Caroline Phansi opens conversation on emotional abuse, faith and support in new Contento interview

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Contento Social Homes CIC has published a new interview in which its CEO, Caroline Phansi, speaks with a survivor about emotional abuse, the decisions that can precede leaving a relationship, and the support she received after bringing her church into the conversation.

The survivor, who is not named in the article, describes how repeated insults affected her sense of self. She had sought professional help, including psychology and therapy, but delayed telling her church because she wanted to protect her spouse and home from shame. She also feared that disclosure could cause her spouse to withdraw from the process altogether.

“At the time, silence felt like the best decision for my spouse, although it was not necessarily the best decision for me,” she tells Caroline.

Caroline asks readers to consider what may have happened before a woman says she is leaving. In the interview, she describes the efforts that can remain invisible to people outside a relationship and the concerns a mother may have for her children. “When we talk about leaving, I always tell our staff to respect the women who come to us,” she says.

Faith is an important part of this particular survivor's account. When she did involve her church, its response included a question she remembers: “What do you need right now?” The conversation distinguishes forgiveness from reconciliation and discusses the need for accountability and meaningful change by the person who caused harm.

The interview does not present the survivor's path as a set of steps that others must follow. It asks how families, friends and faith communities can support someone experiencing emotional abuse without making the decision for her.

Read the full interview, “I Wanted to Protect My Spouse”: What Happens Before a Woman Says She’s Leaving?, at Contento Social Homes.

Contento Social Homes CIC supports domestic abuse survivors and their children through safe accommodation and wellbeing support. The interview was conducted by Caroline Phansi and written and edited by the Contento Social Homes Marketing Team. The survivor has not been identified, and the article's illustration does not depict her.

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