rebuilding a life shattered by abuse. The stoic wisdom to *"trust yourself when all men doubt you"* mirrors the complex journey of overcoming

domestic abuse. It resonates deeply with those whose abusers have eroded their self-worth through words and actions. As a survivor, your ability to hold onto your truth, even when others or you doubt yourself, testifies to your inner strength. This marks an important step towards recovery and healing.

Kipling's words, *"If you can wait and not be tired by waiting"*, echo the patience required in your journey to freedom and recovery. Survivors must build the strength to endure without losing hope. Each day brings them closer to a life free from abuse, but they need fortitude to face continuing hardship without succumbing to despair. Rather than ignoring the pain and suffering, they must acknowledge it while refusing to let it define them. They need to find the quiet determination to keep moving forward, even when the path ahead seems insurmountable.

## **If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you...**

One of the most pertinent lines for domestic abuse survivors is *"If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you"*. It speaks to the resilience and inner strength required to withstand both external adversities and the emotional pain inflicted by those close to us. The pain inflicted by someone who was supposed to love and protect you can devastate, but it does not define you. Just as Kipling's words suggest, you have the power to rise above the hurt from both foes and those who were once loved ones.

The stoics taught endurance in the face of adversity. Similarly, Kipling's words remind survivors to *"hold on when there is nothing in you / Except the Will"*. This is crucial in breaking free from the cycle of abuse. As the poem suggests, if a survivor can *"meet with Triumph and Disaster / And treat those two impostors just the same"*, then they possess the

inner strength to weather the storms of leaving and healing. Every step forward, no matter how small, brings them closer to the life they deserve.

Kipling's poem "If" offers hope for domestic abuse survivors. Your current struggles are not permanent, even if it's hard to see right now. In your darkest moments, when despair threatens to consume you, remember that this too shall pass. Brighter days lie ahead, and a better life awaits you—one where you are safe, valued and free.

## Help for victims

You are not alone. Don't suffer in silence. For confidential help, male victims of domestic abuse should call Freephone 0808 800 1170 (will not show on your bills), or 01823 334 244 (for those with inclusive minutes). Further information is available on [ManKind's website](#).