

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour through which a person seeks to control and intimidate another person. It is a series of events that aim to undermine a person's confidence. 1 in 4 women in Australia has experienced physical or sexual violence by their partner, boyfriend or date¹.

Domestic violence is a crime

Domestic violence includes controlling and intimidating another person repeatedly and undermining one's confidence. Perpetrators of domestic violence use many tactics to maintain control such as:

- **Physical assaults** — choking, beating, pushing and threatening physical harm, harming or threatening to harm children loved ones or pets. It may also include threatening harm to themselves if their partner tries to leave the relationship.
- **Emotional abuse** — name calling, disrespectful treatment
- **Verbal abuse** — yelling, demeaning comments
- **Sexual abuse** — forced sex, forced sexual acts, threats of sexual abuse
- **Financial abuse** — denying money, preventing someone from earning a living, forcing someone to go into debt, demanding money
- **Social abuse** — isolating people from friends and family, using family to intimidate, monitoring contacts on social media.
- **Psychological abuse** — blaming their partner for being abused, telling the person being abused that they have mental health problems, manipulating and twisting reality, denying abusive behaviours
- **Legal abuse** — exploiting the family law system to intimidate, exhaust, exploit or disempower someone.

Are you experiencing domestic violence?

What to do?

Contact 1800 RESPECT to gain specific information related to your situation.

Contact 000 if you are at immediate risk or if you are suicidal.

Domestic violence is abuse and is a behaviour that seeks to control and intimidate by lowering a person's confidence, fear and through isolation. Seeking help can feel hard but gaining support and feeling empowered within your situation is important. You can also make a safety plan. Safety plans are put into place to empower the person being abused. When making a safety plan it is important to remember that you are an expert on the situation and you know what has previously happened and what has and hasn't worked.

What does a safety plan look like?

Have an escape plan:

1. Plan emergency exit routes from all rooms in the house.
2. Have a small escape bag ready with essential documents, spare keys, cash, medicines, etc.
3. Have your own mobile phone, preferably pre-paid so there is no bill that can be monitored.
4. Know where you are going — do you have a trusted family or friend that you can stay with, write their number down so you can contact them if needed.
5. Ask a trusted neighbour to call 000 if they hear fighting.
6. Try to keep a record of frightening events.
7. Collect local services numbers e.g. taxi, crisis phone line and local police station address.

Some important points about your safety plan:

- Safety plans need to be regularly updated when situations change.
- Contact domestic violence services as they are able to provide support, assist in making a safety plan and put you in touch with other services e.g. legal advice.
- A safety plan is not about taking responsibility for the perpetrator's violence, it is aiming to increase safety.
- If children are involved, they need to be taken into account in the plan.

Call
1800 RESPECT
if you need
to talk

What about the kids?

Children that are impacted by domestic violence can experience significant emotional and psychological trauma. The home is full of tension, anxiety and fear. Therefore instead of feeling secure, safe and able to predict their environment, they are required to worry about the future, predict when things might happen and try to protect themselves. Children from a family experiencing domestic violence often have little time for fun and they are just trying to get through each day.

Children and young people react in different ways to domestic violence including self-blame, helplessness, grief, ambivalence, fear, dread, terror, worry, sadness, shame, anger or numbness. They may show signs of:

- poor concentration
- aggression
- hyperactivity
- disobedience
- disturbed sleep
- nightmares
- withdrawal
- low self-esteem
- no emotion
- being on edge
- fantasising about a normal home life
- pessimism about the future
- physical symptoms.

Young people's mental health can be impacted and domestic violence may lead to depression, an eating disorder, low self-esteem, violence, alcohol and substance dependence and even suicide.

Children may also be used as pawns, to control the person that is being abused. This can include an attempt to stop a person from leaving a relationship, to make a person return home if they have left or as a means of punishment for perceived wrong doing. Children are at high risk both during and following separations.

How to help your child?

Some ways to support your children include:

- help them identify the warning signs of danger
- provide practical information to children about escape routes
- practice using escape routes
- teach them how to call 000 and provide their name and address
- explain if there are any other safe places they can go to or people they can call
- teach them that it is not their responsibility to stop the abuse
- inform schools/childcare (if you are already separated).

Where to go for support?

Below are services you may consider contacting for support:

- **Call 000** if you are at immediate risk or if you are suicidal.
- **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault helpline:** 1800 200 526 (24hrs)
- **1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)** — National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (24 hrs)
- **Mensline Australia:** 1300 78 99 78 (24hrs)
- **Centrelink** — a crisis payment may be available: humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment
- **Victims of Crime** in your state/territory — Financial compensation and free counselling

Other online services/resources

For women

- Domestic Violence Resource Centre: www.dvirc.org.au
- Immigrant Women's Support Service: www.dvrcv.org.au/immigrant-women's-support-service-IWSS
- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria: www.djirra.org.au
- Women's safety after separation: www.ncsmc.org.au/wsas/welcome.htm
- Women's Information and Support: www.wire.org.au
- Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc: www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

For men

- Mensline Australia — Support for male survivors and for men who are concerned about their own violent behavior: www.menslineaus.org.au
- Specific information about same-sex domestic violence: www.acon.org.au
- WA Government website: Information on all aspects of domestic violence — www.freedomfromfear.wa.gov.au

For local services and centres in your area, including emergency accommodation services, visit the Lifeline Service Seeker Directory at lifeline.serviceseeker.com.au



Phone 13 11 14 | www.lifeline.org.au

Call Lifeline on 13 11 14 (available 24/7) if you are feeling suicidal or in crisis or visit www.lifeline.org.au to connect online with our Crisis Support Chat (available nightly) and find a range of other useful factsheets.

For volunteer options, op shop locations and training opportunities on the NSW South Coast, visit www.lifelinesouthcoast.org.au

The printing of this factsheet was made possible by Wests Illawarra

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