
"It's a fantasy – Grey is rich, gorgeous and sexy. Real-life abusers aren't."

The myth that all abusive people are somehow recognisable is as ludicrous as it is dangerous.

For many women, the person who goes on to abuse them is the hottest guy they've ever seen. At first, the sex may be amazing. Neither of these things makes someone less likely to be abusive, but they may blind someone to the abuse.

Abusers are skilled in the area of charm. They will put across a version of themselves that they know someone will fall for. What would be the point of revealing themselves to be abusive right away? Nobody would want to be with them.

Fifty Shades of Grey has perpetuated this myth and more. That's why we need to speak out. Not because we're hysterically calling for books to be burned, or because we have any desire to police what people read, but because myths about something as misunderstood as abuse are dangerous. We need facts. What we don't need is a man who stalks, coerces, threatens, intimidates, controls and manipulates being presented as some kind of romantic hero. Because he isn't. He's an abuser.

"Christian Grey doesn't know any better!! You can't blame him for his behaviour, because he had a terrible childhood. He needs help, not judgement."

There is never an excuse for abusing another person. The events that took place in a person's life prior to their decision to stalk, manipulate, threaten, coerce, isolate, harm or forcibly control someone else, do not justify or negate the abusive effect of these behaviours.

Manipulation is a key part of abuse. Getting your partner to think that you're some poor, troubled person who simply can't help their actions because they've never been shown any different, is a hugely common tactic.

"But her love cures him in the end. They both have to learn, compromise and make sacrifices and that's what a relationship is about."

The only person who really makes an effort at compromise is Ana. What does he sacrifice? His need to control? No, he still dictates to Ana as to when she can see her friends, whether she takes his name when they marry and he attempts to control a whole lot more besides.

This all stems from the myth that love can "cure" an abuser. In a healthy relationship, there's nothing wrong with supporting a partner whilst they work on their issues. But this is not a healthy relationship and Ana is taking all of the responsibility, leaving Christian with none.

50 SHADES IS DOMESTIC ABUSE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

www.50shadesisdomesticabuse.webs.com

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“You’re prudish – you’re equating BDSM with abuse because you don’t know anything of the lifestyle!”

We are not against consensual BDSM. Indeed, we have all kinds of people from within the lifestyle who follow and support our campaign. Dom(me)s, subs, switches... They believe, as we do, that the lifestyle has been offensively and dangerously misrepresented by the trilogy. From the tired old trope of the man only into BDSM because of some tragic, painful past (and who needs to be “fixed”); to the “Dom” using alcohol and manipulation to coerce a completely naive young woman into agreeing to become his sub; the story throws the BDSM community under the bus.

Much of Grey’s abuse is emotional and psychological. The fact that it crosses into sexual and physical abuse at times is just an extension of Christian’s already abusive tendencies. Our pointing it out is in no way a damning indictment against BDSM as a whole.

We’re not remotely anti-BDSM. But we are against it being misrepresented and used as a cover for abusive behaviour, as it is in *Fifty Shades*.

We would recommend that anyone wanting to know more about the lifestyle speaks to someone involved in it, reads books on the subject, visits a club and tries to find out the facts.

“But doesn’t the storyline include Ana giving consent?”

Christian does hand Ana a contract and talks about the importance of consent, but whilst discussing hard limits, Christian deliberately gets Ana drunk. She can’t give full, informed consent in that state and were he a reliable Dom (or just a non-abusive person in general), he would know as much. She also asks him not to control every aspect of her life and he ignores her and continues to monitor her whereabouts and even tries to buy her workplace so he can keep an eye on her there.

Christian regularly ignores Ana’s lack of full consent. This has nothing to do with BDSM. Ana never signed the contract; he is not her Master. And even if he were, a lack of consent would never be ignored in a healthy BDSM relationship.

“Calling Fifty Shades “abusive” is offensive to actual victims of abuse”

This campaign is run by survivors of domestic abuse. It is out of concern for the ways in which *Fifty Shades* promotes abuse as normal and perpetuates the myths about abuse that we felt we needed to act.

The examples of abuse we give are taken directly from the books. Not made up to suit an agenda, but direct quotes from the books that reference abusive behaviour – be it stalking, manipulation, coercion, threats, isolation or unwanted control – that EL James actually wrote in black and white.

“You’re telling people what they can and can’t read! That’s against free speech! You’re advocating censorship!”

We’re not calling for a ban on the books. We haven’t said that people shouldn’t be allowed to read them.

However, romanticising abusive behaviour in fiction is highly dangerous and leads to abuse being normalised or missed in reality (emotional and psychological abuse in particular is so insidious that many who experience it don’t even realise until much later).

It also has led to an even greater problem with people believing myths about abuse which in turn causes people to be blind to the very red flags they should be looking out for.

“What about other books?! You can’t criticise Fifty Shades and not anything else!”

We stand against romanticised abuse in fiction *full stop*. Romanticising abusive behaviour in fiction normalises it in reality and can blind us to the signs.

However, *Fifty Shades* went past being “just a book” like so many others a long time ago. When the “find your own Christian Grey” dating sites appeared and almost every women’s magazine refused to hear a word of criticism against it and began promoting Grey as “the perfect man.” And when something with the potential to be dangerous is taken this seriously and becomes such a deep part of the public consciousness, then it makes sense for an abuse-awareness campaign to focus on it.